



# Purposeful Wanderings

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

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## Finding Peace in Troubling Times

“We make our world significant by the courage of our questions and by the depth of our answers.” – Carl Sagan

We live in an increasingly troubled world. It's far too easy to find (or perhaps impossible to escape) evidence of war, violence, abuse, or other forms of judgment directed at [commonly innocent] others. Stepping back, in each case, we see one person or group claiming that *its* “truth” is somehow more truthful than *another's* “truth,” then using that claim as justification to harm them. The so-called “thinking” underneath this violence emerges from almost every corner of our planet's societies and institutions – government, science, media, religion, families, even schools – and stems from a belief that we are all somehow *separate* from one another, so therefore have a need to defend.

We're educated into our separateness from very early in life. It's reinforced in schools, where it's about being right and about test scores. It's pervasive in science, where to ‘know’ a thing, we need to isolate it from its wholeness so we can measure it. It's touted by religions, where to be faithful commonly means rejecting ‘other’ faiths. It's become almost a given in government, where power over others (parties, cultures or nations) has become a worldwide theme.

Looking a bit deeper, however, we see just the *opposite* of separateness. There is only one ultimate truth, and that's the truth of unity and connectedness that drives all creation and life throughout the universe. Universe – one – *uni*. How then, do we as individuals create and live peace – while schools tell us that test scores and uniformity create mature adults, while science tells us that fragmentation leads to truth, while governments and religions tell us that divisiveness leads to peace and salvation? None of us can singlehandedly change the *circumstances* in which we live, yet we *can* change the *perspective* with which we see and think about those circumstances.

We need the courage (and the perspective) to ask new questions, and the perseverance to seek deeper answers. This begins at the personal level. It cannot begin elsewhere. We need to focus on wholeness, not difference. Questions that might frame how we see, think and speak: How are we connected? (instead of How are we different?) What's possible? (instead of What's wrong?) How can we learn from one another (instead of How can we make them conform?) Through a simple, yet regular, practice of personal awareness (awareness of the questions through which *you* see the world), the way *you* see the world changes. What you discover through the simple act of self-observation is that there is a deeper reality that guides all of life, a reality that unifies rather than separates, a reality that calms rather than conquers. And when you tap into that level of reality, you find your own peace – peace that's been there all along.

An obstacle here is that we don't know such a level of reality even exists, lost as we are pursuing our separateness. As an example, quantum science is now forced to reckon with this “inconvenience,” that everything is indeed connected, with the ‘discovery’ that one action *anywhere* has impact *everywhere*. Old science is powerless to explain life's miraculous wholeness. How can anything be separate in that kind of world? It can't. At the individual level, the implication is powerful: You cannot simultaneously complain or blame *and* become a peaceful person.

**Exercise: *Toward personal peace.*** Because of our separatist thinking, we've come to misinterpret the feelings of anger, upset and blame we often have about our world. Such feelings are not, as we tend to believe, messages telling us to argue, judge or take up arms. They're messages asking us to stop, step back, reflect, see a bigger picture. You don't have to accept this without evidence. Try it out for yourself and see how you feel. *The practice:* During 10 - 15 minutes of personal quiet time each day, ask yourself *how you see your world*; include planet, humanity, friends, life, work ... and yourself. What's your general mood about your relationship to *each* of these aspects of life? (upset, anger, resignation, guilt, love, acceptance) Your answers may differ for various aspects of your life. How does your prevailing mood, your way of seeing, inspire or preclude your living more peacefully? Where and how do you blame your lack of peace on life's *circumstances* instead of your *perspective*? The idea is this: through a process of personal discovery, you come to understand that how you see and think is a powerful force in creating the way you experience life and world. Peace is not about finding acceptance for the way things are; it's about finding acceptance for the way *you* are. And *in* that acceptance, your ways of seeing and thinking change, on their own, with no “effort” from you.

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

Imagine for a moment an early scientist, painstakingly dismantling a plant or animal for the purpose of “getting to know” its makeup and inner workings. Imagine for a moment the thrill of discovery that all plants and animals are made up of cells, and that cells differentiate, reproduce, and “become” everything a plant or animal needs in order to thrive. Imagine for a moment the emerging *belief* that the *process* you’d used could explain the entire world. I mean, if you can break something into pieces and discover cell biology, reproduction and genetics, there must be no limit to what fragmenting things into smaller and smaller pieces can offer. No wonder the discovery of atomic particles, sub-atomic particles and sub-sub-atomic particles followed. It’s as if you could rule the world with new knowledge.

Wait a minute! You now look more deeply into the very small, and results change. But results don’t just change; they change *because* you looked!!! “That’s impossible,” you think. You’re a ‘neutral observer,’ and everything you’ve discovered so far *depends* on neutral observation. But now you find out there’s no such thing. Such is the world of quantum science. That which you *100% knew* as truth is blown out the window with this one new discovery. Cause and effect are no longer related. Everything is an effect. So, what’s the “cause?” How can “effects” happen in zero time, with zero energy, and with no communication?

The reason, the “inconvenient truth” of new science, is that old science was severely limited ... *by its own way of seeing*. The observer and the observed are *one*. Everything, and I mean everything, in the universe is connected. Everything is the *effect* of a singular, primordial energy. Everything is inextricably connected to everything else, a manifestation of this very same energy. We humans are *part* of that manifested energy, deeply connected to everything, too. As a matter of fact, because we are the same energy, *we*, in fact, are *one*. We are the same stardust, sunlight and creation energy as is every other thing. No longer can we know anything by ripping it apart from its wholeness, because wholeness is one of its attributes. No longer, too, can we rip *ourselves* apart from the essence of our creation, pretending that we can live as fragments, that we live in an “us/them” world, or worse, and “us *versus* them” world. It’s just not so.

To experience peace, and with it, our oneness, we simply need to shed the old ways of seeing that foster an illusion of separateness, and realize, as quantum science has, that wholeness has always been so, even before its “discovery.” This way of seeing has always been available to us, too, despite the “inconvenience” it causes in turning our deeply-held perceptions of the world upside down. Old truths die hard, even in the face of the new. Can we listen? Can we let go? Can we learn? It’s a choice. What’s yours?

### 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*” -- 100 of my nature images, each offering a simple idea to help experience life’s meaning.
- *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 – The Giving Tree, by Shel Silverstein.*** It’s a book for children. No, wait, it’s a book for adults. OK, so before you wrap one for your favorite child, read it for yourself first. Each of us has “gifts,” gifts we’ve been “given,” gifts we in turn can offer to the world. In giving *to* the world, we also receive *from* the world. It’s all connected. It’s the theme of theme of this month’s article – sharing, loving, giving, receiving, forgetting, taking, remembering, oneness ... paradox. Beautiful paradox. ... And if you’re on Cape Cod, you’ll find this book at the Market Street Bookshop in Mashpee Commons – 508-539-6985.