

# Rotten Green Bananas

Not Even Fit for Banana Bread!

We can wait to see what happens in life and, at the end, probably judge fairly correctly to what extent we have matured well; this is the **victim's** way of thinking. Or, during life, we can seek to find and apply the principles that lead to appropriate maturing (and its many benefits); the **dynamic** approach.

**Victims** (the immature) tend to focus and live solely in the moment seeking to grasp the immediate feelings and sensations while avoiding any discomforts. The **dynamic** approach, on the other hand, appreciates the potential dangers, pitfalls and frequent mirages of what is immediately before us, seeking to look behind and beyond the immediate to the probable consequences of actions or passivity. Or to put it another way, maturing perceives the linkage between costs and the most likely benefits (suppressing the driving forces of "I like . . ." "I don't like . . ." and doing what is better instead). We don't expect a child to understand they cannot healthfully exist and grow on only sweets — we do expect one older to eat a balanced diet; and, as they age, to consider (mature in) this more and more. So what is the common feature in all areas of maturity? Discipline — an analysis completed, decision made, implemented and kept that it is beneficial to form a routine and habit to do x to achieve y — to understand linkages of benefits and costs.

We can define maturity and analyze it in theory or look at ways to catch a glimpse of (so as to improve) our maturity or lack thereof; as a analogy, maturing gracefully is like young green bananas becoming beautiful and tasty versus bananas that merely age to dark and rotten.

Very simply, a lack of maturity is evidenced by doing things that are counterproductive to future wants and needs or failing to act in a way that will provide for necessary future needs and wants. The **good news/bad news** is that **it is never too late to mature/even the best and brightest are foolishly immature in some ways**. And the need to mature faces new challenges each season of life, just one prime example being the late 40s/early 50s need to consider health like never before.

Embracing the **dynamic** versus playing the **victim** is a learned and practiced way of thinking and acting. And while the **dynamic** 20 year-old has a decided advantage over the 20, 30, 40 . . . year old **victim**, they retain this lead only to the degree and extent they apply and transition (mature) at and in the following season.

While an extreme example (radical illustrations are often the best teachers of lesser, similar, situations), O.J. was a model of the **dynamic** (the following is from *Wikipedia*):

Part I 1947 - 1994

Orenthal James "O. J." Simpson (born July 9, 1947), also known by his nickname, The Juice, is a retired American football player . . . He originally attained stardom as a running back at the collegiate and professional levels, and was the first NFL player to rush for more than 2,000 yards in a season. He later worked as an actor, spokesman and broadcaster.

Wow! O.J. exhibited the very positive and consistent attributes of maturity at an early age, continuing through several successful transitions, leaving "behind" many of his counterparts at each level of accomplishment; his achievements were impressive and unswerving, obviously building on the principles of maturity learned at an earlier age. This shows the great potential for building, in one season, on the principles of maturity learned in a prior period.

## Part II 1994 - Present

. . . Simpson was acquitted of the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman in 1995 after a lengthy, highly publicized criminal trial. In 1997, Simpson was found liable for their wrongful deaths in civil court, but to date he has paid little of the \$33.5 million judgment. He gained further notoriety in late 2006 when he wrote a book titled *If I Did It*. The book, which purports to be a first-person fictional account of the murder had he actually committed it, was withdrawn by the publisher just before its release. The book was later released by the Goldman family and the title of the book was expanded to *If I Did It: Confessions of the Killer*. In September 2007, Simpson faced more legal troubles, as he was arrested and subsequently charged with numerous felonies, including robbery with a deadly weapon, burglary with a firearm, assault with a deadly weapon, first-degree kidnapping with use of a deadly weapon (which carries possible life sentence), coercion with use of a deadly weapon, conspiracy to commit robbery, conspiracy to commit kidnapping, and conspiracy to commit a crime.

Again, while an extreme case and example, O.J. shows what can happen when we “lose it” – failing to build upon what we have learned and falling hard into the trap of immaturity by “playing” the **victim**; who wants to become (at his worst) even a “little O.J.”? He offers an incredible depiction of the impact and consequences of maturity/immaturity at their best and worst! O.J. was particularly disturbing (and so possibly instructive) as a case of extreme inconsistencies in maturity. Ditto Clinton/Spitzer, potentials for greatness but with great contrasts of maturity versus immaturity!

