

PRIDE

Yesterday, while walking down Chestnut Street, I ran into OJ, who is always working out with his shirt off. One day, he decided to challenge me, because I too, had my shirt off, it was like real recognized real, and we began doing pull-ups on the construction site nearby. He's always out there, using the urban landscape as a concrete gym. As I saw him doing push-ups yesterday, I was walking down the street, enjoying the sun as I actively tanned and walked. As soon as I got to the corner where he was, I simply dropped to the ground and challenged him to some push-ups. He actually ended up showing me this really cool move, where you do an explosive push-up from a normal grip to a wide stance on the decline. When you're filled with vitality and vigor, you have excess energy that you must release. When I'm on the streets, I often feel like OJ, looking at the world as a playground, a place for me to conquer the concrete. We must become our most vital selves, improvising and treating the world as our canvas, where we both become the artist and the artwork. When you walk the street, you are now a sculpture. Get like me and OJ, and **become a blueprint for others to admire.**

Time as Currency

We have become slaves to time. We wake up to alarms, make sure we're on time for work, constantly being pinged with notifications to remind us when we must arrive, and have subscribed to this artificial idea of time itself.

Have you ever heard the phrase, "spending time?"

When I consider this notion, it reminds me that time is ultimately the most valuable currency that exists in life. *What are you spending your time on? What are you giving your attention to?*

Think of hunters and gatherers, and how they spent just 13 hours a week gathering necessities, allowing them the time to spend the rest of the week devoted to community, storytelling, and human connection. In this modern world, however, we spend at least 40 hours per week, some even 50, 60, or 80 hours per week, focusing all of their attention, spending all of their time, working and toiling, typically for a corporation, a company, a bank, or a boss. This leads to parents working long hours, spending less time with family, impacting the growth of their children, as they now must spend their time with superficial peers. The time children spend throughout childhood this way can lead them to an identity crisis, causing depression and anxiety among the masses of young people. The impact of the way in which we spend our time can have catastrophic effects, breeding mediocrity.

The Weapons of Mass Distraction

When we went to war in Iraq, we may have never found the weapons of mass destruction, however, the weapon of mass distraction sits in your front right pocket and is the iPhone. Consider the iPhone as the SOMA drug in this Brave New World.

This past weekend, I went to a restaurant with some family. Across from our table, I noticed this phenomenon, where parents give their kids iPads at restaurants, letting them watch extremely strange videos on loop. It's truly a shame that this is occurring at scale, and is something I've noticed throughout the past few years, pretty much everywhere. Even babies in strollers are now given iPads when they're being pushed around the city. They don't even have their heads up anymore, looking around the world, but are glued into an alternate reality on the screen itself. This is concerning because we're essentially breeding a generation of zombie-like robots that will grow up already taking the SOMA against their will. If we disconnect from our reality and our instincts as we are being born into this world, what are the effects this will have on future generations and society in general?

Alexander the Great was taught by a private tutor, Aristotle. The impact that this teacher had on one man led him to become one of the most influential figures in all of human history, spreading Greek culture throughout his vast empire. Now, we have parents who will hardly interact with their children, let alone give them

attention, mentorship, or moral guidance. Will there ever be another Aristotle, another Alexander the Great, if we are sedated by the weapons of mass distraction from here on out?

If you realize that you're being domesticated like a dog, would you continue to obey?

Money as Language

Like language, money becomes a medium of exchange through which we express ourselves and our values. Some people will decide to buy grass-fed beef and organic vegetables, while others will purchase cigarettes and candy. What people purchase, how people spend their money, or even how people spend their time, reveals what different people value in life. I like this idea:

Tell me what you purchase, and I will tell you who you are.

Think of the government's ability to print money ad infinitum. This paper money funds wars in foreign nations. It's quite obvious that modern society values war, as we keep printing our dollars, funding endless violence. Just reflect on the last century; for nearly 100 years, millions of deaths have occurred due to the central banking system's money printer.

Curiosity and the Flow State

Do you wake up in the morning excited for life?

