

COVER STORY

I have a new picture of my life. I don't know how it happened or when the change occurred. Some friends and I were doing life maps: pictures or plans or graphs or diagrams of our past, our present and our future. I've done life maps before: they were always journeys, roads along which I travelled with all the good and bad things that happen on journeys. Nice places and valleys of despair, tough hills to climb and easy descents, changes of direction and losing my way, shelters and havens and places where I just gave up and stopped. So there was this terrain along which I travelled. Talking it through, I saw that there were places where I had to run really fast to stay where I was, as though the road had an impetus of its own designed to take me back to bad places I'd just climbed out of. Most of the people who do life maps with me have the same kind of picture: the road of life, the river of life which has to be swum along, up or down stream according to your temperament. It's a common symbol and a lot of the religions and philosophies use it.

When I tried to do my most recent life map, something stuck. I started to draw it and it wasn't like I AM. I sat on the floor in my studio and looked around me. Nothing was moving. Time was still going or flowing or whatever it is that time does. Well, the second hand on my watch was still revolving, and I was breathing a countable number of breaths per minute. So these clues suggested that time continued. But I wasn't going anywhere and anywhere wasn't moving me. I thought of my mind as a kind of cinema screen on which all these interesting events of my life happened whilst I sat there quietly in the cinema watching. I was affected by them of course and because they were real events I had acted, moved, chosen, avoided; I sobbed and laughed, hated and loved, felt angry and guilty and unfulfilled and satisfied. But in some sense I had never moved out of my cinema. I had never stopped being me and because I could remember how I had felt **then**, me was the same person being little tiny baby me and 'try to do things like grown-ups' child me; and 'I'll live my own life my own way' adolescent me; and 'now I'm really into the thick of it' young adult me; and 'all I need is to get through today' mother me; and 'I'm sorry if you don't like it but this is what I do' middle-aged me', and 'great heavens I never expected to feel at peace with myself' fifty-seven year old me. All very different people: if they met they probably wouldn't like or understand one another. The only thing that connects them is me or my memory. I suspect that what I call me is my memory.

So here I am, stuck, not being able to draw the journey of my life. I no longer see a road or The Road before me. If I sit here perfectly still for a week, life will still flow on, it won't stop just because I'm not making decisions or doing things. I can sit here and I can still choose. This or that choice will arrive in my current bit of time and I can say 'yes' or 'no'

to it. I can stay here and be hungry, or I can physically move into the kitchen and get food, but time will still move along with me at the same speed and I will still be now.

I have an uncomfortable feeling that someone reading this will say 'Huh!' (people in my insecurity fantasies nearly always start off criticising me by saying 'huh'. They are very predictable) So they say 'huh!', we knew this all the time. It's the well known Being in the Here and Now.' - (or the well-known Being at One with Yourself, or the well-known Philosophical Concept or Religious Concept of Detachment or Being the One or some other well-known concept that I never heard of or don't understand.) I used to have John Rowan as the 'huh' saying person because he is so Expert on Everything, but now I know him, I know he may well explain that all this is well-understood and researched but is much too kind to say 'Huh!'.

So, well-known or not, my new feeling about my life is that I am and that time moves **through** me. I stay and events arrive, are here and then depart. When I decide to be pro-active I move and time moves along with me. I flow with it and it with me. I feel I am flexible within its 'stream' (though I'm not sure that it is really as active or moving as a stream since that's another spatial image for this temporal concept, this temporal reality.) I'm not sure yet, because this feeling is so new, whether I **choose** to remain here - in and swayed but not moved - or whether this is how it is and not a matter of my choice or my acceptance but how it always was. Perhaps the illusion of life as a journey to be **made** was useful to me once, when I needed to change me and my circumstances. Perhaps this new feeling, which I keep forgetting, is only the acceptance of my age, my maturity, my limitations, my passing and passed youth. I can only say that I'm not yet less active since I became aware of it. I'm doing more, creating more, enjoying a richness of experience and raging less. I hardly dare write this (superstitious fear of being struck down by the Gods for hubris) but I feel more in tune with, in harmony with, less afraid of.

I've been trying to depict this feeling or idea or whatever it is. I find symbols useful ways to remind myself that I don't have to stay stuck in the old mode of being, and symbols go a lot deeper than words for me. Which is why I'm a painter. So that's what the design on the cover is trying to represent. I've recently started making sculpture; so maybe a three-dimensional representation will express it better but this is the best I can do at the present.

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