

Other Than

by David Weimer

In 2001, while in Stuttgart, Germany, David wrote the following personal letter to Shane in Ireland.

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Five years ago, for no good reason maybe, something happened. A couple of things. I was pushing hard as hell. One hell of an efficient diver. I read something recently from a guy who said that no one can push for an answer to their life 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I would disagree. I had become one hell of an effort in a direction towards I didn't know what.

Basically taking apart myself through looking at myself. I didn't take apart anything. It happened. I came apart, like that onion you talked about, as a result of incessant looking and diving.

Well, in the midst of a lot of tension and other things, I was allowed by circumstances to spend a week in the woods alone. In a tent. And my brain broke. I woke up one morning after a bad night of storming, among other things, and I was gone. No David. Everything that can possibly be described as being my mind was gone. No motion. No emotions, no back-and-forth of thoughts or anything. That lasted two and a half days. And like a foot coming back to life after being asleep, "I" returned, along with the non-stop motion of whatever you or anyone can say in describing any attribute of the "mind." But just imagine existing without "you."

When I came out of the woods, I stayed in the cabin of a friend for the night before being picked up the next day to go home. That night was what I call my "night of hell." I say it kind of jokingly because there's no way of describing just how hell-like it was. It's a laugh to say "night of hell" because there's no way to point at what it was.

Beginning in daylight, early evening (it was May 1996), while drinking coffee and discussing things with this friend, I came under attack. That's the way I have of describing it. Imagine the times you've been in the dark somewhere, as a kid maybe, and ran like hell for the light of a house. Scrambling inside just in the nick of time, it felt. And the running was from a mounting terror. And this happened in the light, and increased and increased and I couldn't even politely ignore it anymore.

Okay, that was what I felt pursued by. Terror. And I dodged and ran, mentally, one million different ways. Rationalizing. This isn't happening. Okay, it is happening, but it is all in my head, and so on and on. This thing was strategically superior to me. Before I could complete a move, it beat me to it, halfway. This thing was to annihilate me. I had no doubt of that. I had no doubts as to the seriousness of what was happening. A guy with his head in a guillotine with the blade coming down doesn't take it lightly.

The dodges consisted of leaning on the words of others. Other philosophers, other people whose books I had read. The dodges came from saying “I am” and from getting angry and a lot of other attempts. Man, I was run out. Every avenue was cut off, leaving me no escape. This was no game. I could not escape what was happening. Some unusual phenomena occurred. Noises. Coincidences. It was terrifying.

Eventually the running guy, running with no reason or thoughts but blindly running, came up against something. He (I) perceived that his actions (leaning on another's words for salvation) were harming another person. I thought it was bad enough to be boiling alive. But to bring this on to another person as well--it was unforgivable. So I did the one thing I probably did that entire time. I turned, truly, and faced what I had been fleeing. Openly. No hope of survival existed at this point. No thoughts, as such, either. Just action. Running, noticing, deciding, turning.

Ultimately it came down to me. And only me. Facing, by myself, oblivion.

And turning to face that was like pulling a trigger. There was no hope. That, too, was lost behind me, in the process. What if you pulled the trigger of a very heavy gun held at your temple and it went off and something remained aware? What if you BECAME or discovered yourself BEING. The words are very misleading. They imply something that isn't the real picture.

Other-than is my best way of talking about what I became or what I experienced. I became something other than a coward. I was burned out, completely, and when I was all gone, something WAS.

Well, that happened around midnight. From then until five-thirty or so, I was re-visited by that pursuer. I was forced to re-remember my way back to what I was. I was forced to re-become it. It was like I died once, okay, but then, forced to go through it again and again. “I” was really stupid, and kept growing back, like a sprout from a burned stump of a tree, with as little choice in the matter. It kept happening, time and again, until, by 5:30 I was pretty much...altered. The “I” that grew back, that is. A groove was cut deep, and even though I “grew back,” I never grew back over the center.

I walked the dirt road below that cabin in the morning after that night. Not elated at living. Not gloriously relieved. Not disturbed. Just nothing. I said to myself, aloud, “Well, I'm here.”

Since then, I have never lost that other-ness. I'm a jerk, like all the others, but I'm something else as well.

I've never been afraid again. Not like before. Never again a coward. I am afraid sometimes, but that's what happens interpersonally. It's part of that pattern between animals. But I'm not ruled by it.

Also, my view on things was altered considerably. I saw things differently. I was different. Even though I'm the same. And my view is continuing to alter. Maybe I'm getting smarter. I don't know.

Now, I'm currently 34-years-old. That stuff happened to me when I was 29.

This picture I just sketched is out of context. But I can't write a book here telling all that happened before, during or since.

I can only say that I think you're not wasting your time if you're pushing or diving for understanding or the truth or the final answer or God or whatever you want to call it.

That's it for now. I've got to do dishes before it gets too late.