

Reflecting

Beloved person,

*Who am I? They often tell me
that I come out strong,
that I speak clearly and firmly,
that I bear things quietly.
Is that really me?
Or am I just that
which I know about myself?¹*

Sometimes there are those moments when you stop and wonder: how did I actually get here? Perhaps you recognise this. That feeling you have when you look back at the steps you took, the choices you made and the people you met along the way. Like leafing through a diary and seeing the journey you have taken passing before your eyes. A journey with ups and downs that at times felt lonely, but at the same time was filled with encounters that made me grow in how I want to be in life.

How do I find the peace to reflect on where I am and who I am? Can I do that only when no one else is around and I am not being called upon? What helps is silence. The kind of silence in which you can hear yourself think, in which you dare to ask yourself your deepest questions. “Who am I?” and “What do I really want?” are then questions that come back again and again. This sometimes feels uncomfortable, like meeting a stranger. But it is precisely in that silence that you discover pieces of your own truth.

The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre once said: “Man is condemned to freedom.” And after that: “For once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does. It is up to you to give (life) a meaning.” Such words give strength. The idea that you can give life - *your* life - its own meaning gives you the confidence to make choices that suit you.

Sometimes it feels like you’re getting lost on the way. The balance between rest and space is then far away, you feel like you are constantly ‘switched on’. Although you place value on ‘being there’ for others, you also need time for yourself. And that can then feel selfish, like you are failing. But how can you be there for the other if you don’t take care of yourself first? While this is a simple and undeniable truth, it remains the lesson that needs to be learned over and over again. Reflecting about where you stand – both in strengths and weaknesses – helps you to look at yourself in a softer light. What is going well? What am I proud of? These are questions that create space and can restore balance.

Maybe that will make me feel part of that magical, bigger picture again. After all, you never travel alone. Your journey is intertwined with the wonder of life and is connected to others and to the world. When we think about our place in that world, we can feel a deep desire to contribute to something bigger. Perhaps that is the essence of our journey: discovering how we can continue to connect with others and the world from out of our own strength. That may come with trial and error. That thought is both comforting and inspiring. It is our faith from which we want to go our way again.

So, take a moment. Look around you. Ask yourself: where do I stand now? And don't be afraid to share those questions with others too. Together we are a network of travellers, each with a unique story, but all looking for the same thing: connection, love and a meaningful life.

With a warm-hearted greeting,

sister Marieke van Muijden and sister Judith Masselman



¹Fragment from the poem *Wer bin ich?* (Who am I?) By Dietrich Bonhoeffer
(freely translated)