

IV.  
THE CASE *FOR*  
BIG THINKING  
(OR THE CASE *AGAINST*  
SMALL THINKING)

*Consumer warning:* These next few pages may seem negative. But there's a reason. Even if we know we want to think big, we still may be having trouble. So what? Does it really matter if we keep thinking small? What are my dreams to the world? It matters.

**Your dreams matter to the world.**

Thinking small is no longer an alternative. Fatalistic thinking has never worked. It's killing us—our society, our environment, our dreams. I think we need to deal with it. We live in the world. We need to understand it. More—our world needs us. Sometimes thinking big means facing up to some harsh realities, like the cost of thinking small. Here goes. Let's start with a few reminders. It might not be pretty.

Throughout history, small thoughts have stood in opposition to big thoughts. The church reviled Galileo. The earth is flat, right? Darwin was disbelieved in his time. We couldn't possibly be descended from apes, could we? Slave owners fought to the death to prevent abolition. Men did not let women vote. Jazz was deemed illicit. Someone tried to kill the electric car. Books (and sometimes even the publishers' offices) continue to be burned. Writers are incarcerated. We are poisoning

our environment, but no one wants to take personal responsibility for their treatment of our planet and so we keep on guzzling gas, consuming stuff, stuff, and more stuff and piling up trash. Endless wars are waged because no wants to let go of their hatred and moral posturing long enough to enable peace.

Albert Einstein once said, “Great spirits have always found violent opposition from mediocrities. The latter cannot understand it when a man does not thoughtlessly submit to hereditary prejudices, but honestly and courageously uses his intelligence and fulfills the duty to express the results of his thought in clear form.”

## THINKING SMALL VERSUS THINKING BIG

People dominated by their small thoughts and those who are thinking big struggle against one another: the fully self-expressed artists versus those in self-imposed I-can't-be/do boxes; the bold entrepreneurs versus those who dare not dream; the blissfully happy lovers versus those who deny their vulnerability and thus their capacity to love; those who live large versus those who live in ministorage; the adventurers eager to explore

new territory, new ideas, and new ways of being versus those set in their ways, whether by rigidity or timidity; those who choose abundance versus those who choose scarcity; those who do today what they could do tomorrow versus those who plan to plan; those who seek answers versus those who think they have all the answers; those who say “we” versus those who say “them,” thereby creating a separation between *me* and *others* makes *we* exclusive instead of inclusive.

We are in crisis. We live in a time when the individual and the corporation have merged almost seamlessly. We can hardly distinguish what any individual thinks versus what we are told to think by corporations, by the media, and by the government, all of whom want to control us, whether it is to dictate what we buy or what we believe. Small thinking.

**We will not be controlled.**

In this age of abundance, gluttonous excess even, when the world is flatter every day, more economically networked, and globalized to the nth degree, hostility toward big thinkers’ spiritual, emotional, and intellectual beliefs is at an all-time high. Monopoly-controlled

print, broadcast, and streaming media; consumerism; fundamentalism and other religious extremism—all of these place power in the hands of people thinking too, too small, meaning dogmatic teachers, self-interested politicians, profit-at-all-costs businesses, self-appointed gurus, and others whose interests neglect the well-being of the largest portions of society, often including their own interests. *Including their own interests*—try to imagine—it defies reason. Why would people act with intent against their own interests? Yet we do. Freud had a theory about it—the *death drive*, which he thought was an innate, biological resistance that people have against bettering themselves. He's been proved wrong before. We'll prove him wrong again.

## THINKING SMALL

The power base in our country is dominated by small thinking, and those in control strive to build and perpetuate a domestic and international culture of more and more sedated citizens (*read* me and you). They want us to think small so that we will willingly act against our own interests and the interests of our children and generations to come. Why else would the poor

be getting poorer and the rich richer? Why else would the environment be going to the dogs and war be slipping into the indefinite state of being?

The sheer volume and extraordinary decibel level of small thinking can drown out the best-intentioned entrepreneurial fervor, creative enthusiasm, racial harmony, environmental conservation, political progress, and true human values in the icy water of egotistical, self-interested, hypercommercial calculation.

**We will not be drowned out.**

Our small thinking society has resolved personal worth into a solely transactional value: “The Donald Trump Pseudo-Big Way.” *How much do you make? What things do you own? Who have you conquered along the way?* The small thinking path to success is littered with the carcasses of others who have been stepped on and over.

