



This Moment for the Rest of My Life

By Stan Chung

“If the mind wants to comprehend reality, it will have to come out of the past and the future. But coming out of the past and the future, it is no longer the mind at all. Hence the insistence of all the great masters of the world that the door to reality is no-mind.”

Osho

“If there is a sin against life, it consists not so much in despairing of life as in hoping for another life and eluding the implacable grandeur of this life.”

Camus

One day when I was eleven years old, I sat on the worn concrete steps of our house. I glanced at my running shoes, faded jeans, striped shirt, and scrawny arms. The wind pushed back the black bangs that covered my forehead. I wore a blue jacket with three yellow stripes along the sleeves. The stripes were more mustard than yellow because few knew how to wash these jackets without running the yellow into the blue.

It wasn't supposed to be a particularly memorable day. It wasn't sunny. It wasn't cloudy. It wasn't exciting. It wasn't boring. It wasn't much of anything. So I decided to do something that I had never done before and have never done since. I decided this while sitting on the steps of our home at 299 Third Avenue in Williams Lake.

In front of me rested my trusty steed, the olive green mustang mount with the white vinyl banana seat, chrome sissy bar, and red STP stickers. It was a good bike. We ordered it from Sears, and it had served me without complaint for almost three years.

So, I said to myself, with as much resolve as a boy can muster, I'm going to remember this moment for the rest of my life.

This moment. This moment. This moment. For the rest of my life.

There is no other moment, I realized. I have no other life. This is it. Right here. Right now. In this very spot in the universe, feeling exactly the way I feel right now which to be precise is not exactly much of anything. But I pushed forward and tried to understand my particular time and place in the universe.

Latitude: 52.1333413

Longitude: -122.1444031

Elevation: 609 m

Time: Oct 11, 1973 around 11:42 am.

In 1973 at the above mentioned space and time, I was a student in Mrs Buchanan's grade five class. My best friend was Andy Gibbs. I lived with my parents in a house called the manse right beside St. Andrews United Church. My father was a minister. My mother was studying book-keeping twice a week. We ate Hungry Man frozen dinners on Tuesday nights and cardboard pizza on Thursdays. I was having trouble with long division. I really liked this girl. Her name was Sherrin Takahashi. I wondered if my cat, Dusty, would ever come back. This stuff I just wrote, I didn't really think these things. Those are just the facts that surround the thinking, if you can call it thinking.

Okay, this is what I realized:

I'm not very powerful, but I feel that I am. I'm just a kid but my awareness is strong. I feel filled, but I'm not filled with how great I am or how pathetic I am. I'm not dissatisfied or feeling emptiness. I'm not thinking about what I will become or how I will become what I become. I can't help but feel the sensuality of the wind, the movement of the planet. I inhale the fragrance of grass, honeysuckle, or dandelion green. The smell of October. So be it. No, I'm not exactly thinking or feeling these things. I'm not thinking. I'm not feeling. I'm not. I'm not. I'm not. I'm in a state of "notiness."Ha!

I was existing, as in capital B, Being. The eleven year old boy was freezing time as a reference point of consciousness, a GPS marker of his life, for what I don't know. (So many things that the boy doesn't know, will never know, doesn't ever want to know.)

There are so many things that I, the grown man, doesn't know. This moment of impermanence, this fixing of eternity, this conscious experiment with memory was, for me, my first and best recognition that there is no point in wishing or dreaming about another life, no point in wasting moments wanting things to be other than they are, that the greatest sin in life was feeling insufficient, that living wasn't sufficient. Life was more than enough.

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Now I am a man, a middle-aged man with more than enough insufficiencies. The eleven year boy reminds me that I am not my victories, economic gains, public profile, or reputation. I am not any of these things "nots." When the strengths fade, when the legs weaken, when the mind softens, then who am I? Can I be more than the words on my business card? What, then, is identity? And, if the question is even worthy of pursuit, does identity even matter?

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Now I am my father. An old man in the past and in the future. I smell like I don't want to smell. The air is cold to me now. All is rising air. Everything is seen through my cold eye. I am strong. Nothing moves me. I am cool. I am too calm. Now, my legs are swinging to and fro. I find myself in a coffee shop reading a book of truths. What does each truth say? The opposite of love is apathy. The most important things are the hardest

things to say. We make such small use of our souls. I am an old man now, so careful with my farts. Every person is a missed possibility, every thought a winding path of distraction. What is right here, right now?

Life alone is not good enough. I'm isolated from myself. Every day I'm in a coffee shop wanting to cry. Oh God, I miss the way I never was! A woman with a stroller comes in, her big baby sitting up tall, taking in the world, drinking from the fire hose of life, so the cliché goes. Sit down and breathe, big little one. Take it all in. The poet says the child is the father of man. Oh, my dear mother, long ago dead, I hear your joy in the chatter of women meeting for a cup of tea. Show them your love, my mother tells me from the warm salt ocean of blood. Oh, my dear hot-faced father, your mind/body cooled and no longer confused by your lack of heroism, smiling at me now with his Life question, the eternal riddle: how to love? How to love? Tears in my eyes again. How to love? Yes, that's the only question. Why do I always remember, when it's too late, all the things I should have done?

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Remember that eleven year boy who wanted to live deeply? To live immersed in the moment, sunk so deep? The boy is afraid of dying. Really. The boy doesn't know he is sorry for himself. The boy is mourning the man he will never be. That boy was the best of me. The very best of me.

It was an ordinary just like this one. It wasn't that sunny. It wasn't that cloudy. It wasn't exciting. It wasn't boring. It was not anything but this: now. Everything. All of life itself. The here and the now. The boy calls to me when I bother to listen: this life. This life!
This life!

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