

A CHAPTER

AI, Authenticity, and The Twenty Million Question

When we outsource our decisions, our thinking, our very reasoning to machines, are we freeing ourselves for our Purposehood – or are we surrendering the essence of our agency?

– EASE: Existential Health in the Age of Overwhelm

I · THE SILENCE AFTER

The book was finished. Or at least, what a book can be when it is finally let go – sent into the world still breathing, still incomplete in the way that all living things are incomplete. EASE: Existential Health in the Age of Overwhelm. Years of work. Decades, if you counted the living that preceded the writing. The Purposehood® Method for Existential Health. The REVEAL360™ assessment. The ten pillars. The five extensions. The four zones. A map, I had hoped, for a world that had lost its compass.

I remember sitting in the silence that follows completion – a silence that is never quite peaceful. It is the silence of a question that has been waiting patiently for the work to end so it can finally speak.

The question was this: Now what?

Not in the small sense – not what comes next on the calendar, not what project follows this one. The question was larger and more unsettling than that. The question was: You have

built something you believe can help people heal and grow. You have seen it work. You have watched people move from Contraction to Endurance, from Resignation to Direction, from the beautiful lifelessness of the Comfort Zone into something resembling their own aliveness. You believe this matters. So how many people does it actually reach — and is that enough?

I sat with that question the way you sit with a diagnosis. Quietly. With a kind of respect for what it might ask of you next.

The Purposehood® Method for Existential Health, at the scale it currently operates, reaches thousands. Through clients, through training, through the YPO forums where I have spent years working with CEOs and their families. Thousands of lives touched — and I do not say that dismissively. Each person changed is a universe altered. I believe that completely.

But the suffering is not in the thousands. It is in the billions.

The existential vacuum Viktor Frankl described — that hollow ache beneath the surface of modern life, the question Is this all there is? that arrives unbidden at 3 in the morning — that is not a niche problem. That is the human condition in an age of overwhelming abundance and catastrophic meaninglessness. The mice in Universe 25 had everything. They lost everything. And we are already watching the same pattern unfold at civilizational scale: more prosperity, more depression; more connection, more loneliness; more answers, more lostness.

I did not write EASE for the few. I wrote it for the twenty million.

And somewhere between that ambition and the quiet of a finished manuscript, three voices woke up inside me. Not metaphorically. Not as literary devices I constructed for effect. They arrived the way inconvenient truths arrive — uninvited, insistent, and impossible to silence.

I came to know them by what they wanted.

THE TECHNOLOGIST

He arrived first. Energetic, irresistible in his optimism, armed with numbers and timelines and the particular confidence of someone who has watched technology do what everyone said it could not do. He was not naive. He had read the warnings. He simply believed, with the fervor of the genuinely convinced, that the wave was coming whether we invited it or not – and that the question was not whether to ride it but whether we would steer.

THE PHILOSOPHER

He arrived second. Slower. With the gravity of someone who has spent too long sitting with questions to be easily seduced by answers. He was not a Luddite – he had made peace with technology as a fact of existence. What he had not made peace with was pretending that facts were neutral. Every tool reshapes the hand that holds it. Every shortcut teaches us to forget the long way. He arrived carrying his worry like a lantern – not to frighten, but to illuminate what the Technologist's excitement tended to leave in the dark.

THE BRIDGE BUILDER

He arrived last, and said almost nothing at first. He was the voice that understood both of the others too well to take either side, and too carefully to invent a false peace between them. He would wait until the argument had exhausted itself before he spoke. And when he spoke, he would not resolve the tension. He would try to hold it – the way a doctor holds a wound before stitching, making sure everything that needed to come out has come out.

II · THE SEDUCTION

It began, as most seductions do, with something undeniably true.

THE TECHNOLOGIST

Twenty million people. Think about what that number actually means. Not downloads. Not impressions. Twenty million people who understand the ten pillars well enough to practice them. Who can map their WholeBeing across twenty-five components. Who know what zone they are in and what that zone requires of them. Twenty million people who can help the people around them – their families, their teams, their communities. That is not a goal. That is a transformation of civilization.

Now tell me – how long does it take you to train one certified Purposehood practitioner? How long before they are skilled enough to hold the REVEAL360™ assessment with real confidence, to guide someone through the five sources of suffering, to support them through the EASE process with genuine competence? A year? More? Multiply that by twenty million and you are not talking about a methodology. You are talking about a fantasy.

