

The Author's Guide to Personal Sovereignty

A companion to Nobody Knows the Story Like the Author

Adam Tugwell | 27 October 2026



The principles that follow are not rules, instructions or beliefs that need to be adopted. They are simply observations that emerged during the exploration of authorship, awareness and sovereignty.

You may agree with some of them.

You may disagree with others.

The value, if there is any, lies in considering them for yourself.

Principle 1: Nobody Knows the Story Like the Author

Nobody else has lived your life from the inside.

Other people may know parts of your story extraordinarily well. They may offer insights that you would never have reached on your own. They may even understand aspects of you that you have yet to recognise yourself.

Yet there is still only one person who has been present for every moment.

That person is you.

This does not make your perspective perfect.

It simply makes it unique.

Principle 2: We All Begin With Inherited Stories

None of us starts with a blank page.

We inherit ideas about success, failure, work, relationships, responsibility and meaning from the world around us. Much of this inheritance is valuable. Without it, we would struggle to make sense of life at all.

The question is not whether we inherit stories.

The question is whether we ever examine them.

Principle 3: Occupation Consumes Attention

Much of life is spent responding to immediate demands.

Work.

Bills.

Responsibilities.

Relationships.

Worries.

Expectations.

None of these are inherently negative.

Yet the more occupied we become, the less room we have to reflect on the direction of our lives.

A person can be extremely busy whilst never asking whether they are heading where they truly wish to go.

Principle 4: Peace Creates Space

Peace is often confused with happiness, comfort or success.

In this context, peace means something simpler.

Space.

The space to think.

The space to reflect.

The space to observe.

The space to ask questions that urgency normally pushes aside.

Without space, awareness struggles to emerge.

Principle 5: Awareness Is Not Certainty

Many people assume awareness means having answers.

Often it means becoming more comfortable with questions.

Awareness is less about arriving at certainty and more about developing the willingness to look honestly at ourselves, our assumptions and our experiences.

It begins when curiosity becomes more important than certainty.

Principle 6: Other People Are Authors Too

One of the most significant shifts in human understanding occurs when we stop viewing other people as supporting characters in our own story.

Every person is living a life that feels as real to them as yours feels to you.

Every person has experiences you cannot fully see.

Every person carries questions, hopes, fears and assumptions of their own.

Recognising this does not require agreement.

It simply requires respect.

Principle 7: Freedom and Sovereignty Are Not the Same Thing

Freedom concerns options.

Sovereignty concerns authorship.

A person can possess many choices whilst rarely examining why they make them.

Sovereignty begins when we become conscious participants in the direction of our own lives rather than simply moving between available options.

Freedom expands possibility.

Sovereignty explores it.

Principle 8: Not All Constraints Are the Same

Many people imagine freedom as the absence of constraint.

Yet some of the most meaningful parts of life involve commitments that limit our options.

Relationships.

Friendship.

Parenthood.

Responsibility.

Service.

Purpose.

The question is not whether constraints exist.

The question is whether we consciously choose them.

Principle 9: Needs and Wants Are Different

Needs create foundations.

Wants create movement.

Both have a place.

Problems often arise when the distinction between them becomes blurred.

When wants begin to feel like needs, peace becomes harder to find and "enough" becomes increasingly difficult to recognise.

A sovereign life is not a life without desire.

It is a life that understands the difference.

Principle 10: Sovereignty Is the Restoration of Authorship

Personal Sovereignty is not independence, isolation, power or control.

It is the restoration of meaningful authorship over one's own life.

It is the ongoing process of becoming a conscious participant in the direction of your own journey.

Not perfectly.

Not completely.

But deliberately.

Principle 11: Contribution Is Authorship Made Visible

Human beings often find meaning through participation.

Through creating.

Through teaching.

Through helping.

Through caring.

Through building.

Through improving something beyond themselves.

Contribution is not merely work.

It is one of the ways authorship becomes visible in the shared human experience.

Principle 12: A Flourishing Society Supports Authorship

No society can create awareness on behalf of its citizens.

No system can manufacture sovereignty.

No institution can author another person's life.

What societies can do is create conditions that make authorship easier to pursue.

Conditions that support dignity.

Security.

Participation.

Contribution.

And the opportunity for people to become the genuine authors of their own lives.

A Final Reflection

Perhaps the simplest way to understand Personal Sovereignty is this:

Life happens to all of us.

Circumstances change.

Unexpected events occur.

Successes arrive.

Difficulties arrive.

Much remains beyond our control.

The question is not whether we control everything.

The question is whether we remain conscious participants in the story we are living.

Because other people may influence your story.

They may challenge it, enrich it and help you understand it.

But nobody can live it for you.

Nobody knows the story like the author.

Further Information

To explore more of Adam Tugwell's writing, including the online edition of this post, please visit:

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