

The Only Valid Measure of Success

By

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Both society and religion are of the mistaken impression they are the judge of human worth.

Every human being is alone and unique because:

You alone experience your essence, your self-awareness and your cognition.

Your life is vastly more important to you than it is to any other human being. When you die, you are dead. You no longer exist. Relative to you, nothing exists. Relative to everyone else, life pretty much goes on the same.

No other human being sees and understands you or your life in a manner anywhere comparable to how you see your life. You see it from the inside, from living it. Everyone else sees it from the outside, with their perspective, their preconceptions and their agenda.

Once you die, your impact is almost immediately and significantly depreciated, and continues to depreciate with time.

For these reasons, it is completely irresponsible for you to turn your life and its success over to either society or religion. Only you have the potential knowledge of yourself to determine how best to live your life and how to make it a success. Only you, at the end of your life, when you are alone on your deathbed, can look at your life and make the determination that you lived well. If at that point you can live with yourself, if you are not afraid to be alone with yourself, if you can be honest with yourself, then you have accomplished something.

Society and religion will make their judgment, and it will be on their terms. Judging from obvious popular standards society will ask were you pretty, rich, athletically gifted, do other people like you; did you put society's needs first? Religion will ask if you met their standards of belief, worship, and morality. Neither of these will know what you were capable of, your physical or mental constraints, the effect environment had on your abilities and psychology. They will not know if you could have accomplished much more. They will not know if you overcome extreme difficulties to accomplish what they see as very little. They will judge on their terms based on their needs and their "one size fits all" standards regardless of your abilities or constraints.

You alone have the potential to set your standards commensurate with your essence.

You, of course may accept their standards as your model. That is your choice. You may decide that belief alone is an acceptable measure of morality and turn the responsibility for your actions over to a supernatural being. You may decide that you are significantly more beautiful than the rest of humanity and so meet the needs of society and yourself without further action. Lots of people do this. But I would suggest that in either case and in most cases where you allow

either society or religion to set your standards, you will, at the end, find that you do not think your life a success. How many beauties turn to drugs, alcohol sex or whatever to make themselves happy. How significantly different are the lives of those who “believe” over the non-believers; how many priests turn to raping children, ministers to wealth? How many successful rich people do you know who can live with themselves at the end of their lives?

It doesn't seem as if, in our culture, success isn't measured in terms of the essence of the human being, what they have done with their mind given the circumstances of their existence, their attributes and their deficiencies. It is measured on externals such as looks, wealth, intelligence, business acumen, belief in a deity, worship. Failure is measured in terms of poverty, unattractiveness, type of job, insufficient church attendance. Young folks “face book”, “my space”, text, cell phone, “twitter” in order to be relevant, their existence and success defined in the number of “friends”. Every child is brought up to believe that they are special, deserving without effort the comforts of life. Our society has all but been destroyed because folks believe that they “need” or “deserve” so more than they can afford.

A human's essence is his mind, his consciousness, his self awareness, his capacity to think. The quality of that mind, the level of intelligence or any measure comparing that mind to any other is not a measure of the success of a human being. Every human being is unique. No two human beings have the same composition. No two have the same physical and mental framework and no two have exactly the same environment. Therefore, it is impossible for society to determine or set the standard for a successful life in any terms including religion or happiness. Financial success may come easy to those with the requisite intelligence, training and background. Physical success, in sports for example, may come easy to those endowed with exceptional capabilities. Beautiful people accrue public admiration without effort. However, there are millions of folks who have low intelligence, physical weaknesses and perhaps deformities, millions who are ugly or diseased. Millions have no chance at financial or physical success. The gifted athlete, the brilliant scientist or beautiful model, raised in a supporting and generous environment, are no more special based on their societal successes than the retarded, deformed or physically weak individual raised in poverty and oppression. Religion comes natural and easy to many, especially those raised and living in a religious culture. Others are not so raised and still others with a more questioning personality. The talented who simply meet their potential haven't earned extravagant rewards just as the mentally disadvantaged who have exceeded their potential do not deserve impoverishment.

Only the individual mind is capable of determining its own value and the success of life. In the end, every person is essentially alone with themselves. Of course, many will have close family and friends, but even those are incapable of really sharing one's essence. Their consciousness or their feelings cannot really be shared, at best, just described. No one else truly understands an individual, their fears, their constraints their efforts. In the end, the only real measure of the success of an individual is whether or not that individual is satisfied with their life. Can that individual stand being alone with itself?

I quickly admit that society and especially religion prefer to think the best measure of a person is their contribution to society or religion, but unless the individual measures themselves in that manner, it is not a valid assessment. An individual lives with themselves, first and foremost. Society's or religion's claims on the individual come second to their own essence and their own existence.