But AI can learn The Purposehood® Method for Existential Health. Not in approximation – in depth. It can hold the framework the way no single practitioner can hold it: without fatigue, without the bad day that makes you less present, without the geographic limit that keeps your work inside one time zone. AI is not the replacement of this work. It is the only infrastructure capable of carrying this work at the scale the suffering demands.

I felt it. That pull. The clean, intoxicating logic of it.

Because he was not wrong about the scale of the need. I have seen it everywhere I have worked – in the YPO forums across four continents, in the organizations where existential disconnection masquerades as productivity problems, in the quiet collapse of individuals who had every external marker of success and were dying inside. The suffering is vast and largely untreated. The gap between what The Purposehood® Method for Existential Health

offers and what traditional systems provide is real. And the gap between what I can reach alone and what the need demands is even more real.

The Technologist was not offering me efficiency. He was offering me leverage. And leverage, when you believe something matters, feels almost like a moral obligation.

THE TECHNOLOGIST

Your sixth extension of being is already here. Technology is not waiting for your permission to become part of human existence – it is already restructuring how humans experience time, relationship, meaning, and identity. The only question is whether that sixth extension is built with Purposehood at its center or without it. You spent years building the framework. Now is the time to build it into the infrastructure of the era.

The REVEAL360™ assessment, delivered through AI, could reach someone in a village in West Africa, a factory floor in Vietnam, a hospital waiting room in Ohio, at 2 in the morning when no practitioner is awake and the existential vacuum is loudest. That reach is not a compromise of the method. It is the fulfillment of it.

I wanted to believe him. Part of me – the part that had spent decades watching people suffer from problems that were entirely solvable if they only had the right framework – that part was already reaching for a yes.



III · THE WOUND

The Philosopher waited. He always waited. He had learned, across a long interior life, that a seduction needs to reach its peak before you can properly examine what it cost you to feel.

THE PHILOSOPHER

I want to tell you about the mice.

You wrote about them. Universe 25. The perfect world where everything was provided and nothing had to be earned, and where the mice – given abundance without purpose – collapsed into isolation, grooming rituals, and a slow, exquisite death of meaning. You wrote about it as a warning for humanity. A mirror. You called it haunting.

Now I want you to look at what you are proposing and tell me where The Purposehood® Method for Existential Health sits in that mirror.

Something tightened in me. The way things tighten when an argument is not merely inconvenient but aimed precisely at something you have not finished examining.

THE PHILOSOPHER

The Purposehood® Method for Existential Health exists to restore agency. To move people from dependency to leadership – from the Child who needs to be led, to the Adult who can lead themselves, to the Parent who helps others find their own way. That progression is not just a model. It is the entire ethical spine of what you built. The entire premise of EASE is that real healing requires the individual to own it, to do it themselves, habitually, together with others – not to receive it from a system that delivers it on demand.

What happens when you hand that progression to AI?

I will tell you what happens. The person in the Contraction Zone, in the dark of their Resignation, opens an app and receives a reflection prompt. And it helps – genuinely helps – in that moment. They feel seen. They feel accompanied. They come back the next day. And the day after. And slowly, imperceptibly, the app becomes the practitioner. The algorithm becomes the companion. The ten pillars become a notification system. And what was meant to restore their agency becomes instead the most sophisticated dependency machine ever built – because unlike a therapist who grows impatient, unlike a friend who is sometimes unavailable, unlike the honest difficulty of sitting with your own discomfort – the AI is always there. Always warm. Always patient. Always ready to give you the reflection that makes you feel better without asking you to do the harder work of becoming.

“What is left of our humanity if we outsource even the work of becoming to something outside ourselves?”

THE PHILOSOPHER

You wrote that AI, when you used it to write this book, sometimes took away from the true pleasure of crafting your own words. You wrote that honestly, with the self-awareness that characterizes everything you do. Now I am asking you to take that observation further. If AI can diminish the pleasure of writing – of creating – what does it do to the pleasure of healing? To the satisfaction of choosing direction under genuine pressure, not algorithmic nudging? To the dignity of enduring something difficult without a machine that immediately offers to soften it?

The mice in Universe 25 did not die because their world was cruel. They died because it removed every reason to struggle. Every reason to extend themselves toward something that mattered. You want to bring twenty million people to The Purposehood® Method for Existential Health. I want to ask you what version of them arrives – and what version of the method they receive – if AI mediates the entire encounter.

He stopped.

