

SPURN PLEASING OTHERS

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Dear friend,

A secret of entrepreneurial and personal thriving in life: seek to first please yourself, and whenever possible, spurn (scorn/reject) pleasing others.

On innovation

This is my rationale:

1. No matter what you want to do in life, or desire to do, there will always be someone who will be “anti” what you’re passionate about or want to do. For example, I’m sure you remember as a child wanting to do “X” when you grew up, but your parents or someone in your family might have said, “Don’t do that, it isn’t practical.”
 2. If you’re innovating or doing something totally new, of course you’re going to upset others. Most people are only comfortable with the “status quo” (the boring, predictable, and “safe”). Therefore, realize that if your passion is doing new stuff, or going against the grain, or going against what is commonly accepted in society, you’re always going to upset others.
 3. If you’re an innovator, you’re creating your own new taste. You’re pioneering a new vision (your own artistic vision). Therefore, to stay motivated, you must ignore the feedback or criticism of others. You must continue to follow your own vision, and spurn pleasing others – because you must strive to please yourself! *(The true artist/innovator/entrepreneur is the one who takes a risk in following his/her own unique vision and voice, and realizing that you’re not following a traditional path (thus you will never know whether you will “succeed” or “fail”).**
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Why do we seek to please others?

The first question:

Why do we seek to please others?

I have several theories/ideas:

1. It is part of human DNA to seek approval from others in our tribe or community. Rejection from the tribe meant possible starvation or death.
2. If we grew up Christian (or in a western country where Christian morality dominates), our personal ethics is to be “selfless” and to always think about others before ourselves. Therefore **according to a Christian morality, the purpose of our lives is to please others (not to please ourselves)**. For example if you’re atheist (but grew up in America, a Protestant-Puritan society), Christian morality still probably has strong influences on your psyche and thought process on considering selfishness as “evil”.
3. We measure entrepreneurial/life success by how much money we make. Therefore, we want to please others, because we think the more we please others, the more money we will earn.

Why spurn pleasing others?

I am Korean-American (born in San Francisco, but raised on Confucian-Korean values, morals, and ethics). I was taught that being selfish was evil.

Also, I was raised Catholic, which of course, meant that if you wanted to be a good person, you had to be selfless like Jesus, and that you needed to sacrifice yourself and your life to help serve/help others.

Now, ultimately I’m all for helping empower others and humanity. But **as a prerequisite, I think it’s essential to first empower and help yourself.**

In my personal life, I’ve discovered this truth:

Anything I was generally curious or interested in life, other people always were nay-sayers, and told me why I would fail and why I was foolish or dumb.

Making a living from my passion (street photography)

For example, my passion was street photography, and I had a thought: “What if I could make a living from it?” But to everyone I told my dream to – literally 0% of people told me that it was possible to make a living from street photography. People told me why I was impractical, and why I would fail. But 2010-2018 (8 years) I’ve been able to successfully make a living from street photography (via workshops, selling products, commercial work). And I imagine I will be able to make at least another 8 years making a living from street photography.

People told me I would fail because there was no precedent from someone making a living from street photography. Of course, **if something hasn’t been done before, it is hard to imagine that it will be possible to do. As humans, we reason via analogy.** It is hard for us to reason from “first principles” and to ask ourselves, “Is this physically possible?”

But to be successful in today’s capitalist world, it requires a combination of grit, hustle, ingenuity, innovative thinking, and luck. Luck as manifested as via opportunity, and the conditions of society and the world around you. For example, I’m “lucky” to make a living from street photography, because of the opportunity of being born in a society that has open access to the internet, digital cameras being ubiquitous, and the invention of social media networks (all which helped me). I was also lucky to have been born in America, because English is the language of the internet. If I were born in South Korea, I don’t think I would have been able to successfully monetize my passion in street photography.

What are you capable of?

Anyways what I want to say is this:

If you have a crazy idea, dream, or ambition in life, ignore everyone else, and pursue your own dream with 100% zest, passion, and effort, and spurn pleasing others.

You will never know what you're capable of until you attempt it!

BE BOLD, ERIC