

How should I spend my 20s in this time between worlds?

For me, the question of how I should spend my 20s has a lot to do with the time and collective context I am living in. That is why I start my contemplation with looking at the collective level.

We live in a time between worlds¹. In a time between worlds the old world is unraveling while the new world has not yet emerged. We live in a period of transition, a period of in-between. In this period of in-between worlds, crises are natural phenomena as most systems and behaviors of the old world stop functioning and it is not yet clear what the new systems and ways of living will look like.

We see this crisis in the burning of the rainforest, species extinction and global warming. We see this crisis as global politics fails in tackling climate change, dealing with a virus and finding ways to live in peace.

We see this crisis in social and economic injustice and the collapse of social systems and economic systems.

While the old world is unravelling more and more, radical change is ahead. In the next decades we will witness Artificial Intelligence and new technology transforming life on Earth in a way we cannot yet imagine. It is also likely that global warming will lead to billions of people dying because of lack of water and food.

What I think is important for young people to understand is that they and all other beings on Earth are directly and strongly impacted by this state of in-between-worlds and the meta-crisis. It is the ecosystem we live in. It is what we smell and taste every day. It is the flavor of the air we are breathing.

Now, times of in-between worlds and crises in themselves are neither good or bad but a natural part of evolution. There have been lots of human crises before. But none like this.

What makes this crisis different is the responsibility of us humans in overcoming it. Never in history had humanity as much impact on the ecosystem as today. Never in history did humans have such an important part to play in planetary evolution as it is the case now². Never in history were humans choosing if the Earth will be inhabitable for future generations.

This responsibility can be a gift, if we humans find a mature enough way to deal with it.

Which is why, from my perspective as an educator, I see our current crisis as a crisis of human maturation. **We are not mature enough, yet, to deal with our evolutionary responsibility** of willing the transition from an Industrial Growth Society to a Life Sustaining Society³.

That is my perception of the collective context you and I live in.

¹ Stein, Zak: Education in a time between worlds. 2019.

² Hubbard, Barbara Marx: Conscious Evolution. 2015.; Berry, Thomas: The Great Work. 2000.

³ Macy, Joanna: Coming back to life. 2014.

Keeping this context in mind, I now want to dig deeper into the individual dimension. How should I spend my 20s in this time between worlds?

Firstly, I want to stress the importance of the 20s. My and your 20s are a defining decade because we are setting the course for our personal lives, current life on Earth and the lives of future generations!

In my perception the intensity of my individual identity crisis and identity crises of other young people is an expression of the collective human identity crisis and the ecological crisis of Planet Earth. It is not an individual fault but a truth that we do not know who we are, where our place is and where we need to be going!

And as I think of the collective crisis as a crisis of human development, **I think that what we young people need to focus on in our 20s is individual maturity.**

I view diving into my individual identity crisis as the most important task in my 20s. Activism in my 20s I view as a crucial part of my maturation, as service learning. But I need to face my individual crisis first before I can effectively contribute. I found that diving into my individual identity crisis lets me come out on the other side having found my place and unique obligation to fulfill in our collective crisis. I think that we can only overcome this crisis by maturing first and then contributing as mature adults and elders.

What does the path of diving into one's individual identity crisis look like? The best way of describing the individual identity crisis I have gone through is as a „descent to the underworld“⁴. It is confusing and dangerous. It certainly is not something you can do on a sunny weekend but a dark, year-long, destabilizing and often lonely struggle.

In the current education systems, most of us are not taught how to overcome our individual identity crises. Because of this we need to take this challenge into our own hands and find internal and external resources that can support us in this process.

Here is a brief overview over what this means for you and me on an individual level:

An incomplete list of habits and thought patterns of the old world to let go of:

- thinking that others can tell you what you should do with your life
- competing with others about who is the better or more intelligent person
- thinking that you will have arrived when you have a well-paid job and a family
- looking for magic pills or tricks that will make everything easy
- focusing too much on finding a job, thinking that a secure job will make you feel safe and give you your place in the world
- Living for ideals of the old world like money, fame, and personal comfort
- Thinking older people are wiser than you just because of their age or position
- Thinking that your time in school partying and watching Netflix was the best time and thinking that maturing and becoming an adult makes life boring and empty

⁴ Plotkin, Bill: The journey of soul-initiation. 2021.

An incomplete list of what to focus on in your 20s:

- Take your maturation into your own hands and actively (!) engage in self-education! Actively look for resources for your maturation. Ask for support and have the courage to go to this workshop or text this person you are inspired by.
- Make self-discovery⁵ the priority of your 20s. Focus on learning, wandering, exploring, healing, and finding your place in the world.
- Find and cultivate your inner voice.
- Have a holistic set of regular practices for your own maturation, something like an Integral Life Practice⁶.
- Be a rebel, view your activism as service learning and be smart about it. Direct your energy, time, and anger at the right things. The Effective Altruism movement⁷ may be able to help you with this.
- Get financially self-reliant and accustomed to a lifestyle of voluntary simplicity.
- Find a conscious way to deal with the Social Dilemma⁸. Make sure to not waste your defining decade with spending much of your time on social media.
- Contemplate what it means for you to live a good life in this time between worlds.
- Contemplate what it means for you to be a mature adult.

I assume that it is crucial in overcoming the crisis that enough young people follow through on these points I listed. As the crisis we are in is first and foremost a crisis of human maturation, there is no way around individual and collective maturation in overcoming it!

We are choosing the future⁹ of Planet Earth by how we spend our 20s. By the clothes we buy, the food we eat and the way we treat each other. By what we think, feel, read, and watch. By how long we shower, how many children we have and how ecologically costly we live. We have a planetary responsibility for the current Earth community and potential future generations of life on Earth.

I think that for most young people this responsibility is the meaning they are longing for. I think that taking on this responsibility is the evolutionary task of our generation. What could be more important? What could give you more meaning? What could make you feel more alive?

I am calling out for a tender, self-determined revolution of intentional maturation!
Let us make authentic maturity valued and cool!

I am in the process of writing a book for 20-y-olds giving an overview over developmental tasks and helpful techniques and concepts.
Help me to write the truest book I can write by giving feedback to this essay.
You can contact me at lennart.tjarks.blog@gmail.com.
My website: lennartjarks.me

⁵ With self-discovery I mean the „descent to the underworld“ I mentioned earlier, not travelling a year in Thailand and having fun.

⁶ Wilber, Ken; Patten, Terry: Integral Life Practice. 2008.

⁷ Effective Altruism: effectivealtruism.org

⁸ Netflix-documentary: The Social Dilemma. 2020.

⁹ Elgin, Duane: Choosing Earth. 2022.