

The Meaning of You

March 10, 2020: The day my competition cheerleading team and I won second place in the state of Ohio. It was truly an eudaemonic day for us. Previously, we had experienced defeat at our high school conference competition in the fall of 2019. That defeat waned our confidence as a team. To know that we were beat at our first competition generated additional pressure. Balancing a work, school, and cheer schedule was also very challenging for the majority of us who were employed. In order to reclaim a title, we practiced rigorously. On that day, before the abrupt onset of the pandemic, I felt undefeated and significant. Now, on February 12, 2021, I must maintain a distance of six feet from my friends, my dreams, and even my near future.

During the peak of lockdown, I decided to do some soul searching. In my pursuit, I discovered that self-love and self-care was the nourishment required during this time. As I focused on my well-being, I invested my time pursuing my passion of writing. Writing filled me with gratification and security. In the moment of chaos, my thoughts were collected and still. I was also in need of direction, which I obtained when I started to strategically plan my future. In short, I surrounded myself with the activities I adore. That sustained me for a short time, however my search was not settled.

An incongruous void had formed inside of me. I lost my sense of time and my motivation. My spirit was faint, and my body felt numb. When I imagined myself as a teenager, this never came close to what I envisioned. Feeling bad only made the pain of loss worse. I needed to take action against this darkness, or else I would turn into a castaway.

My first attempt to repair the void was to convene with my family. We discussed my future and how they were feeling when they were my age. They reassured me that everything

will fall in place, as long as I had my faith. I adhered to their advice, but the battle against what seemed as an indefinite pandemic continued.

The next effort required my friends' counsel. I reached out to friends who were experiencing the same predicament. As I sought guidance, I met with them safely and I asked them what their plans were moving forward from the pandemic. They were situated in the same boat as me: Uncertain when the conclusion of the rampant virus would occur.

After some reflection, it dawned on me that nature was the only factor unaffected from the pandemic. Without human intercession, the animals were as lively as ever. The air appeared cleaner, and the vegetation was thriving. Nature was the solution to my dissatisfaction. I sought rehabilitation in nature as I also reinforced my awareness of the world. I spent enriching time outside writing, meditating, exercising, and detaching from my electronics. As a result, my connection to my writing was enhanced. I reinstated my aspirations and I accepted life for how it evolved.

Throughout this ongoing journey, I have learned about the experience of life. Empirical experience is ineffable and indispensable. As a writer, it is as essential as shelter. Sometimes, it is the shelter that is needed for sustainment and development. Self-expression served as a comforting force throughout the anomalous disruption, and nature was the supplement that healed me. Although this unprecedented pandemic evoked a whirlwind of negative emotions, it unveiled the reality of life. The lessons that were presented during these times are applicable to anyone. The factor that matters is how one applies the lessons that were learned. With that being said, the meaning of life can be redefined in an instant. The meaning of you, however, will never lose its significance.