

You are me in a different form

Beloved person,

Last week I happened to see him in real life: Jacob Derwig. An actor who performed in countless films and series. I put aside my shyness and approached him. ‘May I tell you something?’ I asked. When he nodded his assent, I told him about an example that he had once given. In a podcast he said that he had learnt to always search for something attractive in others: for example, when you had to play a romantic scene with someone you would never normally be interested in romantically. And that he had added: ‘And you always find it...’ I told him that the example has inspired me for years and that I wanted to thank him for this.

I keep this religious way of viewing things close to my heart because it speaks so strongly to me. Because, if you want to make the effort, you will always see something special in the other. And that there is always common ground to be found which can help to adjust your thinking. Instead of searching for differences and perhaps even magnifying them, you can spend just as long searching for something your heart recognises.

Perhaps you know the saying that you should never prejudge anyone before you have walked a mile in their shoes. Also, Jesus advised in his Sermon on the Mount, if someone asks you to walk along with them for a mile, to accompany them for two. The shoes are a metaphor for truly trying to imagine yourself in the other’s place and to take the time to do this. Because:

*Something that is left, can also be right.
Something that is open, looks to be closed.
And that which is large, can also be small.
That which is heavy, often seems light.¹*

The saying is also about choosing for, and experiencing, discomfort. If I put on ‘your shoes’ then I am not only looking at you from close by, but I am also immersing myself into how it is to carry your burdens, your character and your history. ‘Walking’ means choosing to slow down, allowing me to give more attention to that which presents itself and can therefore sympathise with it better. While I am walking in your shoes, I don’t want to rush to judgement or look for a solution. While walking in your shoes, I might have to endure finding it very difficult to understand you properly. And instead of quickly taking them off again, perhaps new insights about you may unfold and, at the same time, about myself as well.

In this way ‘you are me in a different form’ can reach new depths. Certainly, if I want to continue making efforts for all sorts of different people and in other situations. And perhaps I will succeed in extending that single mile to something that was previously not thought of and through which you now sense the possibility to be big-hearted and gentle.

*Once the realisation is accepted
that even between the closest of people
infinite distances exist,
a beautiful coexistence
close to each other can arise*

*If they succeed
in loving the distance between them,
which gives them the possibility
of always seeing each other
as a whole
and before an immense sky.
I consider this to be the highest task
of a bond between two people:
That each of us protects
the solitude of the other.²*

Being human like this. It has a deep meaning for me that is anchored in the realisation that we share our time together and that we can each enrich that time. Making space for the power of creation through which, out of a sense of decisiveness and self-knowledge, we can lift each other up. May it be so.

With a warm-hearted greeting, gladly your sister,
Nanda Ziere



We remember those have gone before us in this

¹ Children's Choir song 38, *Looking differently*.

² Freely taken from the body of thought of Rilke, origin of this translation unknown.