I believe we should cultivate curiosity every day, and as artists, this is our ultimate aim in life. If your curiosity is increasing by one percent each day, consider yourself successful. We must redefine this notion of "success." I find it interesting how

people hope for your success, wish that you are successful with your job, etc. But these notions have nothing to do with what truly matters, such as vitality, contentment, or curiosity. Success has turned into a strange material goal to achieve that is quite meaningless.

Consider Aladdin and the Cave of Wonders. This was the famous scene where he found the genie in the bottle. However, if Aladdin decided to choose the buried treasures, he would be trapped in the cave forever. Aladdin decided to choose the omnipotent power and wisdom, choosing the genie in the bottle. Let's be like Aladdin, and choose wisdom over gold.

Curiosity is important for me to cultivate every day, as it fuels me with excitement. However, I find meaning in the mundane and embrace boredom as a way to find myself in a blissful flow state of creativity. By walking the street aimlessly, without much direction or purpose, I'm able to reflect in words while simultaneously fueling my senses from the external world around me. I enter a Zen zone when walking slowly, as this act of movement becomes my meditation. There's something about the chaos of urban life that fuels me and has me laughing in the face of it. I'm always out there smiling when I'm photographing because it's just so much pure fun, observing life on the front lines. When you're full of vitality, 99% of things in this modern world seem like a distraction, and you want to remain focused in this flow state of production. I find joy in the unpredictable nature of urban life, for spontaneity is my muse, and the street is my canvas.

Ancient World, Modern Life

I recently read Heraclitus' *Fragments* and one quote that stood out to me was in regard to mediocrity and being exceptional:

"One man is worth ten thousand if he is first-rate."

This reminds me of Diogenes and his lantern, walking through Athens, searching for free souls. Diogenes rejected societal norms and essentially viewed most people as slaves to their possessions, social status, pleasure, and the fear of death. He

viewed freedom as self-sufficiency, by becoming aligned with nature, rejecting artificial needs and constraints.

Most people in this modern world are controlled by external forces, the most obvious example being social media and the iPhone. If you're consuming news, it's going to ultimately impact the way that you view the world. If you're consuming media or advertisements, it will sway you this way or that way, like a feather in the wind. However, when you turn within, and free your mind, body, and soul, you become connected with your essence. In a world of distractions and noise, we must turn off the radio static and listen to the sound of our heart beating. True freedom is found from within.

Control and Hubris

Feelings of lust, greed, and attachment are natural, but we must tame them in order to improve. I believe we should fuel ourselves with pride, but be mindful of hubris, or excessive pride and arrogance. Think of Achilles and his fatal flaw of rage. This led to his ultimate demise during the battle of Troy. Achilles became blinded by his power, allowing his emotions to dictate his actions.

One of the most vivid examples of this is when Achilles, after slaying Hector, attached his body to his chariot with a rope and dragged it through the sand. This act of desecration was meant to instill fear in his enemies, but it also highlighted the dangerous extent to which his pride and rage had consumed him. Achilles, once the epitome of heroism, allowed his hubris to cloud his judgment, leading him down a path of destruction. In the end, Hector's brother Paris shot Achilles in the heel with an arrow, killing him in battle.

Become Recalcitrant

So let's rise above our passions and realize the fine line between confidence and hubris. Let's embrace pride openly and reclaim our human instinct to become great. In this modern world, we are becoming docile, weak, meek, and tamed. We should embrace our natural instincts, as this will lead to a more vigorous life. Remember

your nature, and your roots as a human and hunter-gatherer. We are bipedal, stand upright, have a tall spine, and require open spaces to thrive. Don't put yourself in a box, in a closed system, and conform to societal pressures.

Disobey and be untamable. Don't be a domesticated dog.

re- ("back") and calcitrare ("to kick"), which comes from calx, meaning "heel."

Be like a stubborn horse on Achilles' chariot, and kick back with resistance. It's okay to be great and strive to be the best, like that of Achilles!

DANTE