

MARKER

Are we ready for "inner readiness"?

by Mark E. Taylor

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"Marker" is a regular column in Coyote, hoping to encourage debate, questions and a certain regard. For reasons of progress, this "Marker" could appear next in purely digital form as a series of "o"s and "i"s. Abnormal service could resume in the next issue.



Ingenious excuses and a LinkedIn dilemma

You ever come up against people who manage to find incredible excuses for their own action or inaction? I was reminded of a couple of examples while searching for a recipe in a cookbook detailing special meals experienced or consumed by Josip Broz Tito, the late President of Yugoslavia.

"If he did not like something, he rejected the unwanted food with great style: sparrow specialities, offered in China, were not really to his taste, so he stated that he could not possibly eat sparrows as they were the avian proletariat." Quite original, as a response, really. The book does not state how his hosts reacted.

My favourite excuse comes from the last century during a particularly trying seminar on the Fairy Mountain in Budapest (the wonderful part called Csillebérc). We were discussing stereotypes, prejudice, identity, refugees, minorities and other hot topics of what was then known as intercultural learning. For the majority of the participants it was the first time they had been confronted with many of the ideas involved. As many of you will know, this process can be quite challenging, personally. From the second day onwards there were two participants who never managed to join proceedings in the morning until after the coffee break at around 11:29. Their excuse? They were just fulfilling their role of personifying the stereotypical, prejudiced view of outsiders about their countrymen: this would involve having a great time telling stories and drinking large amounts of alcohol until very, very late into the night.



So, how could any reasonable person expect them to get out of bed and be available to start participating actively at 9:27? After several failed attempts at putting into operation some of the techniques of conflict resolution or even *transformation*, the secretary general of the organisation concerned decided that conflict management could be more appropriate there. He told the two heroes that their travel reimbursement depended on their active participation in the seminar. The next day there were two extra mouths to feed at breakfast. Other selected participants then provided encouragement and motivation whenever eyelids appeared to be closing. I'm still unsure if this was the best solution... What would you have done?

Are you a member of LinkedIn?¹ Anyone looking for professionals in a particular area are supposed to be able to find who they are looking for there and as a member you can connect with others. Each person is responsible for posting what they want to and, therefore, responsible for ensuring that information is "true". Or at least their version of truth. After training courses and other events,

facilitators often get requests from participants to be "LinkedIn" with them (or even become Facebook "friends" – but that is another story). One colleague refuses all such requests, stating that he only wants to be involved with people with whom he has worked. What is your approach? Last year I received such an invitation from a participant and I deleted the request. He had been, for me at least, one of those participants who do not engage themselves in the subject matter of the activity and only attend courses in order to find partners for their own future projects. Recently, however, I did have a little look at his LinkedIn page to see what kinds of competences he claimed to have developed. You will not be surprised to learn that his page was bursting with competences and that his career history was very long. Buried in this long list, I was happy to find a reference to the training course last year... And my eyes almost popped out of my head when I read further, as his stated role had been "trainer and group leader"!

So, dear reader, what would you do?

And the response to the title of this issue's "Marker"?

The answer would appear to be: "not quite". Maybe we'll see next time.

And finally

Thanks to those who write or give informal feedback. Next time we consider the "pataphysics of crafty crêpe creation in a postmodernist context".

Sounds, words, inspirations

Drulovic A. (2006), *Tito's Cookbook* (original: Titov Kuvar), Belgrade, Laguna.

Fisher M. (2014), *Ghosts of my life – Writings on depression, hauntology and lost futures*, Zero Books.

Elizabeth Archer and The Equators (1977), *Feel like making love*, Lightning Records www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiuZEPv-_fS (accessed 10 November 2014).

L'express (12 November 2014), VIDEO. "En direct, un artiste cherche une aiguille dans une botte de foin" www.lexpress.fr/culture/art/au-palais-de-tokyo-un-artiste-va-chercher-une-aiguille-dans-une-botte-de-foin_1620978.html#xtor=CS3-5076 (in French, accessed 14 November 2014).

Robert Wyatt, "Go and sit upon the grass" (Ivor Cutler cover) www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWZs7N7_5EQ (accessed 14 November 2014)

1. Defined as a business-oriented social networking service. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LinkedIn> (accessed 14 November 2014).