

CHRIS DEALS WITH IT

episode notes




EP 63 - Millions Of Forgotten Things

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Thoughts about details, and what we're ultimately known for.

Few, through history, are remembered much beyond a few generations.

Some live on through physical reminders: As statues, captured in paintings or photographs, and in the artifacts they leave behind.

Others live on through the product of their minds & industry: Writings, musical notations, prose, inventions, businesses

Historical importance can keep some in the minds of civilization long beyond their passing.

Yet for those remembered, how many actions of their lives are actually remembered?

In the end, what will we ultimately known for?

For most who live, life provides millions of moments: Actions, conversations, day-to-day impacts on the world and our fellow humans. Large or small, most are forgotten to history.

I know at times I have a tendency to place too much importance on some of those actions: Fret over how I appeared, how I said something, what I spent my time on, or the imperfections of my work.

But ultimately what remains in memory is really just quick snapshot of the reality.

Everyone snaps that image through a different lens, from different angles.

All bring the sum total of their reality and history to that moment.

Therefore, everyone takes away different memories from the moment.

Those memories fade at different rates and inconsistently.

Time is a powerful filter.

There are moments that transcend these filters: Core memories, lush with detail, full of emotion and power. Moments that can be replayed in our minds like scenes from a movie.

The birth of a child, a wedding, a deeply embarrassing moment, a breakup, a big performance, a tragic incident.

We should be aware of the role we're playing in others' memories.

And that others involved in those memories have different perspectives of them.

No two memories can ever be the same.

Setting aside these core moments. I believe what matters, what ultimately gets remembered about us, are the patterns of our actions:

The intentionality behind what we do.

Producing things of substance and quality.

Our reliability and availability for others.

Providing spaces and opportunities for deeper connection.

The people we interact with and are influenced by.

Consider a book read, or a movie watched: We may remember elements of the plot, characters, perhaps a quote or two. But above all, our recollection of that book or movie ends up as brief summaries:

It was great / It sucked.

Perhaps a rating on a subjective scale.

How it made us feel.

Some elements that really stood out.

Phrases or imagery that become ingrained in pop culture, or transcend genre to influence civilization more broadly (Ex: going down the rabbit hole from Lewis Carrol's *Alice In Wonderland*)

Few of us, if anyone, are capable of remembering every sentence. Of processing every moment of a work fully and integrating all of them into their personal history and worldview.

But all these millions of details, despite the reality of their fading; they do matter:

They relate to the quality of the experience. (Choices of color palette & brush strokes on a painting)

They can provide context, add depth, and form a base to later deliver a key message and/or moment (all of the details in planning a conference, birthday party, or vacation)

They can ensure physical and/or psychological safety (ensuring every rider is locked in securely before starting the hundredth amusement park ride of the night)

A detail may resonate only with someone trained for or specially attuned to specific details. (the appreciation of a note variation listened to be someone

with a trained ear and/or deep knowledge of that particular work)

All these millions of details have the potential to become poignant, transcendent memories.

Which ones? That's out of our control - since it depends on the individual making each memory.

It depends on their state of being at the moment of interacting with that detail, **in that moment.**

Their attunement, training, past experiences, education, social standing, how much they're paying attention, etc...

In this digital age, we face a new reality: Many of our actions don't fade so easily through time. Breadcrumbs of our digital age litter civilization's tablecloth. Posts, notes, and files become digital memories of things consumed, actions taken, feeds posted to, etc... Creating data-driven accounts of a life lived.

These digital footprints can be viewed as objective truths.

They allow us to swim in details, even obsess over them.

These moments are often curated, and can be misrepresented out of context.

Quality and/or quantity can become performative rather than honest reflections of our lives.

Concepts have evolved like virtue signaling, culture wars, echo chambers, and virality.

What happens to our humanity when all this data overwhelms our ability to make and maintain our own takeaways?

Many of us have literal lenses in our pocket we whip out to capture moments digitally.

But can that video of your favorite band playing at a concert you attend recreate the way the music, the crowd, the real-life moment vibrated you physically and emotionally?

We can choose to live in moments more and worry about capturing & sharing them less.

And leave millions of those tiny details to the sands of time.

Episode 63 Quote:

I love this quote from Brett & Kate McKay, from one of their *Sunday Firesides* articles on their Art of Manliness blog, titled [*Be Prepared To Live Off Your Fat*](#). The format of these fireside articles inspired the format of CDWI episodes like this one.

Every enjoyable outing taken, every laughter-filled conversation engaged in, every book read, every mental model of how to live and what to live for absorbed, stores a life-giving deposit in the spirit. No crumb of life's goodness is ever lost to us. Each adds to the reservoir of rich, nourishing fat that will gladden the heart in the good times, and sustain it during the lean.