

What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger

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by [Academy of Ideas](#)

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The following is a transcript of this video.

“The warrior’s approach is to say “yes” to life: “yea” to it all...Opportunities to find deeper powers within ourselves come when life seems most challenging. Negativism to the pain and ferocity of life is negativism to life. We are not there until we can say “yea” to it all.”

Joseph Campbell, Reflections on the Art of Living

Just as the wood of a tree is strengthened by the storm, in the life of man adversity is the sculptor of a strong and resilient character. Most people, however, fear adversity, they flee from it and believe that if it becomes too severe they will not be strengthened by it, but broken. In this video, we explore how most people underestimate the degree of adversity they can withstand and overlook the fact that even traumatic experiences can be the catalyst for personal growth.

“Out of life’s school of war—what doesn’t kill me, makes me stronger.”

Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols

Bad things happen – this is one of life’s guarantees. Most of the time the hardships that confront us are minor and

manageable. But at certain times adversity strikes that shakes the very foundations of our being. These are the experiences that are so intense or tragic that they are characterized as traumatic. In his book *What Doesn't Kill Us*, the psychologist Stephen Joseph notes that:

“Researchers have estimated that 75 percent of all people experience some form of trauma in life—the loss or suffering of a loved one, the diagnosis of an illness, the pain of divorce or separation, the shock of an accident, assault, or environmental disaster. Around a fifth of all people are likely to experience a potentially traumatic event within a given year. By its very definition, trauma is unexpected, unpredictable, and uncontrollable. Believing that life can be lived without encountering adversity is a lost cause.”

Stephen Joseph, What Doesn't Kill Us

The word trauma derives from the Greek word meaning “wound” and was first used in the 17th century to refer to a physical wound which pierces the body. In the 20th century Sigmund Freud adopted the word for psychological purposes to refer to painful experiences that puncture the psyche and leave us emotionally wounded. Throughout the 20th century, most psychologists focused on the negative symptoms that accompany traumatic experiences. After all, what good can come from the worst life has to offer? In the 1990s, however, the psychologists Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhoun noticed that while suffering was inevitable following a traumatic experience, accompanying this suffering some people experienced immense growth in various areas of life – including an increase of personal strength, a greater appreciation of life, richer relationships, an openness to new possibilities, a greater sense of meaning, and a deeper spiritual attitude. This growth which follows trauma they called “posttraumatic growth”, and as Stephen Joseph writes:

“The idea of transformation through trauma goes against the grain of all that is written about the devastating and destructive effects of trauma. Psychological studies have shown that adverse life-events are often the trigger for depression, anxiety, or posttraumatic stress. What, then, are we to make of the stories of people who have encountered a life-threatening illness, a harrowing natural disaster, even a man-made horror, and then go on to tell of how it was a transformational turning point in their lives? Such stories seem to point to the truth of Nietzsche’s dictum: “What doesn’t kill me makes me stronger.””

Stephen Joseph, What Doesn’t Kill Us

History is replete with stories of individuals that validate Nietzsche’s dictum. Take Viktor Frankl. In 1942 the Nazis took Frankl, his wife, brother, and parents to a concentration camp. His mother and brother were murdered. His father died of exhaustion, his wife died of typhus, and Frankl was transferred between 4 concentration camps in 3 years. Instead of letting this tragedy destroy him, Frankl accepted his fate and through his suffering transformed himself into a heroic character and one of the greatest psychologists of the 20th century. And as Frankl wrote in *Man’s Search for Meaning*:

“When a man finds that it is his destiny to suffer, he will have to accept his suffering as his task; his single and unique task. ... His unique opportunity lies in the way in which he bears his burden.”

Viktor Frankl, Man’s Search for Meaning

Another example of an individual who embodied Nietzsche’s dictum is Terry Waite. In 1987 Waite traveled to Beirut Lebanon to secure the release of hostages. He was captured and spent 4 years in solitary confinement, where he was repeatedly beaten, chained, and subjected to mock executions.

“I said three things on release: no regret, no self-pity, and no sentimentality.”, explains Waite. “I tried to turn the experience around. Suffering is universal; you attempt to subvert it so that it does not have a destructive, negative effect. You turn it around so that it becomes a creative, positive force.”

Terry Waite, Quoted in What Doesn't Kill Us

Some might argue that Frankl and Waite belong to a rare breed of individuals who are capable of transmuting traumatic experiences into personal growth. Research, however, suggests that this capacity is widespread. After surveying the literature, Stephen Joseph notes that up to 70 percent of individuals who experience serious trauma report “*some form of benefit following [the traumatic event].*” What is more, “*Studies have shown that higher levels of posttraumatic stress are often associated with higher levels of growth.*” It appears as if the human psyche has evolved the capacity to not only to endure trauma, but to use the stress that follows to foster growth.

“...posttraumatic stress is the engine of transformation—of a process known as posttraumatic growth...posttraumatic stress is a natural and normal process of adaption to adversity that marks the beginning of a transformative journey...there is nothing positive about trauma...it is in the struggle to deal with what has happened that positive change can arise.”

Stephen Joseph, What Doesn't Kill Us

One of the ways posttraumatic growth occurs is through what is called the “existential wakeup call”. When trauma or adversity strikes, we may become aware of how precarious and precious life is, and this can motivate us to make needed changes to our values, beliefs, and priorities. Or as Stephen Joseph writes:

“Not until adversity strikes do many people begin to look deeply within themselves to reappraise what really matters. Adversity can awaken people to new and more meaningful lives...Trauma forces people to confront a crossroads in their lives.”

Stephen Joseph, What Doesn't Kill Us

While we have a natural disposition to grow in response to adversity and trauma, a weak mindset can impede this growth. To strengthen our mindset, we can turn to the wisdom of the ancient stoic philosophers. The stoics recognized that adversity is an unavoidable part of human existence, and that we should, therefore, psychologically prepare ourselves for challenging times before they arise.

“What should a philosopher say, then, in the face of each of the hardships of life? ‘It is for this that I’ve been training myself; it is for this that I was practising.’”, stated Epictetus.