For the record, Mr. Trump: Thinking big never belongs in the same sentence as kicking ass. Never. Thinking big is not now and never will be the same thing as taking advantage of others (i.e., kicking ass). Trump is hardly the only one. Enron’s higher-ups seemed to be thinking big, but then it turned out they were just really good at taking advantage of other people, at least for a while. I’m

sure you can think of other even more recent examples. You will never see big thinkers winning at someone else's expense or taking more than their fair share. (Should *any* CEOs make more than 30,000 times what one of their employees makes?)

In place of the internationally chartered civil, political, social, and economic rights and freedoms, which incidentally also coincide with just about every secular and nonsecular moral code, small thinking has set up a single, unconscionable unfreedom—*fate*, propagating and perpetuating the idea that you can't change your present or your future, that everything is preordained, and no one cares, anyway, as long as there's lots of *stuff*. Note, too, that not everyone is as glutted with stuff as we are here in the West. Yet we seem to forget our luck in our pursuit of more, more, more.

**Think:** **“why not me?”** **instead of “Why me?”**

My friend Jeremy was a supersuccessful hedge fund manager. He once said to me, “I figured there was all this money out there, why shouldn't I pick some of it up?” That's thinking big, saying, “Why not me?” instead of “Why me?” And Jeremy did pick up

quite a bit of the money out there. Jeremy would never say that money wasn't important, nor would I. He likes his *stuff*. I do, too. But that's not the same thing as valuing stuff above all else; and that's not the same thing as being sedated by our stuff. For Jeremy, money was a tool, not the end goal. And there came a point when Jeremy realized that just making money was not fulfilling, so he thought even bigger. He stepped off the money train, the stuff-accumulation train, to live his life in a whole new way. Now he's an organic cattle farmer and happy as pig in . . . you know what. He spends time with his family. He spends time outdoors. And he can dream up new philanthropic ways to give back. Nothing about Jeremy's life was preordained, and he didn't let stuff lull him into small thinking. Too many give in to what they think is their fate, soothed by their relative economic comfort into thinking it's all they can have or deserve.

If right now you're thinking, "It's easy for him to think big, he's rich," stop. Number one—he didn't make money by accident. He did it because he was thinking big. I've said this book is not about making money, and it's not. There are so many other things that we might value as an end goal. But if making money is

your end goal, then one of the surest ways to get there is by thinking big. Number two—far too many who do make money are not thinking big and don't give back. Those who do, like Jeremy, are proof, if it were needed, that making money does not necessarily corrupt big thinking.

Universal aspirations have been replaced by universal illusions. Truth, and the search for all but the most facile, meaningless meaning, has been replaced by the desire for ease and comfort and permission not to think for oneself. How has this happened? Why do we allow it? The ways in which big thinking is suppressed are many, and everyone who thinks big has encountered a host of barricades and disincentives to thinking big.

Here are five of the most pernicious, insidious small thoughts that keep us from thinking big and maintain the illusion that small thinking is right thinking.

- (1) The small idea that what we've received from our past determines what's in store for our future
- (2) The small idea that who we are and what we have today is not enough (will never be enough) and is shameful
- (3) The small idea that winning requires a loser

- (4) The small idea that we can expect of our future nothing more than the most diminished, pessimistic, negative, hopeless version of reality to come
- (5) The small idea that being *realistic* or *practical* means settling for less

No one is free from small thoughts and their subversive nature. Small thoughts subversively strip away the fire of imagination, the generosity of the collaborative spirit, and the halo of every dream. Small thoughts convert the mother, the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the scientist, and the politician from people striving to the highest personal standard into interchangeable pod people for whom being like everyone else is the most important thing.

When we think small, we abuse our natural desire for (and inherent right to) abundance. Corporations were once thought to be benevolent patrons of commerce and society at large. If that quaint notion were ever true, which many now doubt, that sentimental veil has most certainly been torn away. Brutal displays of corporate greed are matched only by our small thinking passivity. Corporate, religious, government, and media promises of the Garden of Eden are received and believed without

question with the most slothful intellectual, political, physical, and emotional indolence imaginable.

Sure, sometimes small thoughts disguise old wine in new bottles. Everyone loves shiny things; I certainly do, but that's no guarantee of anything except shininess (not to mention that shiny things become dull over time). Small thinking perpetuates the past and encourages the false notion that we can never rid ourselves of any of the excess baggage we carry from the past, our long-held prejudices and opinions.

