

Crew or Passenger? Take Your Choice

For so many people YouTube has become a valuable resource with regard to just about everything you wanted to know but were afraid to ask. Not only that, it grows constantly, adding new material and adapting to various needs. For example, a middle aged friend of mine in Iceland never knew how to make a tie. He was too embarrassed to ask even his wife but found a solution to his problem on YouTube. Personally that site has been and continues to be a genuine lifesaver. It covers an immense range of practical questions anywhere from product reviews to simple plumbing solutions as well as everything in between. On those occasions when I've found a site really helpful, out of gratitude I make it a point to post a positive comment.

Like anyone else I could go on singing the praises of YouTube. Then there are instance when the site helps you with short video clips when it comes to writing an article, the one at hand being such an example. For some reason or other I've had a fascination with trans-Atlantic ocean liners. Never have I been on one nor desire to do so. Not my cup of tea practically speaking. However, it represents something special which I hope to detail in this brief article. On the other hand, I prefer luxury trains of which there are quite a few throughout the world. The main problem? Wicked expensive!

I make a sharp distinction here with regard to cruise ships which I consider floating malls where people are jammed together like sardines. I've looked at some videos on line and was immediately turned off. In my opinion I couldn't think of a worse way to spend a vacation. It's the herd mentality in the extreme. Throw in the huge amount of kids, and you have a genuine nightmare on your hands. To get an overall view of this just take a look at once of these behemoths from either the port or starboard side. It literally resembles cells in a jail, the only difference being it's on the water.

As for the trans-Atlantic vessels, that's a whole different animal. I searched on Google (where else?) which to my surprise came up with one...just one...ocean liner, the RMS Queen Mary 2. In addition to the trans-Atlantic run, it plies other routes, depending upon the season. There's the newer Queen Victoria, but technically that's a cruise ship but certainly a cut above the floating sardine cans mentioned above. If you really want to stretch luxury ocean travel to the utmost

limit, recently I found one even to top Cunard...there always seems to be such a candidate...the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection. Enough for the purpose of this article. You get the drift.

Despite the fall-off in popularity with regard to crossing the Atlantic on an ocean liner, the QM 2 as sole survivor retains its magic partly by reason of its illustrious history. After coming away with both horror and fascination with regard to a number of cruise videos on YouTube, I turned to those dealing with this queen of the seas. I looked at everything from how the crew live and work (like dogs, really) to the various levels of service and rooms for passengers. The highest grade is the Balmoral Suite, that of course being an extreme example. Another intriguing fact is that you can actually live on some of these ships. From what I gather the whole experience on a trans-Atlantic crossing lasts seven days either way. The transit could go more quickly, but they prefer to stretch it out so the passengers can take full advantage of all the amenities.

Videos of particular interest pertain to the various restaurants and because the QM 2 is a British ship of the Cunard Line, afternoon tea stands out among them all. No question about it. That's what essentially caught my imagination and more particularly what got this article off the ground. As for the cruise ships? Forget-about-it. I'd say life on board the QM 2 revolves around the daily ritual of afternoon tea which has the solemnity of a religious ritual...and then some. It's easy to follow through with the observation that this solemn rite appeals to an older crowd. Indeed true judging from the videos. Noticeable is the lack of kids (thanks be to God).

After enjoying all sorts of videos about the QM 2 and cruise ships peppered with some videos on navy ships and submarines, I was struck more forcibly by the existence of two basic classes without which these vessels wouldn't exist. On one hand we have the crew responsible for running everything from the captain to the lowest kitchen worker. On the other hand, we have the passengers. Of course, the crew is precisely there to cater to the passengers, the quality of service depending on how much you've paid for your voyage. It seems the general consensus is that all levels are pretty good.¹ On a cruise ship, the quality of service appears to vary more widely. So we have these two sharply divided

¹ One reliable online source had the crew-to-passenger ratio as 1292 to 2691.

classes—crew and passengers—living in one limited area for a limited period of time. Yes, it is limited despite the immense size of the QM 2. While as obvious as all get-out, making this clear is important because it's at the heart of the article at hand.

With these details out of the way we can now consider real life practical implications which hopefully will become clearer as we move forward. Can this image of being on an ocean liner—again keeping in mind that technically just one exists—be an example of how to conduct one's life? If so, you have to choose between being a crew member or a passenger. There's no other choice. Being on board a vessel designed to cross the open ocean also makes it pretty stark. If you persisted in looking for a third choice, you'd find it but in a place you'd rather not go. That consists of walking the plank.