Epictetus, Discourses

Training for adversity requires that we accept that life is uncertain, and that we will face various misfortunes, both minor and major, throughout life. Most of us do not accept this. Instead, we convince ourselves that the hardships that happen to other people are unlikely to happen to us. “*In experiments in which people are asked to rate their chances of experiencing negative events, they consistently rate their own chances lower than those of others.*”, explains Stephen Joseph. While alleviating our anxiety in the moment, this strategy of sticking our head in the sand leaves us vulnerable. For if we believe we are unlikely to face misfortune, when we do, we will be unprepared and susceptible to greater suffering. Or as the Roman Stoic Seneca noted:

“What is quite unlooked for is more crushing in its effect, and unexpectedness adds to the weight of a disaster. The

fact that it was unforeseen has never failed to intensify a person's grief."

Seneca, Letters from a Stoic

For this reason, the Stoics recommended we set aside time to contemplate the various misfortunes that could befall us, and occasionally imagine that a specific misfortune has already occurred. Arthur Schopenhauer, who was influenced by the stoic philosophers, wrote that:

"There is some use in occasionally looking upon terrible misfortunes – such as might happen to us – as though they had actually happened."

Arthur Schopenhauer, Counsels and Maxims

As an example, we can imagine that we have suffered a great loss or the death of someone we love. Not only will this practice heighten our appreciation of what we have, ensuring that we do not take it for granted; but if such a loss or death does occur, we will be in the position of the Stoic wise man whose foresight blunts the negative effects of tragedy and minimizes the degree of suffering and grief.

"The wise man gets used to future evils...", writes Seneca. "We sometimes hear the inexperienced say, "I didn't know this was in store for me." The wise man knows that everything is in store for him. Whatever happens, he says, "I knew.""

Seneca, Epistles

Or as Seneca continues:

"...by looking ahead to all that may happen as though it were going to happen, he will soften the attacks of all ills, which bring nothing unforeseen to those who are prepared and expectant, but come as a serious blow to those who show no concern and expect only blessings. Sickness befalls a

man, captivity, disaster, destruction by fire: none of these things, however, is unexpected; I knew in what rowdy company Nature had confined me...A great many men on the point of taking to the sea give no thought to storms."

Seneca, Dialogues and Essays

Along with preparing for potential adversities ahead of time, to further improve our capacity to endure the worst life offers, we can strive for what Nietzsche called "*the highest state a human can attain...to stand in a Dionysian relationship to existence.*" (*Nietzsche, The Will to Power*) Dionysus was a Greek God. In one myth the Titans, former gods whose power had been supplanted, are jealous of Dionysus and so they capture him and tear his body into pieces. Dionysus's father, Zeus, quickly intervenes and brings Dionysus back to life. Hence why Dionysus is an archetypal symbol of resurrection, but more importantly, of psychological rebirth.

"Dionysus cut to pieces is a promise of life: it will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction."

Nietzsche, The Will to Power

To stand in a Dionysian relationship to existence is to recognize that no matter the degree of psychological destruction we face, like Dionysus, we can be reborn from tragedy and trauma and return to life stronger than we were before. It is to acknowledge the truth that pain and destruction are often the precursors of self-transformation. It is to be strong enough to say yes to life – to justify it – even when life is, in the words of Nietzsche, "*most terrible, ambiguous, and mendacious.*" In a passage in the Will to Power titled "*Dionysus: To him that has turned out well*", Nietzsche describes the individual who stands in a Dionysian relationship to existence:

"...he has illnesses as great stimulants of his life; he knows how to exploit ill chances; he grows stronger through

the accidents that threaten to destroy him...That of which more delicate men would perish belongs to the stimulants of great health."

Nietzsche, The Will to Power

In our age a victim mentality reigns, and many individuals use adversities and traumas as justifications for their personal failures, resentments, pettiness and meanness of character. But we can rise above this weakness of our age. We can strive to be heroic in the face of hardships and recognize that, while traumas and tragedies can break us and tear us into pieces, they can also be the catalyst to a greater health and a greater life.

"A full and powerful soul not only copes with painful, even terrible losses, deprivations, robberies, insults; it emerges from such hells with a greater fullness and powerfulness; and, most essential of all, with a new increase in the blissfulness of love."

Nietzsche, The Will to Power

Or as Joseph Campbell wrote:

"Nietzsche was the one who did the job for me. At a certain moment in his life, the idea came to him of what he called 'the love of your fate.' Whatever your fate is, whatever the hell happens, you say, 'This is what I need.' It may look like a wreck, but go at it as though it were an opportunity, a challenge...Any disaster you can survive is an improvement in your character, your stature, and your life. What a privilege!...Then, when looking back at your life, you will see that the moments which seemed to be great failures followed by wreckage were the incidents that shaped the life you have now."

Joseph Campbell, The Power of Myth

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Social Distancing – Why They Want You Isolated and Alone

[Social Distancing – Why They Want You Isolated and Alone](#)

by [Academy of Ideas](#)

July 19, 2024

The following is a transcript of this video.

“...totalitarian domination as a form of government is new in that it... bases itself on loneliness, on the experience of not belonging to the world at all, which is among the most radical and desperate experiences of man.”

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

Many people have amnesia regarding that fact that a mere few years ago we were forced to seclude ourselves in our homes, banned from partaking in social activities and attending communal gatherings, and even told to maintain our distance from others out in public or in our own homes. What was the

intention of this extreme social isolation? Was it to protect us, or is there a more nefarious reason behind the social distancing and isolation we were forced to endure? In this video, we explain how tyrants and totalitarians in the 20th century, and into the modern day, have attempted to isolate and atomize individuals, in order to make them easier to control.

In his book *Community and Power*, Robert Nisbet writes:

"The genius of totalitarian leadership lies in its profound awareness that human personality cannot tolerate moral isolation. It lies, further, in its knowledge that absolute and relentless power will be acceptable only when it comes to seem the only available form of community and membership."

Robert Nisbet, *Community and Power*

Man has social needs that must be fulfilled as a basis for psychological health. Throughout most of history, these needs have been satisfied at a tribal or local level. For hundreds of thousands of years our hunter-gatherer ancestors lived in small, tight-knit tribes, and each member's sense of self was deeply intertwined with the group. This tribal identity provided our ancestors with an unwavering sense of social belonging.

"History teaches that in the beginning the individual did not exist as an independent entity...In the early state there is a fusion of the individual with the group."

Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*.

