

Sequel: Brief Overview

The Magnifier/Minifier framework is based in the patterns of decision-making for a person over their lifetime. These patterns define the self; they make you who you are.

There are two patterns, Magnification and Minification, which parallel the evolutionary dynamic of fight/flight.

When confronted with a situation of having to make a decision about taking action, one could say that a major factor is the consideration of the probability of a favorable outcome versus an unfavorable one. While there is always the possibility either could happen, in making this calculation people operating from Magnification minimize the possibility of failure. They focus primarily on the possibility of success. It is the opposite for people operating from Minification. They focus primarily on the possibility of failure and diminish awareness of the possibility of success. For both, the calculation relies on a perception that favors the likelihood of one or the other. To the extent this pattern of Magnification or Minification overrides a balanced assessment of the evidence, both are distortions. The best decisions with the least distortions, are ones made with a more balanced consideration of what is possible and what is not possible.

There are two elements of the decision-making process: the Directive, which is the formulation in language of what I should do; and the Rationale, which is the formulation in language of why I should do it.

These patterns of decision-making for either Mag or Min, can be plotted on a continuum from immature to mature. On the immature end of the continuum on either side for Mag or Min, the patterns reflect a rigidity of making decisions automatically, without consideration of possible alternatives. Toward the more mature middle of the continuum, the patterns reflect a flexibility in making decisions that considers a larger range of alternatives.

While these patterns remain stable over a long period in one's life as they define the self, they can change. With work, the patterns can change, and as a result, the self changes. There are two levels of this work. Level I focuses on making adjustments to the patterns which changes how one manages one's life. Level II focuses on making long-term changes over an extended period of time, which then changes the self in a significant way.

While the Original book presented the whole framework, it was focused primarily on Level I changes, anticipating the possibility of moving to Level II. The Sequel now takes the framework to the deeper Level II.

The Sequel expands upon the dynamics of both the Directive and the Rationale components of the decision-making process. It presents in depth the process of Magnification and Minification as modes of denial that protect the person from the existential anxiety generated by the existential paradox.

The existential paradox is the situation of the human who has a brain that can imagine the infinite, and think of oneself as immune from death. At the very same time, that human is aware of having a body that will indeed die. The paradox is that both are true, but irreconcilable, which creates existential anxiety, and the need for denial. The Magnifier denies the mortal side of the paradox and the Minifier denies the immortal.

In this book, the Directive component is expanded to include the dimension of the extent to which the Directive is internalized and becomes a Principle, vs just being adopted as a Rule. The Rationale component is expanded to include the dimension of transcendence, both as a process and as Meaning. As process the transcendence provides the protection from the Existential Paradox so one can transcend the paradox. The Meaning aspect of the transcendence is the articulation of the person's overall sense of how their life makes sense, their worldview, which includes the sources they draw that from which transcend their own experience.

Importantly, the Sequel formats this deeper understanding of the denial process in the larger and more extended context of the systems that one's life is embedded in.

Like the Original, the Sequel presents a guide for practice, not as a set of self-help techniques, but more as a roadmap for pursuing the work on self in Level II over time. It offers a framework for experimenting with changing the Directive of the denial mode of Mag or Min, with the subsequent change in the Rationale, and then in the Meaning that make sense of the person's world. This is the process of changing the self.

The appeal of the Sequel book is for the person who has reached a point where they know they need to make a significant change in how they live their life, and are willing to take the risk to do that work.