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**It is never too late to ABANDON our PREJUDICES, to rethink, to THINK deeply again, again, and again about the world and what is RIGHT.**  
.....

Small thinking has exploited the flat world, the virtually interconnected world, and globalization to give character and significance to the consumption of mind-numbing, irrelevant, low-vibration pop culture in every country and to the creation of a disposable society of throwaway goods, throwaway people, and throwaway dreams.

The least glimmer of a distant hope or dream sinks into the sludge of small thinking. Maybe I will go for that

walk today. Maybe I won't eat at McDonald's today. On second thought, it is a lot easier to take a pill for my health than to worry about self-discipline.

Where once small thoughts were private and self-sufficient, they were also, of course, self-destructive; as our interconnectedness increases, and we now connect in every direction, a universal interdependence has been created, and small thoughts are propagated farther and wider and deeper. We become the instruments of our own small thoughts, and the larger community of people thinking small likewise propagates a kind of wiki-small-thinking process of assimilation and groupthink. Even when we are capable of big thinking in the right environment (and almost all of us are), instead we let ourselves be crushed under the contagious weight of small thinking.

New big thoughts, habits, and creative concepts are becoming more and more impossible; and through the increasing number of small thinking, international, national, and local media distribution channels, a small thinking, anti-intellectual world literature, world philosophy, and world economy is developing—*a world anesthesia*.

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The cheap price of small thoughts—the ease with which they can be swallowed whole, no muss, no fuss, no work, no effort—breaks down the obstinate resistance of our bold, big thoughts. We are struggling to hang onto our goals, ideas, ideals, and dreams. Small thoughts make it too easy to capitulate and too difficult to resist. Small thinking prevents new ideas from flourishing, stops true innovations, and discourages direct and intentional actions toward our dreams. Small thinking compels us, on pain of extinction (because who wants to be the only big thinker—a weirdo, a freak?), to adopt the small thinking mode of existence. So-called progress in our society is big thoughts making way for small thoughts.

Small thinking creates a world after its own image, a world of ever-smaller thinkers, safe only after all its drones are hooked forever on the mutual life support system of small thoughts.

We worship greed and self-centeredness. The extreme disparity of wealth, of access to opportunity, goes largely unnoticed. When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, people were galvanized by the breadth of the tragedy, but New Orleans, and in particular the Ninth Ward, was already in crisis—a crisis of poverty, of lack of

social services, of lack of the basic necessities that most Americans expect as routine. Why weren't people galvanized by that prior crisis? Because they didn't know it existed. Because they didn't believe it could exist in their country.

We have been sleeping through our lives. We have been lulled into thinking everything is okay. Consequently, when we want to think bigger, we lose our motivation and drive. To achieve even the barest first step of any big thought requires almost more energy than it generates. Note that I said *almost*.

**The truth is that **big thinking** is always, always [always, always, always] **worth the expenditure of energy**.**

Yet the cost of small thinking has skyrocketed. With small thinking, we cannot grow—intellectually, spiritually, creatively, emotionally, financially. And when we cannot grow, society cannot grow. It cannot advance. It cannot develop. Small thinking is an ultimately autodestructive path. The cost of small thoughts will increase geometrically until it exceeds society's ability to pay.

What's more—the modern small thought support system (television, glossy magazines with surreal photos of the *perfect* life, political and corporate indecency, religious extremism, etc.) only increases the speed and effectiveness of the spread of small thoughts.

We become slaves to small thoughts. We live in the thrall of the new big brother. We are the puppets of the gremlin on our shoulder, telling us what we can't do, can't strive for, can't even dream. Instead, we are fed the message that the accumulation of wealth and possessions is the only true end, and the more the message is absorbed, the more it sinks into the marrow of our being, the pettier, the more hateful, and the more embittering it is.

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The only reward of **SMALL THINKING** will be paid in the common  
currency of all small thinking—**UNACCOMPLISHED DREAMS.**  
.....

What have we become?

No growth—spiritual, emotional, professional, or social—is possible in this kind of environment.

We are squandering the gifts of the universe.

## THINKING BIG

And yet . . . and yet . . . there is hope—think big. With and within those of us who are willing to think big lies the potential for growth, the wellspring of renewal. Growth springs from the broad, expansive, big thinking of a conscious mind and soul. Better still—there is no either-or about it. Even if we've been thinking small, we need not continue to do so. We can all think big. There is more than enough room in the world for everyone to grow.