In medieval society man started to emerge as an independent individual, yet his social needs were still satisfied through the diverse community associations that flourished in towns and villages, such as markets, guilds, local assemblies, town councils, communes, churches, fraternities, charities,

monasteries, universities, and the primal community of the family. This multitude of community associations provided medieval man with a strong sense of social belonging that not only bolstered his psychological health, but also his courage and will to resist external powers which posed a threat to his social groups.

"Only in their social interdependences are men given to resist the tyranny that always threatens to arise out of any political government, democratic or other."

Robert Nisbet, *Community and Power*

Another benefit of the diverse array of community associations that existed in the Middle Ages is that each had authority figures who, as a result of a superior character, knowledge, and ability, served as role models, maintained communal order, and mediated disagreements among members. This proliferation of authority figures created a web of decentralized authority that safeguarded societies from being overtaken by any single centralized power. Or as Nisbett continues:

"We are prone to see the advance of power in the modern world as a consequence...of that diminution of individual freedom. But a more useful way would be to see it in terms of the retreat of authority in many of the areas of society within which human beings commonly find roots and a sense of the larger whole... It is power, not authority, that seeks homogeneity, regimentation, and the manipulated articulation of parts by hierarchies of administrators. And it is the competition of authorities within society at large that, above most things I can think of, keeps a society mobile and free. "Multiply your associations and be free," wrote the great Proudhon."

Robert Nisbet, *Community and Power*

The modern state came into existence in the 17th century and

one of the primary trends that accompanied its development was the destruction of traditional community associations. The state, defined by its bureaucratic form of organization and a stability that extends beyond any individual ruler, has from its inception imposed itself as the intermediary, regulator, or manager, of almost all forms of social organization and interaction. As a few examples, with the birth of the modern state, guilds that regulated trade and maintained quality standards were replaced by government regulatory bodies. Charitable and private hospitals and institutions for the sick and disabled were replaced by institutions of the Welfare State. Private schools and educational institutions were replaced by State run public schools. And the defense provided by merchant leagues was replaced by enormous state militaries. In absorbing or destroying the medieval forms of community, the modern State spread its tentacles throughout society and methodically built up what is now an all-encompassing political community. Or as Nisbet explains:

"The structure of political power which came into being three centuries ago on the basis of its eradication of medieval forms of community has remained—has indeed become ever more—destructive of the contents of new forms of community...Knowing the basic psychological truth that life apart from some sense of membership in a larger order is intolerable for most people, the leaders of the total State thus direct their energies not just to the destruction of the old order but to the manufacture of the new."

Robert Nisbet, *Community and Power*

In the 19th and 20th centuries many intellectuals assisted the State's efforts to dismantle traditional community associations by arguing that institutions such as the church and the family were outdated, obsolete, and oppressive. Friedrich Nietzsche attacked the community of Christian Church, calling it "the greatest of all imaginable corruptions". Herbert Marcuse, a member of the Frankfurt

School of Critical Theory, joined the growing voices of 20th century radical feminism by arguing that the community of the family was a patriarchal system of oppression. What motivated these modern iconoclasts was the idea that traditional communities and institutions limited man's freedom to develop in an autonomous manner, or as Ross Douthat explains:

“As social institutions, these [community] associations would be attacked as inhumane, irrational, patriarchal, and tyrannical; as sources of clinical and economic power, they would be dismissed as outdated, fissionary, and inefficient. In place of a web of overlapping communities and competing authorities, the liberal West set out to build a society of self-sufficient, liberated individuals...”

Ross Douthat, Introduction to Community and Power

What these intellectual iconoclasts did not foresee is that most people are not self-sufficient or mentally strong enough to embrace freedom when they lack community involvement and a sense of social belonging. The dismantling of traditional community associations has left many people lacking the social ties that give their life meaning and joy. Furthermore, this so called “liberation” from the communal bonds of the past left many individuals socially isolated, anxious, alienated and lacking in purpose. This social atomization was taken to an extreme in the first few years of the 2020s, when individuals, most of whom already lacked a strong sense of community, were forced to isolate to a degree never before experienced society-wide. History shows, that when social atomization and isolation reach unnatural levels, it tends to trigger the phenomenon of enantiodromia. The law of enantiodromia, formulated by the Presocratic philosopher Heraclitus, states that when an individual or society is too one-sided or excessive in some important manner, a counterreaction to the opposite extreme will sooner or later

occur. In accordance with this law, extreme social atomization triggers a swing to its opposite, extreme collectivism. And as most traditional forms of community have been destroyed, in the modern day this extreme collectivism plays out in the political realm, as individuals try to fulfill their needs by becoming fervent supporters and participants of the political community of the State. Or as Ross Douthat writes:

"Man is a social being, and his desire for community will not be denied...And if he can't find that community on a human scale, then he'll look for it on an inhuman scale—in the total community of the totalizing state."

Ross Douthat, Introduction to Community and Power

That modern man, in his social isolation, is seeking to satiate his yearning for community by forming a deep emotional and psychological bond with the political community of the State, is apparent when we look at the case histories of 20th century totalitarianism.

In her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt notes the intimate connection between social isolation, and the rise of 20th century totalitarianism. As she wrote:

"What prepares men for totalitarian domination in the non-totalitarian world is the fact that loneliness, once a borderline experience usually suffered in certain marginal social conditions like old age, has become an everyday experience of the ever-growing masses of our century."

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

Hitler recognized that a lack of community creates a void of social isolation which can be filled by a strong leader and a strong state. Hence why, when in power, he suppressed and co-opted independent associations including trade unions, youth groups, and other cultural organizations, and replaced local town hall meetings with mass political meetings. In *Mein*

Kampf Hitler wrote that:

"The mass meeting is necessary if only for the reason that in it the individual who in becoming an adherent of a new movement feels lonely and is easily seized with the fear of being alone, receives for the first time the picture of a great community, something that has a strengthening effect upon most people."

Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf

In a similar manner, the attraction which communism held to millions of people in the 20th century, and continues to hold for many today, has less to do with its ideology than with the sense of community it offers its adherents. Or as Nisbet explains:

"To a large number of human beings Marxism offers status, belonging, membership, and a coherent moral perspective. Of what matter and relevance are the empirical and logical refutations made by a host of critics as against the spiritual properties that Marx offers to millions."

