

SECTION 1

WE BOUGHT A DESTRUCTIVE FANTASY.

1.

Like in The Emperor's New Clothes, we have been tricked into thinking that a man's life has no intrinsic value.

"Men and women need each other! It's not natural for a healthy man to not want a relationship with a woman. Things are different from when I got married and women today won't put up with what we did, but women today just want to be treated equally. You can't hate all women just because some may have gone too far and don't appreciate men. You have to find a good woman. What will happen to society if men just start "Going Their Own Way" and avoid women?"

A. Discovering my own self-worth.

My mother was in tears when she spoke those words to me over the telephone. I had just recovered (or should say was recovering) from a mental breakdown and suicidal depression after my adulterous wife filed for divorce and took my children. Everyone I knew determined that whereas I had regained my strength it was time for me to "*get back out there*" and find another woman with whom to share my life. What disturbed my family and stimulated my mother's call was learning that I had no desire to do so. Worse yet, I had come to reject the whole concept "committed" relationships. I thought that my brothers would understand because they went through similar life traumas with adulterous wives. I was wrong. They all insisted that I had some sort of "duty" to "man up" and dedicate myself to some woman. They insisted that I could not lead a fulfilled life until I found a woman and dedicated my life to her. They insisted that I had just gotten a "bad one" and needed to find a "good one."

I shocked them by explaining that I did not attribute my breakdown to a "bad woman" but my previous dedication to a destructive philosophy that they were now insisting that I once again adopt. They were then horrified when I explained that attributed my recovery to discovering a new but growing philosophy that a man is better served by "going his own way" and leading a peaceful life alone rather than tying his life to a woman. Being an economist, I added up the benefits of being with a woman and realized that they did not justify the financial and emotional costs. Being a lawyer, I took time to analyze the laws behind a modern marital contract. I realized that the legal contract obligates a man's life while giving him absolutely no guarantee of benefits in return. In any other area of law or contract, a lawyer would be liable for malpractice if he did not do everything in his power to convince his client to run – not walk – away from that contract. Worse yet, the problems go beyond contract law and into tort and criminal law. Because there is little to no chance of her facing perjury charges, women are free to file false charges against a man (say abuse or rape) and have him falsely locked up if he does not adequately appease her.

I went from asking how any woman could want me to "why the Hell would I want one of them?"

In listening to everyone's argument in favor of "committed" relationships I noticed the recurring theme of "duty." "A man has a duty to man up." The irony of this argument is that it concedes my point: there is no rational argument in favor of "commitment". For example, a Lexus is an expensive car, but no Lexus salesman ever argues that you have a duty to buy a Lexus. He will instead explain how the benefits justify the higher cost. Lexus values your money and so creates benefits that justify the cost and makes a person want to buy the car. In any trade, you demonstrate the value of what you receive by what you are willing to give. If you give no guaranteed benefit, you are valuing what you get at zero. In marriage a man must dedicate his life and so without realizing it, anyone who argues that a man has some "duty" to "man up" is in fact arguing that a man's life has no intrinsic value.

The very idea that a man finds value in sacrificing his life to a woman is demeaning because if a man's life has intrinsic value, there is no inherent value in "manning up" and sacrificing for sacrifice's sake. In fact, the very idea that a man gains value and becomes "a man" by committing/sacrificing his life to a woman is immoral and degrading. Rather than feeling the intended shame for his "failure" to commit, the man should be pissed off.

I am not saying that a man should never dedication/sacrifice his life or that such a dedication/sacrifice is never honorable/desirable. I am saying that, just like sacrificing money to buy a car, a man should never dedicate/sacrifice his life unless he receives clear and just compensation for that sacrifice. He must receive something that honors and gives value to his life. He must receive a reciprocal sacrifice that is at least equal to the sacrifice requested of him. Think of a fireman. His job includes the possibility that he might die to save others. That is a severe cost, but a fireman receives far more than a paycheck to compensate him for his commitment. A fireman receives pride, respect, adulation, and gratitude from the community. (At least in fire prone California they do.) He receives the joy of a sometimes-exciting job and a work schedule that affords him a lot of time off. He also receives the camaraderie of working with men who will all sacrifice their lives for each other. They might have to die but feel compensated with a greater joy of living. The greater joy of living gives value to their lives that is greater than the possibility of death. No one has to force a man to be a fireman. Men compete for the privilege of being on these teams.

On the contrary, when it comes to relationships, we have forgotten this necessary compensation package. If a man sacrifices his life without a proper benefit (a reciprocal sacrifice) that gives his life greater joy, he is devaluing his life. The woman to whom he sacrifices his life will never appreciate him because he has devalued his life and people do not value things that have no value.