

Hey there!

I appreciate you taking the time to check out this Note and I hope you have as much fun reading it as I had creating it.

As you can probably tell, I *love* wisdom. And, if you enjoy getting "More Wisdom in Less Time" I think you might also dig *PhilosophersNotes TV* where I profile my favorite Big Ideas from my Notes in fun, inspiring, and practical 2-10 minute episodes all about getting our wisdom on and rocking our greatest lives! You can check out the first episode here:

[Click here to watch Episode #1](#)

Plus, we've got all kinds of other stuff on the site for you—from our collection of thousands of quotes and hundreds of Big Ideas to my blog where we share inspiring videos and news articles and other goodness.

And, of course, remember that this book is just one of the top 100 books on personal growth I profile and if you'd like to find out what the other 99 are, check this out:

<http://www.PhilosophersNotes.com/Notes>

Here's to our greatest lives,

B

Brian Johnson
Chief Philosopher



THE BIG IDEAS

One Great Truth

The universe conspires.

The Fear of Suffering

Is the greatest threat.

What Makes a Dream

Impossible to achieve?

The Extraordinary:

It's your birthright.

The Warrior of the Light

Are you one?

If You're Going to Fall...

Climb!

Bare Your Scars

Like medals.

Statutes

For the New Millennium.

Life Is Like

A great bicycle race.

The Art of Trying

Something new! :)

90% There

= Half-way there!

Run God's Risks!

And LIVE!!!

*"We all have the ability...
we just don't all have
the courage to follow
our dreams and to follow
the signs."*



Paulo Coelho

A Look at Some of My Favorite Big Ideas

"A philosophy of life: I'm an adventurer, looking for treasure."

~ Paulo Coelho from *The Alchemist: A Fable About Following Your Dream*

Paulo Coelho is one of my favorite human beings on the planet.

I like to say I know a great book when I finish it and say: *"The person who wrote that is a *really* good person."* That's how I feel when I read Coelho's stuff and I'm obviously not alone as his books have sold more than 100 (!!!) million copies in 150 different countries and have been translated into 60 different languages—easily making him not only one of the coolest guys on the planet but one of the most read and influential!

If you haven't read any of his stuff yet, I'd suggest you start with the magical fable, *The Alchemist*, where we meet a shepherd in pursuit of his dreams who discovers that when someone truly wants something, the Universe conspires to help him get it.

(Some of my other favorites include *Veronika Decides to Die* (which is now a movie starring Sarah Michelle Gellar (see trailer here)) and *Warrior of the Light* and *Like the Flowing River* (thoughts and reflections from Paulo's weekly syndicated newspaper column).)

I'm pretty sure I've read all of his published books and I'm excited to share some of my favorite Big Ideas from a bunch of my favorites. Let's jump in!

ONE GREAT TRUTH

"There is one great truth on this planet: whoever you are, or whatever it is that you do, when you really want something, it's because that desire originated in the soul of the universe. It's your mission on earth... And when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it." ~ from *The Alchemist: A Fable About Following Your Dream*

This is the essence of *The Alchemist* (and a theme that runs through ALL of Coelho's work): If you have a deep-felt desire, something you TRULY want, it's the universe begging to express itself through you.

To be clear, we're not talking about something you want because you think it'll impress people or you've been told you should have it, etc. We're talking about something that MOVES you and stirs your soul! When you've got THAT flowin' through you, relax, know that it's something much (!) bigger than you that's itchin' for expression. AND, know that you wouldn't have that desire in the first place if you also didn't have the mojo to bring it to life. Emerson and Goethe say the same thing:

Emerson: *"There's nothing capricious in nature, and the implanting of a desire indicates that its gratification is in the constitution of the creature that feels it."* (Translation: Nature doesn't play around!!! If you can dream it, you can achieve it! :)

Goethe: *"Desire is the presentiment of our inner abilities, and the forerunner of our ultimate accomplishments."*

"Freedom is not the absence of commitments, but the ability to choose—and commit myself to—what is best for me."

"We wouldn't worry nearly as much about what others thought of us if we recognize how seldom they do."

"Join with those who sing songs, tell stories, enjoy life ... because happiness is contagious. Join those who walk with their heads high even when they have tears in their eyes. Avoid those who ... have never shed a tear."

