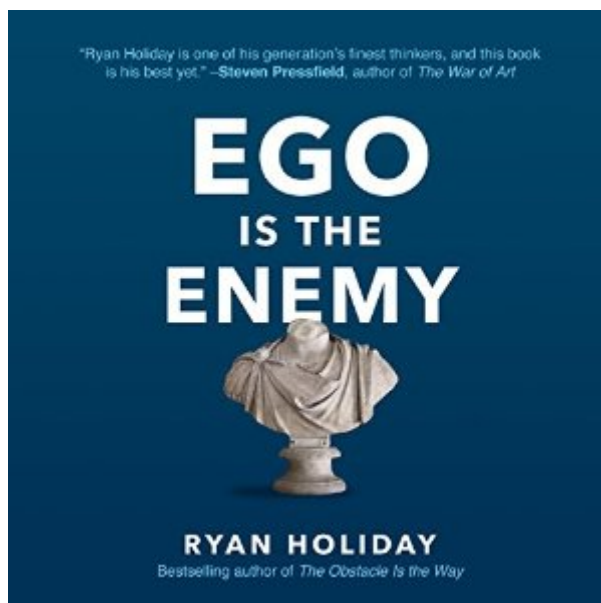


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# Ego Is The Enemy



## Synopsis

"While the history books are filled with tales of obsessive visionary geniuses who remade the world in their images with sheer, almost irrational force, I've found that history is also made by individuals who fought their egos at every turn, who eschewed the spotlight, and who put their higher goals above their desire for recognition." (From the prologue)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If ego is nothing more than a Freudian concept to you, then you may not have any idea how it's holding you back right now. But don't think that author Ryan Holiday aims to bore us with the same stale pop-psychology tropes that most books on the Self-Help shelf use to fill out their pages. What the author has provided us is actually a great work of modern practical philosophy. Those familiar with Holiday's last book, *The Obstacle is the Way*, will know exactly what practical philosophy means. Eschewing the commonly held view that philosophy is the province of academics in classrooms bloviating about abstract concepts, Holiday follows the Stoic tradition that puts philosophy firmly in the realm of everyday life. It's about learning to deal with destructive emotions, unpredictable circumstances, self-interested people, and yes, ego, without succumbing to them. It's philosophy as a way of achieving a better life. In *Ego is the Enemy*, Holiday moves beyond the clinical definitions of ego and places the concept firmly in the realm of the practical. To be sure, the clinical and the

practical in this case have some common ground. Modern psychologists define the ego as a critical part of identity construction, and further, an egotist as someone excessively focused on himself. Holiday defines ego along those lines: "an unhealthy belief in our own importance. Arrogance. Self-centered ambition" when the notion of ourselves and the world grows so inflated that it begins to distort the reality that surrounds us. The idea that becoming untethered from reality is the primary symptom of an ego out of control is the thread that unites all three sections of this book. Holiday expands this idea throughout the three sections that form a continuum - Aspire, Success, and Failure - to show how this form of ego plagues everyone from the ambitious and striving, to the wildly successful and those who have been crushed by personal and professional defeat. In our own lives, we are always somewhere on that circle of aspiration, success and failure. To this end, Holiday goes right to the sources of practical wisdom: the primary sources of great practical wisdom - Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, Aristotle, and Martial to name a few - and the biographies of those who apply that wisdom to great effect or ignore it at their own peril. This is where Holiday's other key influence, strategist and author Robert Greene, becomes apparent. Like Greene, all of Holiday's chapters start out with a short, pithy title sets the direction of the advice contained within the chapter. From there, Holiday mines the stories of great men and women who have either applied the advice laid out in the chapter title or ignored it and shows us the consequences of both. For example, in the chapter titled, "Restrain Yourself" in the Aspire section of the book, Holiday launches right into the story of Jackie Robinson. As the first black player in the newly integrated MLB, Robinson faced discrimination and outright abuse at the hands of everyone from his own teammates and opponents, to hotel managers and restaurant owners and, of course, the press. At any point, Robinson could have lashed out, fighting back to defend his dignity against the injustices he faced. But Robinson knew that if he fought back even once, it would end his MLB career and set the prospect of full integration of the league back for a generation. As Holiday writes, "Jackie's path called for him to put aside both his ego and in some respects his basic sense of fairness and rights as a human being." Now, it's likely that few of us will face the kind of treatment Robinson did, but the lesson here is that when we have ambitions and goals, we're likely to run into the kind of people that Robinson did. The kind who react to your striving with cold indifference. The kind who aim to weaken your will with taunts and jeers. The kind who will go out of their way to sabotage you and undo all your efforts. Holiday concludes here that ego tells us to snap back at these people and