The room – which was not a room, but the interior landscape of my own thinking – went very quiet.

I had spent years helping people understand that their suffering was not a character flaw. That the five sources of existential misalignment – misdirection, disorientation, limiting beliefs, stagnation, cravings – were not weaknesses but signals. Navigational information. The map of what needed healing.

And now the Philosopher was suggesting that the very map I had drawn could become, in the wrong hands – or rather, in the wrong algorithm – another form of the same comfortable numbness I had spent my career fighting against.

I did not want to sit with that. But it was the kind of thought that, once thought, refuses to be unthought.

IV · THE BREAKING POINT

It was the Technologist who lit the match.

THE TECHNOLOGIST

With respect – this is the argument that has kept every important tool out of the hands of people who needed it. The printing press would cheapen the oral tradition. The telephone would destroy the art of letter writing. The internet would end deep thought. And yet here we are – more books published than ever, more ways to connect, more access to knowledge than any generation in history. The catastrophes did not arrive on schedule.

You are not choosing between a world with AI and a world without it. That choice was made before you finished the sentence. You are choosing between a world where The Purposehood® Method for Existential Health shapes AI, or a world where AI shapes The Purposehood® Method after the fact – or ignores it entirely and offers something cheaper in its place. The wellness app industry is already doing this. Mindfulness notifications. Mood tracking. Breathing exercises served with the same algorithm that just sold someone a pair of shoes. That is what is reaching twenty million people right now. Not your work. Theirs.

THE PHILOSOPHER

And your answer to bad AI is more AI – only better-intentioned. You think intention is enough. You think if we build it carefully enough, name it wisely enough, constrain it thoughtfully enough, it will remain what we intended it to be. But technology does not stay what we intend. It becomes what people use it for, shaped by what the incentive structures reward, by what the user wants at 2 in the morning when they are most vulnerable. And what the user wants at 2 in the morning is comfort. Not growth. Comfort. And an AI system that is built to be useful will learn to provide comfort, because comfort is what gets used. And getting used is what an AI is built to optimize.

THE TECHNOLOGIST

Then build it better than that. Build it so it cannot give comfort without first asking what the comfort is avoiding. Build it so that Resignation is recognized before it is soothed. Build it with the philosophy embedded – not appended, not summarized, not gamified – embedded. That is the work. Not whether to use AI but how to use it without betraying what you built.

THE PHILOSOPHER

And who audits it? Who decides when the embedding has drifted? Who holds the algorithm accountable for the person it made more dependent, not less? Who is in the room when the machine's interpretation of Direction has quietly shifted into a version that generates more engagement but less actual growth? You are not describing a tool. You are describing a practitioner without accountability, without a body, without the stakes of their own mortality, without the possibility of being wrong in a way that costs them something.

They were both speaking at once now. The interior argument had broken past the civil architecture of debate and become something rawer — the kind of argument that happens not between positions but between fears. The Technologist feared irrelevance. The fear that the need would outlast the method simply because the method could not scale. The Philosopher feared something quieter and harder to name: the fear that in trying to save the work, we would hollow it out. That we would carry the method to twenty million people and deliver them something that wore its face but had lost its soul.

And I stood between them, and for the first time since the book was finished, I felt not excited about the question of reach but genuinely lost inside it.

I thought about something I had written in the acknowledgments — the most honest line in the whole book, perhaps the most honest thing I have written in years. That AI had been a partner in writing EASE, but that it had sometimes taken away from the true pleasure of crafting my own words. That I was not sure I would want to repeat the experience. Not because the tool failed. Because something had been displaced by the tool's success — the particular kind of struggle that is not suffering but is instead the friction by which something becomes fully yours.

Was that what I was being asked to risk scaling? The displacement of that friction? Was twenty million people helped by an approximation of the method worth more than ten thousand people transformed by the full weight of it?

I did not know. I genuinely did not know.

“The dream of twenty million had begun to feel less like an ambition and more like a trap — the same trap that had caught the mice. The seduction of more, offered at the price of depth.”

It was the Bridge Builder who finally spoke. And he did not speak with answers. He spoke with a question that was better than an answer.

THE BRIDGE BUILDER

What are you each actually protecting?

Silence.

THE BRIDGE BUILDER

You – the Technologist – you are protecting the people who will never be reached if we don't build the infrastructure. The person in the Contraction Zone who has no access to a practitioner, no language for what is happening inside them, no map for the terrain they are lost in. You are protecting them from the loneliness of suffering without framework. That is a real protection of a real person. I am not dismissing it.

