



Parallel Lives: A Founding Essay
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Two thousand years ago, the Greek historian Plutarch authored *Parallel Lives*: a collection of 48 biographies of Greek and Roman figures—statesmen, generals, and philosophers—whose choices defined their eras. His method was simple but radical: history could be understood through individuals, not abstractions.

Across centuries, *Parallel Lives* was admired by Montaigne, Beethoven, Hamilton, Jefferson, Emerson, Lincoln, and Thomas Carlyle, each finding in Plutarch's work a mirror of human potential. As Carlyle wrote, "The history of the world is but the biography of great men." We admire Carlyle's intuition, but diverge from his determinism. We believe that leaders are made, not born—that character is cultivated through experience, discipline, and encounters with adversity.

Plutarch's tradition fell out of favor as modern scholarship turned to structures and systems. Yet in the twenty-first century, the pendulum is swinging back. Despite the illusions of structural inevitability—algorithms, statistics, markets—the decisive variable remains the human mind at their center. This may turn out to be especially true in the age of artificial intelligence, where the cost (and value) of human action will be greater than ever before.

If history is an eternal struggle between individuals and structures, our age is one in which individuals are prevailing. Out of the fragmenting international order are emerging new opportunities for individuals to wield influence, amass fortunes, and shape history. Technology companies, philanthropies, and sovereign wealth funds operate inside and outside the nation-state paradigm; their leaders and chief executives oversee empires as vast and as powerful as states themselves.

Our age thus demands a new historiography of agency: a way of studying how influence is built, exercised, and sustained in technology, finance, defense, politics, religion, culture, and more.

Parallel Lives exists to study those individuals, a modern revival of Plutarch's project: a platform exclusively dedicated to serious, long-form analysis of the players operating just behind the veil of power.

We will publish 48 profiles per year—the same number as Plutarch—each around 5,000 words, one per week. Every essay seeks to understand not only what a person has done, but *how* they think: the structure of their worldview, their relationship to risk and ambition, and the institutional or cultural context that amplifies their reach. Each is a self-contained portrait: philosophical, psychological, geopolitical. We hold a special regard for underappreciated figures outside the traditional English-speaking world: executives in Riyadh and Seoul, ministers in Nairobi and Brasília, industrialists in Shenzhen and Mumbai.

We do not conduct interviews, nor do we solicit comment. Instead, our writers—scholars, analysts, and researchers—synthesize primary and secondary materials to produce grounded, enduring portraits. Our contributors publish anonymously to protect independence. We are open to external submissions and suggestions for individuals to be profiled, but final decisions on profile selection are made by internal consensus. There are no restrictions on industry, nationality, or age, nor do we set quotas or minimums on representation. We do not consider self-submissions. Our aim is to simply become the world's authoritative archive of profiles on the world's most influential players.

At the same time, the global media ecosystem is transitioning towards a new generation of digital-native platforms—built on subscription models and direct distribution—proving that serious analysis can be both profitable and influential.

Parallel Lives is a simple bet that to deeply understand a select group of individuals wading through the currents of power—their culture, their values, the way they work; what they hope to achieve, *how*, and *why*—is the best possible approximation to making sense of our world today.

As Plutarch writes in our namesake: “*Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain.*”

For inquiries, please contact: inquiries@parallellives.com.