

Kevin Yu

Professor Steele

Tuesday 3 pm, Critical Thinking and Academic Writing

November 14, 2017

### Listen to Your Own Heart

Familiar with novels about adventures, we are certain to expect our protagonist to discover some underground palace with a secret map he acquired on his way of vanquishing all forms of obstacles, and unearth treasures hidden for centuries. In *The Alchemist*, nonetheless, the author, Paulo Coelho, chooses to bury the treasure where Santiago's journey started, to demonstrate the fact that truth often manifests itself in unexpected ways and places. During his quest, Santiago learned to listen to his heart and adhere to his dream, which allowed him to see beyond the superficial and locate the real treasure. Through this story, the author tries to deliver the message that we should be honest with our hearts to achieve spiritual transcendence.

The journey of Santiago is a perfect example of learning to discover the treasure in our hearts. As a shepherd in Andalusia, Santiago was able to read signs and omens from nature to locate water and the best pastures. He even felt the link between himself and his sheep in the form of "a language without words." These, however, were only superficial understanding of the Soul of the World. Set on the track towards his Personal Legend by Melchizedek, Santiago traveled to Africa, a land full of unknown people and cultures. Having lost all his money to a thief, Santiago first worked in a crystal store, in the process of which he grew more skilled in interpreting omens, before entering the desert in a caravan. It was by observing the desert and the caravan that Santiago realized that everything was merely a manifestation of one thing only—the Soul of the World. Moreover, his heart was also part of that soul, interlinked with

everything else in the universe. Bearing that in mind, Santiago began to communicate with his heart. Difficult though it was, he eventually connected with his own heart and saw through it the Soul of the World, which was crucial in completing the final stage of his adventure—finding the real treasure. Just as the alchemist said, “Listen to your own heart. It knows all things.”

Apart from the main plotline, the notion of having faith in our hearts is also expressed in various myths throughout the novel, such as the one the alchemist told his disciple before they went on separate ways. In the story where an angel revealed to an old man that the words of one of his sons would be remembered for generations, the author surprised us with the twist that it was the words of the son in the military, instead of the poet, that became immortal. In search of healers for his man, the soldier met believers of the son of God and converted to their faith. When Jesus himself was about to set out to heal his man, the soldier said that he was not worthy and that Jesus could heal his servant with just one word. Those words became immortal. Although the soldier had no literary merits, he had faith in his belief and in himself, and thus his sayings were recognized and appreciated by wise men for generations. The story shows that no matter who we are, we can achieve our purpose only if we never abandon faith.

To put in a nutshell, as an eternal testament of the transforming power of dreams and the importance of listening to our hearts, *The Alchemist* teaches us that we should always be honest with ourselves and pay attention to our hearts. There will certainly be moments when the temptation of material wealth and physical beauty lure us away from what our hearts truly desire, and when we lose focus of our dreams—our Personal Legend—and when we can no longer see beyond the superficial and discover the truth of the universe. In those dark and frustrating moments, always think about the story of the shepherd from Andalusia, and listen to your own heart, which knows all things and hold the greatest treasure in the universe.