

20th August 2024

Seeming

“Esse quam videri”

“To be rather than to seem.”

Latin version of the Greek maxim, found in Æschylus, *Siege of Thebes*.

Sometimes I write things, then I forget I've written them. Such was my experience when I went back to my most recent book, *Whispers of Wisdom*, from which I've quoted two poems over the last couple of days. There I discovered a piece I'd written some years ago, which, for this book, I'd included at the conclusion of a chapter on a theme in loss and grief, headed *As Others See Us*. It's a regular issue in bereavement, when we are concerned about how we portray ourselves to others, so that we give the impression we're doing OK, when, in reality, we may not be at all.

And it's an aspect of life that's not confined to bereavement. Are we not constantly concerned about how we'll be seen by others? Don't we don different *personae* in different circumstances? How well do we really know ourselves, and is what we reveal *actually* who we are? And even more, aren't we inclined to be quick to judgement when we *think* we know someone by what we see of them, when we don't really know them?

So, let's get beyond game-playing and posturing, and, in love and openness, take time to find out who we really are and what the reality is of those around us. Let's hold to the Greek Maxim above: to “be” is more important than to “seem”. So here's the poem. And “If the cap fits”, well ...

*To see myself as you would see me? There's a thing to do.
To know myself as you might know me? There's a thing that's new.
To find myself as you would find me? What a thing to learn!
But who am I to those around me? So much to discern.*

*To see myself reflected in another's views, is good.
With insights, well directed, I can feel I'm understood.
I'll benefit from what's been seen, and not be too disturbed.
To see myself as others see me – that's not so absurd.*

*So, come to me with honesty, and gently help me out.
There's no need to be forceful; you don't have to scream and shout.
Accept me as you find me; that's my simple, heartfelt plea.
To see myself as others do – now, there's a task for me!*

A prayer for today

Made in God's image? Known for who I really am? No pretence? Got it! Amen