demand the respect we think we deserve. But that won't earn it from anyone. We must ignore this impulse, no matter how badly we're treated, and continue to work on our craft and ourselves. We must forget what we think the world owes us and focus on building our base, developing our skills and continuing to learn. The rest of the chapters follow this same model, and plumb the depths of modern and ancient history to show us how those who put their egos aside achieve great things. Think of New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick spending years doing unpaid grunt work and film study before finally getting a chance to put his knowledge into practice. Think of the great conqueror Genghis Khan seeking greater knowledge and expertise from those he defeated, rather than forcing them into silent subservience. Yet, others turn themselves into cautionary tales. Howard Hughes was a mechanical genius who inherited a successful family business, and then squandered all of it through a lack of focus, entitlement and paranoia. John DeLorean had a great vision for an automobile company, but never built the solid foundation of leadership skills he would need to run a successful company. Holiday gives us a healthy dose of both kinds of stories, and that's what makes the advice in this book stick with us. Ultimately, practical philosophy is meant to be used in our daily lives, away from the safety of our reading chair. Holiday's aphoristic style of advice, bolstered by memorable stories is what gives us the tools we need to remember this wisdom when our egos start to take control of us. Holiday positions the three states of our lives — Aspire, Success and Failure — as being a never ending continuum. We must put our egos aside as we aspire to our goals, aside when we achieve them, and aside again when we flame out and have to start over. At each stage, ego threatens to knock us off the continuum altogether and lock us into an unproductive state of stasis. Taming your ego is never easy, but it is essential when we are confronted by failure or bolstered by success, as we all will be in our lives. Ego can easily let both conditions become debilitating: With success, we think we can stop being humble and working hard. In failure, we can become paralyzed, blaming others for our rotten luck and ignoring the fact that it's on us to right the ship. Ego is always encroaching on us, even after we think we've beaten it back. As Daniele Boilelli puts it, a floor doesn't stay clean because you've swept it once; you must sweep again and again. With this short, accessible book, Holiday gives us the tools we need to do just that.

Holiday presents evidence from a personal perspective. A life of success AND failure, lived to the extreme. So many authors who attempt to address this idea are only offering theories and proposals

that have no real world perspective. Holiday speaks from the heart, he exposes his soul and causes the reader to truly examine their own motives and ego.

It took me over 6 months to write this review. I think the delay is in part because I felt torn about the book, and rather than write something negative I decided to write nothing at all. Ryan would probably appreciate this. In any case, I'm glad I delayed my review because I think Ryan Holiday has something to offer. His beliefs, thoughts, and ideas might not be entirely original in thought, but his ability to recycle stories of the stoics that he admires, and the more modern day figures that he draws lessons from are concepts that are worthy of review. At times each vignette seems like it needs more depth and development, but upon further reflection I'm okay with wanting more, and I would feel ashamed that if I did not encourage more from this promising author. Good work! I look forward to reading more from this author!

Like the first bite of an exceptional meal, I knew I was into something special within the first few pages. Like that meal, I've lingered, taken my time and let the wisdom of Holiday's work impact me at a deeper level. This isn't a book you read, it's a book you study and use as a tool for reflection on how ego has negatively impacted your life and relationships. I greatly enjoyed Holiday's other works, Ego is the Enemy has made me a passionate fan.

This book is a great and exciting read. Ryan brilliantly articulated the nature of the human ego with great excitement and dynamism. The human ego is an extension of our true selves as well as much as it is indivisible from our true selves. Even though I do agree with Ryan's discussions and recommendations, I am not fully convinced that the ego, is in fact an enemy. My counter argument is that the ego is in fact a necessary evil as much as it is an agent of self-discovery and self-transformation. Ryan did a superb job articulating and illustrating the ego's second and third order effects. I highly recommend this book. **BRANDED BY HER: "A Scorned Woman is The Most Destructive of All Man Made Disasters."**

Prior to this book I've never given much thought about the topic of Ego. I think in life we all know someone with a huge one maybe someone who doesn't have enough. It's a very difficult thing to balance in this challenging world that we live in. This book gives you different examples of times Ego worked for and against people along with perspective on the topic. I thought it was definitely

worth the money and enjoyed the entire book from start to finish.

This was a fantastic book. I purchased the kindle and audio versions. There is a lot of really great information and being able to go back into the book and refer to specific parts quickly makes a kindle/print version of the book indispensable for people who prefer listening the audio version. The audio version was great also because the author narrated. As a result, the delivery has the inflections that he intended when he wrote which is subtle but I think does add to the book. Overall, I thought it was great. I could have done without the Tim Ferris interview at the end. It feels like it is more about Tim Ferris and makes the book seem longer than it really is. They also definitely stretched the dead air between chapters on the audiobook for what I assume is the same reason. The material is so wonderful that little things like that to stretch out the run-time seem unnecessary.

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