

Do Not Recklessly Touch the Bubbles

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In moments of profound solitude, when all around me falls silent, I often find myself immersed in the tender embrace of cherished memories. It's as if I can almost catch the delicate fragrance of the frangipani blooming in our backyard, or relive the innocence and purity of first love during those early school days. And then, my mind drifts to the vast expanse of the unknown future, envisioning a life nestled by the secluded shores, where each dawn beckons with the gentle touch of sunlight, where I walk barefoot with my beloved, tracing the golden sands as the waves beat the coast and the sea breeze whispers its eternal lullaby. Yet, reality has a relentless grip, pulling me back, leaving an ache, a void difficult to mend. Even amidst the fragrance of frangipani or witnessing the tender dance of others in love, the past resurfaces, haunting me like a specter. It's as if I've become a creature of melancholy, drown in the echoes of time's tender embrace.

When I read Thomas Hardy's "The Self-Unseeing," I can almost immediately envision a picturesque scene of a warm family: the smiles, the bowing, the dancing. Yet, the poet concludes with "Yet we were looking away!" Why this conflict and contrast? Have you ever experienced the effort of trying to recapture memories of people, events, or things from the past, only to find that the sacredness, the uniqueness you once associated with them seems to vanish upon encountering them again? Despite the passage of time, these things may not have changed. In "The Self-Unseeing," Hardy seems to urge us to cherish the precious moments of the present before it's too late. However, in my recent experiences, beyond just "cherishing the present," this old notion, my insight has been that we must recognize those things that are unattainable or lost, and carefully manage the distance between us and them.

Is what we can't have truly that good? Perhaps not. Often, it's our own minds that embellish these things excessively. Firstly, regarding past experiences, take "The

Self-Unseeing" for example. Maybe 'She' wasn't smiling, but the protagonist's nostalgia paints a smile on her face. Perhaps "It was a cold night without fire," yet the protagonist feels warmth and imagines a fire. I believe human memory is often imprecise; with time, many details are consciously or unconsciously reprocessed, usually in a positive way. Then there are the skewed imaginations of things to come, like unvisited travel destinations or ambiguous romantic interests. The allure of these things may stem from their distance, leaving room for our imagination or fueling our innate curiosity. As Hardy put it, "Love lives on propinquity but dies of contact." When we truly encounter these things, we may find them different from our expectations or fraught with flaws we hadn't noticed from afar.

In my perception, all these fantasies, past and future alike, are akin to bubbles. They shimmer under the light, their surfaces adorned with flowing rainbows, much like the colorful kaleidoscope of memories and dreams within our minds. They dazzle and intrigue, resembling the amazing auroras of Earth's poles or the vibrant blooms of spring. Their beauty sparks wonder, tempting us to peer inside these bubbles, imagining the mysterious scenes they may hold, even stirring an urge to explore within. Yet, they are delicate, easily shattered by a touch or even the gentlest breeze. When a bubble bursts, it may not injure us, but the splash leaves us sober, creating a void in our memories or hearts. And we exist within a bubble—the bubble of the present. Here, we can see, hear, and touch the things within this bubble, but without the filtering lens of its surface, the contents may not hold the same allure. Life is a continuous act of blowing bubbles, projecting forward the fantasies of the future, and exhaling the moments of the past. Yet, what we truly grasp and touch is always the here and now, unfiltered and genuine.

Take a look at Thomas Hardy, who once ardently loved his wife Emma in Cornwall, pledging a lifetime of devotion. However, after the passion faded, conflicts arose. They argued over where to settle, clashed over fertility issues, and tensions simmered between Emma and her mother-in-law. Gradually, Hardy sought emotional solace in other women. Emma even kept a diary filled with grievances against Hardy.

Moreover, Hardy developed a slight affection for Emma's friend Florence, who later became his wife after Emma's death. More ironically, after Emma's passing, it seemed Hardy's love for her reached a new peak. During that phase, he created some of his greatest love poems such as "The Going" and "The Voice". Again, 'Love lives on propinquity but dies of contact'.

As for myself? This question has plagued me for a long time, even up to now. It seems I cannot handle intimate relationships well. I'm like a natural-born adventurer, always trying to approach, touch, and immerse myself in the bubbles of past. But at the same time, I exist in the present reality, struggling to find a balance between fantasy and reality. I am very prone to becoming bored with an intimate relationship, finding it difficult to stay comfortably in the cradle, as if there is an unresting creature within my nature. This brings about the problem that I often enter a relationship too impulsively, leaving no effort spared in pursuit. But after truly entering the relationship, I cannot devote myself to it, to maintain it. However, at the same time, after the relationship breaks down, I always regret it at some point in the future. I simultaneously make three mistakes, impulsively pursuing the bubbles of future, struggling to maintain the bubbles of present, and overly indulging in the bubbles of past. As a result, I find myself constantly living in guilt over the present and regret over the past. I often engage in meaningless rumination, continuously disappointed in the pursuit of the bubbles of past, while simultaneously hurting the present reality. Eventually, the reality that has been hurt becomes another bubble of the past, leading to a never-ending cycle. This cycle disappoints others and leaves me feeling exhausted.

Does this mean that people really have such a pathetic nature? Or are those bubbles completely useless, except for exhausting us? In the sixth stanza of 'The Going,' Hardy says: 'Well, well! All's past amend, Unchangeable. It must go.' I believe recognizing reality is crucial if we want to avoid getting trapped in this cycle. As for those bubbles themselves, they are good reminders, telling us that despite the current unpleasantness of reality, there have been many beautiful moments in life and there

are also many expectations for the future. Perhaps I should heed Hardy's words, keep a distance from those bubbles, and not easily touch them, while also realizing that 'All's past amend, Unchangeable. It must go.'