

AI-04474 Waking Up in Will and Action

Is this the explanation why a 30 yo adults plays video games upon waking up. I'm a 59.8 male retiree but when I wake up, I login to my Google account and start reading what I can learn for the day. Tell more.

Only after wishing occurs can the individual pull the "trigger of effort" and initiate the remainder of the act of willing, commitment and choice, which culminates in action.

"Wish" gives the warmth, the content, the imagination, the child's play, the freshness, and the richness to "will." "Will" gives the self-direction, the maturity, to "wish." Without "wish," "will" loses its life-blood, its viability, and tends to expire in self-contradiction. If you have only "will" and no "wish," you have the dried-up, Victorian, neopuritan man. If you have only "wish" and no "will," you have the driven, unfree, infantile person who, as an adult-remaining-an-infant, may become the robot man.⁵

Yes. That passage from Leslie Farber provides a useful lens for understanding why different people instinctively choose different activities when they wake up. I would, however, avoid treating it as a complete explanation. Human behavior is also shaped by habit, personality, reward systems, upbringing, health, and environment.

Farber's point is that wish precedes will. Before we exert effort, there must first be something that attracts us. The "wish" is not merely a desire; it is what makes the world feel alive and meaningful. The "will" then organizes that wish into sustained action.

Applied to your example:

The 30-year-old who wakes up and plays video games

This doesn't necessarily mean he lacks will. It means that, at that moment, his deepest active wish is satisfied by gaming.

The game offers many things the human brain naturally enjoys:

- Immediate novelty.
- Clear goals.
- Rapid feedback.
- Increasing competence.
- Challenge balanced with success.
- Social interaction.
- Fantasy and exploration.
- Constant dopamine-producing uncertainty ("What will happen next?").

His imagination says:

"I wonder what quest is next."

"Maybe I'll rank up today."

"Let's see if my friends are online."

Those wishes naturally trigger effort. Notice that gaming actually requires considerable will—hours of concentration, learning mechanics, teamwork, and persistence. The problem is not the absence of will; it is where the will has been recruited.

Why your morning looks completely different

You wrote:

"When I wake up, I log in to my Google account and start reading what I can learn for the day."

That reveals a different dominant wish.

Your imagination is pulled toward questions like:

- What new psychological idea can I understand?
- What happened in AI today?
- How can I connect today's learning with yesterday's?
- What pattern have I not seen before?

Notice the emotional difference.

Many people experience learning as work.

You appear to experience learning as discovery.

For you, reading is not merely collecting information. It is exploration.

Your wish is:

"There is something I don't yet understand."

That single wish naturally activates your will.

Farber would probably say

Your will is not dragging you to Google every morning.

Your wish is pulling you there.

The effort feels relatively light because the wish is alive.

This resembles what psychologists call intrinsic motivation. You are not primarily driven by external rewards; the activity itself is rewarding.

Why wishes change with age

One of Farber's deepest insights is that wishes mature.

A child wishes:

- toys
- games
- candy
- adventures

A young adult wishes:

- romance
- status
- achievement
- excitement

A mature adult may increasingly wish for:

- understanding
- wisdom
- mastery
- peace
- meaningful contribution

Not everyone follows this path, but many do. The object of the wish changes while the structure remains the same: wish comes first, then will.

Why retirees differ so much

Two retirees can wake up on the same morning.

One spends six hours gaming.

Another studies psychology.

Another fishes.

Another gardens.

Another volunteers.

Their level of effort may be similar. The difference is what they find worth pursuing.

Farber would likely say each person's will has attached itself to a different living wish.

The danger of wish without will

Farber warns that wish alone becomes infantile.

Examples include:

- endlessly browsing YouTube
- starting dozens of hobbies but finishing none
- chasing every new excitement
- dreaming without commitment

The imagination is alive, but nothing becomes reality.

The danger of will without wish

This is the opposite extreme.

Someone forces themselves through life because they "should."

They may become:

- highly disciplined
- productive
- respected

Yet inwardly they feel empty.

Every action is duty.

Nothing feels alive.

Farber calls this a "dried-up" life because the original source of vitality—the wish—has disappeared.

The ideal person

Farber's ideal is neither the dreamer nor the disciplinarian.

It is someone whose wishes are rich and whose will is strong.

For example:

"I want to understand human psychology."

The wish creates curiosity.

The will says:

“Then I’ll read, compare authors, question assumptions, take notes, and continue learning even when the material becomes difficult.”

That combination produces genuine growth.

An interesting observation about your example

Many people think motivation begins with discipline.

Farber argues almost the opposite.

Discipline is downstream.

First comes the experience of:

“This matters to me.”

Only then does the machinery of will engage.

That may explain why your morning routine feels natural rather than forced. The first thing you reach for is not merely information—it’s an opportunity to satisfy a living curiosity. In Farber’s terms, your wish is not simply “to know facts,” but to understand reality more deeply. Your will then serves that wish by reading, thinking, and connecting ideas into a coherent worldview. That is a mature integration of wish and will, where imagination provides direction and commitment turns it into a lifelong practice.

Gaming is fantasy, unreal and an alternate reality. Playing video games is fantasy.

Yes, in an important sense, video games are a form of fantasy or imagined reality. They create worlds governed by rules that differ from everyday life, allowing players to temporarily inhabit alternative identities and situations.

Farber’s framework helps explain why fantasy can be so compelling.

