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It's All in the State of Mind... and how to change it - Part 2

~a story about love, passion, and altering reality~

"The greatest triumphs of man were those in which his mind had to free itself from the influence of delusive appearances."

-Nicola Tesla

I guess I was lucky to have begun music at a very young age, but then it's hard to know what life would have been like otherwise. My Dad was a music professor, and he started the children before we knew what we were doing – I was five years old.

We had a unique teacher, who years earlier had been a violinist with the New York Philharmonic. Through various equally unique situations, he ended up teaching music in public schools in our smallish town in Georgia. He was terrific with kids and developed his method for teaching youngsters, very simply and rapidly. Then he started a local orchestra for children. In just a few years he had made my sister, my brother and myself top instrumentalists in the state in Junior High School. We didn't think too much about it – we had started earlier than the other kids so we had more experience.

So, it was a bug-eyed, ice water dip for this young violinist, who ranked top in his state at the ages of 13 and 14; used to being the lead violinist in orchestras; to then at age 15 enroll in an up-state New York institution for the arts and find himself placed abysmally low in the youth orchestra.

That was sobering enough, but the severe reality adjustment that dramatically shifted my viewpoint was seeing the other kids, on their *own* initiative, take a sandwich and coke in the practice room and not come out all day!

In the comparatively rural musical world I'd been brought up in I had never imagined such a thing. This was clearly a new species of kid for me. Many of them would *wake up early* and rush out to secure coveted practice rooms. I have to say that at first, this was unnerving as hell. It was supposed to be a summer *vacation* from home, not work.

I suppose most serious young music students have nightmares about not practicing enough and being sent to a musical juvenile delinquency home where you'd receive that sort of a demonic punishment. But that was not that scenario at this institution. I saw no evidence of the parental whip or institution despot driving these kids. They were a new brand of being for me, far from the giddy-kid consciousness that was so prevalent where I was from.

I had a "girlfriend" in the school that was a painter from New York City. She would stay in her studio, which for me lasted anxious eternities. I think she had wealthy parents who secured this unique little place for her. She had a small refrigerator, a bed, and a bathroom, and could subsist for days in that hermit hole. It had no windows, and time was irrelevant to her, so she never bothered to look at a watch and didn't know if it was day or night, and didn't care. At fifteen years old, she so immersed herself in her work that she would only eat necessary, and when she got too tired to concentrate, throw herself down on her never-made-up cot.



I think she liked me; she'd hold my hand in public and kiss me a bit in private. But maybe she just wanted a more personal male admirer, as she would rarely come to visit me. She was always working on some intense new art piece – far more enthralling than myself. Nevertheless, I knew I liked her, so to keep at least a pretense of a relationship, and in the hope that she would get in a kissing mood again, or more, I would visit her.

Of course, she was very preoccupied when I arrived and would invite me in with an almost sincere, "Oh, hi, glad to see you"- type line, mixed with a - "but don't be too much of a nuisance" look. She wouldn't say anything else but just go back to where she had been before the nuisance arrived.

I felt like one of her last week's passé pieces, which I would sit next to in the corner. I was part of the discards that she was now elevated from, having transcended on to something more avant-garde and of real worth.

In the beginning, per the custom I grew up with, I should have been insulted by this, but for some reason, it didn't bruise my ego. Events so far had made it embarrassingly obvious I was in a superior world, and maybe all my past customs should be swept out with the old attitude. Additionally, I understood that musical practice time was sacrosanct; never to be profaned by anyone under the godhood of full professor, and painting time would be similar. So, I just sat in the corner and watched.

She was too cute for real comfort, but interestingly, there was no discomfort or anxiety about not talking. That was simply not a part of the pictorial world she was in, where mere words were unnecessary and could even be distracting.

