

Dear Mr. Vonnegut,

I spend a significant amount of time in my own head. When I have nothing better to do, I will sit and think about anything I find interesting. For this reason, I am frequently called spacy or a synonym thereof. When I think, my thoughts sometimes relate to something I've read, whether it be a newspaper article, a road sign, or a short story. Therefore, when I purchased your short story collection *Bogombo Snuff Box* this past spring, it gave me much to think about. Most of these stories had some kind of connection to the world around me, one stuck with me more than the rest.

It took me a full week to process "Mnemonics." I was sitting in the car going nowhere important when the full weight of the story hit me. I saw how easy it was for Alfred Moorhead to get caught up in not only his own thoughts but also in the mechanics of day-to-day routines like remembering. Alfred became so entangled in his own thoughts that they became more important than what was going on in the world around him, as I did every day.

During a walk to school in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I managed to convince myself that I didn't exist – not that I wasn't socially noticeable, or that I couldn't be seen, rather, in the nirvana-esque sense that I was not a physical being. By the time I started the day, I did persuade myself that I was, in fact, in existence, but a thought process had begun. In the end, I came to the same conclusion that Descartes did in 1644: "I think, therefore I am." Your story, however, changed this belief.

I saw how too much self-contained thinking could lead to a lesser existence. Although thinking was a great part of me, I saw now that "being" is an element of the biological definition of living; in order to truly live life, which is a great part of human existence, a person must react effectively to external stimuli. While simpler organisms might find it easy to be satisfied with light and food, humans need a variety of stimuli to continue living. One of the defining characteristics of humanity is social interaction, which I now see is a necessary external stimulus. Therefore, if a person such as myself spends all their time within themselves, they may not be 'being' to their full potential.

I found great meaning in these words and hope that others may find them meaningful as well. As in Blue Man Group's 'Utne Wire Man' and the humans in *Wall-E*, it is easy to bury yourself in a constant stream of information without spending time to look at the people around you. At a common workplace a person might be surrounded by people, but at the same time can be alone if there is little true social interaction. Together, but not alone.

Your insights inspire me to spend time outside myself. Fifteen years of practice are hard to break, but I hope that someday I can 'be' to the fullest.

Regards,

*Ian Brenckle*