

The Repair Man

The man sat thinking about himself. He knew he was broken, but he didn't know if he had come into this world broken, or if being abandoned at birth and the subsequent traumas had broken him, but he knew he was broken.

He wasn't a particularly artistic man. In fact, he was quite clumsy in most everything requiring a deftness of touch or thought. He was a literal person; a person of little imagination and he was a rather crude person. When he repaired something, the thing he repaired looked like it had been repaired by a person with little finesse, and while the object he had repaired was certainly still functional, and sometimes even more functional than before in terms of strength and longevity, the repaired object was certainly never a work of art. And it was the same with the repairs he did to himself.

As a child he had been severely damaged mentally, emotionally, and physically, and because the damage was so consistent and so overwhelming for so many years, he finally broke into pieces. One of his favorite nursery rhymes was Humpty Dumpty. Humpty Dumpty was his favorite nursery rhyme because he and it had a simpatico relationship. A relationship he kept as his secret, and a relationship that for decades he believed was absolutely true.

At first the man had hoped for, and expected, sympathy and understanding from those around him. But he soon learned that sympathy and understanding are not easily doled out, especially if one asks for seconds. No, his needs far outweighed anyone's ability to sate him. His insatiable neediness from those around him cost him first one friend and then another, and so on and so on, until he was left friendless. Even so, the man tried to fix what was broken in him that caused him to be so unlike most everyone he knew.

Thankfully he occasionally met people who were also very needy. Some were so needy that it was difficult for him to be around them! They would phone him and ask how he was, but then, without really waiting for his answer, they would launch into why they had phoned him, and he learned their telephone call to him wasn't to find out how he was at all. The man began to reflect, and he saw his reflection in those needy people, and he soon realized he was like them. Almost everything he did was done to get what he wanted. He was simply a transactional person for a lengthy period of his life, but once he realized how he was behaving he began to repair and modify this learned behavior. Once he learned his behavior could to be unlearned, he became more socially acceptable. He then learned about pleasure, and he learned how much he enjoyed giving and getting pleasure.

The man was extremely handsome. He was tall, and because of the hard, physical work he did daily, he was very strong and possessed a fine physique. He became adept at handling the physical side of relationships, and most if not all of his relationships, of which there were many, were because of his handsome looks and his muscular physique. He soon found a life of pleasure and he liked pleasure, but after the pleasure he was always left wanting more pleasure, and he wanted pleasure so much it became his obsession. Even after experiencing the best and finest pleasure he had ever experienced, he would soon become dissatisfied with his life, and he would need the distraction of even more pleasure. Pleasure helped the man distract himself from his inner certainty that he was in fact an inferior, second-class, and completely broken person. The man innately followed this path of seeking pleasure, but once he heard the voices inside his mind again reminding him his life had no real meaning, and when he realized there was never going to be any deeper sense of meaning in his life from the simple pleasures he was finding and participating in, he decided to change course to follow a path towards a life of deeper meaning.

The writings of the intellectuals he had so voraciously read as a teenager, people like Frankl, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre, all of whom wrote about existentialism and the meaning of life, would often come to the forefront of his mind during the times he would lose all meaning for his life. However, of all the novels he read he remembered the theme that seemed to pervade them all: they all believed that each person must define themselves in this, an absurd, illogical world, and a world without deep meaning. No words could have been truer for the young teenager, because the world around him made little to no sense, except for the drugs, sex and music. None of the major societal elements in his life- education, church, military, society, and laws- held his respect. He mostly behaved so as not to draw any wrath upon himself, but occasionally he would let slip his frustration for how the designation for living had been engineered. He wanted to know who the engineers were and who funded them. He wanted to know how the suburbs came to be, and who funded the think tanks that thought of and planned for man's inevitable increase in population, and the needs that would come from that increase. But he was too damaged and too broken to spend much time around and in close contact with other people. For the man, it was like he had been badly burned, so the tiniest amount of excess heat would make him recoil in fear of being burnt more. It was a reaction that he could not control.

