

# Status anxiety by alain de botton

[Sociology](#)



What are the respective thesis in De Botton's chapter on meritocracy and Gladwell's chapter on hockey? Can these ideas be seen as useful to us in our postmodern era?

Thesis: The chapter on meritocracy from the book "Status Anxiety" by Alain de Botton is the most persuasive. A statement made by the author in the chapter on meritocracy is incisive: clever and gifted individuals are at the top, however, now people start to believe the opposite – at the top are only stupid and lazy ones.

Evidence: The author states: "Once the partridge shooters had been ejected from the Civil Service and replaced with the intelligent offspring of the working class, once the SATs had emptied Ivy League universities of the witless sons and daughters of East Coast plutocrats and filled them instead with the hardworking children of shop owners, it became harder to maintain that status was the result entirely of a rigged system." (de Botton, 2004).

Claim: De Botton discusses the ideas of failure and success. People are anxious about their position in society, no matter if they have high status or not. If they do not have it, they try to get it, when they obtain it, they worry about keeping their position high. We depend on our status. This dependence generates status anxiety. The question is what it means to be successful in our society? What is the most important now?

Analysis: Many individuals consider their occupation to be something that brings them their position and respect. Their profession in its turn depends on the payment and the business surroundings. De Botton proposes us a clear and interesting solution. The best way to find the answer to any questions is to apply to science, philosophy, history. For example, Greek thinkers were not so anxious about their status, intellect was more important

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for them. Really in modern society and in future the problem of status anxiety can be solved if we just think about what makes us happy nowadays: status or something more relevant.

Thesis: The topic of meritocracy is touched upon in Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers*. In Chapter 1 the author tells us about the Canadian hockey game. Gladwell tells us about the meritocracy in hockey system: the most gifted and hard-working are made a part of "an elite league" (Gladwell, 2008). The author wants to prove: hockey players' success does not depend on something definite.

Evidence: The author states: "hidden advantages and extraordinary opportunities and cultural legacies" (Gladwell, 2008).

Claim: Gladwell explains the success of elite league members by interesting thing – most of them just are born early in the year. This fact proves that a person does not need much to become successful.

Analysis: A person should not care much about status. He just should work, learn, try. And the success will come. In our modern society every person has a lot of opportunities to become successful even without high status.

#### Works cited

Gladwell, Malcom. *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Little, Brown & Co, New York, 2008

De Botton, Alain. *Status Anxiety*. Penguin, 2004