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Necessity's idealist

Enjoy this excerpt from my book, *This New Day: Self Creation—The Wisdom of an Idiot*.

There is an ordinary notion, a daily concept which at its heart carries as much destruction as promise. It seeks to elevate, but it degrades. It looks to exalt while it denigrates. Idealism is of this germ and is in need of examination and replacement. In the common conception an idealist has his ideal, his preconception, his known gold standard which he compares to everything unknown to determine its value. This is the essence of error-generalization, which always fails in making the most of each specific case. It also carries toxic baggage. A person who meets one's ideal in one area becomes seductive. We may forgive him many other faults and become blind to the whole for the love of one facet. Idealism is simple. People and situations are complex, and have their meaning hidden in contradiction. The idealist hopes to simplify the world and becomes unthinking and automatic. The reflexive idealist swallows whole all which meets his ideal, and reveals his undiscerning shallow nature. When pushed to its extreme, idealism can yield an intransigent state where the ideal has crowded out all reason and narrowed vision and the ability to listen, until the victim hears nothing above the angry rushing of his own blood. He has become deaf. His idealism has reached a fevered toxic pitch. He has developed the blinding cancer which springs from idealism. He has convictions. His closed mindedness has become a point of pride, a virtue!

An idealist, however high-minded and well-intentioned, brings his simple truth of comparison which diminishes all he sees. Everything is taken apart according to the ideal formula. "This is of the ideal and that is not." The value of the whole is often sacrificed for the ease of comparison. A nasty dogmatism indeed! Things are not seen in their own terms, but are reduced to the terms of the ideal and their likeness to it. The world is a particular place which responds poorly to rule-governed thinking. A Swiss army knife has many useful tools with different functions. The right tool serves a particular job best. No one tool is above the others. The knife does not negate the spoon. Each is ideal for a particular situation. Another type of idealist feels guilty if his tools are not the same, and seeks to make each appear like the other to lose the usefulness of their different functions and different perspectives. His ideal is the absence of conflict. As soon as he gets his hands on two different ideas, he mutilates them and murders the truth trying to make them the same. This politically correct idealist synthesizes opposing perspectives into unreal useless agreement because he wants everybody to get along. The guilty idealist binds his forks so as not to offend his spoons, which he slots so the forks won't mind. Different ideas are useful because they are different! It is uncomfortable to live in this world of discord and strife but let's be honest, the knife is not the spoon nor does the knife negate the spoon. Perhaps they don't like each other much, but that's to be expected, and in fact that's why they are each useful: they are different. Whether idealism yields a dogmatic ethos of one ideal or a fearful ethos which dogmatically esteems what dulls all concepts to ease the conscience and claim the rule of none, is immaterial. Which ideal is chosen be it reverence of the one, or fear of the many, idealism is a

dogmatism, a rule-governed comparative valuation which assumes the rule, the standard of value, before the specific facts of the case. This rule is how the facts are understood, the rule is the key, and so the cart goes before the horse. What might the case itself tell us? This is the question the idealist refuses to ask. This dangerous question is unsafe reasoning for anyone who wishes to find what is comfortable, affirming and familiar when they look for the truth. They do not wish to find the truth, only their ideal. Rather than an ethos of ideals, preconceptions and rules, one is best served by a morality, an ethos of the particular. Each situation may be best understood, its problems solved and profited from, by a different and unique perspective. The ability to see the same problem with a new definition, a new active principle and a new result, is a trick of genius. To understand your tragedy as comedy and laugh at your miserable self, to change perspective and start anew is such a trick. To see your despair differently and find your misery has fled to reveal a blank page, your ultimate freedom to define yourself, is another. We see our pain is not a sadist who burdens us, it is re-understood and known more deeply as a piece of ourselves, a truth which was unheard. We hear, and pain is profit! This trick of the open mind which sees the basis of all things again is what fuels new scientific paradigms, creativity itself becomes science, now in this moment flexible, knowledge supple and curious no longer defensive opens her eyes as the apple falls on our head, or did our head fall on the apple? These moments are rare and costly. Inertia of the spirit is immense, and certain conditions must prevail to force us into such basic reevaluation of our understanding. A destroyer is at work to be sure! Her name is Necessity. She is deaf and in this lies her power. She only demands, and never answers. You know the world, its value and your truth well, until you meet her. She knows no compassion, justice or truth. She is. If you have idealism she rapes you. Your ideals will be sodomized in the glare of her omnipotent reality. Her rocks never yield. In this desert of smoldering venomous sun, you quickly dry up and wither; soon one changes. Soon one is too weak to maintain the roar of one's convictions, and then weaker still until something most curious occurs. One begins to reconsider the certain, one's own sacred foolish definitions, and the ideals they contain. Soon the air is ripe for apostasy and it happens. You see again and laugh. The problem is the solution. Each particular demands its own solution, necessity demands it so we see! In this moment the wisdom of the idiot is born. He is the idealist of necessity! He would not exist without necessity, and being her offspring I shall properly call him, "Necessity's Idealist."

