

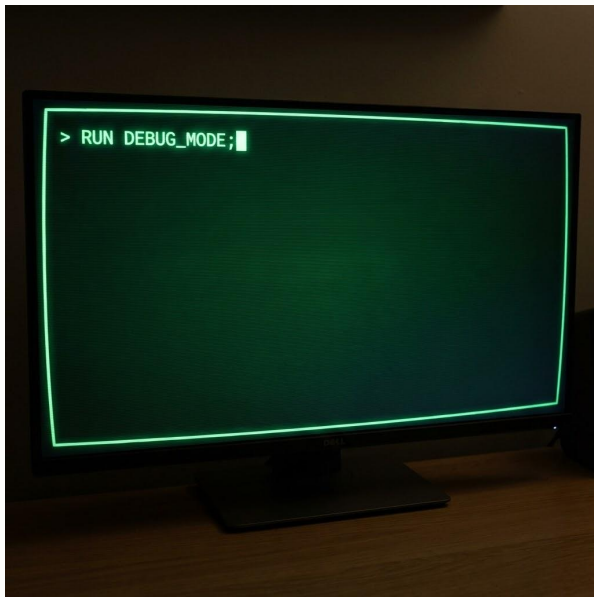
Why I Took 7 Months Off.

Decision Engineering Lessons From South America

Krzysztof Dudzik-Górnicki

17th December 2025

This is not a talk about vacations.



It's about debugging my life.



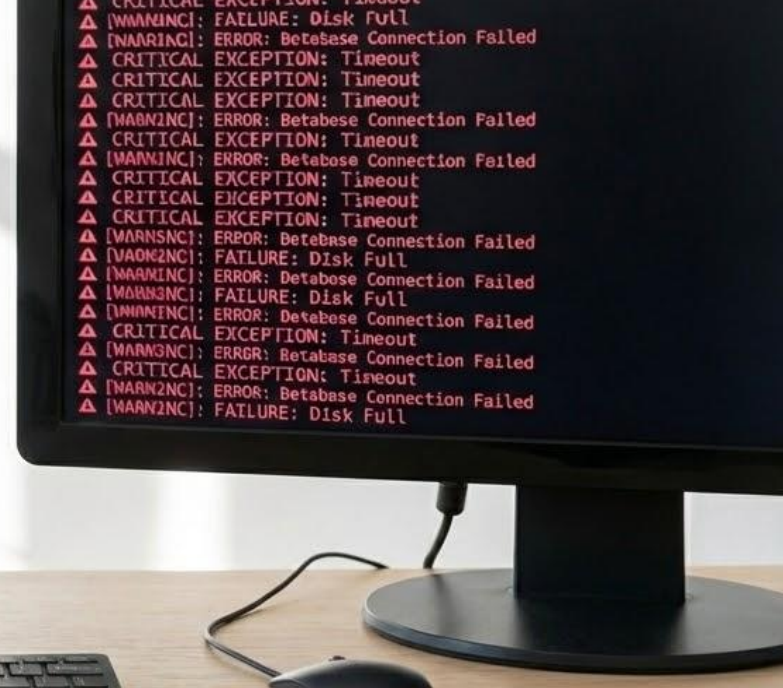
Act I: Leave.

Decision Models

Who am I?

- Career: 14 years
- 2 companies
- B2B SaaS
- Engineer → Director
- Many roles. Many teams.






✓ Dashboard metrics green
>> Title, salary
>> Performance reviews

⚠ Deep logs red
[ERR] Less joy
[ERR] Reorg fatigue

Model 1: Quitting Threshold (Cate Huston)



	1 May	1 Jun	1 Jul	1 Aug	1 Sep	
You're not learning (and you want to)	1	1	1	3	5	
Your job is bad for your confidence	2	3	4	5	5	
You feel...	2	3	4	4	4	
You...	2	2	3	2	1	
You...	1	2	2	2	3	
Score	8	10	14	16	18	Threshold = 17/25. I quit!