One objection automatically presents itself with regard to this example. A trans-Atlantic crossing lasts for a mere week, a drop in the bucket compared with an average life span. Naturally that infers the example based on a passage on the QM 2 is far removed from reality. Nevertheless, what this mere week represents, as outrageous as it may appear, indeed is front row and center as representing a permanent life style. Really, how far out can you get? Yes, far out but something that actually can be implemented. I'd go as far as saying it must be implemented...not by everyone...but as a vital way of life based upon leisure. That will be spelled out in some detail shortly.

By necessity the functions of each crew member on an ocean liner vary widely, but everyone works in concert not just to cater to the passengers but for everyone's safety. After all, they are on a ship that plies the Atlantic. Despite all the hi-tech equipment, the ship can be swamped before anyone knows it. The crew members are ever present. Some you see them carrying out their duties in a discreet fashion but many if not most are below deck as in the kitchens and manning the various jobs to keep the ship functioning. Then, of course, the captain and his elite team of officers are equally out of sight high on the bridge with a look-out that changes every four hours or so. They represent a system which essentially is hierarchical, for everything filters down from on high.

On the other hand we have the passengers. They are the very reason why the ocean liner had been constructed and why the crew members have their jobs. The

passengers are onboard to be entertained, pampered and simply to relax for one week. Nothing more, nothing less. They're not carrying freight or the like. Completely useless in the middle of the ocean. Perhaps the only serious contact passenger have with the crew are the lifeboat drills, for their lives depend upon it. However, it'd come as no surprise that most don't really pay attention. As noted above, there are varying degrees of accommodations, and if I'm not mistaken, all have pretty much the same access to the ship's amenities. While the passengers may not pay as much attention to the crew...after all, they are temporary...the crew pays close attention to them. Many have been on the job a number of years and can tell the novices from the experienced or those who've made the crossing a number of times. They must have quite a lot of private jokes they share behind the passengers' backs.

Expanding this general presentation of life onboard an ocean liner to real life (for that's what we're really after), we could take the crew as those who've signed on to a given way of life as well as service. After all, on the QM 2 they do both in the same place and in a hierarchical fashion, the captain being on top of the heap. His word is law though perhaps with not as much stringency as on a naval vessel. Nevertheless, all subscribe to one world view, if you will, as they go about their duties within a confined albeit large space. Interestingly, this space is defined not so much as running horizontally, left to right, but vertically or up to down. That is to say, their work area and ways they function is defined largely by the deck system. The passengers participate in this but not as much because they don't have access to all the decks. Besides, even a week isn't long enough to explore all that's available. This arrangement thus bears certain resemblance to the upstairs-downstairs model of English aristocratic manors. Downtown Abbey obviously comes to mind.

While the members comprising the crew have widely different functions, they must work together in a way that in many ways differs from any organization that functions on the land. If one deviates or gets out of line, the effects are felt more immediately and pervasively. Talk about the domino effect. For this reason officers have a vital job. They keep the crew members under them in line but do so out of sight of the passengers. We can press this image a bit further to say that persons who adhere to a regime do so in a quasi-military fashion. The chief obligation is adherence to the system at hand. This isn't as bad as it may seem because belonging to a close-knit group has the benefit of imparting an identity

that an individual would lack otherwise. You have to really work hard to reach this status which comes with its own perks. Besides, it must be enjoyable to boss people around as long as you're not hard on them. Passengers, on the other hand, don't subscribe to this rigidity. In fact, they're barely aware that it exists right under their noses. All they care about is being served and entertained. After all, they paid for this, some more dearly than others and expect nothing less than the best.

