



SIEBENQUELL

»What is REAL?«



QUELLENANGABE: THIAGO CERQUIERA 2017

As a storyteller, I am an insatiable and incorrigible observer of the people and events around me. They are always the source for the very best stories.

Several days ago, while visiting a friend in the hospital, her three year old granddaughter came for a visit. I turned as the door opened and she came marching in. And as I looked at her face, my eyes filled with tears. For on the beautiful, young face of this child I saw the most authentic joy and delight. The image of that child's face has been tattooed onto my heart ever since.

I have reflected on that moment over and over, because I instinctively understood, that something took place here that was neither a coincidence nor an accident. What made that child's smile remind me of the radiance of the transfiguration was the fact that behind that smile lay a long story of love and relationship with her grandmother. As young as she was, she had shared deep loss with her grandmother, the death of her beloved grandfather. And now her little soul was rejoicing to see her grandmother in good health, in good spirits and obviously on the mend. Between these two, something beautiful for God has grown, something authentic, something real.

Many years ago, the author Margery Williams wrote a magnificent and heart-warming tale for children entitled »The Velvet-
een Rabbit«. In it she explains to her children how people become real, like the little girl with the face full of sunshine. In the
most moving scene, two toys talk about what it means to become real. In it, the storyteller opens to us a window into heav-
enly processes.

» The Skin Horse had lived longer in the nursery than any of the others. He was so old that his brown coat was bald in
patches and showed the seams underneath, and most of the hairs in his tail had been pulled out to string bead necklaces.
He was wise, for he had seen a long succession of mechanical toys arrive to boast and swagger, and by-and-by break their
mainsprings and pass away, and he knew that they were only toys, and would never turn into anything else. For nursery
magic is very strange and wonderful, and only those playthings that are old and wise and experienced like the Skin Horse
understand all about it.

»What is REAL?« asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to
tidy the room.

»Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle? «

»Real isn't how you are made, « said the Skin Horse. »It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long,
long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.«

»Does it hurt? «, asked the Rabbit.

»Sometimes, « said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. »When you are Real you don't mind being hurt. «

» Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit? «

»It doesn't happen all at once «, said the Skin Horse. »You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often
to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most
of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things
don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand. «

»I suppose you are Real? «, said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse might be
sensitive. But the Skin Horse only smiled.

»The Boy's Uncle made me Real, « he said. »That was a great many years ago; but once you are Real you can't become un-
real again. It lasts for always. «

The Rabbit sighed. He thought it would be a long time before this magic called Real happened to him. He longed to become
Real, to know what it felt like; and yet the idea of growing shabby and losing his eyes and whiskers was rather sad. He
wished that he could become it without these uncomfortable things happening to him. «

And now you know what I saw that day in the face of the little girl. And, more importantly, now you know how that joy and
radiance found its way onto her face.

Erik Riechers SAC

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