Model 2: Life Vision

(with my personal 6 areas)



Career and
Technology



I empower people through technology to create
real, positive change

Family

Growth

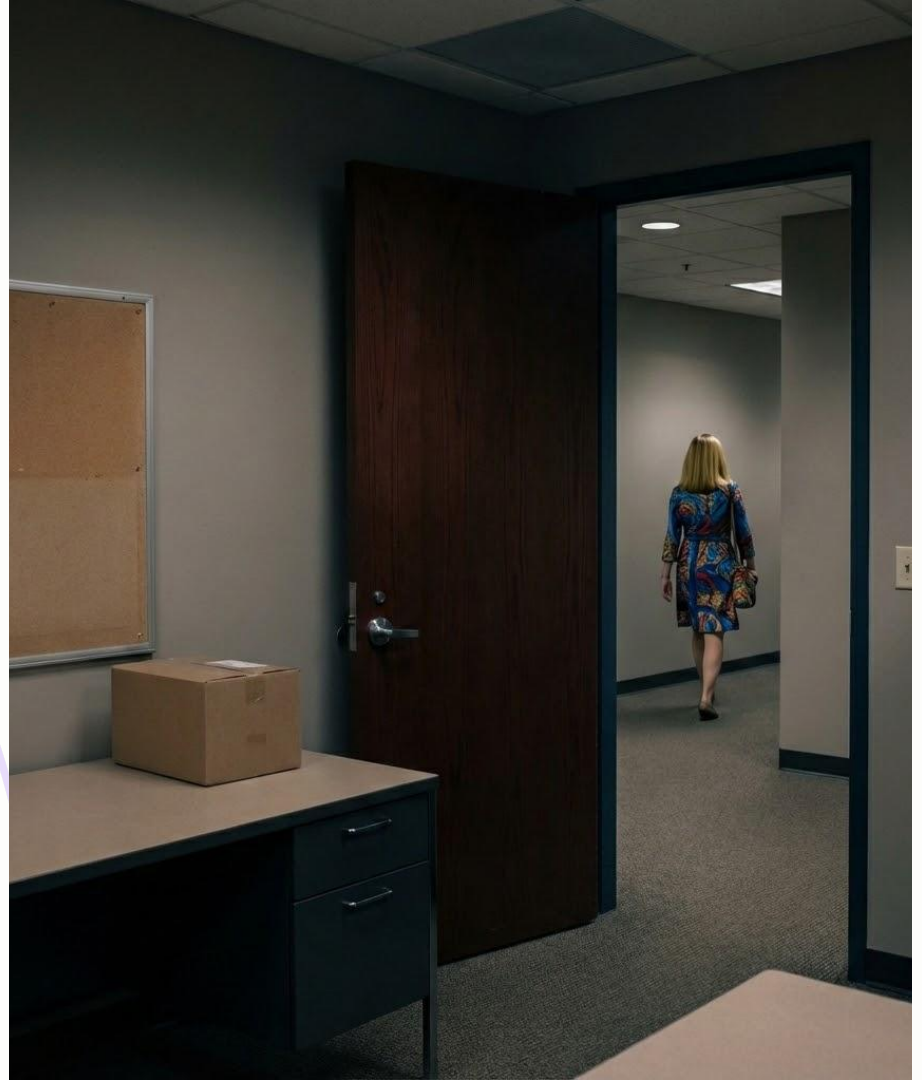
Health

World

Friends

The Catalyst:

My wife was laid off.
The decision became clearer.

