

PAGES FROM A JOURNAL

I. AVOIDING POWER

What I have learned is to avoid all sources of power. If you are offered three jobs always take the one at the bottom and ask if there is not one lower still. When those in positions of power seek you out, ignore them, insult them, but don't anger them. If you must sit with them and make conversation, tell them nothing but lies; never share the secrets of your heart for they will use them against you.

To avoid power, make yourself seem powerless, absurd, unattractive, mad. Never admit to being a poet. If they ask if you are a poet, tell them you write little advertisements for shoe publications. When they ask you who you like in literature, tell them you read mostly comic books.

When the powerful seek you out, never try to hide from them. Show up with a hundred suggestions, all insane, and make them aware from the beginning that you could never be of use to them: also indicate that your services will cost them a great deal of money. That will usually drive them away.

When men of politics seek you out, tell them you are a practicing atheist, an antisemite, a supporter of the Spanish Inquisition. None of these things will do you any harm so long as you do not seek power, but they will immediately drive off the politician who prides himself on his love of humanity.

When men of business come to push you around, always always give in to whatever they wish but refuse to sign anything. If they drive you from your home, leave but burn it down. Tell them you had a dreadful accident with a kerosene lantern while fixing the refrigerator. Never go to court over anything. If you go to court, tell the judge you are an atheist and cannot say "I swear to tell the truth..." etc. Tell him truth is an absolute and you have no idea what truth and what non-truth is/are. If the judge threatens you with contempt of court, suggest a great love of the law, a fierce belief in the constitution, and a great ignorance of legal categories. Tell him you are only a poor logical positivist.

With policemen always be docile. Carry a John Birch card with you. Never demonstrate. If you are black, start singing "Oh Mary Don't You Weep, Don't You Mourn" or say the Lord's Prayer. Never put your hands near your body! If they take you into custody, piss all over the back seat of the police car (very quietly).

II. HELPING THE POOR

Be a counterfeiter, but never try to pass the money; instead drop it over poor sections of the city from airplanes. By dropping large amounts of phoney cash into the poorer quarters, you will supply many with ready cash and at the same time destroy the economy of the middle class by inflating the real value of money.

Never join a help the poor organization: these are always run by rich liberals who want to keep their hand on the pulse of the poor. Instead spread rumors that one of the people in the audience has cholera.

Steal from the rich. Make copies of their tax records and mail them to all their enemies. Put illegal drugs in their autos and call the police. Make them honorary chairmen of Nazi activities, mentioning their many services rendered.

Take a hundred tramps on an outing to Beverly Hills. Try to get them into a church service and see if the priest, minister, rabbi, throws these children of god from god's house.

Take a hundred terminal cancer patients to a charity ball at a grand hotel.

III. HOW THE POET SHOULD VIEW HIMSELF

Never call yourself a poet -- always refer to yourself as a writer. Do you want to be thought of as prophet, priest, seer, mystic? Leave that to the charlatans. Call yourself a writer. Never seek to be more than that! If you view yourself as a poet, you will likely become a professor and then you will never write any more poetry, but spend your life talking about how you

write it. Never let your friends refer to you as the poet. Correct them on the spot. Say "I am only a writer, not a poet. Sometimes I write poetry." Poets are at the top of everybody's shit list. Those were the guys the Nazis went looking for first.

After you have established that you are a writer, try to establish that you are only a weekend writer, not a professional. If you get money for your writing, never admit it or brag about it. Always say you are having a hard time making ends meet. If someone sends you a five dollar check in the mail, put it away toward a stock portfolio. Always be aware that a man with a stock portfolio can tell the world where to get off. Poets are not supposed to have a stock portfolio because they are supposed to love the poor, so have a stock portfolio, but say nothing about it. Try to get poor people to buy good stock and put it away against emergencies. Always use the capitalists by imitating them. Never let yourself be dependent on parents, universities, publishers, magazines, or managers.

Try to get employment that has nothing to do with writing! The writer (he will always call himself a poet) who teaches poetry in a university is giving out his life blood in little doses. He will have little or nothing left for his writing. The fact that he starts a thousand nincompoops on their way to a life of crime as poet rooters is even worse, though these people will always buy his books and ask him to sign them. A writer (try not to use that word) is better off as a gardener, a lineman, a bank president, a bank robber, a pimp, a revolutionary, a computer programmer, or a detective than he is as a journalist, a teacher, an ad man, a tv scripter, or a professor. Try to get a job that does not rob you of your thoughts, that leaves your mind alone during the day so you can still use it at night or better yet a night job so you can half sleep at night and write during the day. A watchman is an ideal job provided you do not take it seriously.

-- Ben Pleasants

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