Twitter Thread by Luke Burgis

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20 insights into mimetic desire, some of which might save your life:



The fox in Aesop's fable of the sour grapes in a Romantic Liar. The only reason he was able to convince himself that the grapes were sour is that he was alone. Had there been a rival fox who wanted them, he wouldn't have been able to walk away.

The domestication of dogs probably happened because humans used them for ritual sacrifice.

Mimetic desire leads to entropy unless directed to something transcendent. The scapegoat mechanism brings order, but it is short-lived. The only way to break the cycle is some form of renunciation—in biblical terms, death to self—the false self. ■Thomas Merton.

The worship of cats is related to the human perception that cats don't want the way that we do—they seem unaffected by mimetic desire. In Western philosophy, the only creature who is free, who doesn't want for anything, is God. You see the connection.

Eddie Bernays staged a drama that used mimetic desire to get women to smoke publicly at the Torches of Freedom parade in 1929. When someone appeals to your freedom as the key reason you should do something, run in the opposite direction.

Mimetic desire cannot be transcended. However, the destructive cycle of mimetic desire that leads to rivalry, conflict, and violence can be.

All desire is metaphysical—a desire for being. Don't ask, "What does this person (or consumer) want?" but rather "Who do they want to be?"

Empathy is the most anti-mimetic human emotion because it breaks the cycle of reaction and allows one to enter into the experience of another rather than be mimetic to it.

The love of money is the root of evil is true, and dangerous, because money is a proxy for metaphysical desire—it can be converted into any object at any time and is abstract and theoretically infinite, thus presents a Sisyphean challenge.

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The goal is not to free ourselves of desires. That makes us less than human. The goal is to transform our desires and order them to the greatest good. We want to be people who want more, not less.

Great leaders break people out of tiny, immanent cycles of desire—there's bounded rationality, but also bounded desire. Great leaders generate transcendent desires.

Peter Thiel has not grasped some of the most fundamental aspects of René Girard's thought because his technocratic mindset prevents him from doing so. He has a block. He is not the arbiter or interpreter of Girard. Nobody is.

You can use mimetic desire to make a lot of money, if that is your primary driver, but I would not recommend trying. The cost will be your soul.

All great writers of fiction have had a novelistic conversion which strips them of their vanity and pride and makes them capable of great art. This conversion is akin to a spiritual conversion. The same is true of other domains of life, including entrepreneurship.

The dominant moral value of our age—the only one that is absolute and agreed-upon by nearly everybody—is the protection of victims.

"No one wants to talk about it, and the less you talk about it the more you have it." —@brenebrown on shame. Closely related to mimetic desire in its most pervasive form: envy.

Starting around the French Revolution, there was a total inversion of values. Before it, imitation was prized and innovation looked upon with skepticism. After it, innovation became a god. The god we still worship.

Find and follow positive external mediators of desire; viciously cut out unhealthy internal mediators of desire.

Read this: https://t.co/SuF4cwHEyt

The only way out is through.