

GETTING A SENSE FOR THE BIG PICTURE



In the Norse myths, Allfather Odin, King of the Gods, sacrificed his eye in exchange for a drink of the spring of wisdom. We could interpret this to mean that to have wisdom, one must keep one eye on the big picture. Yet how do we get a sense of the big picture, when everything changes, each day different, and if anybody were to pin us down and demand us answer the question, “Where will you be in ten years from now?” we could only laugh and say “Only God knows that.” Jobs become added and eliminated daily. Businesses fold, businesses merge, and meanwhile, we might take any manner of promotion that will end us with another company, perhaps in another state, in another life, somewhere else. Keeping an eye on where your next opportunity can be **found**, is the best way to stay in the game. How can we hope to have a life trajectory in this sort of world? What helps is reading about the lives of those we admire. Get your hands on some biographies, and not only of unlikely people, like a saint or a war hero, whose life little resembles yours, but read about some successful lives that are a lot like yours. Let these people be your immediate heroes. By reading the lives of people who are like you, and successful, you will be at first surprised that they often struggled some of the same struggles as you, not just the grand heroic gestures of being unemployed for such and such a time, but even the petty stuff, the stupid little things in life that just chafe you and manage to discourage you. By seeing a “life” lined out in a book, we can get a grasp at the big picture, we get a sense of what it is all about, and we can start seeing our lives in terms of its decade by decade course. Instead of simply “retiring and catching up on fun times,” we can see our career, our series of careers, as a building of challenges, as something that is going somewhere, and like a great orchestral event, which comes to a conclusion, and leaves us in our golden years with something to be proud of. Having that wise eye, that eye on the big picture, is worth investing some free time in reading biographies, and also in setting up some interviews, informal things, with coworkers who you admire. Hear them out, listen to their story, ask wise questions. Remembering all those good lessons of **networking etiquette**, you might find that successful coworkers are itching to explain how they overcome their obstacles. You will be surprised to find they are not made of a different substance than you, but are like you in intimate ways. This can only work to encourage you to improve your own striving of life, to keep trying your best, and to strive upwards in all you do. Sometimes it is but **small differences** that differentiate the winners from the mediocre.