The very way an ocean liner is organized (the same for a cruise ship) is that the crew is crew and passengers are passengers. Obvious enough. This leads to an important part of what I'm attempting to communicate here. Is it possible for a member of the crew to "graduate" to being a passenger? The other way around might be possible, but for now that would be straying a bit too off base. Keep in mind, however, this is using the example at hand as symbolic of a way of life. We're more interested here in delineating what's called a *participation mystique*, a phrase derived from Lévy-Bruhl. According to one online definition "it denotes a peculiar kind of psychological connection with objects, and consists in the fact that the subject cannot clearly distinguish himself from the object but is bound to it by a direct relationship which amounts to partial identity." Note the three parts outlined as follows:

- 1) The first is not just a psychological connection with objects but a connection which is a peculiar kind. That means we're attracted to something inanimate...why this is so can't be explained, really...because it has something that speaks to you directly. There are plenty of objects out there, hence the stress upon "peculiar" which also connotes that which is out of the ordinary.
- 2) The second is when you can't distinguish yourself from the object. The operative word is "clearly" which ties in with this inability to tell how we differ from the object.
- 3) The third is a direct relationship with the object...not so much that but being bound or compelled to remain with the object come hell or high water. The result? An identity with the object which is not full but partial. That means the person drawn to the object almost like a moth to a flame

retains some independence. It's precisely this independence that holds out hope that the *participation mystique* won't have an absolute hold.

As for a crew member, he or she is fully within the *participation mystique* both of the QM 2 and the company (Cunard) which owns the ship. When subscribing to it—and this is made clear before signing up—the person buys into it totally. Everyone knows that when in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean the ship instantly could be in jeopardy, let alone on other occasions. That makes assent by all crew members more important than, for example, a land-based job. A more extreme case is being a sailor on a destroyer or submarine. In other words, the smaller the ship the tighter is the *participation mystique*. The major difference is that in the navy all on board are crew. There are no passengers, not even one. Thus the *participation mystique* is absolute. A slacker or traitor would stand out like a sore thumb.

When we look at passengers on the QM 2 or any other ship for that matter, they are there to escape life's humdrum routine which affects everyone regardless of high their income. To be sure, putting out on the open ocean makes the separation all the more dramatic. You get a real sense of leaving things behind. Besides, there's the prospect of danger which, despite being minimal, is nevertheless present. You're fully in the hands of the crew. That's the unwritten disadvantage of being a passenger. I'm pretty sure too that most if not all passengers have in mind the Titanic, notably the movie about it. To some degree that must contribute to setting the standard by which one both enjoys and dreads the voyage ahead of you.

With all this in mind, The Big Question is how can we transit from belonging to the crew...having signed our lives away on the dotted line...to being a passenger while remaining, of course, on the same ship. It involves making a dramatic move while remaining within a confined space. What's involved is abandoning the *participation mystique* proper to the QM 2. Such is the uniqueness of this transit. It's done right there in front of everyone without them being suspect of the momentous shift. Thus the two modes of existence—working like a dog on an ocean liner, often below decks, and reaping the benefits produced by this concerted labor—conspire to point to a reality often not appreciated. Here It's designed to say that there exists a transit from being serious about life to being entertained. Ironically a good number of the crew are on board to provide

entertainment of various kinds. However, they're doing it as work for the passengers' benefit. In light of this a simple formula can be put forth that sums up this article: crew = work and passengers = entertainment.

We should always keep in mind that a chasm deep as the Mariana Trench separates the two as put forth by the formula. I suspect that all passengers have a certain dread, albeit low-keyed, the day they set foot on the QM 2. They're caught up in the excitement at hand, of entering a world apart from what they're accustomed to. This is true regardless of wealth and prestige which means nothing should an emergency arise. This fear laying just below the surface is suspended yet always present in the background for the first two or three days because the passengers are absorbed in all that the ship has to offer which, of course, is a superabundance. Once you-as-passenger get the lay of the land (an expression not exactly fitting for a ship), toward the end of the voyage you start the slide to one of melancholy. This time it's of a different order. You've grown accustomed to being pampered 7-24 and are about to leave it for hard core reality.

Despite this limited example of crew/passenger with all the work done behind the scene and outward glamor, it's meant to demonstrate a shift we're capable of making in real life. Most of us have to work for a living which is represented by being part of the crew. However, there's a form of life which represents a way of getting away from this. It's recognized in the broadest sense but hardly explored in depth, namely, being a monk. Certainly monks have to work for a living, but for the most part each individual is under less pressure by reason of belonging to a community. Indeed, it's a way of life not unlike that of being on an ocean liner. By reason of the work being more spread out, a monk can weave in and out of it and be at leisure. This varies depending upon one's capabilities, disposition, age and the situation at hand. So in a real way being a monk is like being a passenger. Like member of the crew on an ocean liner, each monk has a fairly well delineated role to play. Only in this form life can one be both crew and passenger. It's jamming two opposites together which is impossible elsewhere. Surely there are people right now following this way of life but on their own. You can find a number of them and the life style they represent on the Internet. One notable secular monk, if you will, who comes to mind is Henry David Thoreau. He wrote eloquently of being a "passenger" while in Concord, making use of the "crew" as he found them there and elsewhere.

