

Augustine's Pears and Chely's Drawer

In his Confessions, Augustine bemoans that he once stole some pears only to feed them to pigs. When reading this, it's easy to poo-poo Augustine's concerns as an excessive moralism. I think this is a poor response.

It is quite fashionable for people to look over their life and say that they have no regrets and wouldn't change anything. "These mistakes made me who I am," is very often the only justification given for this attitude. By contrast, I am far more likely to agree with Chely Wright in her song, "Back of the Bottom Drawer." In this song, she sings of a box she keeps to remind her of the places she has been and the mistakes she has made. In one of the best verses, she sings, I don't keep these things because I'm longing to go back/ I keep them because I want to stay right where I'm at/ I'm reminded of my rights and wrongs/ I don't want to mess this up/ But I wouldn't know where I belong without this box of stuff."

In the story of my life, Chely's drawer is filled with many pear cores. This box contains pictures of friends that life has split me from, pictures I don't remember being taken, a cigar cutter with the price on it to remind me what can happen when I've had one too many (that one's actually a funny story about how radio personality Dollar Bill cock-blocked me), it has mixed CDs and shirts ex'es have given me that remind me of good times that also remind me of what a poor partner I have been sometimes. It contains these and many other trinkets besides. They remind me of the good times, and they remind me of how I can be stubborn, even when I am wrongheaded, and sometimes slow to learn lessons others already mastered.

I've lived a life, and in many ways feel very fortunate. However, I've made lots of mistakes and have a number of regrets, and if the past is any guide to the future I will probably have many more. I think it's better to recognize these mistakes, learn from them, and improve one's life, than it is to deny they were mistakes at all. My past hasn't made me who I am, but you can't understand me unless you also understand my pear stories. I think I am a better man for them.

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