We have within our grasp the potential for a society of fully self-expressed big thinking people. If only we will first face head-on the real condition of our life, our relationships, and our beliefs and own up to our complicity in perpetuating our own small thoughts and those of others. At the same time, to gain a foothold, airspace, eyeballs, and influence, we must establish actual and virtual connections between those of us who are thinking big everywhere around the world. Together we can, we will, and we must join, participate in, and lead the Think Big Revolution.

Become the kind of person who lives best when you express yourself and who accomplishes bigger and



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bigger goals by collaborating with others. Strive always toward full self-expression. Then you will be a catalyst for change. It's hard, very hard.

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**Remember this: Small thinking always says “No, no.” It's up to YOU and ME to say “YES, yes.”**  
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To think big is to embark on a path of development, a series of personal revolutions, an intellectual awakening, a process of opening up to the world around you, the exchange of ideas, and the flow of energy when people truly work together. At every step along the way you will experience your own political, social, moral, financial, ethical, and spiritual advancement and the advancement of others around you. Just as others who have thought big throughout history, you can and will play a revolutionary role in the development of your community, family, government, economy, and the institutions you are connected with.

Put an end to destructive, manipulative, parasitic, oppressive relationships. Cut loose the ties that pretend to bind people to their supposed superiors, to their gurus, to their politicians, to their religious advisers, and to their teachers; instead, build a new web of connections between



people based on collaboration, service, meaning, and, yes, even (and above all) love.

What will we face?

We are the first step in the Think Big Revolution. The first step in the struggle between big thoughts and small thoughts is the personal challenge each one of us will face.

There are stages in the development of most big thinking. Few of us are able to totally withstand the pressures of small thinking exerted on us in childhood and early adulthood. From the start, you have probably struggled against a barrage of small thoughts, consciously or unconsciously. Now make the struggle conscious.

Once conscious of your intent to think big, you will find the others like you—like me and this manifesto. It's like a secret handshake, only there's nothing hidden about it. The absolute hallmark of big thinking is its wide-open abundance. Collaborations between you and others will start happening, the beginning of a revolution. This in turn will spread to a broader community. We're out here—waiting for you to join us.

We're already consciously thinking big, working together to improve our lots and the lives of others. As the word

spreads, we will inevitably be drawn together. There is a gravitational pull among big thoughts that grows stronger as our numbers increase. As each collaborative effort bears fruit, it will inspire yet more.

As you band together with others who are thinking big, you will be faced with a similarly growing pressure of small thinking that threatens to deprive you of your inspiration and accomplishments.

**Small thoughts fear the future. Big thoughts are the future.**

What do you fear? What is your future?

Other people's small thoughts are not your enemy. Direct your struggle ever inward against your own small thoughts. Turn away from, tune out, and unplug the small thoughts that sneak in. All those *I-can't-I-don't* thoughts have no place. Set the tired dogma of those small thoughts ablaze with the kerosene strength of your curiosity and creativity. Restore openness with your passion. You will find that you are more and more in tune with others—and even, I'll go ahead and say it, with the universe.

Did you just think, "There he goes again"? A moment ago, in that last paragraph, I was almost embarrassed to write

about becoming more in tune with the universe. Why? Because it sounds hokey? Yes, but the *why* of my hesitation was because I struggle with small thoughts on a daily basis. That moment was one such moment. While I was writing the words, I thought that others (not me) would find it implausible and then I would be discredited. I thought I ought to be more cautious, hold back what I truly think to make it more palatable. In the end, I didn't. The words are there. The *I-can't-write-that* thought did not win out. No matter how big you think, you will likely continue to struggle (maybe even daily) not only against the small thoughts of others, but more important, against your own small thoughts. I haven't given up yet. Don't you give up. We're in this together. We don't have to agree on everything to do big things together or to stand side by side.

As with all revolutions, as the Think Big Revolution grows larger in numbers and we feel the weight of our big ideas gaining density, we will be galvanized. So, too, at first, will the small thinking masses, anxious to protect their numbed security.

Do not let your imagination fail. Nothing happens in an instant. There are no easy victories, only important ones. Stay the course. It could be years until we achieve the

ultimate goals we set out to achieve. Yet in the interim, nothing is lost. Every day that we live resolved to think bigger about who we are and what we offer the world is its own personal victory.