Nevertheless, by remembering these things he was immediately happier, and then he read this:

“Never be a prisoner of your past. It was just a lesson, not a life sentence.”

And, oh, oh, how he wished that thought, that exaggerated and self-indulgent expression of tenderness and forgiveness, could be true.

He smiled, outwardly and inwardly, for he knew better than to lie or to deceive himself. The man knew he was broken and that he had gotten broken sometime in his now distant past. He also knew he was badly broken, but he wasn't completely broken. He liked many people, places, and things, and many people liked him. He knew he had to protect the parts of himself that remained unbroken. He had to protect them and, while he wished he didn't have to do it alone, experience had showed him, even taught him quite harshly at times, that this was his only choice if he wanted to live a happy, optimistic, and creative life.

The man smiled again, because knowing that being able to live the wonderful life that he now had, while also being badly broken, was already a tremendous outcome.

Yes, he had repaired a lot of what was broken in him. He repaired himself clumsily, and his repairs looked crude, and they looked like he was a complete novice at repairing anything at all. He had indeed repaired much of his brokenness, and he tried not to expose his repairs to relationships and situations where they could get broken or even damaged again.

He was truly thankful for his repairs, and yet, right now, he felt like crying and smiling at the same time. He felt like crying for what he didn't have, and that would have been the beauty and wholeness of never having been broken. He felt like smiling for what he did have after his lifelong struggle with the horns of his dilemma and that was for the good person that he knew he had become.

This scenario, the crying and the smiling, had played out for the man countless times in his life. And yes, by countless, he knew the number was too great for him to ever count. He had struggled everywhere and in everything he had ever done because of his self-worth, or, to put it another way, his worthlessness. His shame was the daily clothing his heart and soul wore, and

under the shame, the underclothes, was his worthlessness. As one can imagine living anything other than a dismal, self-demeaning life was never truly possible. He tried of course, and one of his four most positive traits was his optimism. He found it difficult, and much of his life he had found it impossible, to reconcile his deep shame and, his often times, feelings of total worthlessness, but his onboard quadfecta of God, happiness, gratitude, and creativity, had quite literally carried him through the worst times imaginable, much like a good canoe will carry a person and their belongings through the toughest, white-water rapids of a major river.

One day, during what he thought was a nonchalant conversation with a dear friend, and seemingly out of nowhere, the man learned of an ancient art called Kintsugi, which means that we can embrace something being broken. Kintsugi also means the imperfection, and it also means golden joinery. Kintsugi is the Japanese tradition of mending broken pottery with gold, silver, or platinum.

The man did some research and he found many beautiful pictures of pottery that had been repaired using Kintsugi. And while he could still see where they had been broken, he noted that the repairs added to their beauty, and in some cases made them even more beautiful than before they were broken. The revelation was at first mind-blowing for the man. He had always thought that because everyone could see that he was once a broken man he would always be seen as a broken man despite his repairs.

Then one day, while meditating, he asked himself *Why not add beauty to my own, personal repairs?* Now, laughing out loud, for he was a person who had not thought about his own personal beauty since his teenage years, he decided he would do it. He decided he would treat his breakages and their repair as part of the history of who he was, rather than as something he

needed to disguise or that he needed to pretend had never happened. Beauty in this case wasn't going to be added gold, silver, or platinum, nor was the beauty he would apply going to be tattoos, fine clothes, or anything physical, because his breaks, his broken parts, the parts he had fixed, were not physical. The man kept thinking, and he decided that rather than ever talking about how he got broken again he would instead focus on, and show off, his repairs and the beauty of those repairs, without ever dwelling on his own success or another's misfortune of not being able to repair themselves. He did at times revel in the personal achievements of his introspections and repairs, and because of the width and depth of his brokenness, and because of the pain and anguish fixing his breaks had caused him, he knew his success and the reason he had prevailed was because of his forever relationship with the God in his life. Because of that he never felt smug, nor did he ever demean anyone who was broken, or had been unable to repair their break or breaks. No, first of all he wanted to repair himself, and then he wanted to quietly and without demeaning anyone, be an example of self-help. He sincerely wanted to pass on what he had learned and how to go about repairing oneself, but only if a person was indeed looking to do that.

