

Same As It Ever Was, Or Something New? It's Not Up to the Economy, It's Up to You

By Jennifer Selby Long

Given the title of this article, I guess I'm a poet and don't know it. Well, in the article, we're going to travel a little heavier than usual, but this is just too important to treat lightly.

Last weekend we watched the DVD of Talking Heads' *Stop Making Sense* concert. As David Byrne launched into *Once in a Lifetime*, I was struck to the core by the *immediate relevance* of the song: it was recorded in 1979 – early in the deep recession which continued through 1982, the recession which most closely resembles the one we are in right now.

In the song, a young man, having gone with the general zeitgeist of boom times, lost his money. Now he reflects on his life and the lives of those around him:

*“And you may find yourself living in a shotgun shack
And you may find yourself in another part of the world
And you may find yourself behind the wheel of a large automobile
And you may find yourself in a beautiful house, with a beautiful wife
And you may ask yourself-Well...How did I get here?”*

He tries to enter his unconscious mind, to go deeper and find meaning in his life. While there, he experiences fleeting peace. Byrne and his co-writer Brian Eno, use water as a metaphor for our deep unconscious:

*“Letting the days go by/let the water hold me down
Letting the days go by/water flowing underground
Into the blue again/after the money's gone
Once in a lifetime/water flowing underground.”*

But he struggles to stay there, to reconcile his life with his glimpses of deeper meaning. Have you ever had this struggle? If not, it's a struggle worth having:

*“And you may ask yourself
How do I work this?
And you may ask yourself
Where is that large automobile?
And you may tell yourself
This is not my beautiful house!
And you may tell yourself
This is not my beautiful wife!”*

But it's not easy to reconcile, to make sense of it all. In frustration, Byrne hits himself on the head repeatedly, chanting:

*“Same as it ever was...Same as it ever was...Same as it ever was...
Same as it ever was...”*

Which will it be for you? Same as it ever was, or something new? The economy is showing early signs of stabilization, and this means time is running out for your once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to use difficult financial circumstances to facilitate a connection with the deeper meaning in your life and in your work.

It's only through challenges that force us beyond our comfort zone that we dive into our unconscious selves, face tough facts, and grow. It's when our backs are against the wall that we look beyond the façade, and deeper inside ourselves, to find reserves of strength, creativity, and new insights – the insights that raise us to new levels of success we could never have achieved had things stayed comfortable.

What do you want? How did you get here? What do you need to change? Soon the money will be flowing again, covering up the pain, softening the edges, soothing over the tough questions. But the rocks and stones will still be there. Will you have faced yourself? Will you have grown to the next level of meaning, of service, of a full life?

*“And you may ask yourself
What is that beautiful house?
And you may ask yourself
Where does that highway go?
And you may ask yourself
Am I right?...Am I wrong?
And you may tell yourself
MY GOD !...WHAT HAVE I DONE? ”*

What do you want to be asking yourself after the next boom comes and goes? Do you want to be where you are now, or somewhere else? Now is the time to begin. When the money flows, the temptation to never connect the life to spirit becomes strong. What do you want?

*“Letting the days go by/let the water hold me down
Letting the days go by/water flowing underground
Into the blue again/after the money's gone
Once in a lifetime/water flowing underground.”*

It's up to you. Our lives are in our own hands. You make your own choices, and are solely responsible for where you are now. You will be solely responsible for where you are in the next boom, and the next bust. Ask the questions now. Go there. Do it. After the money's gone. Don't wait until the money comes back. Do it now.

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