

Thoughts from the dais: a personal coda



The article d “ Thoughts from the Dais: A Personal Coda” recounts the ambivalent thought process of the while attending an Engineering College’s alumni party as an invited honoree. His mind wavers from the ritualistic humbug associated with the party to the inner question – why he is there, despite his awareness of the meaninglessness of the whole affair? He reflects on the way professionals are forced to attend such gatherings, as part of survival in their respective fields. He underrates his significance as a honoree by referring to the way associations operate, and how anyone in the engineering field would have a 50% chance in a thirty-year period of being called upon by associations. He reveals that he had been in such committees and knows how a person like him would just mean “ one less problem to worry about”. The other honoree is referred to as someone who had contributed substantially to the engineering field with a lot of degrees, honors and inventions, while the author had just written a couple of books and articles that treat engineering from a philosophical point of view. He gets irritated and angry as he keeps on reminding him of he has just become part of a meaningless custom. However, by the time his turn to speak comes, his views undergo a transformation. While he is delivering his message to the audience, he feels that there is an invisible bonding among all the participants. He takes the approving nod from an elderly person as the sign of this solidarity. The engineering profession seems to unite him with the rest of the participants and he feels elated as they all recite ridiculous school song, which was wonderful as well, just like the moment that captured his heart. The imminent ambivalence in the thoughts of the author is best explained through this conclusion.

The most important points from the chapter are related to the way

<https://assignbuster.com/thoughts-from-the-dais-a-personal-coda/>

professional associations operate. The author uses his reflections on it as a self-critique. He laments the way intellectual pursuits are institutionalized where individual merit is overlooked for the sake of convenience. He criticizes the whole process of organizing meetings, parties and conferences, which, instead of inspiring the current and future generations of professionals, end up being a vanity affair where mutual ego boosting becomes the need of the hour. The way he presents the facts are interesting and relevant. Though the reference to the facts and figures with regard to engineering professional seem to divert from the topic, he reinstates with the help of it that a honoree like him is rather chosen by accident than for real merit. He attempts to satirize social behaviour by making references to other participants of the meeting, including his wife, the other honoree and his wife. However, his focus shifts from that to the core of the matter – why such meetings are to be held, and why had he to be there. Personally, I found it difficult to appreciate how the author took a populist stance in the end. Though he tries to stick to his original argument that the entire affair was ridiculous, he tries to appease the so-called general readers by mentioning that it was wonderful as well. It is possible to allege cynicism to the statement, but the sense of ambivalence that he expresses towards the end of the article takes away the seriousness of the issue and makes it unnecessarily sentimental. It may definitely be a matter of personal taste, but I would focus more on the first part of the article where the author raises a lot of pertinent issues related to the institutionalization of professional and intellectual pursuits.