One advantage of monastic life is that it allows a person to live in accord with a given daily pattern that's pretty much the same each day and to do so with support from other people. While it may look boring from the outside, from the inside it frees you up so as to pursue things you couldn't do otherwise. Some follow the schedule more rigorously than others, and in this way they bear a semblance of a member of the crew. There are some who follow it so precisely that you swear to God a real program in the form of a chip had been inserted into their brains. This software, if you will, does one thing and one thing only, and I might add often to an high degree of efficiency and complexity. However, in the end this resembles a robotic vacuum cleaner. Such a device is geared for one function and one function only, to clean the floor. I've never seen one in real life, only videos, but enough to get an idea of what's involved. I enjoy watching one of these vacs bump into an object after which it goes its merry way. The same applies to a person. It simply and gently touches your foot and moves on, programmed to continue vacuuming the entire floor. To hell with everything else.

A cardinal rule with regard to this software! Never...and I mean never...interfere with its operation. Instead, allow it to run according to its own program. Because we've seen that it functions with one thing in mind and with no variation, we can say that it has the mind not just of a toddler but a pre-toddler. As for the definition of a toddler, that means a child just learning to walk, i.e., learning how to toddle. No so with the software at hand. It's something proper to a state before that which I guess would be an infant. That's how incredibly primitive or low grade is the software.

On the other hand, a passenger isn't governed by software but is on the ocean liner to have a good time, albeit momentarily. However, in real life one's existence can be just as programmed if not more so than a member of the crew. During this break, despite its shortness, a passenger is able to step outside the same essentially primitive software governing one's life. While the change in venue is refreshing, even more is the realization that you don't have to fully subscribe to the software program that had been governing you. Sounds ideal, but in reality it rarely works out that way. By reason of its primitive constitution the software has a compelling, even addictive way of drawing you back into its old familiar pattern. I put "pattern" in the singular, for that's more apt for the situation at hand. In a word, dictatorial.

So if you want to make the shift from being a member of the crew to a passenger, get ready to pay a dear price. In short, it amounts to abandoning the *participation mystique* in which you find both sorrow and identity. More than being a stringent code that keeps you in mind, it's both comforting and rewarding provided you tow the line, and most people do so willingly. Belonging to a *participation mystique* requires that you undergo a ritual of sorts, one that boils down to fixing you. Another way of putting this is that it neuters you as applied to our pet cat or dog. Yes, the low grade software proper to a *participation mystique* seeks to fix us, to do away with any potential individuality. The goal of fixing in the concrete is to prevent procreation, of projection into the future. It cuts one short in order remain in the *participation mystique* without being able to go anywhere without permission. The only movement allowed is after the example of that robotic vacuum cleaner. When it bumps into an object, it does so without recognition of what or whom it has hit. The sole task at hand is to move on with the work at hand.

Strange to say, the primitive software defined here so characteristic of a pre-toddler does have precedence. It may sound unfamiliar at first but consists of an image of God we find in the Bible. Although this isn't the time to go into the matter ¹, suffice it to say that in his dealings with Israel and even before the nation came into being the Lord dealt rather brusquely with those he had brought into existence. Indeed, in many instances they deserved it, but unfortunately he lacks a degree of maturity the way he goes about it. This originated with the drubbing he gave to the man, woman and serpent after the so-called fall. The Lord lined all three up and let them have it, not giving them a chance to respond. The next step was to banish them from the Garden of Eden.

While At the two humans and serpent could put up with this, what riled them above everything else was being lectured at. This may be considered as the essence of original sin...the sin that was original insofar as it set in motion a whole chain of tragic events. The Lord attempted to step in and rectify the situation but had only partial success. So many times he couldn't help but burst out in anger and take it out on the people. We'd have to wait until Jesus Christ before that tragic situation was taken care of. Indeed, Jesus had to "redeem" the Father from his heavy-handedness, another way of viewing what the Ascension was all about.

¹ I treated this in some depth in a few articles posted on this same homepage.

