

The Inverse Cripple by Rich Norman

Nietzsche saw it well over a hundred years ago. He saw many things about the character of human psychology in general, and his countrymen in particular, but he had one insight which describes the current state of affairs to a tee. Nietzsche is my best friend. Sure, he has been dead for over a century, but the point stands. He helps me out and teases me. One's best friend should be honest, and often enough that means he says things that hurt your feelings. Nietzsche never spares my feelings, and he has often held up a mirror for me and all of mankind, a cruel mirror which looks and laughs! We believe we are a society of great men, men who are so very expert in their highly particular fields, one a particle physicist, another an oncologist, the next a philologist and so on. We are all experts, so very good at one thing! Anyone who is not, has but a poor chance to make a living in these times where complexity itself seems to demand specialization. But one who is most expert at one thing, has almost surely *narrowed themselves* to accomplish the fact, and has become most accomplished here, at the expense of growth in other areas. Our human resources are limited so one could say: Hypertrophy diminishes wholeness.

Nietzsche noted this Faustian dilemma: the narrowing and general atrophy of the human spirit and potential that goes along with becoming a master in one specialized area. He referred to these modern men, these great men, as "inverse cripples," people who had exchanged their overall development for an imbalanced hypertrophy, a super-abundant development in one narrow area. I was the ultimate inverse cripple: The Giant Ear. I created music for TV and led a band with my aim clear and narrow as a laser. I could hear a musical flaw of the most minute proportion, a single sample or two misaligned, an error in timing of but two, or even worse, three microscopic fractions of a second was enough to cause me physical pain. To hear a single note chosen which contradicts the key and chord under it, or a string out of tune by a minuscule fraction would shatter my nerves. All my work was perfect, but the cost to my misshapen spirit was enormous! I was a modern man, incomplete in every way, an expert of the highest order—an inverse cripple. A Giant Ear.

I am lucky to have found the answer, here, buried deep in the commercially zoned forest, this last refuge for the whole human spirit, where the real purpose of so much of our "expertise" becomes clear. Here there are no lists of ridiculous codes to insist that someone be paid to accomplish what you might easily accomplish yourself. The bridge can be built to suit reality, *not a code that requires an expert **be paid*** to quell our modern, state sanctioned insecurity. If the bridge holds the truck without collapsing, it is fine. That is my code! I am no longer so afraid of my own incompetence that I refuse to try, and *pay an expert* instead! The main purpose of experts is to nurture the insecurity that makes us trust, and only trust: experts! Never trust an expert, become expert instead. That is the mantra of the luckiest man who has found a piece of land that is bounded by reality, rather than a multitude of intertwined rules and codes which belittle the human spirit into the narrowness of modern expertise.

Now that I have again emerged from under the shadow of my huge ear, and have at last reclaimed my self-belief and my humanity, I am at peace. But I must admit that a shadow of fear has crept over my blissful world. I have been offered a job which will allow me to test my many intricate psychological theories, and to claim this job, I must

become educated in an area so specialized, so narrow, that the academic field in question, to the best of my knowledge does not yet exist. I will be a Neuropsychological Engineer specializing in the Quantitative Representation of Unconscious Processes. Oy! If I was narrowed to become a Giant Ear, what will this do? I must remain whole, and not give in to the process! Perhaps I can keep my humanity if I repair my own car and get my own wood. Maybe that will help. If I give in again, what will become of me? If I was a Giant Ear before, what now? I believe the key to the typological distillation of unconscious ideational content revolves around the inferior parietal lobe, Brodmann area #40. Oh no! If I blow it again, I will become a huge blueish-grey and pink scrap of soft neural tissue with a sneaker attached. No way, not again! I will not forget. I will get my own wood and grow my own food. No more inverse cripple! One way or another, I have to keep my head.

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