After I felt too much like yesterday's leftovers, I would excuse myself and go for the door, saying I didn't want to bother her and I had to practice. It was just an excuse, of course, as not having her dedication, I didn't *have* to practice. She would feign regret that she hadn't paid more attention to me and was sorry I had to leave. She would invite me back, but the offer was vacant of assuring substance.

I hadn't yet had my first love affair, and my attitudinal and corporal zodiac had it that this was *supposed* to be a no-holds-barred, or all-holds-allowed, red-hot love affair worthy of verbose brag when I got home.

Obviously, I was doing something wrong, but in my south 40 mentality, I couldn't figure it out. Maybe I was using the wrong smelling deodorant, or perhaps the shirttail was supposed to be out instead of in?

She appeared to me to be extraordinarily talented for her age, but my judgment of such things was limited. I lived in mostly a musicians' world, and even though my father had some of his artwork hanging in the house, painting wasn't something I'd paid a lot of attention to. This now loomed as possibly a costly omission in my education.

"Hey... maybe that's my problem... I don't know pointillism from van Gosh, or whatever his name is. Maybe I should grab an art book from the library, pick out a few choice terms, and show her my true sophistication!"

I remained a derelict aimlessly bobbing in the sea of my disconnected discontent – until my third visit to the hermit hole.

It was that visit that *forever changed my reality and state of mind.*

I really wanted to make it go right with her, so I decided to stop pretending I was interested in her artwork and *really* get into it. I hung in there about twice as long as the previous visits.

After watching her for maybe thirty minutes, observing the idyllic scene she was painting, a transformation began. I started to enter her world.

At first, it was merely sensing where she was going with the painting; what she would paint next and the colors she would probably use. Then, as artists can, I began to see what the paint would look like on the canvas before it went on.

In watching how she held the brush and made the brush strokes, I sensed the balance of it and a sort of rhythm she had. The brush was a lot smaller than a violin bow, and the canvas was bigger than the violin, but I could see a relationship. You had to skillfully stroke something with the artistic concept of what the small strokes were supposed to add up to.

I picked up a dry brush near me and practiced with it against one of her old paintings. Then I started anticipating and imitating her brush strokes. After a while of that sympathetic action, I sensed the communication she had with the paint and canvas through the brush. I was getting an almost tangible feeling of co-motion. It was very new and weird to me, but unmistakable.

I perceived her balance and coordination with the brush, paint, and canvas, and I could tell she had no attention on the mechanics of what she was doing. Her focus was only on using these things to form her ideas of what it should look like.

I asked her if she knew what it was going to look like when finished, and for the first time, she really looked at me. With nonchalant certainty said, "of course." Then I looked at her half-completed picture and envisioned what I thought it would look like, and with a surprising degree of certainty. My certainty had a lot to do with the sympathetic co-motion, and this latent capability was slowly turning into an aesthetic ability.

Though much of the painting was still in an indistinguishable outline form, I could see that she was creating a pastoral scene, with sheep and a shepherd underneath grey clouds. Above the clouds, the sun was reflecting brilliantly off the top of the clouds. But below the clouds, it was beautifully misty and somber - except for a single ray of sunlight shining through a small hole in the heavy clouds. The beam was directed on the only black sheep in the flock, who was looking up at the ray.

Suddenly I sensed her message in the work. It was a banner for the black sheep of the world. Knowing and appreciating that enhanced my perception of her delicate but deliberate approach, her concentration on detail, and the force and purpose she had. Her attention actually seemed palpable.

It was at that point that I had my dramatic epiphany! A ray of sunshine parted *my* clouds. It was like flipping a switch on the sun. All of a sudden, I saw everything with different eyes.

I had only been seeing the objects in the room, including her beautiful face and body. Now I noticed how purely physical, flat, and relatively uninteresting that seemed. The meaning of the objects and the deeper aspects of life had been missing.

It was like a 3D picture that when viewed flatly shows a simple scene, but when shifting angles you see the three-dimensional aspect, which opens up a whole vista you had been looking at but not seeing.

