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Keynote speech title:

Is life an Odyssey? Or a place to dwell?

Abstract

All our lives we seem to be caught up between becoming and being. The values we pursue in order to gain a foothold for our manifold identities may – perhaps - help us through our lives, but just as well lead us astray. Will we ever know what we are destined for? Will we ever reach our destination? How should we get there?

Is life an Odyssey? And if we find a way, how do we know it's the right one? Did not Carl Gustav Jung once say that *'if the path before you seems clear, you're probably on someone else's road'*. Or how about this one-liner by Nietzsche: *'you have your way and I have mine. As for the right way: it doesn't exist'*.

Would it therefore not be wiser to build physical and mental walls to hide behind against the troubles of our times? Yet, walls may be broken. What would clinging to false security bring us, other than the fear of strangers who will keep on knocking at our gates? Is it the journey that counts, or the destination?

This brings us to the dual theme of the wanderer and the settler, the nomad and the dweller, the outsider and the established; a very familiar trope with great appeal all over the world. As, for instance, in 'the hero's journey'; a popular metaphor for the process of (further) individuation; often referred to by supervisors and coaches.

It is exactly this hermeneutic focus on the meaning of, between and beyond words, that we as supervisors or coaches share with poets and philosophers. Wondering where this may take us, I propose to study two poems together, both by the Greek-Alexandrian poet and historian Constantine Cavafy (1863-1933). First 'Ithaka' (1911), followed by 'Waiting for the Barbarians' (1905).

Profile

Sijtze de Roos (The Netherlands) is LVSC certified senior and teaching supervisor, policy adviser and coach. He acted as co-founder, trainer and lecturer of the Master Organizational Coaching at The Hague University of Applied Sciences. From 2006 till 2010 he served as LVSC president, as ANSE vice president and president between 2010 and 2018 and from 2020-2023 as chief editor of ANSE Journal. Next to that, he published various books and articles on social work, supervision and coaching in several languages. He is currently active as editor of the Dutch Coaching Magazine.