

# The Druckerian Method



*Towards a Self-Managed Education for the Next Economy*

### *Author's Note*

This essay has attempted to answer questions about *education*, the *self*, and the *economy*. Divided into three parts—*Dialogos*, *Diagramas*, and *Discourses*—it alludes to Galileo Galilei's famous books, in which he outlined his ideas about the model of the known universe. As an homage to Da Vinci, I have made the illustrations herein myself. For Socrates, I have centered the entirety of this essay on his timeless axiom '*Know Thyself*' because I understand the advantages of doing so. I am also aware of how dangerous it can be to urge young people to think for themselves. But, no matter what happens, I believe that if I am ever served the *hemlock*,<sup>1</sup> then this endeavor will have succeeded.

*A Young Polymath,*  
*May 4, 2024*

*Book I*

*Dialogos*



*Thesis: The Turbulence*

*"To find yourself, think for yourself." - Socrates*

Consider the application letter below:

April 1, 2024

*Dear Hiring Manager,*

*I am excited to apply for the Junior Software Engineer Internship at Billerpoint. As a passionate student, I am eager to contribute my skills and innovative thinking to your dynamic team. Although I have not formally worked in the industry, I have immersed myself in various programming projects and collaborative coding experiences.*

*Through my coursework, I have honed my skills in Java, Python, and JavaScript, and have developed a keen understanding of software development life cycles, algorithms, and data structures. My most recent project involved creating a web application for managing personal finances, where I led a team of three to design, develop, and deploy the application. What sets me apart is my unyielding curiosity and drive to continuously learn and adapt.*

*I thrive in fast-paced environments and am not afraid to tackle complex problems with creative solutions. My passion for fintech, coupled with my technical proficiency, makes me a strong fit for this role. Joining Billerpoint would be a pivotal step in my career, and I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to learn from your esteemed team. I am confident that my background will allow me to contribute effectively to your innovative projects.*

*Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the possibility of contributing to Billerpoint's mission.*

*Sincerely,*

Apollo, my younger brother, used GPT-4o<sup>2</sup> to generate over a dozen of these because he was trying to apply for an internship at Billerpoint, a fintech startup in Nigeria. Billerpoint received over 1,400 applications and published on their blog that most of the cover letters were identical. Apollo, now 19, feels anxious. Not because he is pitting against thousands of machine-assisted youth who have the same skill sets and qualifications as he does, but because for the first time in history, almost anyone has access to a combination of many high level skills for as little as \$20. Like many others, Apollo does not know how to make his own work stand out. I had encouraged Apollo to start coding at 16. And yet, Devin AI, an autonomous software engineer released by Cognitive Labs earlier this year,<sup>3</sup> is threatening to displace junior developers like Apollo, who could have secured a \$100k remote job right out of bootcamp.

## **The Allocation Economy—The Coin Tail**

With math and verbal skills fully commoditized, the trend suggests we are moving from a knowledge economy (where you are valued for what you know) to an *allocation economy* (where you are valued for your ability to redistribute intelligence resources). *In the allocation economy*, the argument continues, *individuals will become 'model managers' automating and delegating tasks with intelligent models*. Thus, the 'power-users' of GPT-4 would win by default.

The trouble with this prediction, however, is that every economy has always harbored an *allocation economy* for the top 1% of individuals, institutions and corporations. If everyone becomes an *allocator* under a free market, the top 1% of players would, by extension, *not be allocators*. To stand out would require that a manager would have to think beyond mere *allocation* of resources, and beyond distributing replicable knowledge. This is because it is the very nature of knowledge that it changes fast and that today's certainties will be tomorrow's absurdities (Drucker, 1993). In this case, the ubiquitous use of *intelligent models* would have a second order effect—another side to the same coin. Once found, a knowledge worker becomes a top 1% player.

So, what is this other side?

## **The Non-Replicable Economy—The Coin Head**

Increasingly, the true investment in the knowledge society is not in machines and tools, but in the knowledge of the knowledge worker (Drucker, 1994). By definition, the focus is on what the knowledge worker 'knows' rather than tools she uses. A focus on tools translates a manager into a mere laborer. Drucker, again: 'The critical feature of a knowledge workforce is that its workers are not labor, they are capital (Drucker, 2002).