Daniel Dae Kim stretched his imagination. Here's the story of his personal victory: Dan and I attended the Graduate Acting Program at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts together and became good friends. He's a talented actor. But . . . he's an Asian-American man. So when we got out of school he was getting only the usual secondary roles that Asian men get—you know, the forensic doctor, the lab technician—never the sex symbol or the leading role. Sure, he did some cool theater, Off-Off-Broadway. But he's a bright guy. He had options. So he left acting and worked for a couple of years at a dot-com. He is a husband and father of two beautiful boys. That should have been the end of his acting career. The prevailing wisdom is that you can't come back to acting after an absence unless you were a big star before you left. The prevailing wisdom is that once you have a wife and family, your risk-taking days are over and you better just stay put in your pay-the-bills job. Well, Dan thought big. He decided that not only was he going back to acting, he was going to get

parts that were not typically given to Asian men. It was that determination and big thinking that enabled him to capture a leading role on the television show *LOST*. Now he's a star and a sex symbol, to boot. Not that being a sex symbol is important to Dan, but he's paving the way for future generations of Asian-American actors and changing the way Americans see Asian-American men. And that is important to him. The only thing holding you back from taking the risks you need to succeed at what you want is your own small thinking.

Not all of us want to be television stars. What we think big about is up to us. It's our personal revolution, remember? Maybe you bought a hybrid car. Maybe you marched for peace. Maybe you quit the job you hated, but you haven't found the one you love yet. Maybe you got the twenty-first rejection on a book you've written, but you still know it's a good book. What if J. K. Rowling, a struggling single mother, had given up? Maybe you haven't written the next *Harry Potter*, but maybe you have. You are not giving up. Even if your hybrid car seems like a drop in the bucket, your march fruitless, and your economic situation less secure than it once was, you will not give up and give in to the small thoughts trying hard to ride you into the ground.

Sometimes we will feel ourselves drawn into competition with others who are thinking big. That's natural. Unlike the entropy of small thinking, which competition forces to the lowest common denominator in a downward spiral, true big thinking transforms competition into cooperation, which only strengthens the overall results. Collaborating accomplishes so much more than the individual isolation of most competition.

In case you were wondering, that word *entropy* that I used just now is dictionary-defined as “measure of the degradation or disorganization of the universe.” It is too apt a term not to use. If small thinking = entropy, disorganization, and degradation, then big thinking = blossoming, growth, and love.

## THE REVOLUTION

Virtually all previous historical revolutionary movements were movements of minorities, or temporary coalitions of minorities who, once the early struggle was complete, turned on each other. The Think Big Revolution is a self-conscious, independent movement operating in the interest of the immense majority. In fact, even those individuals who, wedded to their small thinking ways,

may feel threatened by big thinking will soon find that they, too, will benefit.

**This is a one-way revolution. It gives to everyone and takes away from no one.**

This is not a revolt of *us* against *them*. In the end there will be no *them*, only *we*. This is each of us seizing the opportunity for self-empowerment. Sure, there may be some loss of power by those thinking small, but in the end, it will be clear that it was fear they lost, not power.

Until now, almost every form of society has been based on some version of the antagonism between powerful and powerless. Society cannot function properly in this condition of perpetual repression. No form of repressive existence is compatible with a big thinking society. True big thinking, like true democracy, is a society of equals, a level playing field the likes of which we've never seen before. The majority does not oppress a minority. Nor does a privileged minority disenfranchise a less privileged majority. Equal opportunity does not mean that everyone is identical, far from it. It does mean that each and every one of us has the freedom, responsibility, and capacity to think bigger about who we are and what we have to offer the world.



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As a founding principle, the Think Big Revolution requires the formation and augmentation of intellectual and spiritual capital.

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The condition for **INTELLECTUAL** capital is big thoughts. The condition for **SPIRITUAL** capital is love. The future of big thinking rests exclusively on the **COMBINATION** of both.  
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The advancement of and growth of intellectual capital through study and learning in action with others will replace the isolation of small thinking. This revolutionary combination will cut loose the very foundation on which the old-school small thoughts were generated and propagated. In place of small thoughts and small thinking, we will have big thoughts and big thinking, fully self-expressed, self-actualized, collaborative contributors to society, who know no limitations and no limits. After all, that's what love is, too.



