

PILGRIM is a word that accurately describes the average human being; someone on their way somewhere else, but someone never quite knowing whether the destination or the path stands first in importance; someone who underneath it all doesn't quite understand from whence or from where their next bite of bread will come, someone dependent on help from absolute strangers and from those who travel with them. Most of all, a pilgrim is someone abroad in a world of impending revelation where something is about to happen, including, most fearfully, and as part of their eventual arrival, their own disappearance.

The great measure of human maturation is the increasing understanding that we move through life in the blink of an eye; that we are not long with the privilege of having eyes to see, ears to hear, a voice with which to speak and arms to put round a loved one; that we are simply passing through. We are creatures made real through contact, meeting and then moving on; creatures who, strangely, never get to choose one above the other. Human life is contact; getting to know, and a moving beyond which is forever changing, from the transformations that enlarge and strengthen us to the ones that turn us from consuming to being consumed, from seeing to being semi-blind, from speaking in one voice to hearing in another.

The defining experience at the diamond-hard center of reality is eternal movement as beautiful and fearful invitation; a beckoning dynamic asking us to move from this to that. The courageous life is the life that is equal to this unceasing tidal and seasonal becoming; and strangely beneath all, stillness being the only proper physical preparation for joining the breathing autonomic exchange of existence. We are so much made of movement that we speak of the destination being both inside us and beyond us; we sense we are the journey along the way, the one who makes it and the one who has already arrived. We are still running round the house packing our bags and we have already gone and come back, even in our preparations; we are alone in the journey and we are just about to meet the people we have known for years.

But if we are all movement, exchange and getting to know, where a refusal to move on makes us unreal, we are also journeymen and journeywomen, with an unstoppable need to bring our skills and experience, our voice and our presence to good use in the eternal now we visit along the way. We want to belong as we travel. We are creatures of movement, but we have something immutable in the flow: an elemental, essential nature that gives a person a name and a voice and a character as they flow on. We take our first bubbling source and our broad, subsequent confluences and grow in the conversation between them, all the way to our dissolution in the sea.

We give ourselves to that final destination as an ultimate initiation into vulnerability and arrival, not ever truly knowing what lies on the other side of the transition, or if we survive it in any recognizable form. Strangely, our arrival at that last transition along the way is exactly where we have the opportunity to understand who made the journey and to appreciate the privilege of having existed as a particularity, an immutable person; a trajectory whole and of itself.

In that perspective it might be that faith, reliability, responsibility and being true to something unspeakable are possible even if we are travelers, and that we are made better, more faithful companions, and indeed pilgrims on the astonishing, never to be repeated journey by combining the precious memory of the then with the astonishing, but taken for granted experience of the now, and both with the unbelievable, and hardly possible just about to happen.

Whyte, David. *Consolations: The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words* (Kindle Location 808). Many Rivers Press. Kindle Edition.