This being lectured at is something members of a crew have to put up with. They expect it when they've signed on but never get used to it. Original sin in action, if you will. Constantly they're receiving instructions from on high and have come to accept it though more often than not they balk. The only alternative is to go ahead with their duties. On the other hand, the passengers are enjoying themselves with the ever present crew to wait on them. The interaction is polite, even friendly, but both sides maintain the proper distance. Indeed, the passengers are living off the crew which comes at a price for the latter.

The distinction between crew and passengers is put forth as an example for making a transit from the grim reality of work to being entertained, of being serious to enjoying oneself. Sticking with the image of an ocean liner, both take place in the same limited place where you can't walk away except on a gang plank into the ocean. So we could shift this image of two parts over into one person. If this person were to stick with the image of being a member of the crew, he or she would suffer increasing decrepitude simply by being over worked. In other words, one would rapidly become old despite being physically young and in good health. While constant attention to work contributes to bringing on decrepitude, to a large extent it's being under the ban of seriousness that takes a toll. And that toll is invisible, manifesting itself at a later stage in one's life. When it does, it comes at you with a vengeance.

There comes a time in one's life when this tension exemplified between crew and passenger is resolved. Usually that happens when we retire and are supposed to be taking it easy. However, often various pains afflict us, so it's not as cracked up as popularly imagined. Extrapolating from here, we can say that the time is not to be wasted or idled away. Rather, the idea of being entertained connotes that we've managed to access a part of us that always had been present yet asleep or during the time when we had been crew members. Waking up to this fact is the very essence of shifting from crew to passenger. Instead of the image of being entertained day and night on the QM 2, the entertainment (so called) is transformed into a special form of leisure which goes by the Latin noun *otium*. That's a difficult word to translate, involving freedom from the drudgery of work and spare time not just to go fishing or the like but to be put at the service of higher pursuits. One ancient Greek adjective equivalent to it is *philosophos* which doesn't bear resemblance to being a philosopher as understood today. The

original sense...one which is very appealing...may be rendered as being *philos*, friendly or well-disposed with regard to *sophia* or wisdom, also as skill. And the skill at hand is a pursuit related to sustaining the culture in which one lives, so it has a hands-on meaning.

Actually you don't have to wait until retirement to pursue this *otium*. It can be had at any time. Two instances, if you will, from real life people which made me seriously wonder which they come from. The first is a lawyer who some years ago had assisted me with my mother's finances when she had to enter a rest home. He had a magnificent model of a New England lobster boat on his desk, one that he had fashioned over an extended period of time. This fellow was the father of five children, so I asked how in God's name did he find the time to produce such a magnificent piece. He leaned over his desk and stared right at me lawyer-like saying that if you're passionate about something always you find time for it.

The second instance pertains to my nephrologist, a young-ish fellow whose wife just had their second child. He's into reading Virgil, Ovid and Seneca...in the original Latin. As with the lawyer, I asked how he found time and replied that this limited time of an hour or so late at night was what gave his life meaning. Obviously he enjoys his work, but reading the Latin poets is his real passion. Actually it was this good man I asked what is lacking in today's society. He didn't come off with the usual litany of complaints but unhesitatingly mentioned *otium*. To be honest, I was somewhat taken aback as well as delighted. The doctor put his finger right on what was important, cultivation of our common Western heritage that so quickly had gone down the tubes.

So if you want to be a true-blue passenger, follow the doctor's prescription and cultivate *otium*. That's the ticket to get you on board...not on board an ocean liner but permanently on board a vessel, if you will, that will bear you along with continuous access to what really matters in life. It sure beats being a member of the crew though we should never forget that they are essential for running the ship. By being faithful to *otium*, things start to look quite different but in the best possible manner. Stretching this a bit further, should we opt for belonging to the crew, chances diminish substantially for putting *otium* into practice. Actually *otium* is a state of body, mind and spirit all rolled into one that fits the notion of being a passenger quite well. It's not unlike trying to define the nature of a passenger. We all know what it means, including a crew member, but rarely if

ever have extended it into everyday life. We've boxed it in for a limited passage on an ocean liner, cruise ship or any other vehicle meant to provide maximum service and comfort. However, whichever choice we make, it comes at a price.

