

A Place of One's Own

Nobody asked but ...

A very good friend recently had a life-altering event. And it did not just change things going forward. It changed past, present, and future. Not only does it make him reconsider, wondering what his final role is in this neck of the universal woods, but it has profound implications for me, too.

Any individual has both a genetic and a memetic footprint — and in the end, the memetic far exceeds the genetic. As a carrier of DNA, I have had some effect — Kilgorette and I have 2 daughters, 8 genetic grandchildren, and, at this telling, 3 genetic great-grandchildren. But our separate and/or combined affect goes much further. An individual leaves an affect with every person, place, event, or thing with which he has had a relationship (in the broadest sense), and that same individual is affected likewise.

As a carrier of DNA information, I am a single unit among 7 or so billion currently alive, among 10s of billions of humans who have ever lived, among trillions of trillions of lifeforms who have ever existed. My DNA is small potatoes, but probably unique, nonetheless. The DNA is frozen in perpetuity either in being transmitted or truncated — Nature permits replication or extinction. But we cannot fathom the memetic affect. Newton, borrowing from (maybe) Bernard of Chartres, said we advance by standing on the shoulders of giants, and I have perpetuated that meme a thousand times. If only an hundred picked up on that meme and paid it forward, that means the meme has been distributed one thousand times plus 100 thousand times. We don't know where lies the outer limits of these exponential happenings.

Therefore, the question becomes have you lived, not did you get top billing in the very transitory annals of myopic history?

— Kilgore Forelle