He sees all definitions and knows all contradictions. His knowledge is complete, and does not negate for the sake of appearance. He is an idealist who knows his tools are not meant to "get along," he accepts that they are useful, and is untroubled to know they will never, and should not agree! All that is politically correct and kind has been squeezed out of him. He is in no position to exclude anything. He is too weak to afford any but an open mind. He seeks only to find the attitude most conducive to his healing. He is without preconceptions, convictions or ideals in the usual sense to hinder him. Necessity has stripped him bare of these, and he only wants to solve the problem. His pride offers no resistance, necessity's idealist is desperate and does not know any crooked truth strange enough, that it might not be straightened and made plain by necessity's unyielding circumstance. It is often not the truth but our understanding which proves crooked. Necessity's idealist finds having no preconceptions to be the ideal state of mind. His vision is unobstructed by ideals so he is in a position to see something new. An open mind is everything to one desperate enough, one who needs to see differently. He chooses from his

arsenal of perspectives and cracks open the nut, each moment, with the perfect tool so he may enjoy its tender meat, or perhaps solve its dreadful riddle. To have been crushed by necessity and forced to think anew, is to have received a strange gift most generous in its cruelty. To be destroyed by, then to see and overcome your tragic script, and raise yourself from desolate anguish with new eyes so hard won is heady stuff! I must be grateful to necessity for having shown me this trick of genius which stands pain on her head and shakes her, empties her pockets until she is generous. Now you know I must be an idiot. Only an idiot would be grateful for his pain.

This gratitude, may well represent the high-water mark of dignity in my thought. Rare and precious are those few days when I feel this gratitude, and know my laughing brother so well. I admit that here and hold it before us both to show what is possible. Can you imagine a more powerful, sublime, perfect or serene state of being than one where you are free from your own pity? I heard the small voice pleading, pale and bleak in the woods, and knew I heard myself, in pain and alone. I found you, so hungrily and gladly I welcome you home, my guide, you lost traveler, thin and sick, let us be together again, and laugh a drunken laugh. Let us drink and celebrate, now whole, we say it aloud, "Pity is dead!" Pity is dead drunk and drowned in gratitude. Pity is dead!

Despite its lofty unapproachable appearance, this overcoming of self-pity is the beginning of the last stage in the process of learning from one's misfortune. The notion of misfortune, pain or suffering presupposes victimization, and the unfair consequences and torment which come from being a victim. We suffer and feel ourselves to be victims of a cruel or indifferent fate. We take our strength in hand, hear our pain and learn. Soon when we are apparently whole, one matter still remains. We still think of ourselves as victims, we still pity ourselves for having had to overcome, having had to become stronger. This is the last paradox which faces those who learn from their sickness. Upon becoming well, we must learn not to think of ourselves as sick. This habit born in facing the truth, is no longer true, and must now be discarded. The last thing the student must do is to divorce his teacher. He must no longer be victim but victor, and victor alone! He must overcome his self-pity. This last most dignified lesson for we students of discontent is to know ourselves again, and ask why we have such a stooped back, always looking down with angry frowning disappointed glances, when we are new, and deserve new eyes! So we shall take them, steal them back from our pitiful self, so they may sparkle with impudence, these pitiless new eyes which call us, scorn us to abandon our excuses, and begin again. How light and magnificent, how voluptuous and simple, how unforgiving and fruitful a life where our strength and completeness laugh, choose any goal and ascend any height, free from our shadow of lead, our old fool, our self-pity.

He who needs his old struggle to find himself, does not yet know the way. The idiot is grateful for his pain, as the big game hunter is grateful to the black bear he killed. It is a trophy now, all snarl and teeth, stuffed and comical by the mantle, his trophy is now harmless. He displays it because it was fearsome, and so it has become a point of pride. The hunter who hunts his pain and is victorious, is also grateful to his pain in this way. It was his pain which fell victim to him, and not he to his pain. He has rescued himself from a terrible unknown fate in the dark woods at the fangs of this beast, so he stands proudly with the beast, and bids you see what he has vanquished and know! Proud and complete in every posture he is a bit of an egoist, but he is no victim!

So we have gotten an annulment from our teacher, a separation is good, but the divorce must be

made final. Soon the idiot will become used to being well and his trophy will seem uninteresting, ordinary and dull. It becomes clear that he needed his trophy so he could wear it out. His past is now powerless and threadbare, unable to hold even enough interest for a convincing bluff. This is the last he will need such a ridiculous trophy, as if it is possible to speak of new things, as one boasts and conjures the laurels of the old. Wear your laurels till they are brown brittle twigs and dust, so you may be free of them. One is not free proclaiming the glory of old chains, one must walk upright toward all things high and bright. Tired of his worn trophy, the idiot stands and finds he is tall enough, he is invited into the cold ice, the perfect frozen sunlit desert, the promise of our beautiful solitude which he may seek to warm, to befriend, so he may harvest its beauty awoken within the endless furnace which drives his ascension. Now the idiot is wise, and throws his trophies into the fire, so he might be warmed and become them. He has used up, burned out and consumed what was, and stands only in relation to himself, having shed both victim and victor, self remains and looks up.

Who lives here in this clean ice air at heights so far from his pity? It is my laughing brother! Free of delusions he has known himself, and now is himself. May he stand forever complete, warmed in that fire which burns fiercely enough to charm any blue ice, and seduce every glacier. From this furnace and fire comes a wind. This wind is unafraid, and boils ice into laughter. It thaws the inner depths, the last cruel most unforgiving glacier. It makes song of pain, hope and longing. It has opened the mouths of hidden ice caves, so they may sing with its breath. For my brother the forbidden depths have become open and light. All is play, every cavern a singing whistle for the wind. So it is with one, where pain might become that golden sumptuous song, which in its fullness of heart, answers its own lament. Complete and never still, he has made liquid that which was ice. No more pure, fresh or glad could any water be, as if glass solved in ether, transparent and sparkling, a gem now fluid runs shining cold and sweet, to refresh us both and quench my tired heart, as we delight in this perfect chill morning.