



Purposeful Wanderings

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

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This I Believe

“Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to find all the barriers within yourself you have built against it.” – Rumi

As is true for all of us, my upbringing included a lot of lessons. Mine focused on how I should see and think – about myself, my life, and the world. No matter *what* we’re taught, though, our upbringing leaves us with an individualized model of how we’re supposed to *be* in the world. A lot of miles and many years later, I’ve come face-to-face with that model again, having spent much of the past year caring for my 93-year-old dad. Aside from the obvious challenges of this unplanned life detour, I’ve also experienced it as a time of personal reflection, much of it about how I was taught. In a way, it would be hard *not* to do this, especially with the “teacher’s presence” so much a part of my daily reality.

I am struck by the huge gap between how I was *taught* to see and think (then), and how I *do* see and think (now). Here is a summary of what I heard throughout my formative years (and continuing to this day!). Perhaps it wasn’t intended to be heard just this way, but it’s how my young mind incorporated it as the context of my emerging sense of being.

- education, status, position, and achievement are measures of being a *good* person
- knowing more, trying harder, staying busy, being productive, making no mistakes, and not rocking the boat are measures of being a *successful* person
- the world is mechanistic, rational and linear; scientific proof is the only valid way of knowing something.
- this lifetime is “all there is;” there’s nothing bigger than one’s self to rely on or believe in.
- emotion detracts from these things, so needs to be denied. Love is therefore conditional, based on “getting it right”

Even as a young boy, I knew the world didn’t work the way I was taught it did. I knew there was more. I knew *I* was more. I felt lost. I had no framework in which I could “be” what I knew to be so. Although these teachings framed the context of my early adulthood, here’s what my own life experience since then (supported by a whole lot of practice) has taught me as “truth.” ***This I believe:***

- everything in the universe is connected to everything else; boundaries and separateness are illusion; we are all one
- “truth” is both context-sensitive and malleable in the presence of conscious thought; there’s no “one truth;” therefore, the way I see and think *creates* the reality I experience as “life”
- there are many ways of knowing; “rational” is just one of these, and often the *least* trustworthy
- I’m never alone; I am guided, supported and loved – always part of something so much bigger than myself
- my deepest longing lights my way; I connect with it in the levels of consciousness available to me through quiet reflection, listening and inquiry
- life is a beautiful mystery, and each day we are offered glimpses into its majesty and wonder
- I’m lovable just because I’m here; and furthermore, love is all there is, really.

In these past many months, I’ve deepened my connection – with myself, with my dad, with love. I’ve come to appreciate how important it is to consciously choose and live by my personal principles. Doing so creates and enhances the way I experience life. I want my children and grandchildren to know me in this way, too; to know this is what I stood for, to know that they can (must) choose *their* own truths – based on inquiry, reflection and personal experience, and not the dogma of other people’s thinking. In this way, I will know my life was not irrelevant.

Exercise: *Find and live your own truth.* It doesn’t matter what you *say* you believe; it matters how you *live*. Perhaps the “great work of your life” is to dig into the depths of your own consciousness and discover, firsthand, what matters so deeply to you that you’d not trade it for anything. It’s all inside you, waiting for you to notice. Then, boldly put each belief into practice every day, on purpose – in how you see, think, speak, act. Listen to what your experience tells you; notice the sense of personal freedom and self-confidence that inevitably follow. Honor where that path may lead you.

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

Nature has principles, too. They're not all written down in some kind of project plan for planet earth, but they're freely available for the listening, should we choose to do so. I've written on this topic before, yet it also seems so appropriate to this month's article. And it's not lost on me how closely nature's way maps to my own. (She helped me along.)



Creativity – The universe, with all its creations, animate and inanimate, is sustained by a singular energy – the *process of creative expression*. Each thing exists to *be* its innate creative essence. Possibility, therefore, unfolds from creativity, not from control or from a focus on results, suggesting that life is *a journey of creative spirit*, not a *destination* or goal.

Opportunism – Life takes advantage of life's inherent uncertainty, propagating itself in all directions. This means we create life's path by walking it, not by having it planned out ahead of time. Awareness, trust, patience and choice offer windows into innovation in a landscape of continual change.



Self-Organization – Creativity & opportunism lead *naturally* to systems of order, all as a response to *feedback*, an inherent attribute of every living system. Adopting a personal culture of listening, reflection and inquiry offers a far more effective strategy for creating order than that of command and control; let the process do the work, not your will.

Simultaneity – Nature holds myriad possibilities in each moment, always many “right answers.” Only in selecting one do others disappear from view. Choosing one right answer ahead of time, as in a “goal,” *limits* future possibility. You can *create* more by learning to *see* more.



Rhythm – Cycles are nature's way to renew and refresh. Underneath life's surface chaos and complexity are natural order and unity. Nature's rhythms offer far more meaning than the events comprising them. Peaks, valleys, quiet space between. If there's no *down*, there's no *up*. If there's no silence, there's no void in which new possibility can unfold.

Energy – If there's a limit to anything in the universe, it's energy. In nature, energy goes *only* into what matters. Time is *resource*, not a constraint. Perhaps the most important step you might take is to achieve *clarity of intention* – what do you most want to happen, a focal point for where you put your energy?



Community – In nature, survival and sustainability lead to cooperation, the creation of adaptive and resilient systems of order – communities – from galaxies to ecosystems to organisms. This means things occur *in relationship*, built around a common thread. Holding a shared vision creates energy, where both individual and collective may thrive.

Connectedness – Everything in the universe is inextricably connected to everything else. We're united by the original energy of its creation; everything is just a manifestation in form of that primordial energy. We are one. Fragmenting our world into pieces as a ‘way of knowing’ robs life of its context, its connectedness, its source of meaning.



Openings to New Possibility

Available for you:

- *The Road Not Taken Community*, a no-cost subscription that offers you connection, interaction, challenge, and learning. Articles, newsletters and blogs [here](#). I welcome conversation; dialogue is how we all learn together.
- “*In Nature's Image*,” 100 of my nature images, each with a simple message to help experience life's meaning.
- *The Road Not Taken* newsletters (13 years, 156 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: This (or any) newsletter could be the basis of a focused program of personal coaching. So if you read something that evokes the yearning inside you ... and have the courage and determination to 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 will allow you to live your truth, every day. Trade the way it *is* for the way it *could be*.

Book of the month – Make Good Art, by Neil Gaiman. The text of a college commencement speech given by the author; it's fun, it's countercultural, it's deep, it's “truth.” It challenges you to find the truth inside you, and then to live what you love, no matter the criticism or consequences. *That* is a life of meaning and purpose. From the book: “The rules on what is possible and impossible were made by people who had not tested the bounds by going beyond them. If you don't know it's impossible, it's easier to do.” (Note: reports say this book doesn't work on Kindle. It wasn't intended to. By design, it uses non-traditional page format and style. Some books are meant to be experienced. This is one of them.) ... And if you're on Cape Cod, you'll find this book at the Market Street Bookshop in Mashpee Commons – 508-539-6985.