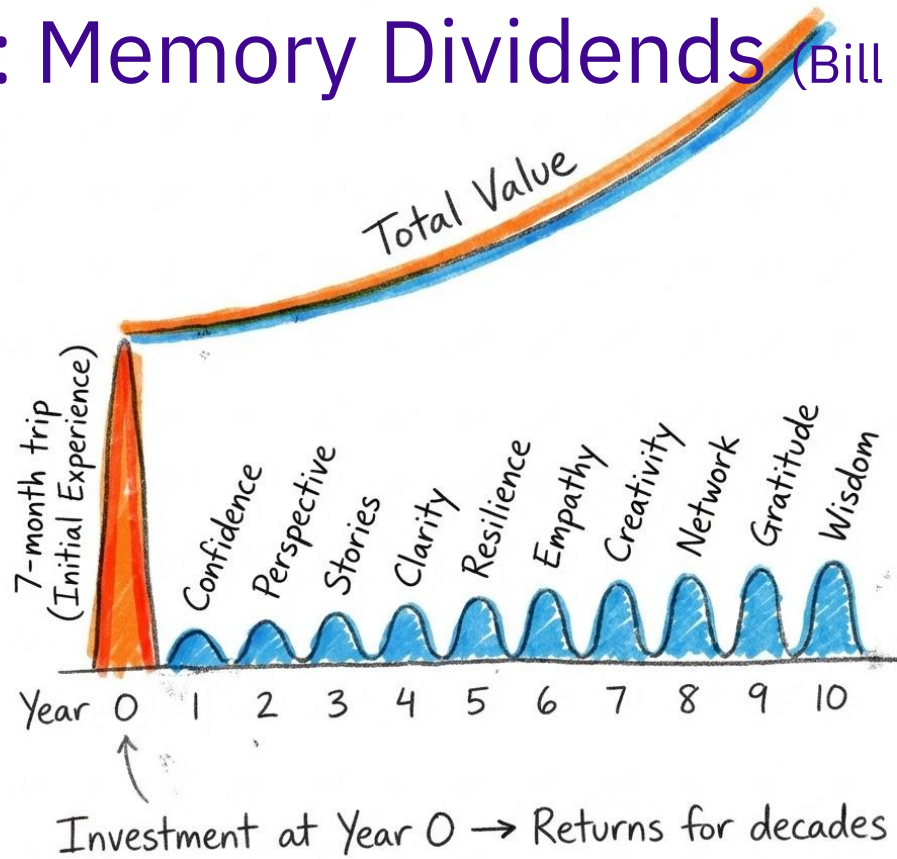


Model 3: The Optimization Window



From the outside: risky. From the inside: boringly rational

Model 3: Memory Dividends (Bill Perkins)



Use experiences when their future return (memory dividend) is highest



Works in theory. Let's test it.



Fitz Roy, Argentina



Atacama Desert, Chile



Quilotoa Lagoon, Ecuador



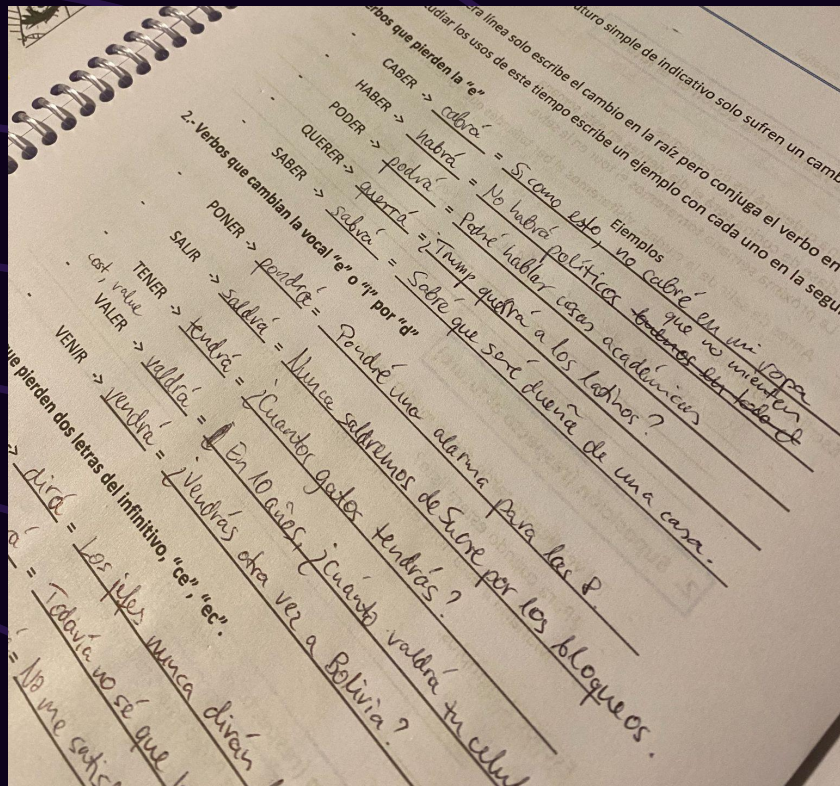
Act II: Learn.

Decision Heuristics

7 months
9 countries
5000 memories
5000 decisions?



