

10th September 2022

Authentic

“Art is not the possession of the few who are recognized writers, painters, musicians; it is the authentic expression of any and all individuality.”

John Dewey, *Time and Individuality*

After months of having no contact, I was dealing with an on-line bank and logged on with my “username”. Because the security protocols had been updated, I had to go through a “two-stage authentication process”: Stage 1 – entering my “password (Is this individual using a password that tallies with his username?”); Stage 2 – the bank sending me a one-off code on my mobile phone (Does this luddite have access to the phone we’re sending the code to?) with instructions to enter that code in the relevant boxes. It worked! Authentication, in two stages or more, clearly matters.

In a recent *Sky Arts* TV profile of the actor, Clint Eastwood, several contributors referred to his on-screen authenticity, Dewey’s “authentic expression”. In an interview for the *New York Post*, the actress, Cameron Diaz, said, “Fame does not define me ... Fulfilment comes from within you, being authentic to yourself.” Authenticity, therefore, is important to an on-screen persona. But Diaz takes this further: *true* authenticity is not just about performance; it’s about knowing who you are and letting that inform what you show to those around you. It is, in effect, a *two*-stage authentication process: Stage 1 – knowing yourself, being comfortable in your own skin; Stage 2 – being proud to show your true self to the world.

And us? For stage 1, we may know ourselves well, but be diffident about revealing that, or lacking the confidence to truly be ourselves. For stage 2, we might reveal a set of personae, acting-roles, but become more conscious of image than anything else. True fulfilment needs both. As our king, Charles III, deals with his loss and prepares for the responsibilities of the monarchy, we pray that he will be as authentic as his mother was in her long reign. Being comfortable with who he is will have a direct connection with the roles he plays and the image he portrays.

So, let’s all opt for a two-stage authentication process. “Fulfilment comes from within you, being authentic to yourself” is right, and not just for a talented on-screen actress or, indeed, our new king.

A prayer for today

*Lord, help me to learn from people who are authentic,
that I might be more true to myself. Amen*