Yes, there is a price to pay which is far dearer than one would shell out for the Balmoral suite on the QM 2. It's the cost of transiting from being a member of the crew which to them would be bordering upon the traitorous. While *otium* sounds attractive...and no doubt it is...few people wish to make the shift on a permanent basis. However, if we do, we're irrevocably tied in with *otium* and all it has to offer, including the stigma of not fitting in with the crew. The reason for this uncomfortableness? It's alien to everything to which we've grown accustomed, a wholly different world and values. I'd say what stands out most is in accord with its definition, a way of life marked by leisure. Hence the reason videos about the QM 2 represent the pinnacle of leisure popularly understood. I might add by way of footnote of equal personal importance is private rail travel such as the Golden Eagle which plies the Trans-Siberian railroad.

Say you've coughed up the big bucks to go on either adventure. You look forward to it months in advance and have all the details not just planned but memorized. Then like all things, it comes to an abrupt end and back to reality. At this time the let-down sets in and can linger more or less a long time. The exception when you take this and every other conceivable diversion in the best sense of the word? Of course it's *otium*. *Otium* has a distinct transcendental character which means that the specific form of leisure associated with it doesn't come to an end but abides forever. That, of course, sounds preposterous, too good to be true. However, if you're lucky enough to hit upon a practitioner, you'll see it's clearly within the realm of possibility.

Thus far *otium* has been presented as a way of life in contrast to work, the latter illustrated by members of a crew on an ocean liner. There are other types of crews on other types of ships, actually a wide variety of them, but the one at hand is singled out by reason of the contrast involved. Besides, it's well-documented as through videos on YouTube. Should we choose to focus in on the activity of a passenger, it consists of a daily round of eating, taking in a show and in a word, doing pretty much nothing in a magnificent environment smack in the middle of the ocean. Just as the crew is symbolic, so passengers are symbolic. The same applies to the ship and the ocean on which it sails. The activity for one who's into

otium consists of reading combined with study. It's an activity pretty non-descript by reason of being hard to nail down. That makes it possible "to do *otium*" all day long, day in, day out ². Almost always this is viewed from the point of view of someone outside...let's keep in mind the image of a crew member...who wonders how anyone can live like that. Indeed this is a stumbling block to end all stumbling blocks.

Let's take this *otium* another step further. It's quite conducive for someone who'd like to opt for a way of life different from the run-of-the-mill ³. Then, of course, is the practical one. Say you'd like to do it but look around and see it's virtually impossible. Very true. However, there is a way out and gets back to above-mentioned high price to pay. What automatically precludes this search yet at the same time makes it available...a real paradox if there ever was one...are humiliations. I pick that word over humility because it's something right that's in your face. You can't worm your way out of humiliations. They have a way of breaking you or to borrow Jesus' words but from another context, "and carry you where you do not wish to go" [Jn 21.18].

Okay, in your desire to both do and to be *otium*, you get pounded not just once or twice but a whole bunch of times. This, of course, is very different from abuse which is purely negative. Humiliations have a technical side to them, if you will. That consists in the person at hand being the instigator, not victim. As soon as we hear that, we wish to run and hide just like Adam and Eve. For the most part these humiliations start early in life. Because we're unaccustomed to handle them, we try to shake them off, but they keep hounding us. It's as though we've been singled out to be afflicted or more accurately, to be self-afflicted. Again, the source is with ourselves, not from the outside. I emphasize this self-affliction because it's tailor-made for anyone who wish to transit from being a member of the crew to a passenger. It's the steepest price imaginable.

As far as these humiliations go, you can either run away and hide or put them to good use. All this is rather tricky to describe because when it comes to modeling

² Obviously *lectio divina* comes to mind around which the home page at hand revolves. However, I prefer to omit it in this article because *lectio* is not as comprehensive as *otium* in the sense of embracing one's entire life.

³ There comes to mind certain Hasidic Jews who, if I understand correctly, have opted to spend their days studying in a yeshiva. That has a certain parallel with *otium*. However, from what I've seen and have read, activity there is quite intense and to some degree, legalistic. Nevertheless, I respect it very much.

oneself after the image of a passenger, that is, *vis-à-vis otium*, we're not responsible for making the choice. *Otium* is the one that seeks us out. It stands out there looking in and waiting for us to accept it not unlike wisdom in Proverbs which is a real summons, not in the least bit rhetorical: "Does not wisdom call, does not understanding raise her voice" [8.1]? It and the humiliations under discussion are so opposite each other that never can we put them together. That's why the life style, if you will, based upon *otium* must come from outside ourselves. Realizing this doesn't come easily nor at once. Considerable time is involved, that is, waiting around until we hit the mark instead of constantly missing it.

