

Authoring someone else's life

"Observing without evaluating is the highest form of human intelligence." Krishnamurti

Hardly a moment passes before the reputed behavior of a mainstream personality actor/actress, politician, religious leader, sports figure, writer/artist/musician, corporate executive, etc. or that of someone in our personal stream spouse/partner, parent, child, in-law, relative, friend, neighbor, boss, co-worker, etc. crosses our radar. And hardly a moment passes before many of us are quick to respond with a knee-jerk reaction a judgment - that reflects our need to tell that person not only that he is bad or wrong, but how he should be (or should have been) behaving. We don our counseling or psychotherapist's hat and begin to "author" that person's life by critiquing their values, beliefs, premises, choices, and behaviors and then moving to create, for them, the type of life they should be leading, according to "me."

For most of us "authors," it's just too difficult to take in observations of people without needing to immediately react with our own observations that are replete with judgments, criticisms, evaluations or other forms of analysis. And more, once we have finished judging, we then pile on by taking the role of advisor, educator, "good parent," interrogator, interferer, explainer, hypothesizer, or fixer.

Author, heal thyself

"And why do you look at the *speck* that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" - Matthew 7:3

What is it about folks who seem to need to run other peoples' lives either in the here and now or from a distance? What is it about folks who seem to want to "help" others but can't seem to get a handle on their own life or issues? What is it about people who aren't happy unless they're authoring someone else's life? In a word - control. Most of these folks are to some degree out of control in their own lives and so they gain a false sense of grounding and control by attempting to run others' lives. Meddling is their fix.

Lacking close scrutiny

On 30th Street in Boulder, CO you'll find a sculpture of a man chiseling himself out of a block of stone. He has already carved his head, torso, arms, and thighs. Holding a hammer in his raised right hand, he's ready to strike a chisel he grasps in his left hand. He is forming his right knee.

Most authors of others' lives have yet to chisel their own sculpture. Feeling unsafe, insecure, fearful, overwhelmed, lost or confused, their block of granite is incomplete. And to feel some sense of value and worth, they choose to chisel another's sculpture.

Authoring someone else's sculpture brings a fake and phony sense of individuality, self-actualization and self-determination. The opposite is the truth. Authors of others' lives are seldom self-made individuals, lack self-direction and autonomy, rarely assume self-responsibility for their actions, and are poor at self-management. They often are withering on the vine of life, rather than growing and moving forward. Rather than being continuous learners or continual creators of their own life, they take a false sense of pleasure in attempting to tell others how to live. They never take an honest self-inventory. Better to judge, evaluate and tell others how to deal with their emotions, obstacles and struggles of life, than to "know thyself."

Self-authorship

So, for those who are steeped in authoring others' lives, perhaps this might be a good time to step back, leave those others alone and focus on your own self-authorship in an honest, sincere and self-responsible manner, i.e. chisel your own sculpture.

While chiseling, consider:

What conscious choices will I make to enhance my personal, professional, relational, and spiritual life? Will my sculpture reflect an honest, sincere and self-responsible effort to take care of my mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health, my financial and career health, my living environment, my relationship with my spouse/partner, friends and family, my colleagues and co-workers?

Will my sculpture reflect my core values, integrity, trustworthiness and authenticity? And my conscious choice to be a better listener, be empathic, compassionate, patient, accepting and understanding?

When folks come by to view your sculpture, what is the legacy they'll see? Will it reflect a finely thought-out, creative, resonating figure, or will it be whole, flat, and untouched because you were too busy obsessed with telling other folks how to chisel their granite blocks?

Finally, remember that everyone is in chapter three of their life. Try as hard as you might, you'll never, ever know what transpired in another's chapter one or two ever. So, attempting to author their life, without a grasp of those first two chapters, will never work for you or for them - hard as you try. Which is a good reason to close the book on their life and author the book of your own.

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- Do you tend to "author" others' lives? Are you continually judging others? Do others consider you to be a judgmental person?
- Do you feel a need to interfere and meddle in others' lives? If so, what does meddling get you?
- Is self-reflection a challenge for you? If so, why?
- Would you prefer to evaluate other's lives rather than your own? If so, why?
- What one action step can you take this week to chisel one small piece of your block that will result in a healthier, more self-responsible, more honest, more sincere, more positive and more creative life at work, at home and at play?
- Are you a continuous learner, a "work in progress?"
- Has your chisel dulled? What can you do to re-sharpen it? Do you have the strength to lift your hammer?
- Have you stopped chiseling?
- What was "meddling" like when you were growing up? Were you surrounded by people who constantly talked about and judged others? Were you constantly judged?
- The ultimate purpose question: Why do you think you're on the planet?

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