Robert Nisbet, Community and Power

If the cancerous growth of the modern state, as well as fascism, communism, and totalitarianism, are products of the socially atomized masses' misguided search for community, then what Western societies desperately need is a revival of smaller scale community associations. Or as Nisbett writes in the Quest for Community:

"It is not the revival of old communities that the book in a sense pleads for; it is the establishment of new forms: forms which are relevant to contemporary life and thought...Hence the appeal...for what I call a new laissez faire, one within which groups, associations, and communities would prosper and which would be, by their very vitality, effective barriers to further spread of unitary,

centralized, political power.”

Robert Nisbet, *Community and Power*

A diverse multitude of autonomous social groups and associations helps the individual maximize his potential by providing the communal support and security that is needed for an individual to face up to the challenges of life. Furthermore, it is usually only when man feels secure within a community, that he will risk the dangerous task of individuating himself and cultivating his idiosyncratic side. *“...no conception of individuality is adequate that does not take into consideration the myriad ties which normally bind the individual to others from birth to death...”*, explains Nisbett. Or as Carl Jung writes:

“Individuation is only possible with people, through people. You must realize that you are a link in a chain, that you are not an electron suspended somewhere in space or aimlessly drifting through the cosmos.”

Carl Jung, *Zarathustra Seminar*

If modern man continues to be socially isolated and alienated, and allows the State to separate and distance him from others, then not only will individuation remain out of his reach, but many will continue to search for community in the totalizing State, and thus be complicit in their own enslavement. Regarding the man whose life is meaningless due to a lack of social connections, Carl Jung wrote that:

“...he is already on the road to State slavery and, without knowing or wanting it, has become its proselyte.”

Carl Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*

Or as Nisbett concludes:

“Totalitarianism is an ideology of nihilism. But nihilism is not enough. No powerful social movement can be explained

in negative terms alone. There is always the positive goal...We should miss the essence of the total State if we did not see in it elements that are profoundly affirmative. The extraordinary accomplishments of totalitarianism in the twentieth century would be inexplicable were it not for the immense, burning appeal it exerts upon masses of individuals who have lost, or had taken away, their accustomed roots of membership and belief."

Robert Nisbet, *Community and Power*

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Why Democracy Leads to Tyranny

[Why Democracy Leads to Tyranny](#)

by [Academy of Ideas](#)

March 30, 2024

Video available at Academy of Ideas [Rumble](#), [Odysee](#) & [YouTube](#) channels.

The following is a transcript of this video.

“Remember Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes exhausts and [destroys] itself. . .It is in vain to Say that Democracy is ... less proud, less selfish, less ambitious or less avaricious than Aristocracy or Monarchy. It is not true in Fact and no where appears in history. Those Passions are the same in all Men under all forms of Simple Government, and when unchecked, produce the same Effects of Fraud Violence and Cruelty.”

Letter from John Adams to John Taylor, December 1814

In every age there is a set of beliefs that are elevated to a sacred status and questioning them is deemed heretical. For centuries it was the dogmas of Christianity that possessed this status, today it is the dogma of the democratic state. Democracy, as currently practiced, is the greatest form of government and anyone who denies this commits blasphemy – or so we are taught. But just as much of the Christian dogma was a veil to protect the power of the Church, the same can be said about democracy. Democracy, with its political campaigns, elections, and the illusion of rule by the people, is a veil behind which politicians and bureaucrats parasitically enrich themselves while imposing their corrupt vision of society on the rest of us. In this video we explore some of the fatal flaws of modern democracy and explain how instead of promoting social flourishing, it has given rise to a form of soft totalitarianism.

“Conceived as the foundation of liberty, modern democracy paves the way for tyranny. Born for the purpose of standing as a bulwark against Power, it ends by providing Power with the finest soil it has ever had in which to spread itself over the social field.”

Bertrand de Jouvenel, On Power

There are many institutions that are necessary for a free and prosperous society; these include free markets, the division

of labour, a rule of law that promotes order and trust, strong families, sound money, a school system that educates instead of indoctrinates, and a robust media that pursues the truth instead of spreading propaganda. If a democracy preserves these institutions, then one can claim that it is a form of political organization conducive to social harmony. But if a democracy continually produces governments that destroy these institutions, then the value of democracy must be questioned. Across the globe, the governments of most democracies are doing the latter – from the family unit, to schooling, the media, free markets, sound money, or the rule of law, politicians and bureaucrats are actively destroying, or at least severely corrupting, these institutions. Why is this? What are the flaws of modern-day democracies that are leading it to manifest such corrupt governments?

To answer this question, we must distinguish between two types of democracy: direct democracy and indirect democracy. A direct democracy involves citizens casting votes on specific issues, usually by means of a referendum. In a direct democracy majority rules. Whether one views this form of political organization in a positive or negative light will usually depend on if one belongs to the majority or minority. Those in the majority tend to believe that direct democracy is a good system as it leads to the satisfaction of their wants, while those in the minority often feel that direct democracy is nothing more than a tyranny of the masses. *“Democracy is two wolves and a lamb voting on what they are going to have for lunch,”* Benjamin Franklin famously remarked. While the 19th century British politician Auberon Herbert had this to say concerning the morality of a direct democracy:

“Five men are in a room. Because three men take one view and two another, have the three men any moral right to enforce their view on the other two men? What magical power comes over the three men that because they are one more in number than the two men, therefore they suddenly become

possessors of the minds and bodies of these others? As long as they were two to two, so long we supposed each man remained master of his own mind and body; but from the moment that another man, acting Heaven only knows from what motives, has joined himself to one party or the other, that party has become straightaway possessed of the souls and bodies of the other party. Was there ever such a degrading and indefensible superstition?"

Auberon Herbert, The Right and Wrong of Compulsion by the State

A tyranny of the masses, however, is not the most serious threat facing the West as we live in indirect democracies which render most people politically impotent and the power of the masses relatively negligible. In an indirect, or representational democracy, we vote for politicians who are then, in theory, supposed to represent our interests. But how representational democracy should work in theory, is not how it works in practice. In almost all democratic countries a small number of political candidates are preselected by a handful of political parties that monopolize each country's political system and from these candidates we vote for the ones we prefer, or at least dislike the least. Once elected, far from being forced to represent the interests of the majority, politicians can, and frequently do, serve their own interests. Or as Frank Karsten and Karel Beckman note in their book *Beyond Democracy*:

"It is not 'the will of the people', but the will of politicians – prompted by groups of professional lobbyists, interest groups and activists – that reigns in a democracy."