In a system full of replicable information, the knowledge worker must find the sort of knowledge no other player has or can have. The reason for this is that aspects of the future are tilted towards uniqueness and authenticity of personal abilities, which would be highly valued.



The concept of the knowledge worker as capital could be likened to fingerprints, which are unique to each individual, while the knowledge worker as labor could be ascribed to faces. Unlike the nature of a face which can have a doppelgänger (a perfect and sometimes an even better replica of itself), the fingerprint is non-replicable.<sup>4</sup>

As automation and artificial intelligence (AI) take over more standardized tasks, non-replicable personal qualities will become our greatest assets, and the next education will have to employ mechanisms that amplify unique human traits that nurture creativity as educational imperatives in a technologically-driven world.

Here is a table comparing past economies with the non-replicable economy:

Economic Type	Definition	Value Proposition	Primary Economic Drivers	Impact on Workers	Challenges
Creative Economy	Based on creative industries and production of creative goods and services.	Encourages innovation and cultural development.	Creativity, innovation, cultural capital. <small>excited 😄</small>	Opportunities for self-expression and innovation.	Sustainability of creative work and fair compensation.
Knowledge Economy	Driven by the quantity, quality, and accessibility of information.	Emphasizes the value of knowledge and expertise.	Information, expertise, intellectual capital.	High-skilled job opportunities and intellectual growth.	Equitable access to information and preventing knowledge monopolies. <small>satisfied 😊</small>
Gig Economy	Characterized by short-term, flexible jobs facilitated by digital platforms. <small>😓 interested, hesitant</small>	Provides flexibility and autonomy for workers.	Flexibility, digital platforms, short-term contracts.	Flexibility but often lacks job security and benefits.	Job insecurity, lack of benefits, income volatility.
Sharing Economy	Focuses on shared access to goods and services via peer-to-peer networks.	Maximizes resource utilization and reduces costs.	Resource sharing, peer-to-peer networks, collaborative consumption.	Earn from underutilized assets but may lack stability. <small>frustrated 😡</small>	Regulation, trust issues, potential overuse of shared resources.
Non-Replicable Economy	Values uniqueness and authenticity of personal abilities. <small>curious, excited 😄</small>	Prioritizes unique human traits and irreplicable skills.	Unique human abilities, creativity, emotional intelligence.	Emphasizes individual uniqueness and personalized career paths.	Ensuring recognition and fair compensation for unique skills.

So, what kind of education will be required to prepare for the non-replicable economy?

## *Book II*

### *Diagramas*



#### *Antithesis: The Method*

*"To know thyself is the beginning of wisdom." - Socrates*



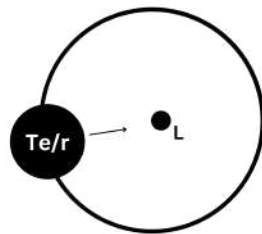
## The Druckerian Method

Peter Drucker introduced his core belief about educating managers, describing it as a liberal art. He stated that management is “liberal” because it encompasses (a) *knowledge*, (b) *self-knowledge*, (c) *leadership*, and (d) *wisdom*, and an “art” because it involves *practice* and *application*. His theory about management as a liberal art (MLA) is what I have expanded and proposed to be *The Druckerian Method* of education.

### **Knowledge**

As a civilization, we have excelled at using *education* to transmit knowledge across generations. However, while all our individual learning contributes to the collective education, not all our education leads to individual learning. Since learning and teaching will be more deeply affected by the new availability of information than any other area of human life, we need a new concept of information and a new understanding of learning and teaching (Drucker, 1969).

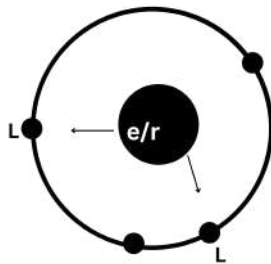
Consider that the Copernican Geocentric Model illustrated here explains the often-praised traditional pedagogy, wherein the sun (teachers, knowledge and resources) revolves around the earth (the learner). In this learner-focused pedagogy, tutors guide learners by providing and explaining resources.



This approach, common in most education systems, often produces conventional thinking, which in itself isn't necessarily bad. The downside, however, is that students under this system receive the same, bespoke information about what to think, but only a few learn how to think critically or use the information personally and effectively.

