

How does an individual develop, express, and maintain an independent frame of reference when nearly every modern information system any one person is tied to is trying to supply that frame for them?

How does any of us resist algorithms?

Those are two questions that sound a lot simpler than they actually are. **“Think for yourself”** is the easy SLOPfluencer answer, but everyone already thinks they think for themselves. Nobody wakes up in the morning, grabs their phone before taking a piss, scrolls through whatever the almighty algorithm decided they needed to see today and thinks, *“Alrighty then. Time to have my worldview programmed for the next twelve hours.”*

Yet, in one way or another, that is exactly what is happening.

Not because there is some evil rogue superAI sitting inside Meta, Google, TikTok or wherever it is plotting humanity's intellectual demise while petting a white cat. It doesn't need to be that complicated. The system only has to learn what holds our attention, what makes us react, what we click on, what we ignore and what keeps us staring at the screen. We provide the information voluntarily. The algorithm sorts it, ranks it, feeds it back to us and waits to see what we do next.

And around the wheel the Guinea pig goes.

Eventually, the much harder question becomes whether the information being placed in front of us is helping construct our worldview or whether our worldview is independently deciding what to do with the information being placed in front of us.

Those may sound like the same thing.

They aren't.

Those questions have three separate problems embedded inside them:

Develop.

Express.

Maintain.

How do you **develop** an independent frame when someone or something else is constantly supplying the raw material? How do you **express** that frame when the systems responsible for distributing it couldn't give two shits and a fuck whether what you're saying has intellectual value if nobody clicks on it? And assuming you somehow manage both, how do you **maintain** that independence without eventually crawling into another comfortable little tribe, echo chamber, ideology or counterculture that simply supplies a different frame for you?

That's where this gets interesting.

Because resisting an algorithm isn't really about defeating computer code. It's about figuring out how much of **you** is still making the decisions.

DEVELOP – Where does your frame of reference actually come from?

Another way to ask this is: How do we construct our own worldview when most of the information we use to construct it has already been selected, ranked, framed, filtered and repeatedly shoved down our throats before we even get a chance to think about it?

Modern information systems increasingly substitute **exposure for experience**. Something appears repeatedly enough over time, so naturally it starts to feel important. That might happen relatively quickly, or the curve could be so long and gradual that none of us ever notice there is a repeating pattern underneath it at all. It just becomes part of the background noise. **Noise pretending to be signal**. Something posted to the almighty algorithm receives enormous engagement, so we assume it must be **“breaking”** or **“viral.”** Something else disappears from the feed, and psychologically it almost ceases to exist. I will post this essay and few will see that I have even posted it.

That is one of the stranger parts of all this.

People increasingly weigh information by **exposure rather than merit**. We see something everywhere, over and over, and assume *everyone* else must be talking about it. We see the same behavior performed over and over again and eventually assume that behavior must be normal. Meanwhile, the thing being amplified might represent some microscopic fraction of humanity that most of us would never encounter in our actual lives.

The screen changes the scale.

Do that long enough and visibility starts masquerading as reality. Repetition becomes familiarity. Familiarity becomes normality. And somewhere inside that process, without anyone announcing when the switch happened, *“I keep seeing this”* quietly becomes *“this is how things are.”* That is exactly where an independent frame of reference has to start fighting back. Not by automatically rejecting whatever appears on the screen. That would just be another supplied reaction wearing a cute little rebel hat. The point is to deliberately reverse the order in which information becomes something we believe.

Experience connects to observation to a hypothesis.
We then investigate and research, followed by a conclusion.

Instead of:

Exposure connects to repetition to familiarity to an **“assumed truth.”**

The **“instead of”** process is easier. It requires almost nothing from us, which is probably why it works so fucking well. **Assumed truth** is basically what happens when something *feels* true enough at the beginning that we never bother checking whether any of the things supporting that feeling are, you know, **actually**

true. The emotional value gets assigned first. Everything afterward gets interpreted through that lens. That doesn't mean emotion is useless or that personal experience automatically makes someone right. Both can trip us up just as easily as an algorithm can. It means there has to be a process between **seeing something** and **believing something**.

Observation isn't conclusion.

Suspicion isn't evidence.

Repetition isn't verification.

Popularity isn't reality.

And your first reaction to something isn't some sacred transmission from the intellectual Gods that must now be defended until death because your brain happened to fart it out first. Sometimes the original hypothesis survives the investigation. Sometimes it gets stronger because the evidence keeps supporting it. Sometimes the whole fucking thing collapses because one assumption near the beginning turned out to be wrong.

Good.

That's the process working.

An independent frame isn't developed by always arriving at some unique conclusion nobody else has. Sometimes the independent conclusion is exactly the same one everyone else reached. The difference is **how you got there**.

Did you arrive there?

Or were you delivered?

EXPRESS – What happens when your independent frame doesn't perform?