Losing identity



Heuristic

Principles >

Job titles

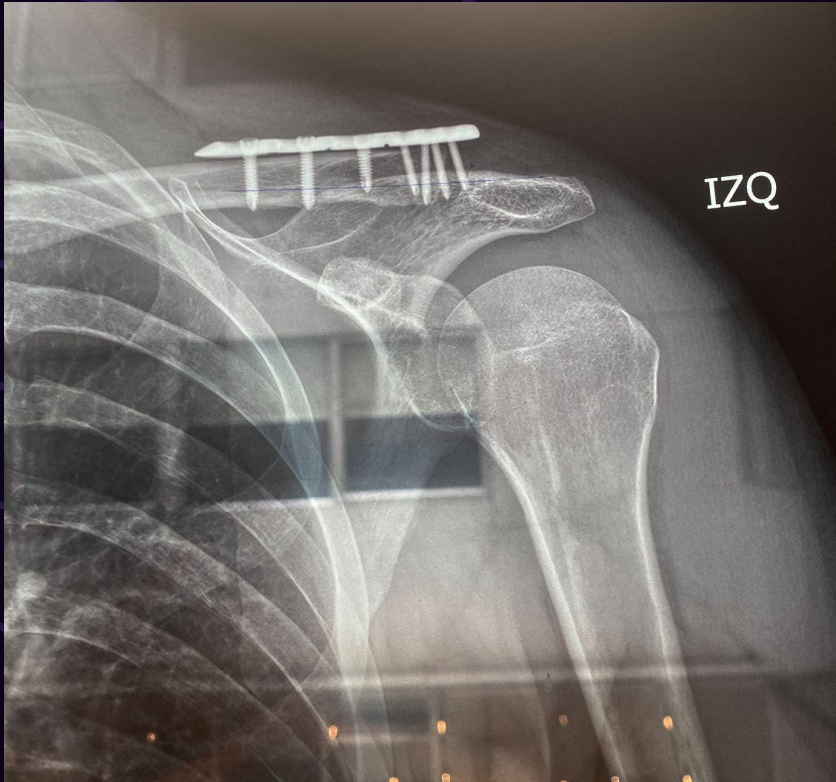
Losing urgency



Heuristic

Zoom-out lens >
Urgency bias

Losing control



Heuristic

Short decision loops >
Perfect plans



Heuristics are necessary. But insufficient.



Act III: Restart.

Decision Engine

Tech in Q4 \neq Tech in Q1

2025

AI

Noise



So I built a decision system for myself

Compathy

Your personal AI assistant for job search and career direction

Alex Chen

Companies

Opportunities

Profile

Search opportunities...

+ Add

Active

All

Alphabetical

Best fits first

Newest

Spotify

Senior Research Scientist - AI Alignment

Not started

83

Anthropic

ML Research Engineer

Not started

70

Spotify

Data Science Engineer - Recommendations

Not started

66

Stripe

Senior Machine Learning Engineer

Not started

63

Uber

Senior Data Science Engineer

Not started

60

Airalo

Data Scientist - Growth

Not started

54

← Back to opportunity

AI fit analysis

Recalculate

Fit score

70%

Data quality score

71%

You have a strong technical and mission alignment with Anthropic's ML Research Engineer role, but the academic research expectations (PhD, AI alignment publications) and missing salary/stability information create some uncertainty that you would need to clarify during the process.

Key insights

- You face a moderate risk of credential mismatch because the role explicitly requires a PhD while you currently show a Master's plus applied research experience, so you may need to demonstrate equivalent research depth.
- You are strongly aligned with Anthropic's mission and AI safety focus, matching your life vision to work on interpretable, trustworthy, and beneficial AI systems.
- You have substantial hands-on experience with deep learning, NLP (BERT/GPT), and large-scale ML systems, which maps well to the role's emphasis on large language model development and experimentation.
- The fully remote, flexible setup with a collaborative research

✓ Position fit

8

You match the ML Engineer seniority and have strong deep learning and NLP experience but lack the listed PhD and explicit AI alignment research record.

↗ Salary

5

You specify a detailed salary expectation but the job description only says competitive compensation with no concrete range or structure.

↗ Growth potential

9

You are offered research budget, conferences, publications, and work on transformative AI which indicates strong growth and learning opportunities.

? Role reality

9

You see a clearly scoped research engineer role focused on AI alignment and LLM development with concrete responsibilities and realistic expectations.

