

Balancing Being with Busy-ness

At various points in anyone's growth toward a more conscious life, they have to undertake the "Hero's Journey." Myths, like that of Perseus and Andromeda, hold clues about how to do this. But the journey isn't literal, nor is it fanciful and silly. The Hero is the Self that has the courage and the consciousness to go into the depths of our inner world to see, name and slay our personal Monster of Unhappiness.

This journey isn't fun. It isn't a cool adventure. It is a crucial necessity for the maturing and salvation of your Being, your soul, your Higher Self.



Still photo from the film "Wild Strawberries," written and directed by Ingmar Bergman, 1957.

All of today's superhero or light-saber film sagas may be entertaining, but they primarily entertain your physical body and your physical brain. The real Hero's Journey addresses what the physical brain and body can never touch: the alchemy of self-transformation. It's worth noting that Perseus first sees Andromeda, chained to a rock by the ocean, as he is flying across the sea on his winged sandals—the alchemical body (Earth) of his Higher Self traveling above the alchemical sea (Water/Emotion) in the alchemical sky (Air/Thought) with the aid of his winged sandals (Imagination, Creativity). His alchemical desire (Fire) for Andromeda (his anima) will give him the strength (Fire/Light) to battle Cetus, the sea monster (negative emotions).

And what is chained to the rock is a woman. Whatever your gender, everyone's happiness requires the participation of both the female and male parts of us. Rescuing (unchaining) our female, or male, aspects isn't just about being more emotional or stronger! It's about being whole, being able to grow, to change, to gain maturity—Wisdom.

That male–female balance within the individual isn't a big seller in western thought. That pervasive disregard can be seen in a particularly striking example: The opening sentence in the Gospel of John.

In the Greek, Latin and later translations, that opener reads, “In the beginning was the Word...” However, in the original Aramaic text, prior to the institutionalizing of Christianity by Constantine, that opening sentence is, “In the beginning was the *Wisdom*...” Why the change? In Greek, the word wisdom is “sophia” (σοφία), which is a female noun. The church *fathers* didn't like that!

Wisdom—of the mind, the heart or the body—nurtures Presence.

Ingmar Bergman's “Wild Strawberries” can open your Hero-eyes to find your own journey. Bergman's hero is no buff 20-year-old: he's a 78-year-old professor traveling to his alma mater to receive an award. The deeper road he travels leads him to a confrontation with the part of his life he has lost—chained to a rock in his ancient subconscious to be devoured by the Beast of Emptiness. It's one of the most accessible, contemporary and moving film depictions of the Hero's Journey.

Below is a similarly contemporary journey through a piece of music. It's a violin concerto that speaks to the pull of daily life's busy-ness and the difficulty of keeping your Self intact, sustained and content. For many of us today, the first challenge of growing your individual presence—the first Herculean labor—is to avoid being swallowed up in the trivial clatter and chaos of the outside world.

[Prokofiev, Violin Concerto 1, D Major, 1st movement](#)

Shlomo Mintz, violin; Claudio Abbado, conductor, Chicago Symphony Orchestra

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eli2_NojYtU

I've placed a loose framework for a story that anyone can use, albeit with their own personal variations within the framework.

In a nutshell:

We start our lives with wonder, curiosity, interest, delight, fascination and enjoyment as a major fuel for what we do and how we grow. But at various points in our lives, other motivations not only take over, but they often blot out any remembrance of what we love and why we love it.

We feel we can't fix our lives. And we reach a point of despair that forces us to question who we are and who we want to be. And from that contest, that challenge, that struggle between the bewildered inner self and the outside world, something cracks open and we see—maybe for the first time in our lives—the full picture of our various selves through time.

That remembrance and reconnection with our composite, best self allows us to continue in the world more effectively, more happily, more contentedly.

Some specific guideposts in the music: (*movement ≈ 10 minutes; timings below are approximate*)

It begins with the entrance of a theme I'll call the self-spark of wonder that's with us when we come into the world. It grows, learns, develops its talents.

2:30 — the world makes its entrance, and the dance of interactions with the world begins, bringing work, success, pride, satisfaction, ego, superiority.

3:50 — the demands of the world get louder, faster, more insistent, and we respond by dutifully speeding up with the world's "expectations" of us.

4:30 — you hit your first big wake-up call — your first pause, your first true disappointment, your first point of discontent, exhaustion, bewilderment...

—but it doesn't last...the world quickly reasserts itself and we redouble our efforts, but any joy or contentment is gone even though we keep trying.

6:00 — it gets harder and harder to keep going, to keep up, until you're operating more from a nervous anxiety that makes you think everything's all right, but only because you don't give yourself the time to see how time is disappearing.

6:45 — you collapse, and deep despair casts us into an even deeper, lost place.

7:30 — from that depth, that seeming tomb of nothingness, we are resurrected by a visitation from the magical world of our aspirations that we were born with but had lost along the way. In essence, you redeem yourself. And at the end of the music, there's a quiet "goodbye" from that magic world. But it's a goodbye that says it will always be near you, available to you, part of you.

And from that journey is born the Wisdom of true contentment and compassionate forgiveness for yourself and others.

OK, that's a lot of stuff! Don't worry about listening to this and hunting for the time codes. You'll hear the changes in the music. And this is just one possible story-line that can be put to this music. What doesn't change with any story applied to this piece is the glorious theme at the beginning and the magical salvation when you hear its return at the end.

This piece of music, this performance—it's a gift for anyone who takes the time and makes the conscious effort to unwrap it.

And give yourself the gift of watching *Wild Strawberries*—another artistic treasure that feeds the soul.