Frank Karsten and Karel Beckman, Beyond Democracy

Many will counter that a benefit of an indirect democracy is that we can vote out the corrupt politicians who fail to serve

us. The problem, however, is that modern democracies rarely produce honest and ethical political candidates. Each time one corrupt politician is voted out of office, he or she is replaced by another corrupt politician who merely serves different special interest groups. Furthermore, nation states have grown so large that most of the state actors who rule over us and implement the policies that affect us on a day-to-day basis are bureaucrats who are not subject to popular elections.

And herein lies perhaps the most serious flaw of modern democracies – the democratic process seems incapable of preventing the worst from rising to the top in government. There are several factors that can account for this: Firstly, there is the corrupting nature of power.

“Unlimited power in the hands of limited people always leads to cruelty.”

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, The Gulag Archipelago

Or as Mikhail Bakunin wrote:

“However democratic may be their feelings and their intentions, once [politicians] achieve the elevation of office they can only view society in the same ways a schoolmaster views his pupils, and between pupils and masters equality cannot exist. On one side there is the feeling of a superiority that is inevitably provoked by a position of superiority; on the other side, there is a sense of inferiority which follows from the superiority of the teacher. . . Who-ever talks of political power talks of domination; but where domination exists there is inevitably a somewhat large section of society that is dominated. . . This is the eternal history of political power. . .”

Mikhail Bakunin, The Illusion of Universal Suffrage

Another factor that can account for the moral corruption of

politicians is that like a moth to flame, the most ruthless and power-hungry among us are attracted to state power. Those who enter the game of politics are often the very individuals who we least want to rule over us, or as Frank Herbert wrote:

“All governments suffer a recurring problem: Power attracts pathological personalities. It is not that power corrupts but that it is magnetic to the corruptible.”

Frank Herbert, Chapterhouse: Dune

Another explanation for why the worst rise to the top in modern politics is because Machiavellian, narcissistic, and sociopathic character traits improve one's chance of winning a political election or getting promoted to the position of a high-level bureaucrat. Or as the philosopher Hans Hermann Hoppe explains:

“. . . the selection of state rulers by means of popular elections makes it essentially impossible for harmless or decent persons to ever rise to the top. Presidents and prime ministers come into their position not owing to their status as natural aristocrats, as feudal kings once did . . . but as a result of their capacity as morally uninhibited demagogues. Hence, democracy virtually assures that only dangerous men will rise to the top of state government.”

Hans Hermann Hoppe, From Aristocracy to Monarchy to Democracy

Once in power these demagogues are effectively shielded from the wrath of the citizenry due to a mirage that is created by the dogma of democracy. Most people believe that in a democracy it is we the people that rule, and that as rulers we are collectively to blame for the corruption, ineptitude, and immorality of our government. This belief overlooks the fact that most of us have no impact on the actions of politicians and it diverts responsibility away from the politicians and bureaucrats who are responsible for the policies that are

destroying society. Furthermore, when it is believed that we the people rule, our resistance toward the dangerous growth of state power is weakened, or as Hoppe explains:

“Under democracy the distinction between the rulers and the ruled becomes blurred. The illusion even arises that the distinction no longer exists: that with democratic government no one is ruled by anyone, but everyone instead rules himself. Accordingly, public resistance against government power is systematically weakened.”

Hans Hermann Hoppe, From Aristocracy to Monarchy to Democracy

This weakened resistance to the growth of state power has created a fertile ground for the emergence of totalitarian rule across the West. Many will counter that the democratic West is not at all like the totalitarian countries of the past, be it Soviet Russia, Communist China, Nazi Germany, Cuba, or North Korea. These countries centralized power and controlled the lives of their citizens to a degree never seen in history and to a level which far exceeds the experience of the modern West. But the centralization of government power in Western democracies, differs only in degree to that seen in the totalitarian countries of the 20th century. Western democracies are what can be called soft totalitarian states in contrast to the more brutal manifestations of totalitarianism past. In 1835 Alexis de Tocqueville foresaw the rise of soft totalitarianism in Western democracies and described it in his great work *Democracy in America*:

“After having...taken each individual one by one into its powerful hands, and having molded him as it pleases, the sovereign power extends its arms over the entire society; it covers the surface of society with a network of small, complicated, minute, and uniform rules, which the most original minds and the most vigorous souls cannot break through to go beyond the crowd; it does not break wills,

but it softens them, bends them and directs them; it rarely forces action, but it constantly opposes your acting...it hinders, it represses, it enervates, it extinguishes, it stupifies, and finally it reduces each nation to being nothing more than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.”

Alexis de Toqueville, Democracy in America

Prior to the rise of this soft totalitarianism, social relations were dominated by a multiplicity of different institutions and associations which were independent of government – such as markets, guilds, churches, private hospitals, universities, fraternities, charities, monasteries, and most importantly the “primal community of the family”. These independent associations and institutions, while providing great societal benefits, also acted as barriers to the expansion of government power. The destruction and replacement of these more diverse forms of community with relationships between the individual and the state, which began in the West in the 20th century and continues to this day, was a crucial step in the rise of governments who hide their totalitarian nature behind the veil of the democratic ideal. Or as Robert Nisbet wrote in *The Quest for Community*:

“It is not the extermination of individuals that is ultimately desired by totalitarian rulers. . . What is desired is the extermination of those social relationships which, by their autonomous existence, must always constitute a barrier to the achievement of the absolute political community. The prime object of totalitarian government thus becomes the incessant destruction of all evidence of spontaneous, autonomous association...To destroy or diminish the reality of the smaller areas of society, to abolish or restrict the range of cultural alternatives offered to individuals. . . is to destroy in time the roots of the will to resist despotism in its large forms.”

Robert Nisbet, The Quest for Community

In places like Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia the destruction of institutions independent of the state was done quite rapidly and with the use of violence. The same process has been occurring in Western democracies, but at a slower pace and instead of violence, these alternative institutions are crippled with the use of propaganda, educational indoctrination, laws, regulations, and bureaucratic red tape. But no matter how totalitarianism emerges the result is always the same. Citizens becomes subjects, the state becomes the master, and even if we are still granted the right to vote, we are enslaved nonetheless, or as Lysander Spooner wrote:

“A man is none the less a slave because he is allowed to choose a new master once in a term of years.”