L ← T ← e/r

Conversely, the Galilean Heliocentric Model, where planets (learners) revolve around the sun (knowledge and resources) emphasizes an experience-focused approach. In this model, learners engage directly with experiences and resources, constructing personal meanings for themselves—by themselves. Sometimes, teachers also serve as resources from which learners extract knowledge:



Here, the learner orbits experiences, extracts knowledge and constructs meaning from the resources by means of first hand interaction and interpretation. Sometimes, the teacher is often the resource himself, and the learner extracts from him:

L ← Te/r

I term this experience-focused approach a *self-managed* education because it emphasizes a direct negotiation, conversation, and construction of personally relevant meaning from experience (Thomas and Harri-Augstein, 1985). A *self-managed* education makes individuals uniquely able to:

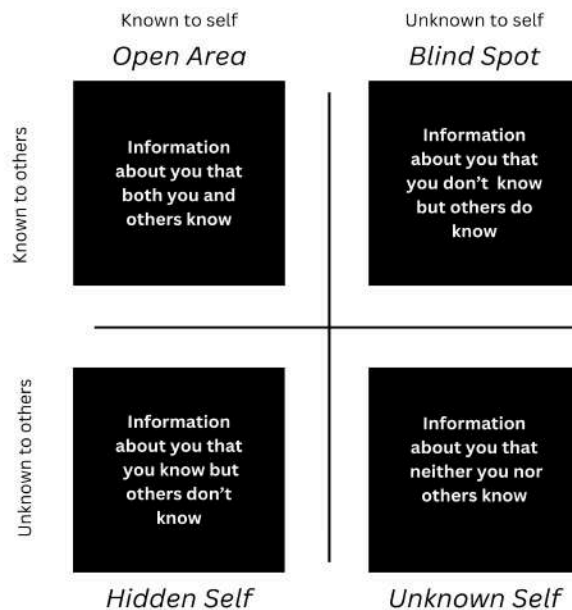
- A. Identify cognitive, practical and emotional needs;
- B. Define purpose more clearly, and;
- C. Achieve them more effectively.

As Claxton (2008) stated, “In a complicated, fast-changing world, the intelligent path is to let go of being a Knower and embrace being a Learner.” A *self-managed* education equips the knowledge worker with the key skills to learn to ask the right questions, exercise good judgment, take decisive action, and develop great taste. This is because *taste is the new skill!*

### **Self-Knowledge**

To develop taste, each person must strive for a greater contextual awareness, an aspect of systems thinking that helps to understand the world around us. From birth, we begin to construct personal realities, develop new patterns of thought and feelings, validate them, adapt, and experience cycles of growth and rebirth. This continuous cycle is the essence of learning, the cornerstone of *self-knowledge*, which could be approached through four quadrants:

1. Open Area (known to self and others);
2. Blind Spot (known to others but not self);
3. Hidden Area (known to self but not others);
4. Unknown Self (unknown to both)



By expanding parts of ourselves that others know more than we do and receiving feedback on them, the knowledge worker could learn to recognize areas for growth. The viability of *self-knowledge* will be dependent on how well an individual synthesizes her experiences—current, past and present—to identify, define and achieve purpose effectively. The persistent question then is this: what tools will enable us to translate experience meaningfully?

*Book III*

*Discourses*



*Synthesis: The Human Touch*  
*"Do thine own work, and know thy soul." - Plato*

## *Memory*

In 1996, my father, Mufasa, started 'Palmy', a drinks business that bridged the gap between the local palm wine tappers in Akpabuyo and the urban Marina areas of Cross River State. He innovated by adding sweet, peppery, sour, and smoky flavors into his drinks. These flavors were his trade secrets and they came from local vendors in remote villages of Odukpani and Akamkpa. Mufasa exported Palmy to all five southeastern states in Nigeria but never patented his recipes. Coincidentally, In 1999, Smirnoff, an European company founded in 1864, introduced a new drink called 'Smirnoff Ice,' which had the same remarkably sweet, peppery, sour, and smoky flavors like 'Palmy' and shared the same unique sap-like color. By 2006, Smirnoff Ice entered the Nigerian market and quickly displaced my father's business.<sup>5</sup> As an eight year old child, I watched my father struggle under the weight of the competition. One afternoon, we went to Akpabuyo to get raw palm wine. Usually, Mufasa would fill several trucks with 12 barrels of 70 liters of palm wine each. But on that day, Mufasa instead negotiated for 100 barrels of 10 liters each at the same price.