All of the above are from
Warrior of the Light

So... What do you *really* want?!? And... What are you waiting for?!? :)

THE FEAR OF SUFFERING

"Tell your heart that the fear of suffering is worse than the suffering itself. And that no heart has ever suffered when it goes in search of its dreams, because every second of the search is a second's encounter with God and with eternity." ~ The Alchemist to the young Shepherd, Santiago, in *The Alchemist*

Are you afraid of something? Tell your heart that "the fear of suffering is worse than the suffering itself."

And KNOW that the FEAR of suffering is *way* worse than any potential challenges you may face! As Montaigne says, "My life has been full of terrible misfortunes most of which never happened."

This also reminds me of Russell Simmons' wisdom from his great book *Do You!* (see Notes). He says: "The pain that's created by avoiding hard work is actually much worse than any pain created from the actual work itself. Because if you don't begin to work on those ideas that God has blessed you with, they will become stagnant inside of you and eventually begin to eat away at you. You might seem OK on the outside, but inside you will be ill from not getting those ideas out of your heart and into the world. Stalling leads to sickness. But taking steps, even baby steps, always leads to success."

WHAT MAKES A DREAM IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE?

"There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure."
~from *The Alchemist*

That makes it pretty simple, eh? Are you afraid of failure? Know that it's the only thing standing in your way. So...

clears throat

ahem

What would you do if you weren't afraid?!?

THE EXTRAORDINARY: IT'S YOUR BIRTHRIGHT

"I learned the most important lesson of my life: that the extraordinary is not the birthright of a chosen and privileged few, but of all people, even the humblest. That is my one certainty: we are all the manifestation of the divinity of God." ~ from *Paulo Coelho: Confessions of a Pilgrim*

It's so easy to look at those people we admire and think it was *their* destiny to experience the extraordinary. Coelho's constant reminder throughout his beautiful books is to look within and KNOW that we *all* have the extraordinary within us. The key to bringing it to life? Having the courage to follow the dreams of our heart.

This Idea also reminds me of one of my favorite thoughts from Walt Whitman: "In the faces of men and women I see God."

What do YOU see when you look in the faces of others (starting with that beautiful face in the mirror?!? :) Try making it a game, seeing the amazing potential and genius and divinity within all those faces you see today!!!

WARRIOR OF THE LIGHT

"Every Warrior of the Light has felt afraid of going into battle.
Every Warrior of the Light has, at some time in the past, lied or betrayed someone.
Every Warrior of the Light has trodden a path that was not his."

"Each stone, each bend
cries welcome to him.
He identifies with the
mountains and the streams,
he sees something of his
own soul in the plants and
the animals and the birds of
the field."

"Then, accepting the help of
God and of God's signs, he
allows his personal legend
to guide him toward the
tasks that life has reserved
for him."

"On some nights, he has
nowhere to sleep, on others
he suffers from insomnia.
'That's just how it is,'
thinks the warrior. 'I was
the one who chose to walk
this path.'"

"In these words lies all his
power. He chose the path
along which he is walking
and so has no complaints"

All of the above are from
Warrior of the Light

Every Warrior of the Light has suffered for the most trivial of reasons.

Every Warrior of the Light has, at least once, believed he was not a Warrior of the Light.

Every Warrior of the Light has failed in his spiritual duties.

Every Warrior of the Light has said 'yes' when he wanted to say 'no.'

Every Warrior of the Light has hurt someone he loved.

That is why he is a Warrior of the Light, because he has been through all this and yet has never lost hope of being better than he is." ~ from *Warrior of the Light*

Coelho's book, *Warrior of the Light: A Manual*, serves as a companion guide to his enormously popular book, *The Alchemist*. And it definitely lives up to its advertisement that "Every short passage invites us to live out our dreams, to embrace the uncertainty of life, and to rise to our own unique destiny."

Here's to the Warrior of the Light within each of us!

IF YOU'RE GOING TO FALL...

"A fall from the third floor hurts as much as a fall from the hundredth. If I have to fall, may it be from a high place." ~ from *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*

Why be afraid of heights? If you're going to fall, might as well be from a high place, eh? So... Climb! :)

BARE YOUR SCARS LIKE MEDALS

"I don't regret the painful times; I bare my scars as if they were medals." ~ from *The Zahir*

Love that.

What do you do with your painful times? Do you bare your scars like they're medals?!