That sounds like a strange question because ideas are not supposed to **“perform.”** They're ideas. They can be good, bad, brilliant, stupid, factual, completely wrong, somewhere in the middle or something we haven't figured out yet. But once an idea gets uploaded to the almighty screen, none of those things are necessarily what determines whether anyone actually sees it.

Now it has to perform.

This creates another problem with expressing an independent frame of reference. How do we communicate that worldview when the systems responsible for distributing it reward conformity, reaction, popularity, engagement and/or pay the platform outright more than independent thought?

This part hits a little more personal for me because I have been posting online for decades. I can spend hours, days, sometimes weeks thinking about something, researching it, conferring with AI, writing it, rewriting it, questioning whether what I am saying actually makes logical sense, recording it, editing it, coding it and finally posting it.

Ten people might see it.

Meanwhile, someone points a phone at themselves, says something completely fucking stupid that makes people angry, and 4.7 million people see it before dinner. Under the algorithm's measurement system, they won. Under an **actual** intellectual measurement system, that tells us absolutely fucking nothing about which one contained more **actual** value.

That's the weird contradiction created by the attention economy. We have confused **visibility with value, followers with legitimacy, views with currency, and popularity with substance**. If enough people click something, the numbers themselves begin functioning as proof that the thing deserved to be clicked in the first place. The algorithm sees engagement, supplies more exposure, the exposure creates more engagement and around the Guinea pig wheel we go again.

Except this time there is another person involved:

The person trying to say something.

Because eventually you notice.

You notice nobody is reading it.

Nobody is watching it.

Nobody is listening to it.

You see what *does* get attention, and the temptation becomes obvious. Shorten it. Simplify it. Make it angrier. Make it more emotional. Pick a side. Say the thing people already expect someone like you to say. Throw some ragebait into the title. Maybe say something about gender or who has sex with who because for some reason that is now everyone's business and/or people wear it like a badge of honor. Maybe put a stupid fucking face in the thumbnail with your mouth hanging open like you just witnessed the second coming of Christ behind the camera.

If none of that works you can just pay for fake engagement. That's right. If none of that works, you can just **pay for engagement**. That's also right. Most of these platforms have another algorithmic layer where you can pay the platform directly to put your shit in front of more people. Network administrators call this "traffic." We dress it up with words like "reach," "impressions" and "engagement," but underneath all that marketing bullshit, it's web traffic. You paid the machine, so the machine opened another lane. That doesn't mean everyone who comes through that lane is fake. That's not the point. The absurdity is that **visibility itself is now something you can purchase**. Your idea didn't become smarter. Your video didn't become better. Your argument didn't suddenly gain intellectual value. You gave the machine money and the number got bigger.

BOOM...

Now you're a digital content creator.

Congratulations.

Still, no one cares.

Under this logic, independent expression requires accepting a genuinely unpleasant possibility: **you may have something worthwhile to say and almost nobody will hear you.**

Andrew Wilson described part of this on *The Joe Rogan Experience* #2535 as:
“Fighting the algorithm while having something to say with absolutely no following.”

That hit me because I know exactly what that contradiction feels like. Not because having no audience somehow makes an idea more profound—it doesn't. Obscurity isn't evidence of brilliance any more than popularity is. Something nobody reads can still be complete shit. The important part is what happens **after nobody reads it**. Do you keep developing and expressing the idea because you believe there is something worth exploring there? Do you challenge it, improve it, abandon it if the evidence eventually tears it apart? Or do you start changing what you say because you've learned what the machine rewards? That's where expression starts bleeding back into intellectual autonomy.

If I change what I think because evidence changes, that's intellectual development.
If I change what I say because nobody clicked it, that's something else entirely.

At the heart of it that is what SLOPfluence and/or CreatorSLOP mean to me. This only partially applies to my own experience. I have been posting aggressively since 1998 and writing full-time since 2020. I have posted fiction concepts, blogs, essays, videos, audio, commentary and whatever other weird shit my brain decided needed to exist that week. I post everything individually and organically. I have built a decent following doing it, but nowhere near what the raw amount of material I've produced would suggest. Maybe the algorithm suppresses some of it. Maybe some of it simply doesn't perform. Maybe people don't give a shit. Probably some combination depending on what we're talking about.

But that's almost beside the point.

Because if I start changing what I actually want to say solely to solve that problem, the algorithm has finally accomplished something far more important than suppressing or promoting a post. **It changed me.** And maybe that is part of the independence we were looking for all along. The freedom to say something without requiring the machine to reassure you that saying it was worthwhile. Because if the algorithm ultimately determines what you're willing to say, it doesn't really matter whether you developed the thought independently or not. You handed the frame back anyway.

MAINTAIN – How do we maintain a genuinely independent worldview without eventually turning independence itself into another identity, tribe, ideology or contrarian feedback loop?

