

The Journey: Yours, Mine, Ours

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Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.
- [William James](#), American psychologist and philosopher (1842-1910)

The Journey: Yours, Mine, Ours

Join me on a journey. An unusual journey in that it will be one of the mind, prompted by my words and filled by your imagination.

Yet not unusual in that every experience we have is of the mind. The rest of the body has no means of recording or evaluating experiences. The brain records but has no inherent ability to critique, nor reason to do so, unless it is prompted by other experiences of the mind.

Our lives are of the mind, not of the body. Come along to learn more as we travel.

Our journey will take place over water. We will travel together, more or less, but each in separate boats. We may link together our watercraft, some of us. From time to time we will separate from each other, then link with others. Some of us will grieve the separation, others welcome it. We will all welcome the company of others, though some may not know how to show their pleasure in social interaction because they simply don't know how. They may remain alone more often than not.

So many of us will be on this journey that we will never meet everyone. Some will say that the ones we don't know are bad, stupid, simple, or evil, will plot against us given the chance. We don't know. The more we realize how little we know about the others we don't know and have never seen, the more likely we are to believe unfounded rumours about them. In all likelihood, they are just like us, but why take the chance?

We will meet relatively few others on our journey, compared with the total of us. We'll base our opinions and thoughts about them and what they are like on our own experiences with the few people we know. Many will not realize that if we think they are like us based on our experiences with those we know, it doesn't make sense to believe the people we don't know are any different from the ones we know.

Some won't like us. They will judge us based on their opinions about our boats, the looks, the component materials, the shape, the paint job, our own attire for the trip, our apparent ability to pilot where we want to go. There will always be people to tell us we should go another way, their way, even though they don't know where they are going either.

We're not sure of our destination. Some will say the destination doesn't matter, that we should make the best of what we have on the trip. Others will say that we should deprive ourselves on the voyage so that we will have an abundance once we reach our destination. Oddly, many who recommend depriving ourselves here believe that we will have abundance when we get to our destination. It may not make sense, but it's human nature. Still, nobody knows for sure what our destination is.

Some say that if we don't conduct ourselves on our voyage the way they say, our destination will surely be dire and tragic, eternal tragedy. They claim that if we follow their path the destination will be glorious. Strange how people who don't know a thing have the insight for forecasting what anyone's destination will be like. "It's in the book," they will say.

Some say they know the way and the destination because they heard of a man who had done it before and reported back. Others will say that man never existed. Many will admire the life that man led, according to reports they have read and heard, and will pay homage to the advice he gave. But few will actually follow that advice because it doesn't make them happy.

Many we meet along the way aspire to be happy. They haven't a clue about how to actually be happy, but they have read about their right to pursue happiness and it sounds really good. They will keep trying to buy and trade with others what they have for happiness. They will get thrills. The thrills pass, a bad period follows, then they will try again to buy or trade for a new kind of happiness. Like a good drug trip followed by a bad recovery. But they keep trying as if the routine will change by itself.

No one is sure what happiness is. So many hold happiness up as the greatest goal of life. They keep chasing happiness, but they can't ever achieve it because they can't buy it or trade for it. Yet they have been told that hard work and wealth buys happiness, and they believe it to a large extent.

What they know how to do best is to buy and trade their efforts for bargaining power. Acquiring, they have learned, is the way to happiness. That lesson, reinforced by every medium they know, has been taught to them since childhood. What you get and what you do will make you happy. That's the lesson.

Yet each joy or thrill passes. Happiness, it seems, never wants to stay.

A few people seem to enjoy some sort of joy that stays with them. They don't seem to necessarily be happy, just content all the time. Some say these people are delusional. Others that they are emotionally unbalanced, socially not "with it."

They are suckers by the standards of most. They spend far more time helping others along the voyage than they do acquiring for themselves. They don't seem to understand that they can't give and get at the same time. If the objective is getting--and almost every social norm suggests that's what is desirable--then they will never be happy because they keep giving so much they can never build up a sufficient treasure to be happy. Still, they seem to mysteriously enjoy life far more than most people. They don't experience as many thrills though.

Only the delusional, unbalanced, socially "different" people who give to others, who help others, who work with others along the way, seem to have some kind of inner joy that lasts, that stays with them no matter what trouble they endure along the way. The "suckers" can't be happy because that's not how most of us define happiness.

Some will look around and see multitudes of others in nearby boats, yet still feel lonely. They think that the others want to ostracize them or they feel isolated from the others because of something social abhorrent about themselves, while the others simply ignore them because they act invisible. They may just lack the social skills needed to make friends. Or they may be looking too much for what others can and (they believe) should give them while not concerning themselves about what they can give to others.

Some will be sick, weak, lack body parts that allow them to move through the water like others. Somehow they manage to move along the same route as the rest of us. We don't know how. They must have some scary secret remedy or formula that allows them to manage when they aren't "whole" like most of us. Most of them can't afford the same thrills as the wealthy ones. But they don't experience the same depressions either. Weird.

Some won't seem mentally "right" at times. They get angry, act out, get into battles with others. Some have periods of depression. Others periods when...they act strange. We try to ignore them. We may have something they need. We may even be able to help them. But we don't know what it is they need or how to help them. It's easier to ignore them, to pretend they don't exist for a while. Best keep them at a distance.

Some beg from others. They gain such skills at begging--they may call it by some other word--that we wonder why they don't apply the same devotion and effort at learning skills that will better benefit them so they can be more self sufficient. They won't learn. They admire their own skills at begging.

Some believe they are totally alone, with no one to help them. They move through the water by paddling with their hands while leaving the oars within reach sitting unused. They can't see what is obvious to us. We don't point this out to them because they are likely stupid and we don't want to seem socially intolerant. One must be correct, mustn't one?

Many will wonder what the purpose is of the voyage. "Why are we even doing this. All we ever see is the same old water." When told by the old ones that they once left solid land to make this voyage, they will be suspicious. When told the purpose is to learn something that will help them once they reach the new land, they will be suspicious. All they can remember seeing is water.

Maybe water is all there is. Maybe there was no land we once left and there will be no land to establish a new life after we reach a new shore. Maybe it's just water, water, water. What can you do with water? Better get as much as we can from others to make this endless voyage bearable.

Some will believe there never was land. Some that there never again will be land ahead. Some will say that land is a myth, that the only true way to define anything is according to the conditions of the present. If they can't see it, feel it, touch, smell or hear it today, it doesn't exist. They will say that having faith that something existed in the past and will exist again in the future is self delusion. They ignore the argument that water must be supported by land underneath it, instead claiming that only what they can sense and "prove" today actually counts, actually matters.

Here's the Catch-22 of this story. Now that you are on the voyage, you must stay on it. Sorry, I kind of forgot to mention that earlier, before we launched.

Oh, and I have to leave you here because I promised to join with others away from here. I hope you don't mind. You will have to figure out the rest of the voyage for yourself.

You can do it. Think it through. Remember the kind of future you want so that you don't get stuck dwelling on the endless water around you. The better you plan the rest of your voyage, the likelier it is that you will reach the destination you hope for.

It's a voyage. Voyages end eventually. That's how they work. What may differ is the destination you reach. There are many to choose from.

But plan where you want to get eventually. If you don't, you may spend eternity paddling around in this same old water.

Good luck! See you around.

Bill Allin

Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems, a guidebook for people who want to know how to make their lives and their communities better. It all begins with teaching children what they need to know, when they need to know it.

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Author: builder

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