Lysander Spooner, The Constitution of No Authority

If our democracies cannot prevent the worst from rising to the top and if they cannot protect us from the rise of a soft totalitarianism, then democracy, as currently practiced, is a failed institutions and alternative forms of political organization must be explored and openly debated. Some may continue to hold out hope that a political saviour will emerge, overcome all the corrupting influences of the state, and return society to a path of peace and prosperity. This, however, is to gamble with the future of society. For as we wait for our saviour, who may never emerge, the state will continue to grow more and more burdensome, and then slowly at first, but ever more rapidly, our societies will deteriorate into the hellish conditions that characterize all totalitarian nations, for as James Kalb noted:

“If all social order becomes dependent on the administrative state, when that becomes terminally corrupt and non-functional everything goes.”

James Kalb, The Tyranny of Liberalism

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Why Do Most Relationships Fail? – The Myth of the Magical Other

[Why Do Most Relationships Fail? – The Myth of the Magical Other](#)

by [Academy of Ideas](#)

November 8, 2023

The following is a transcript of this video.

“...more people look for salvation through relationship than in houses of worship. One may even suggest that romantic love has replaced institutional religion as the greatest motive power and influence in our lives...the search for love has replaced the search for God.”

[James Hollis, The Eden Project: In Search of the Magical Other](#)

Half of all first marriages end in divorce; as do two-thirds

of second marriages, and nearly three-quarters of third marriages. Most non-marital relationships also end in separation. Of the relationships that do last, many are unhealthy and unhappy. Most relationships, in other words, fail. In some cases it is infidelity, abuse, or a clash in personality, beliefs, values, or life-plans that causes a relationship to fail. Many times, however, it is the result of one, or both partners, burdening the relationship with the fantasy that it will cure all their personal problems. This belief that a romantic relationship will unlock a life of happiness and fulfillment, the psychiatrist M. Scott Peck called the myth of romantic love. And in this video, we explain how belief in this myth destroys one's capacity to cultivate the healthy and realistic love that sustains fulfilling relationships. For as M. Scott Peck writes:

"The myth of romantic love tells us that when we meet the person for whom we are intended...we will be able to satisfy all of each other's needs forever and ever, and therefore live happily forever after in perfect union and harmony...While I generally find that great myths are great precisely because they represent and embody great universal truths...the myth of romantic love is a dreadful lie...as a psychiatrist I weep in my heart almost daily for the ghastly confusion and suffering that this myth fosters."

[M. Scott Peck, The Road Less Traveled](#)

The myth of romantic love is pervasive in popular culture; countless shows, movies, plays, books, and songs are centered around the theme of a lost and lonely individual who finds the perfect romantic match, and thereafter experiences a life of happiness and fulfillment. The psychologist James Hollis called this perfect romantic match the Magical Other. And he suggested that as traditional sources of meaning such as religion, family, and community have eroded, the pursuit of the Magical Other has intensified – as many people today deify

romantic love and view it as the central source of life's meaning. Or as Hollis wrote in *The Eden Project: The Search for the Magical Other*:

"One of the false ideas that drives humankind is the fantasy of the Magical Other, the notion that there is one person out there who is right for us...a soul-mate who will repair the ravages of our personal history; one who will be there for us, who will read our minds, know what we want and meet those deepest needs; a good parent who will protect us from suffering and, if we are lucky, spare us the perilous journey of individuation... Virtually all popular culture is fueled by...the search for the Magical Other."

[James Hollis, The Eden Project: In Search of the Magical Other](#)

In addition to popular culture promoting the idea that a Magical Other can save one from suffering and make life meaningful, the search for the "Magical Other" often stems from a childhood lacking in sufficient parental love, affection, and attention. A child who does not receive steady and dependable caregiving tends to develop into an adult afflicted with feelings of insecurity, a fragile identity, and pervasive feelings of emptiness. Such an individual often attempts to fill the emotional void by anchoring their sense of self in a relationship, and by seeking a romantic partner who can assume the role of a maternal or paternal figure, or as Hollis writes:

"The search for reflection from the Magical Other is also the dynamic of narcissism, which manifests in the adult who as a child was insufficiently mirrored by a loving, affirmative parent."

[James Hollis, The Eden Project: In Search of the Magical Other](#)

In the early stages of a relationship, it can appear as if one has found their Magical Other. With dopamine and oxytocin flooding the brain, and with evolved mating instincts playing tricks on the mind so as to increase the probability of reproducing, the experience of falling in love is rife with illusions – the primary of which is the idealization of the significant other. The faults and flaws of the partner are ignored or glossed over as eccentricities which only add to their charm. The novelty of the other, coupled with their perceived perfection, engenders deep feelings of infatuation, happiness, and euphoria, which can breed the illusion that life is now complete. Furthermore, one's ego boundaries collapse as one psychologically merges with the partner, just as in early infancy one was psychologically merged with the mother. *"In some respects the act of falling in love is an act of regression."*, observed James Hollis. Or as the M. Scott Peck wrote regarding this experience:

"The unreality of these feelings when we have fallen in love is essentially the same as the unreality of the two-year-old who feels itself to be king of the family and the world with power unlimited. Just as reality intrudes upon the two-year-old's fantasy of omnipotence so does reality intrude upon the fantastic unity of the couple who have fallen in love...One by one, gradually or suddenly, the ego boundaries snap back into place; gradually or suddenly, they fall out of love. Once again they are two separate individuals."

[M. Scott Peck, The Road Less Traveled](#)

When reality intrudes upon the illusions of falling in love, the romantic partner, rather than being a Magical Other, is revealed as being human, all-too-human. Seen without rose colored glasses, their faults, flaws, rough edges, and bad habits grow apparent. The partner does not always make one happy, meet one's needs, or fulfill one's expectations; and so, in place of sustained infatuation and happiness, at times

there are feelings of indifference, disappointment, and even disdain. These feelings are a normal component of long-term relationships, for as M. Scott Peck writes: “...real love often occurs in a context in which the feeling of love is lacking, when we act lovingly despite the fact that we don't feel loving.” ([M. Scott Peck, The Road Less Traveled](#)) However, for individuals enthralled to the myth of romantic love, the conclusion of the honeymoon period, and the awareness of the widening gulf between their fantasy of who they want their partner to be, and who they really are, can be a troubling experience. Or as James Hollis writes:

“Why don't you make me feel good about myself?” we ask, usually unconsciously but sometimes straight out. “Why don't you meet my needs?”...What a disappointment, how unromantic – the Other was not put on earth to serve or take care of me, protect me from my life!”