This may well be the hardest part. Because escaping one supplied frame doesn't mean you've suddenly become independent or cracked any cheat codes at life. You can go full punk-rock, reject mainstream culture, shave half your head, put a safety pin through something that probably shouldn't have a safety pin through it, and then simply download the counterculture package instead. Different clothes. Different music. Different people telling you what you're supposed to think. **Same fucking mechanism.**

You can reject CNN and inherit FOX. Reject FOX and inherit Reddit. Reject Reddit and inherit Joe Rogan. Reject Rogan and inherit some obscure Substack girl with 63 subscribers who assures you that everyone else is brainwashed while she posts pictures of herself half naked and calls that culture or community. Congratulations. You escaped the Matrix and immediately subscribed to another Matrix with worse production values.

That's the trap.

I've been arguing and debating for almost a decade that prolonged exposure to curated information bubbles eventually produces people who speak a language that makes sense primarily to other people living inside the same bubble. Spend enough time there and assumptions become facts. References no longer require explanations. Everyone already knows who the good guys and bad guys are. Everyone knows which sources can be trusted and which ones must automatically be dismissed. Eventually, you aren't investigating an idea anymore. You're checking whether it fits the tribe.

The underlying benefit only makes this worse because social media rewards certainty much more effectively than curiosity. Certainty is easy to package. Certainty fits inside a meme. Certainty works in a thirty-second TikTok video. Certainty gives you heroes, villains and something to be pissed off about before breakfast. *“I don't know”* doesn't perform nearly as well. Neither does, *“I thought I knew, but after looking into it I might have been wrong.”*

That takes us back to skepticism.

Real skepticism cannot only point outward. If everyone else gets questioned while everything already living inside your own head receives diplomatic immunity, you're not really being skeptical. You're just using skepticism as a weapon against information you already don't like.

Possible and probable aren't the same thing.

Neither are suspicion and evidence.

Neither are consensus and truth.

But rejecting consensus simply because it is consensus doesn't make someone an independent thinker either. Sometimes everyone else knows something you don't. Sometimes the expert really is an expert. Sometimes the mainstream explanation survives because after years of people trying to tear the motherfucker apart, it remains the explanation that best fits the available evidence.

And sometimes it doesn't.

The point is maintaining the ability to tell the difference.

An independent frame of reference probably cannot be purely informational anyway. It has to contain lived experience because we are not emotionless, fact-processing machines made out of biomass. Human memory itself isn't some perfect database where we enter a search term and retrieve an untouched file from 1997. Most average people reconstruct things. We remember pieces. We reconstruct those pieces we remember. Emotion changes the weight of those pieces. Experience changes how we interpret them. Time changes us,

which means sometimes the person remembering something isn't psychologically the same person who originally experienced it.

Our frames come from books, arguments, failures, friendships, work, love, pain, memory, mistakes, observations, conversations, stupid shit we did twenty years ago, things somebody said that bothered us enough that we kept thinking about them, sometimes for years, and occasionally some random asshole on the internet accidentally making an excellent point.

All of that gets into the machine.

The goal therefore cannot be eliminating influence.

That's impossible.

The goal is knowing, as best we can, where the influence came from, what it is doing there, and whether it still deserves to stay or get the fuck out. An independent frame of reference is not a worldview created without outside influence. Such a thing probably doesn't exist. It is a worldview whose influences remain examinable, challengeable, replaceable, and capped by one's personal limit of tolerance for nonsense to revise their own conclusions with whatever fumes and coffee your brain is running on today.

That's more than **“think for yourself.”** Everyone thinks they're thinking for themselves. Everyone says it. Everyone believes it. The conspiracy theorist thinks it. The political partisan thinks it. The SLOPfluencer thinks it. The person repeating something they heard fifteen minutes ago like they personally discovered it carved into a stone tablet thinks it. That in and of itself is the very cliché that tends to trigger me into examinations like this to begin with.

The more useful question is:

Can you identify what taught you to think that way—and can you still tell it to go fuck itself when the evidence stops supporting it?

That's maintenance.

Not stubbornness.

Not endlessly defending the worldview you worked so hard to construct because admitting one piece is wrong somehow feels like demolishing the entire building. Maintenance means being willing to replace parts. Sometimes you repaint a wall. Sometimes you rip out the plumbing. Sometimes you discover the previous idiot wired half the house incorrectly and you're the previous idiot.

So, fix it.

Because the moment an independent frame becomes something that must be protected from contradiction, it stops functioning as an independent frame. It becomes another supplied reality except this time **you're supplying it to yourself.**

And that might be the hardest algorithm to fight.

The one running inside your own head.

Humans cannot develop an independent frame of reference independently.

Everything you, I, we know came from somewhere. Parents. Teachers. Books. Television. Friends. Enemies. Culture. The internet. Personal experience. Algorithms. Me. Joe Rogan. Some drunk asshole at a bar twenty years ago who accidentally said something profound between two completely idiotic statements. So, independence cannot mean **absence of influence**. It has to mean something closer to **ownership of influence**.

Humans do not preserve an independent frame by building walls around the mind. It's preserved by controlling the doors. Everything gets to knock. Nothing gets to move in permanently without being questioned. And anything already living there can still be evicted.

Intellectual independence isn't freedom from influence.

It is ownership over influence...

Compages Independens
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