

The True Professional

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This is a “found poem”—all phrases are taken from, or found, in Parker Palmer’s book The Active Life. I then played with them and extended them beyond Parker’s original prose. I wrote this in tribute to Parker Palmer for the profound influence he’s had on my work.

*“The true professional is a person whose action points beyond
his or herself to that underlying reality,
that hidden wholeness, on which we all can rely.”*

Parker Palmer

Illusion

Too much of our action is really reaction. Such doing does not flow from
free and independent hearts
but depends on external provocation.

Such doing does not flow
it depends on external provocation.

It does not come from our sense of
who we are and what we want to do, but from

our anxious reading of how others define us
our anxious reading of how others define us
our anxious reading of how others define us

and of what the world demands.

When we react in this way we do not act humanly.

The true professional is one
who does not obscure grace
with illusions of technical prowess,
the true professional is one
who strips away all illusions to reveal

a reliable truth
a reliable truth in which
the human heart can rest.

Can rest.

Unveil the illusions
unveil the illusions that
masquerade
the illusions that masquerade
as reality and reveal
the reality
behind the masks.

Catch the magician
deceiving us
get a glimpse
a glimpse of the
truth behind the trick.

A glimpse.

Contemplation happens anytime we get a glimpse of the truth.

Action

Action, like a sacrament,
is the visible form of an invisible spirit
an outward manifestation of
an inward power.

An expressive act is not to achieve a goal outside myself
but to express a conviction
a leading, a truth that is within me.

An expressive act is one taken
because if I did not
if I did not
if I did not take it
I would be denying
my own insight, gift, nature.

Action, like a sacrament, is the visible form of an invisible spirit
an outward manifestation of
an inward power. But as we act,
we not only express what is in us
and help give shape to the world.

We also receive what is outside us
and we reshape
our inner selves.

When we act, the world acts back.

The world acts back
and we and the world,
we and the world are

co-created.

Right action is a process of birthing that cannot be forced
but only followed.

Surrender

When God's love for the world pierces our armor of fear
it is an awesome experience of calling and accountability.
When God's love pierces our armor of fear
it is awesome
it is awesome to be pierced by God
to be called to accountability
to be called by God's love
for the world.

The true professional is one
who does not obscure grace
with illusions of technical prowess,
the true professional is one
who strips away all illusions to reveal

a reliable truth in which
the human heart can rest.

Reveal a reliable truth.

Let our human hearts rest.