

When Reputation Matters

I wrote recently about the need to let your reputation die so you can remain free and not become a slave to the good opinion of others.

But is concern for your reputation only dangerous, or does it provide value as well?

If strangers don't like you, I don't think there's a lot of value in trying to change that vs continuing to follow your own North Star.

But if those who know you best begin to think ill of you, maybe there's something to learn from it.

It's undoubtedly true those those closest to you and with the best intentions can be your greatest hurdles. The respect and pride of those who love you can lead to a mush of sellout choices and a victim/martyr life. But there informational content in your reputation among your close friends. It's like a mirror that lets you see things you cannot from your inside-out perspective.

The danger isn't in examining the information reflected back to you by your reputation. The danger is in seeing the opinion of those around you as a destination, rather than a reading of your trajectory. Don't let it tell you where to go. But don't ignore information about yourself that can come from the way those who know you see you.