



Purposeful Wanderings

A Monthly Newsletter for Clients and Friends of **The Road Not Taken**

Volume 13, Number 5 – May 2014

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How Do You See the World?

“It’s one kind of victory to slay a beast, move a mountain, and cross a chasm, but it’s another kind altogether to realize that the beast, the mountain, and the chasm were of your own design.” – Mike Dooley, Notes from the Universe

What’s the story you tell – your beliefs about life, why you’re here, and how you fit in the scheme of the cosmos? Each of us has a story, you know. Do you truly *know* your story? Is your story big enough to include your greatest potential inside its frame? Did you choose your story consciously, or are you unconsciously living someone else’s?

Human cultures have always viewed life through the lens of story – most often called *worldview*. It’s the largely invisible frame that expresses a culture’s way of seeing and thinking – what it views as possible (inside the frame) and what it views as impossible (outside the frame.) These stories have arisen over the course of human history to offer a sense of safety in a fundamentally uncertain world. Three major worldviews have dominated most of human history, each offering its adherents a sense of connection with something bigger than themselves. In simple terms, we could label the views Creation-centered, Creator-centered and Science-centered.

- The *Creation*-centered worldview has been around since the dawn of humanity. It grew out of reverence, wonder and connectedness with the earth and our place in the cosmos. It holds that we engage life’s meaning by *taking part* in a conscious, emerging creation called the universe. We choose our experience through our consciousness.
- The *Creator*-centered worldview has been around for the past few thousand years. It grew out of interpretations of sacred texts, and holds that our ‘original sin’ corrupted us, so we answer to a creator figure who judges us, in this lifetime or after. This view sees us as *separate* from the world and that we therefore need to be *saved from* it.
- The *Science*-centered worldview has been around for the past few hundred years. It grew out of a belief that the world is mechanistic, and holds that rational thought alone can help us know a world devoid of inherent meaning and purpose. This view also sees us as separate from the world, sees life as a competition for survival, and that by controlling our world, we can *save ourselves* from it.

The issue is not the faith religion has offered us; nor is it the knowledge and technology science has offered. The issue is that, *by their own definitions*, both religion and science exclude and deny significant pieces of human experience. In so doing, they *separate* us from our inherent wholeness, robbing our personal power *and* personal responsibility. The Creator-centered view suggests we can regain wholeness in the afterlife by making right choices now; the Science-centered story says there’s no meaning anyway, that only physical survival matters, which science itself can promise. The trouble is that when we take a system that was designed to see *part* of life and project it as a system to see *all* of life, we seriously diminish our sense of meaning and reverence with life, and thereby our own potential.

In reality, we’re not separate from anything – not from our souls and spirits, and not from the earth upon which we depend for survival. We are free (and responsible) beings, here to learn, explore, grow and create, fueled by curiosity and wonder about life. Where the Science-centered view denies this by seeing the universe as random, and the Creator-centered view denies this by seeing it as determined, the Creation-centered view sees life as an ongoing, unified, creative process, where everything and everyone are, at the same time, integral parts of and participants in its continued unfolding. We are united with all life, not just the magic of *what* it is, but the mystique of *why* it matters.

Exercise: *Why are you here?* Regardless of the place these ideas may hold for you, ponder for a moment the source of meaning and purpose in your life. This is the start of choosing a worldview. As you contemplate why you’re here and why your life matters, begin to notice *places where your creative potential feels blocked*, where you believe you *can’t* be, do or have that which holds meaning for you. Get to know these blocks – not to judge or fight them, but to become keenly aware of their presence and impact. Imagine that the blocks create the *edges* of your story, a boundary that constrains your potential. Are you willing to let go of what holds you back, simply by *expanding* your story to include more of life? What choices would you make if you knew that your choices mattered, to you *and* to the world?

