

THE POINT OF SUCCESS

In general it's worth thoroughly digesting everything the world feeds us. Another reason why having the TV or radio on all day at home isn't a good idea is because in order to gradually put things in their right place you need peace and calm.

Having had several triumphs in life and paid dearly enough for them, now as a middle-aged man I know what I must do or rather should think over when from time to time the dangerous storm of applause overwhelms me. I'll give a list of my relevant spells which I'm sure you'll understand even without much explanation.

Starting things from the beginning

Completing something tends to make you feel pretty numb. You've become involved and given your blood to whatever you created, like the legendary figure of the stonemason who mixed his wife's blood into the stones of the walls of his castle so they should stand firm.

You are bruised and empty.

Once again you need time before the chaos becomes order, the shelves are filled and there's cleanness all around. Until then you must go into hiding. You mustn't allow society to sweep you up or you'll blend into it. You're in danger. For a long time your next step won't be as clear as it was when building the road to success.

Continue the road, not the success. Forget what's happened so far and embark on something new. It doesn't matter what. Follow the method of the poet: *potato, ready, throw away, new potato, peel, potato*, as he said in an interview.

Basking in the warmth of success is deadly. You'll have plenty of time to laze in the grave. People want swimming pools in their gardens because they don't dare go to public baths. Don't mull over your earlier deeds; be like Odysseus who refused to listen to the sirens singing about his great victorious feats. When passing their island he had himself tied to the mast while his sailors blocked their ears with wax. They rowed speedily off.

Starting from zero

You know even less things for certain than before reaching the goal, I mean the previous goal. Success makes it tricky to discern precisely what it was that didn't work.

Even God wasn't able to make this world perfect, merely round. Then how could your little stunt have come off without any mistakes? You don't even believe you've done everything in your power. You're not aware of your own limits. Whatever the case, don't feel justified to go on a world tour in return or accept the award - smiling back at the congratulating murderer. Don't break off with old friends, swap your wife or think that anything's over. If you're honest with yourself you'll have to admit - oh, what horror! - that it's precisely your success that's making you uncertain whether the path you're taking is the right one.

Neither Kafka nor Van Gogh were successful.

You need to reach the other person: at last you need to reach yourself. You must recognize how you got there. Aren't you yourself horrendous? What's your task meant to be? Are you doing what you should be? Are you the person who should be doing it? Is this the right way? If you're in your right mind success won't intoxicate you, instead, it will sober you. Put it all in the drawer like the white pebble you found in the summer. Preserve it in a way that one day you'll see the point. You've got over another baptism of fire.

But is there any fire left in you?

The reward of success

Our age speaks of success and means by it greasy wads of notes. Many chase success like dandies once hunted chicks on the promenade. Always something new. Something fresh. More, even more! As if success were some kind of a badge or a ring through the nose. One follows the other, hanging like a chain from your neck, covering your chest, rattling, causing sensation, scandal or publicity. It can be exchanged for a two-storey house, a girl stuffed with silicone, contacts or a quality funeral. This is, however, not the reward but the curse of success. Avoid such rewards. They go with a short life. Like the cat that has a tinkling ball sewed to its tail by the pound-master. If you want to rise above your fate don't be taken in by the promise of tangible rewards arranged in the world's luxury shop windows.

Real success provides calmness

This is how you'll first recognize whether you've really succeeded in something. You'll sense a big, satisfied inner silence. Not immediately: in weeks or months. *Yes*, says the inner voice. And nothing more. But this is an upgrading.

When did you last nod your head in acknowledgement at yourself? This tranquillity will remain. It also lurks in the background of the emptiness and woundedness that follow success. Real success rarely entails much money. It's not materially you rise but in the ranks of your existence: reality justifies you. You become surrounded by love like an invisible armour. Those who, for instance, raise their children well, can't be humiliated by their boss – however much he tries. The person who designs bridges that are not only beautiful but also long-lasting can't be unhinged by anything.

Worthy success enlivens

It provides imperishable nourishment. Don't put it in the window. Lock it up deep inside you. Don't even touch it. Then you can live off it continuously. When put to the test by danger, when your mind and soul are tormented by hunger you'll suddenly feel it in your mouth. Giving you strength and hope.

Encouraging you to work

Work in my vocabulary means not the embellished wording of *labour*. Work is a game with genuine results. At the least it's a passion, at the most creation. Whatever act is beyond or beneath it should be avoided. Work equals creation. Real success, though it laughs along with you, animatedly murmurs the next task even amidst the oblivious celebration of a job well-accomplished.

Positive success is alive; it has ideas, it plans the future, nags and pleads. It wants you to live too, forever higher and higher, concealed from the eyes of the others. Your glory in the world isn't yours but your flatterers'. Though possibly unaware of it, they don't want you to live. A monument could be dedicated to you then. It could be inaugurated.

Pleasure and applause belong to those who display it. Not having achieved anything, it's they who are in need of it. The fruit of your work is your eagerness to work. Your triumph lies in becoming more and more yourself despite changing by the minute. The news of your accomplishment appears not in the tabloids but in the serene smile on your face. And in the smile of those you live for.