As for this notion of a passenger, I had come upon it when very young and developed it without knowing what it was all about. I had been fond of being alone and spent many a happy hour in a park close to my home. Actually what I learned by the time there turned out to be formative, of having a way of setting me apart for something I knew was proper to me but couldn't articulate it. Fast forward a number of decades. Now I can apply the notion of being a passenger to those happy years. As for family and friends, indeed, they turned out to be the crew providing vital services to sustain my way of life. At the time I felt no conflict between the two, that is, passenger/crew. The two worked in harmony chiefly because I hadn't developed the ability nor maturity to see the difference. It was a kind of blissful existence. Even when I was with the crew...and that was most of the time...I retained my identity as a passenger.

An important aspect of this pre-passenger mentality as it could be called now are the frequent car trips I'd take with my parents as well as other relatives. That involved anything from a few hundred miles away...a week or so...up to cross-country trips. Included were most of the provinces of Canada and believe it or not, all the way to Mexico City and on to Acapulco, something that today would be foolhardy. The trips in and by themselves were wonderful. However, the best part was planning which preceded the adventure by a few months. We'd send away to Gulf Oil for maps, giving a several destinations and eagerly awaiting the thick envelope where the routes we requested were outlined in orange. I'd pour over these until I had memorized them. When I think of it now, GPS and all that has thrown a damper on this exciting part of the planning. Then at last. The actual day of departure arrived. We'd have the car pre-packed, face it outward from the

driveway and depart usually around 3 am to get a good head start, especially if the distance was great.

Then as in all cases when we grow up, contact with the broader world blotted this out. It seemed unfortunate if not cruel but in the long run, was necessary. There had to be an extended period of time being a crew member, if you will, but in the case at hand with the intention of transiting to being a passenger. If the crew phase were somehow eliminated, the childhood experience of being a passenger would continue later in life but would stunt you. You'd be a grown up child in stead of a child who has grown up.

So these experiences somehow had a way of tying in with the fascination I later developed with the QM 2, the trans-Siberian Golden Eagle included. Now when you look at them as an adult the mystique certainly remains, but it's accompanied with awareness that it's fleeting, no matter how glamorous it may appear. Advertisements have a way of communicating this clearly. This disillusionment had a way of making me look for a way to be a passenger...again recalling my early years...here and now. While the possibility was very real, for most of us to get there a lot of pain and humiliations are involved. They don't happen in isolation but always involve other people who are unwitting conspirators. In fact, they are the ones who impart awareness of a given humiliation even without being aware of it. Awareness of being near them is sufficient to make the humiliation front row and present even if they're unaware of it which most often is the case.

Being a life-long passenger is in the larger scale of things fairly uncommon. To understand it better means we have to take into consideration being a pre-passenger (youth) and then a full-blown passenger (adult), the two essentially the same but come at different stages of development. The rest of life, no matter how consequential it might be, is incidental by comparison. Next comes the future, and by future I mean gathering these two stage up in preparation for death. That, of course, is the ultimate journey as depicted through so many accounts in human history. We all know where we've come from and long for being a permanent passenger but are in need for a map to get there. It seems 99,99% of life is viewed from the crew's vantage point. That may be why we're easily prone to depression. So if you manage to carry over this passenger mentality aided again by that *otium* or special form of leisure, it seems you can pretty much glide through the

threshold of death. Sounds great on paper but another thing in real life. That's where the humiliations come into play and provide the impetus on which all this moves forward.

A quick endnote, if you will, which contributed to getting this short article underway. In my reading of one of Plato's **Dialogues** I came across the word *apeiron*. That's alpha privative prefaced to *peras*, end, limit and perhaps more specifically boundary. In other words, it means that which is without bounds. So while we continue to operate within the bounds of our existence something somewhere somehow is at work trying to pull us out of it, not violently, of course. In a way, this fits in with the image of an ocean liner. It represents life on that which is *apeiron* or without boundary, namely the ocean on which it sails. The ship isn't alien to the ocean, just the opposite. It was made to traverse it, port to port. Not only that, unlike a navy ship or freighter, an oceans liner is made for people to enjoy themselves, not to work. Thus the double *apeiron* and notion of passenger upon the vast ocean are not dissimilar.

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