🏠 Location & logistics

10

🏢 Company culture

9

You prefer collaborative, autonomous research environments and the company is an AI safety-focused research lab which suggests strong cultural alignment though details are sparse.

★ Prestige

9

You are considering a well-known AI research company recognized as a leader in frontier AI and safety work for a high-impact research engineer role.

⌚ Work-life balance

8

You want flexible, remote work with autonomy and the role offers fully remote work with flexible hours but no explicit boundaries on workload.

🏢 Strategic fit

10

You prefer AI/ML and ethical AI industries and the company is an AI safety research lab with a clear mission on beneficial AI, but long-term strategy details are not fully specified.

⚠ Risk profile

5

Why do I fit?

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Location & logistics

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Risk profile

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You have a strong technical and mission alignment with Anthropic's ML Research Engineer role, research expectations (PhD, AI alignment), and missing salary/stability information that you would need to clarify during the interview.

Key insights

- You face a moderate risk of credential mismatch as the role explicitly requires a PhD while you currently have a Master's degree, plus applied research experience, so you may need to clarify the equivalent research depth.
- You are strongly aligned with Anthropic's mission and AI safety focus, matching your life vision to work on interpretable, trustworthy, and beneficial AI systems.
- You have substantial hands-on experience with deep learning, NLP (BERT/GPT), and large-scale ML systems, which maps well to the role's emphasis on large language model development and experimentation.
- The fully remote, flexible setup with a collaborative research environment aligns well with your preferences.

Where's the catch?

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the role's emphasis on large language model development and

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✓ The fully remote, flexible setup with a collaborative research

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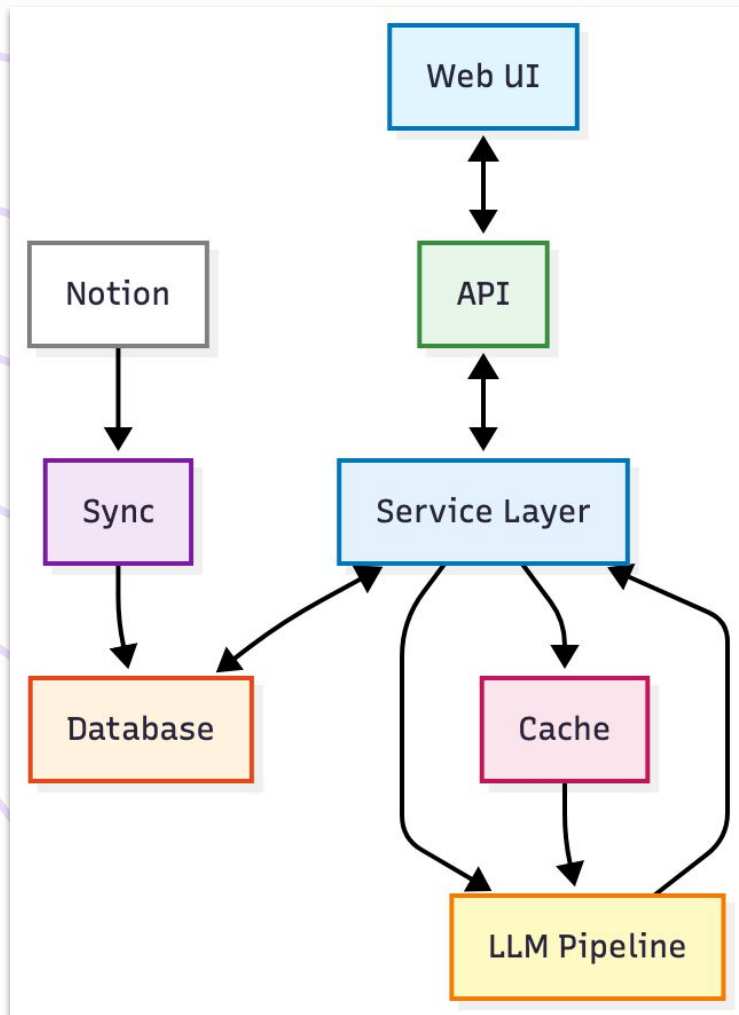
Publications and work on transformative AI which