On a macro basis, we can likewise see, and possibly benefit from, clear examples of a **dynamic** versus **victim** mind-set. The key principle of growth (whether physical, mental, financial, spiritual . . .) is that growth and development ONLY occur in the face of resistance followed by rest; resistance only results in exhaustion and burn out while rest only ends in atrophy and wasting away. We see the latter clearly and consistently with “great” societies. In history, on a macro basis, success results in the “blessings” of abundance. Abundance typically leads to a reduction in the disciplines required of growth and success (people in the midst of abundance can get by with less and less effort) so that the society inevitably decays and declines from within. We see these great societies fall prey to outside enemy forces and can wrongly conclude they fall because of these enemies when, in fact, they are like the termite infested home that will eventually collapse – the fall simply being the end sign of decay.

Given the choice, with one caveat, I would much prefer to live in a society of abundance than one of want, a “developed” rather than Third-World country. Abundance blesses when combined with proper disciplines – I would only desire to live in an abundant society IF I were working on disciplines, otherwise, abundance will inevitably and surely end in cursing! The trial/temptation/resistance of abundance is the lure to laziness, being undisciplined because discipline is not necessary to get by. Good disciplines are those that harness resistance to achieve growth and benefit.

## Personal Application

What we say after “I like . . .” or “I don’t like . . .” often reveals more than anything else our level and direction of maturity. As noted earlier, **victims** tend to focus and live solely in the moment seeking to grasp the immediate feelings and sensations while avoiding discomforts. The **dynamic** approach, on the other hand, appreciates the potential dangers, pitfalls and frequent mirages of what is immediately before us, seeking to look behind and beyond the immediate to the probable consequences of actions or passivity; the **dynamic** approach’s main tool for accomplishing its objective? Disciplines, confronting and harnessing resistance to benefit and blessing rather than

doing everything in our power to avoid any immediate discomfort. While counterintuitive, even the immediate is harder for the **victims** because minute-by-minute they are taking their feelings temperature (checking how they feel, rechecking minutes later, having to check again . . . enough to exhaust a person!), the master and controller of their actions. The **dynamic**, on the other hand sets a course and resists the constant voices of “I feel like . . . I don’t feel like . . .” the most sure sign of immaturity (when applied to non-taste issues). “I don’t like vanilla ice cream” is a legitimate feeling and cause for not eating it. “I don’t like to exercise” is immaturity on par with the child’s “I don’t like to brush my teeth.”

Some common, immature, “I don’t likes . . .”

- “Even though I am ‘saved’ I don’t like to read so I seldom read my *Bible* . . .” This is childish, failing to appreciate the great blessings from seeking God through a foundational and primary way He offers us spiritual maturity – failing to mature all because “I don’t like . . .”
- “I don’t like to consider what I am buying . . . so I will spend until I am forced to stop;” this is immature, but all too common, having grave consequences on many individuals and families.
- “I don’t like to make the effort, take the time, spend the money to properly maintain what I have . . . so I will be penny wise and pound foolish;” again, this is juvenile behavior unbecoming to adults!
- “I don’t like to have to go to bed and miss all the exciting TV shows, hanging out with friends, etc.” the consequences being that at work, school, in relationships . . . we are less than effective often making others around us miserable.
- As mentioned earlier, “I don’t like to exercise . . .,” the result being inevitable, significant and increasing costs and pains associated with declining health that “modern medicine” can only partially mitigate.

These and other “I don’t feel like . . .” have, at their core, the common feeling of entitlement rampant in societies of abundance. What those in Third-World countries would be very thankful for those in Developed country commonly feel entitled to (and typically even more)! “I am entitled to having everything I need and want – if I don’t get it someone else is to blame! \$4.00 gas – that is outrageous and may force me to consider my driving – it’s not right or fair, someone is to blame!”

There is great freedom in understanding, on the other hand, we aren’t entitled to anything! Even if we personally did not have pay a price for our freedoms, there are many in Arlington and various other cemeteries, who gave their lives for these blessings! A hallmark of the mature (and more consistently happy) is thankfulness for what others consider a “right” and entitlement!

**Victims** view everything in relation to its personal cost to them – “I want. I deserve! Give me, now!!” In contrast, the **dynamic** approach is not one of ignoring the costs, but rather comparing the costs to the expected and probably payback. “I really like to exercise because it has so many positive benefits, FAR exceeding the costs!”