CREATION, EDEN AND BEYOND
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THE TENSION BETWEEN ADAM I AND ADAM II

• NY Times columnist David Brooks’ 5 minute TED Talk entitled:
  Should you live your resume or eulogy?:
  https://www.ted.com/talks/david_brooks_should_you_live_for_your_resume_or_your_eulogy?language=en
  David Brooks delivered a more expansive address:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN8Yzxy11X0

Brooks uses a quintessential metaphor to drive home the dichotomy in our lives between materialism and spiritualism in which résumé virtues are the ones you put on your résumé, which are the skills you bring to the marketplace and eulogy virtues are the ones that get mentioned in the eulogy, which are deeper: who are you in your depth; what is the nature of your relationships; are you bold, loving, dependable, and consistent?

Most of us would say that the eulogy virtues are the more important of the virtues. But are they the ones that I think about the most? The answer is “no”.

Joseph Soloveitchik, a rabbi wrote a book called *The Lonely Man Of Faith* in 1965 (The Lonely Man of Faith, Doubleday 1992). Soloveitchik said there are two sides of our natures, which he called Adam I and Adam II. He argued that these two sides of our nature are at war with each other. We live in perpetual self-confrontation between the external success and the internal value. We happen to live in a society that favors Adam I, and often neglects Adam II. And the problem is, that turns you into a shrewd animal who treats life as a game, and you become a cold, calculating creature who slips into a sort of mediocrity where you realize there’s a difference between your desired self and your actual self. You're not earning the sort of eulogy you want; you hope someone will give to you. You don't have the depth of conviction. You don't have an emotional sonorousness. You
don’t have commitment to tasks that would take more than a lifetime to commit. Soloveichik’s point is that to live a good life involves a permanent confrontation between these two sides within ourselves, but we happen to live in a society that nurtures and encourages and bloats Adam I, leading to the neglect and atrophy of Adam II, leaving us inarticulate about what really matters in life.

Adam I was driven by the desire for greatness, stature and success. His approach is direct: input leads to output; effort leads to reward; skill leads to success

Adam II sought to build a moral and fulfilling internal life. His approach is inverse—a moral but not an economic logic. Surrender to something outside yourself, gain something within yourself, conquer desire, forget what you personally want. Humility and learning are the greatest success. To fulfill yourself, you have to forget yourself; to find yourself you have to lose yourself; to conquer desire you have to forget what you want. Life is not a journey but a confrontation against sin and weakness in our nature. This is the central journey of life, not the outer journey. (And these are the paradoxes of life!)

Adam I asks how things work; Adam II asks why things exist.

Adam I ventured forth; Adam II returns to roots

Adam I’s motto is success; Adam II’s motto is redemption and success

Adam I involves skills. Adam II is goodness imparted (by example) and not taught, which enables you to rise up to do good, things that will delight God, the spirited examples of the patriarchs and matriarchs.

Adam I is the worldly, ambitious, external side of our nature. He wants to build, create, create companies, create innovation; Adam II is the humble side of our nature; Adam II wants not only to do good but to be good, to live in a way internally that honors God, creation and our possibilities.
Adam I wants to conquer the world; Adam II wants to hear a calling and obey the world.

Adam I savors accomplishment; Adam II savors inner consistency and strength.

Adam I asks how things work; Adam II asks why we're here.

Adam I's motto is "success"; Adam II's motto is "love, redemption and return."

FOR THOSE WHOSE WORK IS INVISIBLE—Mary Gordon
For those who paint the undersides of boats, makers of ornamental drains on roofs too high to be seen; for cloggers who labor over inner soles; for seamstresses who stitch the wrong sides of linings; for scholars whose research leads to no obvious discovery. For dentists who polish each gold surface of the fillings of upper molars; for sewer engineers and those who repair water mains; for electricians; for artists who suppress what does injustice to their visions; for surgeons whose sutures are things of beauty. For all those whose work is for Your eye only, who labor for Your entertainment or their own, who sleep in peace or do not sleep in peace, knowing their efforts are unknown. Protect them from downheartedness and from diseases [of the eye]. Grant them perseverance, for the sake of Your love, which is humble, invisible, and heedless of reward.


Isn’t it strange that princes and kings
And clowns that caper in sawdust rings
And common people like you and me
Are builders for all eternity
To each is given a bag of tools
A piece of clay and a book of rules
And each must fashion ere life has flown
A stumbling block or a stepping stone