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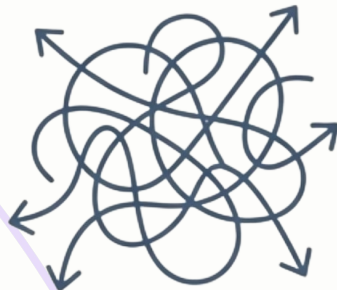
2024:
At least a quarter for a team

Q4 2025:
Two weeks for me & Cursor

This changed
how I

- search
- select
- think

BEFORE



- **100+ options, mostly noise**
- Emotional reactions
- Fear of missing out
- Could land anywhere

AFTER



- **8 positions with >70% fit**
- Data-backed
- Calm, deliberate, aligned
- Will land at the right place

Decision Engineering

Audit

Diagnose

Triage

Protect

Logs

Models

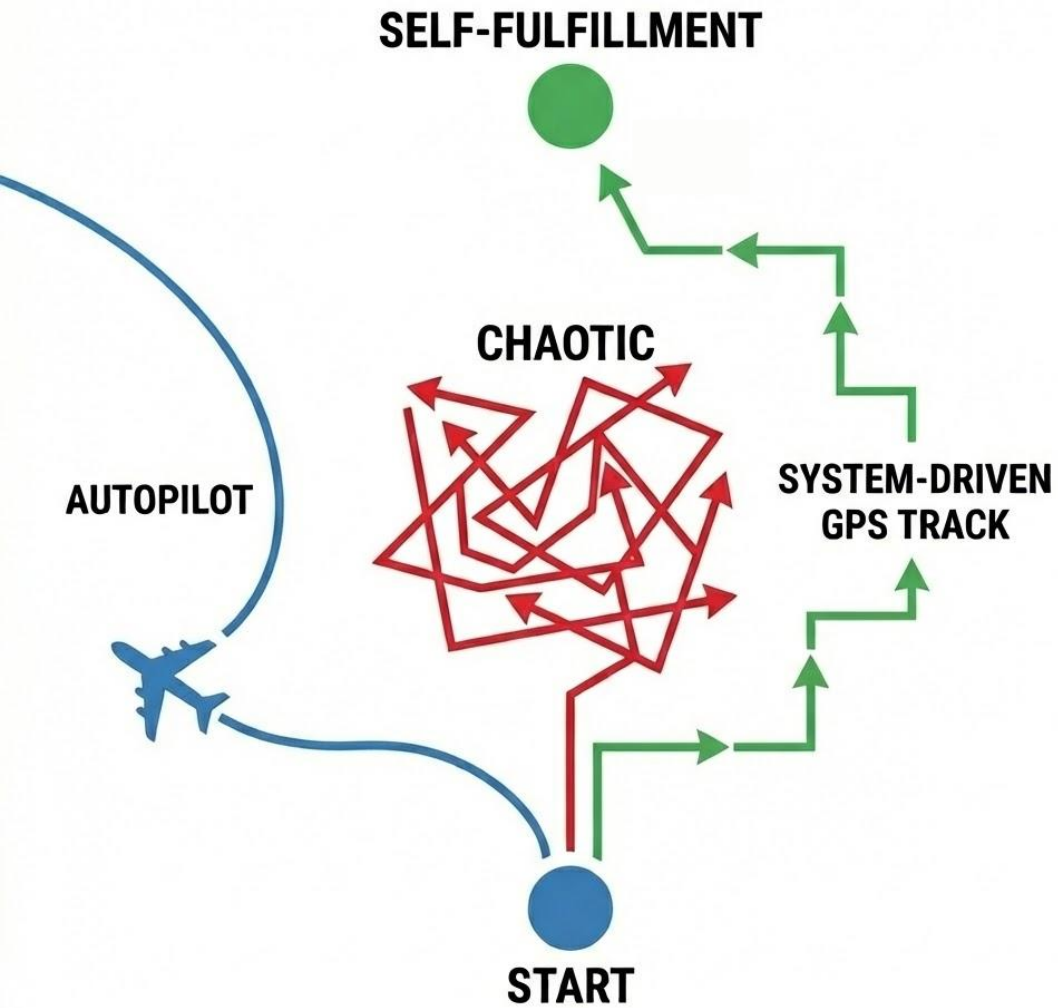
Heuristics

System

What's my Return on Investment?

Better decisions – everywhere, not just in the career.





Which road are you on?



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@k-dudzik-gornicki



<https://kdg.one>