

The Second Journey

When I was a child, my parents took the family to a theatre in London. To a packed auditorium, the Great Barnum played out, with the obligatory breaks when people massed out from the hall to the bars and back again, accompanied by an organist whose keyboard rose from one side of the main stage. At the end of the musical, as the applause for the stars died down and people started to fill the aisles, my father continued clapping. Everyone looked round at him, and we children were mortified – there goes dad embarrassing us, we thought. When we were in the car returning home, he explained that he had been applauding the organist, who was left seated at the end of the show, unrecognised. At the time I thought little of this and put it behind me as just one of my fathers' embarrassing foibles.

Years later, I engaged myself in a one-year Death meditation, the outcomes of which can remain for another article perhaps. This took the form of imagining that I had a year to live, and attempting to act accordingly. One certain thing impressed itself on me as the days counted down. I found myself listening to music as if for the last time and realising that some of that music had accompanied me in my life for many years – favourite groups, artists, certain tracks, certain albums. All brought back unique memories, generated new thoughts and feelings, held meaning for me. I came to realise that I had never joined a “fan club” of these groups, although I had gone to a few concerts and gigs when I was able. These people would have no idea of the impact they had made on me, nor their presence throughout my life.

It seems to me that we have two journeys; the first, our observable journey, our career, our family, friends and pastimes, and the second journey, that which our inner life leads, accompanied by all that we have seen and listened to, all that has impressed itself upon our memory. That this journey takes place in our psyche is no reason to neglect it; just as dreams when observed provide information of use to our first journey, so we should value those inner things which form us.

A simple exercise is to take all of the media around you, be it records, CD's, tapes, videos, the television and radio, books, magazines, and photographs. These are things that you have decided to record or observe in some way or another, and therefore hold value to you. Write, or imagine writing, a letter to the creators to let them know that their creation has accompanied you on your journey. Tell them when you first came across it, how you found out about it, what attracted you and what kept it with you for so long. Let them know if it reminded you of something, or became attached to a certain emotion or event. Perhaps you could tell them if you then recommended the music, poem, film or whatever to someone else, and why you did so.

This idea can apply to people who have accompanied you – albeit briefly – on your journey. Rather than the obvious friends and family, think of those who have changed the course of your life without them perhaps being aware of it. Some comments made by teachers, casual acquaintances, friends of friends, may have taken many years to unfold or be realised, such as the event I began by describing. Perhaps you can contact these people, or imagine again writing to them to tell them what became of you as a result of their influence.

I don't believe that writing to those who have accompanied you on your second journey will necessarily gain any response. However, the act or re-cognition will enable you to view yourself from a slightly different light – that of a pilgrim travelling with invisible companions, distant but close, real yet imaginary, also themselves questing towards the same distant goal.

A copy of this article has been sent to my Dad.

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