

The Actor

In today's society, the word "actor" doesn't seem to carry any particular meaning beyond a job that one does to entertain or earn money. In short, being an actor is merely a career choice that is fundamentally no different than any other career choice. However, if that is our attitude toward the profession, perhaps we are not looking deeply enough at what it really means to be an actor.

For instance, when one acts, what does one really do? Acting, at its core, is the taking on of the character, nature and mannerisms of another in a way that is convincing to those who observe it. Whether this is done for pay or not is irrelevant to the fact that one takes on the identity of another. Whether one is successful at convincing others is also irrelevant to the fact that the person doing the acting is substituting another person for their own person, whether the character is real or fictional.

What we must do then, is consider what this really means to the person doing the acting. After all, we each have an identity. We are particular persons, with peculiarities that are unique and intrinsic to us as individuals. We do not hold these things collectively. Rather, they are individualized attributes of our unique personality. Now, to be sure, there are certain things common to all of us. The fact that we all are self-focused and generally like being the center of attention are a couple of them. But there are many things about our individual personalities that are distinctive to us, and that no one else shares in the same way. Though we may think much like someone else, we will dislike some things they like very much. In short, we have a particular makeup of characteristics and traits that are unique to us, and us alone.

Thus, the question arises as to what happens when someone

takes on, or attempts to take on, the personality characteristics and traits of another? What happens to their own personality when this is done? Where does it go? We know that it cannot be allowed to come to the fore during the time when the person is acting, as it would ruin their performance. We also know that it cannot be allowed to compete with the personality the actor takes on, as that would also create a conflict and would ruin the performance.

Plainly, the only thing that can happen to that person's identity is for it to be shunted aside, moved to the background and suppressed. However, most people have a strong enough identity that this creates problems that hinder their ability to act, which is why most people are not very good liars. Obviously, this is not the case with those who are successful actors. Either they have personalities which are weak and thus easily overcome, or they do not really do not know who and what they are.

The reason for this is clear: a strong personality will have difficulty with being shunted aside or moved to the background. Strong personalities are by nature assertive and intent upon being known for who and what they are. This is not the case with a weak personality, or with the individual who has no root in themselves to know who they are and what they are about.

This has major ramifications for the individual and the society that elevates such individuals to places of honor. Whether we realize it or not, when we elevate this type of person, we are implicitly stating that we would rather have the weak to be honored than the strong. We are also implicitly stating that we do not value individuality, other than what we can mold into an image that we like and that is pleasing to us. However, that is not the most destructive aspect of this weakness. No, it is most destructive within the individual.

One can only live vicariously for so long before they lose all

touch with who they are or might be. They will be confused about what their true emotions, thoughts and feelings are. Moreover, how do they know what thoughts and emotions are truly theirs, and which are from some character they became sometime in the past? Groundless, they will drift, become unstable, and be unable to effectively choose a course of action that is consistent from one time to the next. They are difficult to live with and find difficultly fitting into any particular niche in society. They become oddities, whose every move is used as entertainment for those who like the characters they portray more than the actual individual they are.

What does this state about us as a society? What are we, and what have we become when we partake of the destruction of a person and think it is entertaining? It is understandable that people do choose to destroy themselves, for whatever reason. After all, that has been going on for all history. However, it is not understandable that a society would enjoy watching one of its members engage in the slow-motion destruction of their person. Worse yet, that we would pay someone to do that, all the while saying "its fine; there's nothing wrong with it."

It speaks volumes about why we are set for destruction as a society and a nation.