Your Input Is Your Output

Your input is important. What you put into your body, whether in the form of food, entertainment, or knowledge will have a profound effect on what comes out.

Your output can only be as good as your input allows it to be. In the words of author and motivational speaker Zig Ziglar (1926-2012):

Your input determines your outlook. Your outlook determines your output, and your output determines your future.

When you have a free moment, whether you're commuting to work on public transportation, or waiting in line at the post office, what do you do? If you pull out a book, or an article on your phone, this input will likely have a greater impact on your later output than if you start subconsciously playing a game or scrolling Instagram.

Similarly, if you prepare healthy meals every night, or batch cook them to eat over several nights, you're going to feel better overall than if you get takeout five nights a week. (There's a joke about your input literally being your output in this case, but I am much too mature to make it.)

Garbage In, Garbage Out

There's a term in computer science known as garbage in, garbage out (GIGO). It means that the output of a computer program is only as good as the data put into it.

The same is true in all aspects of our lives. There is something profound about watching others perform at the very height of their talents, and on the very edge of their abilities. When my wife and I lived in San Francisco we would frequent the symphony, ballet, opera, and a couple of theaters just down the street from us often. When we moved to New York City we made the most of all of these same entertainment venues, while adding Broadway shows to the mix.

I say this not to brag, but rather to express the importance of your input. While your input isn't your output directly—after seeing My Fair Lady at the Lincoln Center I didn't suddenly start singing "Oh, wouldn't it be lovely?" pitch perfect—it does inspire you to sit down and work on your most important output.