Gives me a big smile and makes me think of Joseph Campbell who says: "Nietzsche was the one who did the job for me. At a certain moment in his life, the idea came to him of what he called 'the love of your fate.' Whatever your fate is, whatever the hell happens, you say, 'This is what I need.' It may look like a wreck, but go at it as though it were an opportunity, a challenge. If you bring love to that moment—not discouragement—you will find the strength is there. Any disaster that you can survive is an improvement in your character, your stature, and your life. What a privilege! This is when the spontaneity of your own nature will have a chance to flow. Then, when looking back at your life, you will see that the moments which seemed to be great failures followed by wreckage were the incidents that shaped the life you have now. You'll see that this is really true. Nothing can happen to you that is not positive. Even though it looks and feels at the moment like a negative crisis, it is not. The crisis throws you back, and when you are required to exhibit strength, it comes."

And, Tony Robbins says something along the lines of: "Five years from now you're gonna laugh at whatever's stressing you out now, so why wait?!?" :)

So: What's stressing you out?

What scars do you try to hide?

Let's change our perspective and bare our scars like medals!!! (Starting now!! :)

STATUTES FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

"Only the following items should be considered to be grave faults: not respecting another's rights; allowing oneself to be paralyzed by fear; feeling guilty; believing that one does not deserve the good or ill that happens in one's life; being a coward." ~ from *Like the Flowing River: "Statutes for the New Millennium"*

"Warriors of the light are not perfect. Their beauty lies in accepting this fact and still desiring to grow and to learn"

"He chooses the path along which he is walking and so has no complaints."

"The warrior of the light has a destiny to fulfill."

"He tries to show each person how much they are capable of achieving."

All of the above are from
Warrior of the Light

That's part of the 12th Statute from Coelho's 15 "Statutes for the New Millennium." (From his collection of mini-essays in his GREAT (!!!) little book *Like the Flowing River*.)

How're you doing with those?

I'm going to assume we're all respecting another's rights. What about the other grave faults?!?

- **allowing oneself to be paralyzed by fear:** Eek! Being paralyzed by fear is a grave fault?!? Yep. Love that. So, how're you doing with your fears? How 'bout this gem from Rollo May's brilliant book *The Courage to Create* (see Notes):

"What is courage? This courage will not be the opposite of despair. We shall often be faced with despair, as indeed every sensitive person has been during the last several decades in this country. Hence Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and Camus and Sartre have proclaimed that courage is not the absence of despair; it is, rather, the capacity to move ahead in spite of despair."

It's NOT about never having fear/despair/etc. It's about never being *paralyzed* by the fear!! So, what're you afraid of right now? Whaddya think about just taking the next step forward? :)

- **feeling guilty:** Well isn't that a fun one?!? One of the practices I have right now as part of my re-wiring routine, is to notice and remove all the little things I do like criticizing (myself and others), blaming, complaining, gossiping and feeling guilt/shame. Guilt is a big one. Start noticing when it crops up and politely thank it for its presence and then let it know that you've forgiven yourself and have moved on. :)

And, you might want to try a mantra I got from Louise Hay: *"I love and accept myself completely."* We've *all* done things that we're not proud of. No need to exacerbate the problem by feeling BAD about it. Let's just recognize the mis-step and aim to improve ourselves in the next moment and go back to the adventure of being fully alive!

- **believing that one does not deserve the good or ill that happens in one's life:** This would qualify you as a victim/someone who puts control outside yourself. Don't wanna do that.

Paulo and psychologists will both tell us that we want to have *"an internal locus of control"* such that we don't blame other people or circumstances for our successes or failures.

So, if you find yourself complaining about a bad economy or bad childhood or bad boss or teacher or whatever, know you're at risk of creating a "grave fault" and take your power back. :)

- **being a coward:** Closely tied to allowing ourselves to be paralyzed by fear, eh? :)

LIFE IS LIKE A GREAT BICYCLE RACE

"Life is like a great bicycle race, whose aim is to fulfil our personal legend, which, according to the ancient alchemists, is our true mission on earth... As we pedal to our goal, we must make a point of asking ourselves: 'What is beautiful about today?'" ~ from Like the Flowing River: "Alone on the Road"

So, we're pedaling away on the great bicycle race of following our bliss that is our life. Sweet.

(First: are you on that race? Or are you watching it on TV? Get on your bike and fulfil your personal legend, yo!)

And, as we pedal away, let's remember to stop and ask ourselves, *"What is beautiful about today?!"* (A little Balinese lizard cruised by right as I typed that. Love it when the Universe

"...in all the woods and forests, God did not create a single leaf the same as any other... People go against nature because they lack the courage to be different."