A River Runs Through It [Life lessons offered by nature]

Although as humans we are the only species with free will, personal potential and awareness of our connectedness, rarely do we live as if this were so. If asked what we think, we *say* we have free will, we *say* we can live our potential and we *say* we're connected with others. And we may even try to convince *ourselves* that our behavior matches what we believe and think. It doesn't. In reality, we act out, in a consistent and sometimes violent way, a belief in our *separateness*, courtesy of our [invisible] worldview. One powerful example is the belief that we're here to have dominion over the earth and its creatures. We sure have perfected *that* 'art!' Another example is the Darwinian idea that life is a brutal competition for survival. Again, we seem to have perfected *that* 'art' as well. Both these beliefs scream to our separateness. Neither one is sustainable. Now what?

Nature exhibits no such thinking. Nowhere in the universe, best we know, is there any kind of "either/or" thinking. Life is the cosmos is characterized by "both/and" consciousness. Everywhere you go, cooperation and collaboration creates communities and ecosystems, built around a common thread – *sustainable creativity*. And to make the point even more clear, we find this true at every level of life: cells organizing to create organisms; ants cooperating for food and shelter; plants and animals and landscape and weather collaborating to create ecosystems; stars, dust and planets coalescing to create solar systems and galaxies. Anything that is "separate" usually falls out along the way, simply because nothing can survive as a fragment. I often find humor in thinking about how nature might respond if she took on our ways of behaving (and the unconscious underlying thinking that drives it):

- High tide might fight with low tide for superiority.
- A chipmunk might gather extra nuts one autumn, with hopes of the promise of a better afterlife.
- A caterpillar might spin its cocoon early, anxious for its friends to find it more beautiful as a butterfly.
- Vultures might conspire to aggravate the coyotes for not having hunted enough to make their scavenging easier.

You get the drift here. Nonsense when we think of it in nature, yet every one of these things is common behavior among us humans. So while we *say* we believe differently, "actions speak louder than words." Worse, as the only creatures endowed with awareness of our own awareness, it's amazing how little of it we use to even notice our plight, say nothing of choose new potential (using our free will, of course). If nature worked the way we work, life would have extinguished itself eons ago. If we could we notice, that alone might be the wake-up call we need.

Openings to New Possibility

Available for you:

- *The Road Not Taken Community*, a no-cost subscription that offers you connection, interaction, challenge, and learning. See articles, newsletters and blogs; you'll find "new stuff" [here](#) regularly. I welcome comments and conversation; this kind of dialogue is an example of how we may all learn together.
- "In Nature's Image," a blog series [here](#). Each offers a simple idea for adding meaning to your life, accompanied by one of my images from nature. If you'd like to receive them by email, use the green icon ("receive blog via RSS feed") on any page of my website or [here](#). If we're connected on [Facebook](#), you'll also find each post there.
- My e-book, *A Field Guide to Life: How to Live With Authenticity and Freedom*. Reclaim the power of your deepest longing. You can [purchase](#) the ebook, or read it at no cost as a series of [blog articles](#) on my website.
- *The Road Not Taken* newsletters (12 years, 144 issues of *Purposeful Wanderings*) available [here](#) as a pdf file.
- Photo images from my travels available [here](#) on fun products – note cards, coffee mugs – great gift ideas.

An invitation to possibility: If you have the courage and determination to step apart from the crowd and *challenge conventional thinking* ... so you can live instead with *authenticity and freedom*, contact me for a conversation that can energize your dream. I will help you reach a level of *clarity and perspective* – about yourself, others, your life, your work and the world – that allows you to live your truth, every day. Trade the *way it is* for the *way it could be*.

Book of the month – A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey to an Undivided Life, by Parker Palmer. According to Palmer, our external world denies or devalues the existence of the true self, so we separate ourselves from our deepest truth, then wonder why we long for more. We must, he says, learn to stand in the gap – to hold the tension between the *reality* of *this* moment and the *possibility* of the *next* moment. ... And if you're on Cape Cod, you'll find this book at the Market Street Bookshop in Mashpee Commons – 508-539-6985.