



The Bridge

The span between pre- and post-eternity
is not a bridge too far,
for time is short.

It passes in a moment,
but the way seems long,
for we walk it in our sleep
both day and night.

Upon waking here in morning's light
our dreaming tells
the secret of our days
that we call life upon the earth.

We pass along that swaying height
made dizzy by the yawing depths
below our feet
and above our heads.

We are jostled by the traffic to and fro
and sometimes we are made afraid
and terrified--
a nightmare in our waking sleep.

But sometimes we grow brave in love
and glimpse the further shore,
made ready by the passage
across the swinging bridge of time.

We cannot think that now
is all or everything that is.
For this is but a footpath
through our many states of sleep.

But we shall awaken fully
when we come alive in that One Life
awaiting us.

We'll bring our gifts and treasures there
that we have made from love
...or terror
shaped by wisdom
and the freedom that we gained
--like Knights walking through our fears
and our struggles with the darkness and the Good.

O heart, be strong!
This shall not last for long.
Perhaps another moment
or the remaining steps we take
across the bridge.

L. Bauman Oct. 7 2017

A Reflection

The metaphor of a suspension bridge held steady--almost miraculously--across some dizzying height, by massive anchors on either end, is one that has been used by wisdom literature across the ages. Called the bridge of time, we move along it throughout our lives from one secure point in pre-eternal existence until we exit at the other into our post-eternal life. On the bridge itself it is almost impossible to remember the anchor points in that vast mountain range called Ultimate Reality, and so we walk in ignorance and often in trepidation and the Mystics say, in sleep.

This metaphor may perhaps seem odd to us at first. Especially since (and as long as) our feet are firmly planted on *terra firma*, it is hard to imagine the swaying bridge of time. But with time's passage and after many years of life upon the planet, what once seemed solid and sure, in truth appears almost dream-like and unsteady (at least in our memories). In older age life appears, as the psalmist said, more like a mist or a vapor in some cloudy past, even as time's breezes (or gales) rush past our current imaginings.

Wisdom literature of almost every tradition and their many mystics, however, affirm the revelatory nature of this metaphor--the bridge of time across vast chasms as a sign of our passage through temporal experience. The one caveat they add to this telling, however, is not just the bridge itself, but also the condition of the beings, which traverse it. They insist that all of us are sleepwalkers even when awake. Therefore the command, "Wake up! Sleepers Awake!!!" (even for a moment), rings out across this same sacred literature.

Sufi literature and teaching insists that all human time-travelers through life are indeed asleep. The prophet of Islam said, "Human beings are plunged in sleep: it is when they die that they awaken." The great Muslim mystic, Ibn al-'Arabi taught that life held a secret meaning or purpose derived from another world, but that we must cross the bridge

of time in a kind of sleeping or unknowing state to awaken on the other side. Only then would we fully understand it. Interestingly he said that we are generally asleep both night and day--these are simply two kinds of dreaming, which is why the world, seen as a bridge of time, must be crossed into full wakefulness. A bridge is not a stopping-place or a dwelling-place. It is only a place of passage. One crosses over it (and it must be crossed) in order to understand the secret meaning of life given to us on the other side. Once we have made the passage will we grasp the whole of it.

For Ibn al-'Arabi, however, there was a special designation for the activity of each individual on this bridge. He called our work here the "kighthood of practical activity." We act as knights of Spirit dedicated to great actions and to the enterprise of love that we undertake in this passage, learning through our struggles with both Good and evil (which exist in fullness here). We are called into this activity of spiritual kighthood and sent across the bridge in time in order to experience the special "blessing of sleep" in the "world of mystery," until our eventual Full-Awakening. We, of course, cannot completely comprehend the entirety of this here--it is often very confusing. But we are asked to walk bravely through it, even the sleeping states, as knights of Spirit seeking to understand as best we can. This is not unlike one of our chants composed by Michael Sciretti who puts this mystery this way: "Creative world's, created world's, between two worlds a bridge... You yourself, within yourself, between two worlds a bridge... be sure you understand this, be sure you understand, be sure you understand this, between two worlds a bridge.

A series of images and illuminations have been provided for your contemplation. Each is a viewpoint on the metaphor of the bridge of time and our sleeping states. Contemplate these images and allow them speak their teaching to you.