This revelation that he could add beauty to himself was stunning in its simplicity, and yet it was for him an ingredient that he had been unconsciously looking for since his first, awkward repairs were completed. In his defence, some of his repairs were done under the most adverse conditions imaginable. All of his repairs he did himself with the help of his God. His friends sometimes helped and often times hindered, either wittingly but many times unwittingly, and still he got his repairs done.

The toll on everyone was great though. The toll was too great for most if not all of his friendships. He needed rest to recuperate from his repairs, and after he rested, he found

himself alone. This was nothing new for the man, as his life had been a scenario of being broken, beginning to get repaired, getting broken, hiding by living a life of pleasure, getting broken some more, and finally taking the long and lonely road towards repair. He would constantly reiterate, from past experience, that no one could come with him because of the pain he needed to go through as he implemented the repairs. He knew that repairing himself was going to be difficult and, at times, almost impossible for him to withstand the pain he needed to go through to fix himself. He also knew from experience that another person would not be able to withstand witnessing what he needed to do.

The man needed to commit suicide, but not physical suicide. He did not need to kill himself, but rather he needed to kill the three most basic parts of himself- the ID, the superego, and the ego. These three conscious, yet at times unconscious, parts of his being had been formed and placed over his hurried, life-saving repairs much like a plaster cast is placed over a bone break. As he was able to kill, one at a time, each of these three parts of his personality, he became quite wild and unpredictable even to himself. However, by living alone he was able to cope. By living alone he had to answer to no one but himself. The man never asked anyone for help, or how they felt or what they thought about him, and he would shy away from anyone who tried to get to know him personally. For him he was an unfinished project, and he was in no hurry to let anyone see him until he felt he was ready to be seen.

By finding this ingredient, the “golden joinery” as kintsugi was also known, the man now believed he could finally, and permanently, add beauty to his repairs, thus revitalizing himself with a new look, a new vibration, and he could finally give himself a second life. The man had often thought about what life would be like without being broken, and without his inner critics always voicing their disparaging disapproval of him. Now, finally, the man had a calm, quiet,

and loving view of himself not only repaired but repaired having used golden joinery for the repairs. He could neither see the repairs nor touch the repairs, and yet he could definitely feel the effects of the repairs, and feeling the beauty of how he had finally been able to repair himself gave him an emboldened sense of self-worth. His self-worth emanated from the deepest parts of his heart and soul, and stopped at the very outside edges of his skin. His newfound self-worth drenched his heart, mind, and soul in an all-encompassing peace and love, the likes of which he had never felt before. His still limitless happiness and gratitude, and his boundless creativity, carried him on a wave of joy and expectation for which he was profoundly grateful. He thanked his God, the God he had committed to all those decades ago, and with whom he had been having the sincerest, and at times the only, relationship of his life. Yes, his God had been there the whole time. His God was similar to his repairs in that he could not see nor touch his God, but he could feel his God.

The man had few human in his life. Oh, he had a few, casual friends, he had his memories, he had his hopes and dreams, and finally he had himself now. The man opined that this change in him was much like wearing shoes that had been either too small or too big his whole life, and now, finally, he was wearing shoes that fit him perfectly. Walking naturally and comfortably would, of course, take time, and he would need to adjust to now being fitted with the correct size shoes. And so it was with the man's repairs, now enhanced with golden joinery.

The man thought, *Learned behavior is difficult to change immediately, but learned behavior can be unlearned.* The man knew this was true because he had already unlearned other learned behaviors.

The End.

Written by Peter Skeels © May 31st, 2022