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All of Them and More From Che to Dylan

By Ben Moats



When Bob Dylan was asked during a 1965 San Francisco press conference whether he considered himself more of a singer or a poet, he responded with an insidious grin saying that he saw himself as more of a song and dance man.

Dylan's response can likely be attributed to his irascible nature when dealing with the media. However, perhaps his response can more fully be accredited to his simple desire to avoid being labeled and compartmentalized: an aversion deemed appropriate not only by our nation's greatest songwriter, but also by Jesuit universities across the globe. What Bob Dylan apparently recognized is that he did not need to label himself as a poet or a songwriter, and maybe he even understood that doing so would limit him as a human being. Perhaps the Jesuits' apprehension with compartmentalization stems back to a fundamental understanding of their savior: a man who was said to be neither solely human nor divine, but rather entirely both.

My own rally against personal segregation began very quietly and sometimes even unconsciously in a sleepy Nebraska town called Weeping Water. It was in this small community where I was neatly characterized with many simple and often varying descriptions throughout my adolescence. Some members of the community, for example, described me as an athlete, most specifically a basketball player,

while others thought of me solely as a student, perhaps because my mother was a teacher at the local high school. There was also a time when many of my classmates began calling me "Che," because of my interest in the Argentine-born revolutionist, while others went so far as to refer to me as Tevia or Ali Hakim, two roles I played in our high school musicals.

These are just a few examples of differing labels I was given as a Weeping Water High School student, but I do not feel remorse for this fact, and I do not believe the most fundamental Jesuit thinker would either. Although being labeled can often lead one to undergo internal compartmentalization, this does not have to happen. In fact, we will all be labeled throughout our lives, so it is therefore our job constantly to remind ourselves and others that we are not just our jobs, cars, clothes, religion, or hobbies, even though we are simultaneously all of them and more.

I was certainly guilty of sometimes forgetting my boundlessly branched nature, but I like to think that none of these descriptions frustrated me, because I always knew that I was never just any one of them. In high school and in my early university life, for example, I spent an ample amount of time practicing basketball, but what I truly wanted to be at the time was a writer. Now, as I write this, not having touched a basketball in several months, I think of myself as no less of an athlete and no more of writer. If we all referred to ourselves as what we spent the

most time doing, then we would all have to be sleepers.

Today, what I would most like to spend the rest of my occupational life doing is playing music, but even when I practice or perform songs, I do not think of myself as a musician any more than I see myself as a person who eats food or likes Christmas vacation. Furthermore, a college student aspiring to be a musician could easily be labeled as a cliché, but I trudge through this ridicule not because of misconstrued conceptions of a rock n' roll lifestyle, but rather because music has reached me on a much deeper level than even have some of the greatest works of literature, art, and film. I therefore hunger to produce songs that speak to people in a mysterious and comforting manner.

More importantly, I strive to live in un-compartmentalized, honest, and fully human ways, ways that remind me that we are not our jobs, cars, clothes, religion, or hobbies, even though we are simultaneously all of them and more. ■

Ben Moats is a senior at Rockhurst University majoring in Spanish and English.