

This is the second anthology in the series exploring the idea of “a life of value.” The concept is a very old one, and has for centuries been sought by the wise for the rewards it brings. Yet, perhaps paradoxically, this lifelong pursuit of a shapeless construct that exists only in our heads is evidenced too by young children. Indeed, kings and thieves, persons from here and from there, free thinkers and shackled slaves, musicians and corporate leaders, generals and peacemakers, the dying and the healthy, the progressive and the conservative, and the inspired and the atheistic have lain their unique stones on the road on which we are now walking. Fascinatingly, it is at once built, yet forever under construction. It is perfect, and at the same time in need of refinement. We grasp the ideas, and then lose them after a sleep.

There are certain values that *those who are wise* make their own, and though there is no true clarity about what it means to be wise – unlike having a college degree or possessing a certain number of dollars – we know wisdom when we see it. For example, kindness is better than meanness; honor is better than deceitfulness. And so on. But these values are not defined by some deity for our digestion; how do we come to know what honor is? What does it mean to be kind? Humans have been writing about, talking about, and living their values for centuries. Indeed, each of us has a story to tell; some part of wisdom is known to every person. No one has every element, as it is not a puzzle that one ever “finishes.” We never “arrive” at our values like we do a travel destination, or grasp them like a trophy. Each day brings new challenges to us all. But if we study wisdom, and pursue our values, we can gain some understanding. And likely, we will enjoy the process, as a bee is naturally drawn to the flower or a kite loves the wind. Humans are unique in their pursuit of wisdom and are inseparable from their values; it is why we read, why we invent, why we love, why we cry. You can see it in our libraries and aeronautics, and feel it when you look at an ancient pyramid or a cave painting.

Quotations were the mode of the book *Building a Life of Value*, which used an architecture metaphor to communicate how we can use our values to build a life that we *value* – and that *has* some objective value as well. Following its publication, I thought it would be fun and rewarding to ask a diverse group of folks what they value, what has led them, what they are moved by, what their life is about. Some were too busy. Others were uninterested. Some were reticent about writing specifically about their values, as though they had forgotten that everything they do is somehow related to what they value. I encountered many priorities *besides* writing about values, and even some gun-shyness. Perhaps I was asking people who did not normally exercise those muscles, as those in the driver’s seat of the political right have been for decades. But some said they would share a piece of what they subjectively perceive values to mean. Indeed, one hundred agreed to participate – some by permitting me to include their snapshot of values in action in the book though it had been previously published. By the deadline, 75 had followed through.

It is similar to the previous book in that it is a compilation of “very long quotations” by a grouping of contemporary writers that is remarkable for its diversity. It includes millionaires and folks who live modestly; those with many degrees and those who’ve never graduated; men and women; people of various colors and creeds; the progressive and the moderately conservative; inventors and innovators; believers and

skeptics, and so on. Everyone has a story to tell, a point to make, a perspective from which their values can be understood. For us to read what they write is like sitting on our grandfather's lap for a lesson; it is a communication about wisdom.

*Living a Life of Value* is a book that I am proud to have orchestrated, and I thank Gina Gerboth for her industry and loyalty along the way. I also am appreciative that each person contributing to this anthology has joined me in the search for wisdom (and trustingly offered their insights and illustrations, for free!). And to you, the reader, thank you for supporting my dream of pursuing my values and communicating with you about them. I share a kinship with and a respect for you. May we find what we are looking for!