"I don't know what to do. I only know that it's taken me years to understand that life was pushing me in a direction I didn't want to go in."

"You're someone who's different, but who wants to be the same as everyone else. And that, in my view, is a serious illness."

"An awareness of death encourages us to live more intensely."

"A miracle happened: another day of life."

All of the above are from
Warrior of the Light

provides immediate answers to our questions. :)

So, how about you?!?

What is beautiful about today? How about some journal time?!? :)

These things are beautiful today: _____

Nice. :)

THE ART OF TRYING

"As long as it doesn't harm anyone, change your opinions now and then and be unashamedly contradictory." ~ from *Like the Flowing River: 'The Art of Trying'*

That's part of a great essay on the power of getting out of our routines/ruts.

Reminds me of Ralph Waldo Emerson who said that foolish consistency is the hobgoblin (love that word) of small minds.

Ah, what the heck. Here's the full passage from his brilliant essay *Self-Reliance* (which we have for free (PDF + MP3) in the members' section):

"A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said today. - 'Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood.'—Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood."

That's genius.

Know that if you can't change your opinion you might as well just stare at your shadow on the wall. Speak what you think today with conviction and speak what you think tomorrow with conviction! Even if it contradicts everything you said today!

If peeps give you trouble just smile and refer them to Coelho and Emerson and Whitman who says: "Do I contradict myself? Very well, then, I contradict myself. I am vast. I have multitudes!")

90% THERE = HALF-WAY THERE

"To avoid falling into treacherous traps, it is best to consider that you have covered half your journey only when you have walked ninety percent of the road." ~ from *Like the Flowing River: The Third Passion*

Big smile.

You 90% to your destination?

Sweet.

To avoid falling into treacherous traps, consider yourself half-way there! :)

Why?

"If only everyone could know and live with their inner craziness... people would be fairer and happier."

"When everyone dreams but only a few realize their dreams, that makes cowards of us all."

"The danger of an adventure is worth a thousand days of ease and comfort."

All of the above are from
Warrior of the Light

One reason is because when we think we're almost "there" we tend to let up a little and get a little feistier than normal if something derails us because now we're attached to arriving at a specific time. If we think we're only half-way there we're much more likely to address a little blip in the road as part of the process and go back to enjoying the whole thing as we blissfully take one step after another after another after another...

This idea also reminds me of George Leonard's brilliant wisdom from his great book *Mastery* (see Notes). (Leonard, btw, is one of the world's leading authorities on Aikido. An art he STARTED practicing at age 40-something.)

He talks about the practices of a master and says: "For a master, the rewards gained along the way are fine, but they are not the main reason for the journey. Ultimately, the master and the master's path are one. And if the traveler is fortunate—that is, if the path is complex and profound enough—the destination is two miles farther away for every mile he or she travels."

Imagine that! To love our journey so much that for every mile we travel we hope our destination is two miles FURTHER away. Too cool.)

RUN GOD'S RISKS!

"Live. If you live, God will live with you. If you refuse to run his risks, he'll retreat to that distant heaven and be merely a subject for philosophical speculation. Everyone knows this, but no one takes the first step, perhaps for fear of being called insane." ~ from *Veronika Decides to Die*

Time to get out of philosophical speculation and take the first step, eh?

Let's invite God to play with us and LIVE!!!! :)

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

If you liked this Note, you'll probably like...

**A Joseph Campbell
Companion**

The Power of Myth

Mastery

**The Monk Who Sold His
Ferrari**

The Courage to Create

The Magic of Thinking Big

About the Author:

PAULO COELHO



The Brazilian author Paulo Coelho was born in 1947 in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Before dedicating his life completely to literature, he worked as theatre director and actor, lyricist and journalist. He is one of the best-selling and most influential authors in the world. *The Alchemist*, *The Pilgrimage*, *The Valkyries*, *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*, *The Fifth Mountain*, *Veronika Decides to Die*, *Eleven Minutes*, *The Zahir*, and others have sold more than 100 million copies in 150 countries and have been translated into 60 languages. Visit him online at PauloCoelho.com.

About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson is a lover of wisdom (aka a "Philosopher") and a passionate student of life who's committed to inspiring and empowering millions of people to live their greatest lives as he studies, embodies and shares the universal truths of optimal living. He hates his job.