## *Imagination*

When I started to import tricycles from India in late 2022, I discovered that a 40ft container could hold 16 fully assembled tricycles. However, I imagined that disintegrating item size could increase space for more goods. If I could import tricycles in parts, I thought, then I could arrange for two or three TVS technicians to be sent in from India to train locals who would assemble them in Nigeria. I would be importing more goods for much less cost of space. I found out that the same 40ft container length could now hold up to 25 tricycles if imported in parts because smaller goods are better fitted into nooks! This was arithmetics, my father's trident. It was what Mufasa had done sixteen years ago to save his business. 12 barrels of 70 liters of palm wine each totalled 840 gallons, but 100 barrels of 10 liters each totalled 1,000 gallons, and Mufasa had negotiated the latter at the same price of the former! Mufasa minimized costs by reducing item size. I thought arithmetics was the only tool I needed, but I quickly realized that *arithmetics* isn't the only tool in the tool box!

## *Leadership*

In the past, people of lower social classes were educated in practical skills such as growing wheat, herding sheep, and riding horses. Only those who were owned as property and used like

machines were expected to do a single task for their entire lives. Higher classes, however, needed to engage with their environment and perform a variety of tasks to thrive. A lady or gentleman or even a free person from the lower classes was not merely a laborer but someone capable of acting in their own interests and adapting to different tasks throughout his life.

A well-rounded education historically included skills with a primary focus on developing a person as an independent, free-thinking individual capable of leading himself. Rooted in the seven liberal arts of classical antiquity from Athens' prestigious schools (5th to 4th century BC), this education encompassed arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy, grammar, logic, and rhetoric. The subjects aimed to teach critical thinking rather than preparing for a specific trade.

In contrast, modern schools were designed to train clerks and factory workers, equipping them with specific job skills. As Drucker (1999) observed, "Schools everywhere are organized on the assumption that there is only one right way to learn and that it is the same way for everybody."

To prepare individuals for true freedom, their ability to learn and adapt is more important than the specific skills they might need in twenty years. The modern equivalent of the seven liberal arts might include:

- I. Logic: deriving truth from facts
- II. Statistics: understanding data implications
- III. Rhetoric: persuading, negotiating, and convincing
- IV. Research: gathering information on unknown subjects
- V. Practical Psychology: understanding others' true motives
- VI. Investment: managing and growing assets
- VII. Agency: making decisions and taking proactive action

These skills are rarely taught in schools, even in liberal arts colleges, which focus on subjects like algebra, mitochondria, and literary symbolism in Steinbeck's books where a little boy owns a dog and the dog dies. Traditionally, liberal arts are aimed at developing individuals to know how to *think* (logic and arithmetic), *talk* (rhetoric and persuasion), and *act* (agency and research), thereby equipping them with an adaptable mindset to think independently and navigate an unpredictable future, rather than merely worrying about which career skills might be replaced by AI.

## **Wisdom—Conscious Capitalism**

With the components of the MLA, individuals could synthesize the influence of their environments on themselves. This contextual awareness can be seen in the rise of conscious capitalism, where businesses operate ethically and consider all stakeholders, including employees, humanity, and the environment, while pursuing profits. As Aristotle said, “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.” Conscious capitalism emphasizes ethical conduct and holistic well-being. For example, to prevent container accidents, I ensure that the long vehicles conveying my company’s containers from Apapa Wharf in Lagos to my warehouse in the East are properly strapped with container belts and chains, a practice I adopted after seeing the mother of a young girl cry uncontrollably on BBC in 2018 when an accident involving an unstrapped container took her daughter’s life. As Drucker argued, managers should focus on people, understand human nature, address moral and emotional well-being, and encourage community and purpose. Is there any evidence of the potency of the Druckerian method?