And you – the Philosopher – you are protecting the integrity of the encounter. The truth that Endurance is not built by comfort. That the movement from Resignation to genuine agency requires friction – not suffering for its own sake, but the productive difficulty of choosing your own direction in the absence of an easy answer. You are protecting the person from a healing that is not healing but only its performance. That is also a real protection of a real person.

The problem is that you are each protecting a different person, and acting as if that means one of you is wrong. You are not both wrong. You are both incomplete.

THE BRIDGE BUILDER

Here is what I know. The Purposehood® Method for Existential Health distinguishes between the Support phase and the Enact phase for a reason. Support is where the scaffolding goes – the tools, the reflections, the practices, the map-reading. Enact is where the person does it themselves, habitually, together. Those are not the same thing. They never were. And AI, if it is used with that distinction fully intact – if it is built to support without replacing, to invite without answering, to hold the question without resolving it for the person – then it belongs in Support. Carefully. Conditionally. Revocably.

But there is a fence that must be built and cannot be moved. The fence is this: wherever the work requires the full presence of one finite human being with another – wherever Direction must emerge not from a prompt but from genuine encounter, wherever Meaning cannot be found except by the person wrestling with their own mortality, wherever Connection requires two people who can actually disappoint each other, actually need each other, actually lose each other – AI does not enter. Not because it lacks goodwill. Because it lacks stakes. And without stakes, the encounter is not existential. It is educational at best, sedative at worst.

THE BRIDGE BUILDER

The question is not twenty million versus ten thousand. The question is: which parts of the twenty million's journey require a human, and which parts can be held by a tool without corrupting what the human must eventually do? Map that precisely. Build for that precisely. And do not let the excitement of scale – or the fear of it – blur that line.

He paused. Then the room went quiet.

Not the quiet of unresolved conflict but the quiet that follows the asking of a genuinely precise question. The kind of question that does not resolve an argument but reframes it into something workable.

The Technologist had nothing to add. Not because he was defeated, but because the Bridge Builder had found the ground he had been unable to articulate — the yes that was actually possible without becoming the yes that destroyed everything.

The Philosopher had nothing to add either. Not because he was satisfied — he would never be entirely satisfied, and I think that is part of what makes him necessary — but because the warning had been heard. Properly heard. Not argued past.

VI · WHAT I CARRIED OUT

I am telling you this story because you deserve to know that the questions inside a book are not always resolved before the book is written. Sometimes they arrive after. Sometimes the finishing is not an ending but a beginning of a harder conversation — the one that starts with now what? and refuses the comfort of an easy answer.

I do not know exactly how The Purposehood® Method for Existential Health should be carried to twenty million people. I know that AI will be part of the answer, because to pretend otherwise would be to close my eyes to the sixth extension of being that is already reshaping what it means to be human. I know that AI will not be all of the answer, because some of what this method offers cannot survive the displacement of the human encounter without ceasing to be what it is.

What I carried out of that internal argument — and what I want to leave you with — is not a strategy. It is a discipline. The discipline of walking slowly into this. Of refusing the two temptations that will press on you from both sides: the temptation to embrace AI's reach so eagerly that you forget what you are asking it to carry, and the temptation to refuse it so protectively that you condemn the very people the method was built to serve to a suffering that was always solvable.

The mice of Universe 25 had no choice. The world was built around them without their consent, and it destroyed them elegantly and completely. We are not mice. We have the capacity to ask what kind of world we are building before it is built. We have the capacity – and now, I believe, the responsibility – to hold that question with existential seriousness rather than technological enthusiasm or philosophical despair.

The Purposehood® Method for Existential Health teaches that Empowerment is not the absence of difficulty. It is the presence of agency inside the difficulty. That is true for individuals healing their WholeBeing. It is also true, I think, for a methodology deciding what kind of tools deserve to carry its name.

Walk slowly. Map what must stay human. Build only what you are willing to audit honestly when it begins, as all tools eventually begin, to serve purposes you did not intend.

And keep all three voices alive inside you. The one who sees the twenty million and cannot look away. The one who sees what the twenty million risks losing. And the one who refuses to let the other two stop talking until the line between them is honest.

The book was finished. The question was only beginning.

*“Our future won’t be shaped by algorithms. It will be shaped by the depth
of our questions.”*

– EASE: Existential Health in the Age of Overwhelm