It was an astonishingly rich, significant little world she had, interposed on top of what I had been viewing. You just have to know how to look at it to grasp what it *actually* is. This came from seeing it, truly, from her eyes. I felt like her, and in retrospect, I see that in some respects, I temporarily *became her*. It was an incredibly spiritual thing. I sat there in awe for quite some time. It made a lot of sense, like; of course, this is what it is *really* all about.

It was such an oddly natural phenomenon. I felt like an initiate who had just been accepted into some exclusive club and had been shown the club secrets and handshake. I was a novice to that world, but now that I understood and was part of it. I was pretty good at my art, but she had something of significance that I didn't have. In tapping into her professional consciousness, I became much more pro. It was a beingness thing, not a thinkingness thing.

After ten years of merely existing in the world of the arts, finally, I was becoming an artist. *It was all in the state of mind and how I went about changing it.*

Many years later I discovered that that had been my first experience, minor as it was, into the fascinating but paradoxically unreliable realm of mysticism; how to perceive beyond the ordinary, automatic and superficial levels.

Now, the point here isn't really mysticism or artists or aesthetics or even love. People can relate to this personal experience, or they can't, so this is the point: is there something like a formula for changing one's state of mind? Well, after almost three decades as a life counselor, I've found that there actually is. This is the bare bones, nutshell version.

First of all, when you say it's *all in the state of mind*, what do you mean? State of mind, by itself, is a relatively passive thing. But if your goal is to have a state of mind that gets something done, then it's got to have a more kinetic or active substance. The state of mind that only appreciates art doesn't create art.

The formula starts the only way it can - with communication. And that certainly doesn't mean only the verbal or written forms. It's not a surface or virtual form of communication, but the most in-depth and thorough kind you can manage. And then improve on that. Naturally, you will find that with more interaction, your liking or affinity for the thing increases, and so your reality of it comes up. This results in increased control of the thing. Find ways of improving these factors, and you start to feel like the thing, so you can *be* the thing.

Thinking may or may not have anything to do with arriving where you want to be. We all know that just thinking right thoughts doesn't get a thing *done*, unless the thing you want to get "done" is to have right thoughts. It is the degree of *beingness* that finally determines the degree of ability and control.

Outside of counseling, don't worry too much about getting rid of the state of mind you don't want but concentrate on replacing it with what you do want. If you make what you want more substantial and more powerful or influencing than what you have, the replacement is inevitable.

Of course, the stronger the *intention*, the more and faster you'll push this. Find the purpose and fan that flame. Look at the leaders or principal figures in any field or area, and you see their intention usually is more alive than others'. That is what separates the special from the average. Fan the flame, and you can end up with a bonfire, and with what we all want – **passion**.

Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world. -[Harriet Tubman](#)

This girl was intent on doing what she was doing, and really on nothing else. There was import and worth - and objective. She had an intention to go someplace in life, and it was very much live for her. It had little to do with the schedules or time, directions from others, food and sleep, or intrusions from boyfriends. It didn't really have much to do with the physical universe, except to use it to accomplish her artistic, and indeed, spiritual objective. She was a true professional in the making.

We sense that real artists have something that others don't operate with. It is an aesthetic creativity that could validly be called the *aesthetic mind*. Everybody has this, but unfortunately, it usually needs to be exhumed from the quiet corners of the soul where it lies quiescent.

I have evolved a personal iconic rallying cry around all this. It's become an integral part of me that I've taken into every field since.

She gave me something immensely more valuable than a love affair, which at the time, I thought was the best you could get. I learned that although true professionalism has something to do with the paycheck, it has everything to do with passion. The type of passion that goes a whole lot deeper than bedsprings.

I didn't even care that she'd made me feel like second-hand artwork. I only regret that I didn't get a chance to pay the significant debt owed her. Sometimes all you can do to compensate for an unpaid debt is pass the benefit on to another.