## **Final Reflections: Apollo’s Rhetoric**

*“A man's mind, once stretched by a new idea, can never go back to its original dimensions.”*  
- Leonardo Da Vinci

I have tried to educate Apollo using this method because he is symbolic of the next generation and all its perplexities. I tell him that now is the time to cultivate his mind to function within advanced frameworks of reasoning—“Do not edit LLM templates,” I tell him. “Put your fingerprint in your cover letter; become a non-replicable entity.” I do not know if I have succeeded. However, on the 1st of May, 2024, Apollo called to tell me he was selected for the internship at Billerpoint. I asked him, “what did you tell them, what did you write?” He forwarded me an email containing his cover letter.

Dear managers, consider Apollo’s rhetoric:

*April 26, 2024*

*Hello Hiring Team,*



*In junior secondary school, our integrated science teacher walked into our class, placed an empty bottle on the desk, held up a glass of water and walked back. He then asked, “Who can put this water inside that bottle without going to the bottle?”*

*No one answered. He then said, “Anyone who can put the water inside that bottle without going there would rule the world. Everyone wants to save time. If you can create value by saving time, the world will be your oyster.” Ever since then, going from integrated science to software engineering, I have tried to answer that question, every waking day.*

*I am not particularly interested in ruling the world, although that would be an exciting venture. But I have seen and felt Billerpoint’s ethos in relation to product speed and customer relations, as well as its endeavors in market share competition.*

*Once a customer signs up and makes an order, your POS issuance only takes hours, unlike the competition which takes days or even weeks to deliver. I am aware that speed is a characteristic of high innovation, and if Billerpoint wants to rule the world by being the fastest, I want to be part of the developers writing the software.*

*It has been my lifelong dream to speed up processes, which I have translated into software optimization and quicker API calls via a backend specialization. This is why I want to be at Billerpoint and nowhere else.*

*Thank you so much for your understanding.*

*Warm regards,  
Apollo*

If it were up to you, would you have selected Apollo?

*Drucker, again: “When the history of our time will be written from a long-term perspective, it is likely that the most important event historians will see is not technology, not the Internet, not e-commerce. It is an unprecedented change in the human condition. For the first time – literally – substantial and rapidly growing numbers of people will have choices. For the first time, they will have to manage themselves.”*

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Hemlock is a highly poisonous plant that has been historically used for executions and suicides. The most famous case is the death of the Greek philosopher Socrates, who was sentenced to die by drinking a concoction containing hemlock. This method of execution was chosen because the poison causes paralysis and eventually death by asphyxiation. See U.S. National Library of Medicine. (n.d.). Conium maculatum (hemlock) poisoning. In MedlinePlus. Retrieved from <https://medlineplus.gov/toxicsubstances/coniummaculatum.html>

<sup>2</sup> GPT-4o is one of the best large language models, and arguably the most sophisticated piece of artificially intelligent software out there.

<sup>3</sup> See: Jose, B. (2024, March 15). Meet Devin AI, the world's 'first fully autonomous' AI software engineer. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved March 18, 2024, from [<https://www.indianexpress.com/article/technology/meet-devin-ai-the-worlds-first-fully-autonomous-ai-software-engineer-7812361/>](<https://www.indianexpress.com/article/technology/meet-devin-ai-the-worlds-first-fully-autonomous-ai-software-engineer-7812361/>)

<sup>4</sup> The likelihood of two people sharing identical fingerprints by chance is estimated to be less than one in 64 billion. Based on those odds, researchers have calculated that it would take more than a million years for two people with identical fingerprints to appear by chance in Scotland Yard's fingerprint database. For further details, see <https://www.sciencefocus.com/the-human-body/why-do-identical-twins-have-different-fingerprints-2#:~:text=The%20likelihood%20of%20two%20people,in%20Scotland%20Yard's%20fingerprint%20database.>

<sup>5</sup> My father wasn't perturbed because he believed Sminorff's semblance with his own products was a rare coincidence. My father also believed in 'Corporate Probity'—a moral compass orientation in business which states that as long as the market is free without unfair competition, let the person with the best talent or the product or the best engineering win. It was one of the first lessons I learnt from Mufasa, and I plan to focus on it for my MBA thesis.

**Appendix A (Random un-belted containers)**

*Note: un-belted containers pose a lot of risk to smaller vehicles.*



## Appendix B (Strapped/Belted Containers)

*Note: There are two ways to strap containers: use belts to cross them over or chain them, strapped to the long vehicle.*

