

Like don Quixote, we are constantly investing ourselves into the stories we want to believe. We create our own personas so that we are “somebody.” When I was young, I took on various identities: I was Miguel Ruiz Jr., the Goth. Then I became Miguel the Intellectual, then Miguel the Bohemian, then Miguel the Artist, and so on. I gave myself rules the same way don Quixote created his rules—through a distorted perception of who I was. Other people would see their own truth and wonder what I was doing. But all I saw was what I wanted to see. And like don Quixote’s faithful servant Sancho Panza, I heard my stories and knew I was being a little crazy, but I believed them just in case I was right.

I spent many years trying to live up to those images I created of myself before discovering that *this* is who I am—no story needed. It’s really me. I am perfect at this very moment, and that is all I need to enjoy my life. Once I learned this, I could change my life in any direction

I saw fit at any given moment. I now had the freedom to choose. The possibilities became endless, just as they always had been. I do not make changes in my life today because I feel I must change in order to accept and love myself; I make changes to express myself and experience more of life, because I already accept and love myself for who I am.

Flaws and defects originate from our own ideas and beliefs. In order to recognize perfection—or to see the world and ourselves *as is*—we become aware of our attachments to our ideas and beliefs and let go of them, even if only briefly, to see beyond them. I have always been perfect, and so have you. When we can’t perceive this, it’s because we are too busy judging everything for not being something other than what it is. The world and everything in it is perfect simply because it exists at this very moment, in the only manner it can possibly exist. The same is true for me and for you. And that is perfection: “I am because I am at this moment.”

This is what freedom is: the ability to enjoy and be exactly who you are without suppressing yourself in the form of judgment. A bird is a bird. A saguaro is a saguaro. A human is a human. Miguel is Miguel. You are you. Perfect.