[James Hollis, The Eden Project: In Search of the Magical Other](#)

Or as Hollis continues:

“...if I do not see and love my partner as a real person in the real world, if instead I elaborate a fantasy about him or her, using the person merely as a springboard for my imagination and my wishes, then I am doomed sooner or later to resent the actual person for not living up to my fantasies.”

[James Hollis, The Eden Project: In Search of the Magical Other](#)

So long as one remains captured by the myth of romantic love, and chained to search for the Magical Other, one dooms their relationships from the start. Holding onto the expectation that a romantic partner should be the primary source of life's

meaning leads to resentment and mounting pressures that either strain or break the relationship. A pathological dynamic can also develop. The individual in search of the Magical Other manipulates and controls their partner in the attempt to mold them into their idealized image; while the other partner, fearful that they will be abandoned, hopelessly strives to live up to this fantasy by submissively devoting almost all their time and energy to satiating the other's every desire, wish, and need. Or as Hollis writes:

"[The search for the Magical Other] accounts for the fact that so many couples move from naive relatedness to the joustings of power. If you do not act as I wish, I shall bring about your compliance by my actions. I will control you, criticize you, abuse you, withdraw from you, sabotage you...And so, through tactics of dependence or anger or control, mixed with emotional and sexual withdrawal, one [of the partners] tries to force the Other back into one's original, imaginary mold. Seldom are these attitudes and behaviors conscious."

[James Hollis, *The Eden Project: In Search of the Magical Other*](#)

To avoid the unnecessary suffering that plagues so many relationships, it is critical that we discard the myth of romantic love, abandon the search for the Magical Other, and rather than seeking salvation in someone else's affection, concentrate on cultivating self-love. For as the psychologist Nathaniel Branden wrote:

"The first love affair we must consummate successfully is the love affair with ourselves. Only then are we ready for other love relationships."

[Nathaniel Branden, *The Psychology of Romantic Love*](#)

Or as M. Scott Peck observed:

“If being loved is your goal, you will fail to achieve it. The only way to be assured of being loved is to be a person worthy of love, and you cannot be a person worthy of love when your primary goal in life is to passively be loved.”

[M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled*](#)

One of the most effective ways to find the motivation to cultivate self-love is to recognize and accept the fact that we are, and always will be, inescapably alone. We are born alone, die alone, and though the boundaries which separate us from others can be bridged, they can never be transcended. *“We are each of us, in the last analysis, islands of consciousness—and that is the root of our aloneness.”*, observed James Hollis. Relationships come, and either through breakup, divorce, or death, they end, but what always remains is our individual journey – the magnum opus of our life.

“The ultimate goal of life remains the spiritual growth of the individual, the solitary journey to peaks that can be climbed only alone.”

[M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled*](#)

Focusing on expanding our skills, pursuing excellence in a vocation, cultivating enriching hobbies, sculpting our mind and body, creating a network of inspiring friends, seeking adventures, and devoting ourselves to rewarding goals – this is how we make our solitary journey meaningful, and therein cultivate self-love. And with sufficient self-love, we do not need a relationship to thrive, and, paradoxically, this is when we are at our most attractive and capable of cultivating a healthy relationship that is based on the following foundation of realism: A romantic partner can support us and enrich our journey, just as we can support and enrich theirs.

However, to use a relationship to flee the burdens of our existence and to look to another person to provide us fulfillment, is to damage the relationship and cripple ourselves with infantile dependencies. The earthly salvation that we seek can only be found by cultivating and affirming our individual journey; it cannot be found in the arms of another.

“Those vested deeply in the idea of romance will no doubt protest, but then they will remain enslaved to the pursuit of the illusory Magical Other.”

[James Hollis, The Eden Project: In Search of the Magical Other](#)

Or as M. Scott Peck concludes:

“...it is the separateness of the partners that enriches the union. Great marriages cannot be constructed by individuals who are terrified by their basic aloneness, as so commonly is the case, and seek a merging in marriage... Two people love each other only when they are quite capable of living without each other but choose to live with each other...Genuine love not only respects the individuality of the other but actually seeks to cultivate it, even at the risk of separation or loss.

[M. Scott Peck, The Road Less Traveled](#)

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Why Nonconformity Cures a Sick Self and a Sick Society

[Why Nonconformity Cures a Sick Self and a Sick Society](#)

by [Academy of Ideas](#)

August 22, 2023

The following is a transcript of this video.

*“I must be myself, I cannot break myself any longer for you.
. . .If you can love me for what I am, we shall be the happier.
If you cannot, I will still seek to deserve that you should.”*

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance*

The great 19th century American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson believed that to flourish we must be a non-conformist. If we

just think as others think and do as others do, we limit our potential and place our health or sickness at the mercy of social forces beyond our control. In this video we are going to explore the dangers of conformity, what non-conformity meant for Emerson, and how the non-conformist acts as a force of good in a society gone mad.

"Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist."

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance*

To be a conformist is to orient our life around the dominant norms, values, and ideals of our society. It is to allow the boundaries and templates of our culture to shape our sense of self. Most of us become conformists without reflecting on what we are doing – we see everyone around us conforming and so it feels natural to do the same. But conformity comes at a price, or as Emerson stated in a lecture given in 1844:

"I pay a destructive tax in my conformity."

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Lecture Read Before the Society in Amory Hall, March 1844*

In any society only certain character traits are favoured by the trends of conformity, while many others – which may be healthy in their own right – are looked upon with indifference or disdain. In our day, for example, extroversion is favoured over introversion, obedience over disobedience, and risk-aversion over risk-taking. Some people may find their inner nature fits the mold of conformity, but many will find the opposite. For those of us in the latter group, conformity is akin to wearing a mask made to fit the mold of another's face. The mask of conformity never feels comfortable and at times it may cause us to feel like a fraud or imposter.

