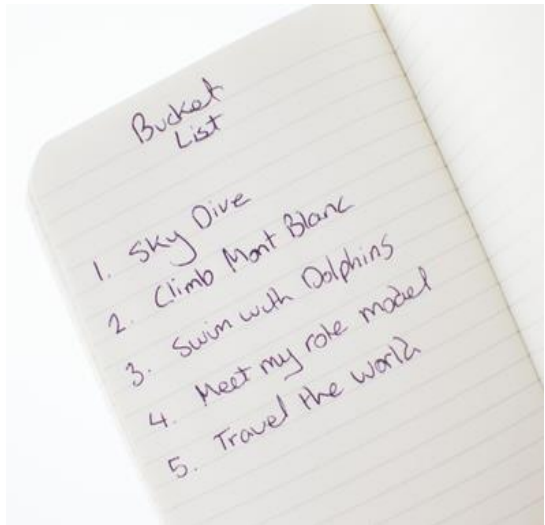


## 13. A Real Man Does Not Have a Bucket List

What good comes when a man makes a list of his own personal goals, the accomplishment of which serves only one person - himself? He's correct to believe that it makes him look like a high-achiever, an interesting man who knows what he wants, and has the ability to go get it. When it comes to self-pleasure and branding, it is a very effective path to further one's success within a culture that glorifies hubris and self-centeredness. However, it sends the clear message: this is a man who cares primarily about himself, and the question of whether he would make a good citizen or a good mate remains open, to put it mildly. "But it's fun. What's wrong with having a little fun?" There's a lot you could be doing that is both fun and less self-centered. Little boys focus on their own pleasure, "I want, I want, I want", but masculine energy is much deeper.



Inherent to masculinity is the wisdom to clearly see that a man is most fulfilled when he is working to help those closest to him, and by extension, to contribute to improving society and ultimately all of life on the planet.

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"But we all know that setting goals and achievement is good, right?" This is what we are taught, and "everyone knows" that it's true. This is the brilliance of subconscious horizontal control. We take pride in our accomplishments, and then through peer pressure and peer praise (for which virtual forums like Facebook are excellent vehicles) we increase our pride more and more. We have come to a point where our time and energy is invested in behaviors that benefit one person and nobody else. We promote pride in these behaviors, and "everyone knows" that this is good. If the bucket list consisted of selfless activities, that would be different; but they typically do not. If you think that love requires a degree of genuine selflessness, and that love is good, then it turns out that "what everyone knows" to be true is absolutely false. Of course, this argument is bound to be unwelcome among conformists.

"But women find it attractive." Yes, it's true, women have been conditioned to value goal-setting just as men have. However, like wealth, it is a temporary attraction, the type that feeds infatuation (short term) but does nothing for intimacy (long term). Think of Charles Ingalls. Did he have goals? If keeping his family alive during the winter or plowing two acres on Tuesday are considered goals, then yes. Did he have goals like running a marathon, or seeing all 50 states, or having dinner with someone famous? Did he have a bucket list? Of course not. He was primarily concerned (partially out of necessity) with the health, safety, and happiness of other people. This is what true masculinity looks like. (yes, he's fictional, but I cannot think of any famous non-fictional man as a fitting example.) It is a characteristic far more common among the early American frontiersmen, and the men who founded this nation; but especially among small band hunter gatherers and other indigenous tribes – men who, by the way, live (or lived) off the land, in relative harmony with Mother Nature, the awesome unpredictable feminine power that demands respect, even reverence.

We have some good excuses for this habit of admiring a man of accomplishment and/or wealth despite not knowing him well. With some exceptions (like inheriting an estate or winning a lottery) it is generally correct to assume that with the achievement comes certain valued characteristics that have facilitated their success; for example, intelligence, discipline, ingenuity, confidence, competence, etc. However, again, if its primary effect is to puff up the pride of one individual, then is it really that admirable? And again, we tell our children to not judge a book by its cover, yet we do the same thing. It behooves us to slow down and reflect on exactly how we feel, what we say, and how we behave when we are observing on-line, or in person, someone who is a high-achiever, has impressive letters after his name, or is rich and/or famous – and to seriously consider whether or not we should laude a man based on his external appearance, or his resume. Masculine energy has the courage and confidence to interrupt the lower impulses, to slow down, and to think rationally about whether it is wise to conform to this phenomenon.

This current cultural conception of success, usually in the form of money, is a “reward” in the first place because it enhances our ability to seek pleasure directly through consumption, and in the second because we get to promote an image, which, when we succeed in getting others to see us in the way we want, is quite pleasurable as well. We do it for self-pleasure. It has become axiomatic to think of money as a reward, when really the ultimate reward is pleasure. This should be no surprise. Philosophers, psychologist, and modern day brain researchers have agreed for years that humans are primarily pleasure-seeking animals. So wouldn't it be natural to ask: Is there a less expensive (with regard to the effort and time that we invest) way to seek pleasure, one that can benefit the lives and liberties of all? In particular, is there a way to activate the brain's pleasure circuits that does not involve the accumulation of money, or experiences, or goals, or college degrees, or just plain “stuff”, or some other thing?

*“We need to redefine the meaning of the word ‘success’” – Kenneth Ginsburg*

Of course, it takes an open mind and seems unnecessary to question what “everyone knows to be true”, but that's the objective here: To assess whether there can a better way to seek pleasure than to blindly follow this script of success, one that may be harder to see and more difficult in the short term, but is better for the lives and liberties of both individuals and groups in the long term.

*“Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed, by the soft arts of luxury and effeminacy, into the pit digged for your destruction. Despise the glare of wealth. That people who pay greater respect to a wealthy villain than to an honest, upright man in poverty almost desire to be enslaved; they plainly show that wealth, however it may be acquired, is, in their esteem, to be preferred to virtue.” -John Hancock*

The fact that money and goal-setting is in limited supply for the vast majority of people means that it must be replenished through continuous economic activity, whether through productivity or investments requiring attention. Otherwise, when the money runs out, so do all the benefits. This keeps us busy and the Adamtocracy fat and happy. The horizontal pressure to follow the money-making script is relentless. We are more eager to spend time with a wealthy person

over a poor person. (One exception being, when we feel exhausted by the need to maintain an image and “fit in” to the “in” group, it is pretty common to want to escape – kick back with some beers and a good friend who won’t judge us, feel some genuine acceptance, and just relax. Some people do this, others don’t. Usually we’re too busy). The truth is that when everything else is equal, we admire and respect a person who appears to be wealthy over one who appears to be poor, and the desire to appear wealthy is a tremendously strong motivator, keeping us locked in the rat race. Some popular motivational speakers even advocate outright the notion that in order to be wealthy you should make friends with wealthy people and maintain an image of “success” at all times. It’s the attitude of famous people like Tony Robbins or fictional characters like the “king of real estate” in *American Beauty* that may come to mind.

A very powerful meme that drives us to work hard to make money and value wealth is the notion that it is good for the economy, hence to the benefit of us all. We must then ask ourselves the important question, what does the evidence show - are humans benefitting, or is it something else? Has Capitalism evolved into a hedonistic ideology, and to what extent does it resemble what its founding fathers envisioned? I think the answers are obvious. To start with we could educate ourselves about ancient thought and first principles, and consider reclaiming them, otherwise the Adamtocracy will strengthen its hold over us.

*What's good for Business is good for America*