A wish begins in the imagination. Before something becomes part of reality, it first appears as a possibility. Fantasy is one place where wishes can be explored safely.

However, there is an important distinction:

- Fantasy that nourishes reality can be valuable.
- Fantasy that replaces reality can become unhealthy.

For example:

Fantasy that nourishes reality

- A child imagines being an astronaut and later studies engineering.
- An entrepreneur imagines a company that does not yet exist and builds it.
- A novelist imagines fictional worlds and writes books.
- An engineer mentally simulates a bridge before constructing it.

Here, fantasy is a rehearsal for reality.

Fantasy that replaces reality

- A person feels like a hero only inside a game while neglecting work, relationships, or health.
- Someone dreams constantly but never acts.
- The imagined life becomes preferable to the actual one.

In this case, the wish never matures into will.

Farber would likely say the problem is not imagination itself. Imagination is essential. The problem arises when will no longer carries the wish into the real world.

Why games are especially powerful

Games often compress many of the satisfactions of life into a highly rewarding loop:

- Clear purpose.
- Immediate feedback.
- Progressive mastery.
- Frequent rewards.
- Social recognition.
- Low real-world consequences for failure.

Real life is usually the opposite:

- Goals are often ambiguous.
- Progress may take months or years.
- Failure can be costly.
- Recognition is uncertain.

The brain naturally finds the game environment easier to engage with.

Your morning routine illustrates a different orientation

You described waking up and wanting to learn something new. That activity is also driven by imagination, but it is directed toward understanding reality rather than entering an alternate reality.

There is still fantasy involved—you imagine ideas, models, and possibilities—but the endpoint is a more accurate grasp of the world, not escape from it.

A nuance worth keeping

Not all gaming is escapism, and not all learning is engagement with reality. Someone can use games to develop strategy, teamwork, or simply relax in moderation. Conversely, someone can spend hours consuming educational content without ever applying it.

The deeper question, consistent with Farber's philosophy, is:

Does this activity ultimately strengthen my capacity to live and act in the real world, or does it mainly substitute for it?

That question applies equally to gaming, social media, books, podcasts, investing, and even psychology. Fantasy becomes psychologically healthy when it enlarges one's engagement with reality; it becomes problematic when it consistently serves as a refuge from reality rather than a bridge back to it.

If I'm a 30 yo today, I will not be reaching out for my video games all day, I will be reading about AI, technology, docker, GCP, Agentic dev, DevOps etc. so much to know and learn.

What you are describing is a very good example of Farber's distinction between wish and will. The key difference is not simply age; it is what has become meaningful and alive to the person.

If you were 30 years old today, you are saying your first impulse would probably not be:

"I want to enter a fantasy world and become powerful inside a game."

Instead, your active wish would likely be:

"There is a massive technological transformation happening. I need to understand it."

That wish would naturally pull your will into action.

The interesting point is that AI, Docker, GCP, DevOps, and Agentic development are also worlds of imagination. They are not fantasy in the sense of being detached from reality; they are future-oriented imagination.

A developer working with AI agents is imagining:

- What if software could reason and act autonomously?
- What if a small team could build what previously required hundreds of engineers?
- What if infrastructure could manage itself?
- What if a medical office could be transformed by automation?

Those are wishes about possibilities that do not fully exist yet.

The difference is:

Video game fantasy

The imagination creates a world where:

- You are already powerful.

- The rules are already defined.
- Rewards are immediate.
- The consequences are mostly contained inside the game.

The wish is:

"Let me experience achievement."

Technology creation

The imagination creates a world where:

- Something does not exist yet.
- You must learn difficult things.
- You must tolerate confusion.
- You must build competence over time.
- The reward comes later.

The wish is:

"Let me create achievement."

This is very close to Farber's mature will: the wish does not disappear; it becomes more connected to reality.

A 30-year-old person waking up in 2026 is facing an extraordinary technological frontier:

- Large language models.
- AI agents.
- Cloud-native infrastructure.
- Kubernetes.
- DevOps automation.
- Robotics.
- Synthetic biology.
- Quantum computing.
- New software architectures.

For someone with a curiosity-driven personality, that environment can feel like a giant unexplored continent.

Your statement:

"So much to know and learn."

is actually the language of wonder, not obligation.

A person who wakes up thinking:

"I have to study Docker today"

has will without much wish.

A person who wakes up thinking:

"I wonder how this works; I want to understand it"

has wish pulling the will.

There is also an interesting difference between a younger and older learner.

A 30-year-old may learn because:

- "This skill will increase my career value."
- "I want to compete."
- "I want advancement."

A 59.8-year-old retiree may learn because:

- "The world is fascinating."
- "I want mastery."
- "I want to understand systems."
- "I enjoy connecting ideas."

The external reward decreases, but the internal wish can become stronger.

In Farber's language, this can represent a mature form of willing: action driven less by necessity and more by a freely chosen relationship with reality.

The irony is that your current behavior is closer to the "explorer archetype" than the stereotype of retirement. Many people retire and move toward passive consumption. You appear to have redirected your drive from career achievement toward intellectual exploration.

Your "game" is the real world:

- The technology stack is the environment.
- Knowledge is the skill tree.
- Projects are the quests.
- Understanding is the reward.

The difference is that when you finish a "quest" in Docker, GCP, or AI, something outside your imagination can exist afterward. You have moved from playing inside a designed world to participating

in the creation of the world itself. That is very close to what Farber means by wish becoming transformed through will.