Conformity also leads to waste – wasted time, wasted opportunities, and wasted resources. In the need to satisfy

others and maintain appearances, we do things we do not value, say things we do not believe, and obtain things we do not need, or as Emerson writes:

“Custom . . . gives me no power therefrom, and runs me in debt to boot. We spend our incomes . . . for a hundred trifles, I know not what, and not for the things of a man. Our expense is almost all for conformity.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Man the Reformer*

But the dangers of conformity reach pathological levels when, as in our day, a society becomes infected with lies. Politicians lie almost as frequently as they open their mouths. A degenerate education system teaches lies on topics ranging from science, to history, ethics, economics, and politics. The media lies about world events. While corporations lie to us about the value, or safety, of their products. With no shortage of lies percolating throughout society, the modern path of conformity leads in errant ways. It encourages us to go into debt to buy things we don't need, to consume unhealthy foods, to be obedient to those in power, to take pharmaceutical drugs that do more harm than good, to eschew our passion in favour of money or social status, and if we ever feel anxious or depressed, the conformist way is to distract ourselves with screens, or to numb ourselves with psychotropic drugs.

“All goes well as long as you run with conformists. But you, who are an honest man in other particulars, know that there is alive somewhere a man whose honesty reaches to this point also, that he shall not kneel to false gods, and, on the day when you meet him, you sink into the class of counterfeits. . . . If you take in a lie, you must take in all that belongs to it.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Religion*

To be a non-conformist, in the modern world, is to renounce the lies that shape our society and to renounce the self that has been shaped by these lies. This act of renunciation paves the way for self-transformation, or as Emerson writes: *“The man who renounces himself, comes to himself.”* (Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Lecture to Divinity Students*). When we abandon the habits of conformity and stop pursuing its ideals, we clear the way for the emergence of a more authentic state of being. We take off the false mask of conformity and permit our individual personality to shine through. But our renunciation should not be limited to self-renunciation, we should also renounce affiliation with organizations and institutions that are infiltrated by the lies of our society. For a non-conformist, according to Emerson, must stand under his or her own banner, not the banner of another:

“It is only as a man puts off all foreign support, and stands alone, that I see him to be strong and to prevail. He is weaker by every recruit to his banner.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance*

Along with the act of renunciation, the non-conformist must establish a new direction in life as merely rejecting conformist ways, without replacing them with something new, will leave us in a pit of aimless and meaningless despair. We need new pursuits to keep us occupied, new habits to keep our life structured, and new goals to give us direction. In the process of re-orienting our life, we should work with what nature has granted us, as it is by cultivating our strengths and talents and aligning our life around pursuits we enjoy, that we unleash our power and pave the way for a great life, or as Emerson writes:

“There is a time in every man’s education when he arrives at the conviction . . . that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but

through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried."

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance*

If conformity has led us astray and we don't know where truth lies or what the plot of ground we are meant to till consists of, spending time in solitude can help correct for this confusion. Away from the chatter and distraction of other minds, solitude can help us understand who we are and what we want from life. There are voices, wrote Emerson "*which we hear in solitude, [that] grow faint and inaudible as we enter into the world.*" (Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance*). Emerson, however, while valuing solitude, did not believe the non-conformist should be a recluse. To flourish as a non-conformist is to strike the optimal balance between solitude and society. We must learn to live in harmony with others without an excessive need to gain their approval or to mimic their errant ways. Or as Emerson put it:

"Solitude is impracticable, and society fatal. We must keep our head in the one and our hands in the other. The conditions are met, if we keep our independence, yet do not lose our sympathy."

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Society and Solitude*

Many people recognize the sickness of modern society, but few choose a path of non-conformity as the means of escape. One reason for this is fear, and specifically a fear of ridicule and rejection. The non-conformist must overcome this fear, or at least learn that constructive, non-conformist action can be taken even when consumed by fear:

"What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people

think. This rule. . .may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. . .It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance*

In learning to deal with ridicule and rejection it can be helpful to recognize a constructive value to this experience. Not only does it provide us with an opportunity to cultivate the courage of acting in the face of our fears, but furthermore, those who treat us with contempt sometimes reveal truths of our character that those who care for us are too timid to point out. But even if the ridicule is not constructive, even if it is based on envy or lies, we can use the disapproval of others as motivating fuel that impels us to greater heights, and as Emerson writes:

"Dear to us are those who love us; the swift moments we spend with them are a compensation for a great deal of misery; they enlarge our life; but dearer are those who reject us as unworthy, for they add another life: they build a heaven before us whereof we had not dreamed, and thereby supply to us new powers out of the recesses of the spirit, and urge us to new and unattempted performances."

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *New England Reformers*

If we learn to conquer the fear of ridicule and rejection, we will possess a crucial skill in the art of non-conformity. But there is another barrier that prevents many from going the way of a non-conformist and this is laziness. To cultivate our own path through life requires hard work, discipline, and a ruthless persistence of action. For Emerson's non-conformist is not passive, he is an active agent striving to change the

world. Once the non-conformist selects a valuable goal, he sticks to it and is not driven off course merely because a bunch conformists disapprove of his ways, or as Emerson writes:

“All men have wandering impulses, fits and starts of generosity. But when you have chosen your part, abide by it, and do not weakly try to reconcile yourself with the world.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Heroism*

Or as he writes elsewhere:

“If you would serve your brother, because it is fit for you to serve him, do not take back your words when you find that prudent people do not commend you. Adhere to your own act, and congratulate yourself if you have done something strange and extravagant and broken the monotony of a decorous age. It was a high counsel that I once heard given to a young person – “Always do what you are afraid to do.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Heroism*

Following a non-conformist path will make us healthier, happier, and more powerful, but it will also turn us into a force of good in the world. For the inner state of our being manifests the events of the outer world, or as Emerson put it: *“A man will see his character emitted in the events that seem to meet [him], but which exude from and accompany him.”* (Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life*) Conformists, in living by lies, are manifesting a sick society. The non-conformist, in aligning himself with the truth of his inner nature and the truth of the world, will manifest events that act as the antidote to a world gone mad.

“In the thought of tomorrow there is a power to upheave . . . all the creeds. . . of the nations, and marshal thee to a heaven which no epic dream has yet depicted. Every man is not

so much a workman in the world, as he is a suggestion of that he should be. Men walk as prophecies of the next age."

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Circles*

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