



Purposeful Wanderings

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

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A Cause to Pause

*"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field.
I'll meet you there." – Rumi*

The authors of the U.S. Constitution were a brilliant lot. The result of their labors has guided this nation for 230 years. That it has been amended only 27 times attests to their insight, foresight and vision. Today it seems to be weathering a storm even *they* couldn't imagine, yet there's a lesson in their commitment that might guide us anew.

Things didn't always go well for Madison, Jefferson, Franklin, Hamilton and their peers. They disagreed, strongly at times, over things big and small. *What made them extraordinary was that their deep belief in a young nation's potential was far greater than the substance of their differences.* So, when faced with disagreement, they were led to *dialogue* rather than *divisiveness*. Dialogue is a two-way sharing of ideas, aimed at understanding and learning, conducted in an environment of respect and reciprocity, and based in mutual belief in shared *values*. Through dialogue, they discovered and then worked through major issues and potential pitfalls ... their differences thereby *strengthening* the result. (A question: When were *you* last engaged in the inspiration of true dialogue?)

It seems we're headed the *opposite* direction – toward divisiveness, judgment, personal entitlement, deception and denial – suggesting that *we hold the substance of our differences more important than commitment to shared values*. Two false beliefs underlie this untenable position: that personal opinion qualifies as evidence, and that denigration of others constitutes effective, valid display of power. Don't know about you, but I see yelling, denial and refusal to dialogue as *weakness*, not *strength*. (Truth doesn't need to yell ... or divide others. It simply *IS*.)

A bit of defensiveness may be unavoidable ... as we instinctively seek a sense of safety in a chaotic, complex and uncertain world. Yet to create a future based on separateness, entitlement and personal opinion actually leaves us *less safe and less secure*. To focus on what's *wrong* instead of what's *possible* fuels the destructive loop of divisiveness. Worse, when (or if) the drama subsides, all that's left is opinion, which, unlike truth, has no sustainable energy of its own, forcing us to fuel it from the outside, with more defensiveness and justification. What now?

Singlehandedly, you can't change the conversation society has become. Yet singlehandedly, you *can* choose the conversation *you* become, everywhere in life – with others, the world, even yourself. "The conversation you are" is made up of thoughts ... thoughts you are free to choose in each moment. By growing awareness (which is the true challenge here) you become free to choose thoughts fueled by your *curiosity* instead of thoughts fueled by your *judgment*. It doesn't matter that you think *your* judgments are "right." Those who see you as "wrong" think *theirs* are right. You may worry that releasing your judgment would just leave "them" free to spew nonsense. So what? First, their railing would no longer ruin your day. Next, this isn't about changing them; it's about changing *you* (not so as to deny your beliefs, but so as to find personal peace in a world that has lost its way). Last, they'd get tired of spewing if no one listened. Shifting your consciousness *does* change the world, one thought at a time.

During times of challenge and uncertainty in my life, times when I felt most intent on *pulling in* the edges of my world, often in fear or self-defense, what I needed most was to *expand* my edges, opening to listening and learning – *dialogue* – allowing new ideas to fill the space I'd created. The most profound shift my life took was when I realized that my own potential came far more from being *connected* than from being *right*. The path was often rocky, yet slowly I allowed life's challenges to *teach* me instead of just evoking my defensiveness and denial.

I can't help believing that authors of the Constitution felt it a *privilege* to serve their country as they did. I also can't help believing that seeing *our* world through a lens of privilege rather than one of entitlement could lead us to some exciting places: to adopt a consciousness of *gratitude* for all we have; to behave in ways that *value* what truly matters; to treat others with greater *respect*, even if we don't agree with them; and to be more respectful of the long-term *impact* of the choices we make – on ourselves, others and planet. In the space thus created, all might live more peacefully. *This is not ideological fantasy; it's the [untapped] potential human consciousness offers.*

Exercise: Choosing the kind of conversation you are: Looking at some of the world's great masters (the Buddha, Jesus, Gandhi, Mother Teresa, M. L. King, Einstein, to name a few), we hold them in high regard not just for what they *did*, nor because they were somehow luckier, richer or smarter than most (which they weren't). We value who they were – their powers of consciousness: awareness, self-trust, courage, non-judgment, passion. The great masters were masters largely because the power of their consciousness was greater than both the small-mindedness and inevitable obstacles they encountered along the way. This power is available to you, too. It's a choice.

You can choose “the conversation you are.” When you reflect deeply, you get below the opinions, judgments and fear-based defensiveness of the “surface” version of you, and discover the “authentic” version of you instead. This is a being of self-trust, commitment, creativity and non-judgment. It sees with a perspective big enough to hold opposites without judgment, to find comfort in paradox and uncertainty, and to trust its inner light to guide you.

This is just what the fear-based mind is trying to avoid, however, in its attempt to keep you safe. As you learn to realize that the “voices in your head” appear as valid only because they've been in there so damned long you no longer question them ... then you become free to replace them with thoughts that are genuinely your own. New thoughts create new reality. With courage to engage in deeper reflection, you realize you're not “separate” at all, but part of something much bigger; and that your former, perhaps defensive, viewpoint of believing small serves neither you nor the world. When you realize you *belong here*, fear and anxiety fall away, leaving you both resilient and confident, despite society's attempt to steer you onto a narrower path. This awareness is powerful fuel for self-trust, resilience and truth – a life of purpose and intention. (Note: When you only think about following your truth, things may feel scary. But when you actually follow your truth, you find a deep sense of peace and home.)

Life lessons from nature: You won't find much stuff out of place in nature. Everything belongs. Two examples: 1) The Arctic looks to be a hostile, unforgiving environment; yet Arctic fox, polar bear, seals, tundra, climate and sea ice orchestrate a “spiral dance” here that holds the entire Arctic ecosystem together as one. 2) In a forest, decaying plant matter and leaf litter are part of a process of *becoming*. What once “was” becomes “what's next” – nothing out of place. This is always true when you're “home.” What this means in everyday life is this: when what you *believe, think, see, say* and *do* all match, you also orchestrate a spiral dance that holds *you* together “as one.” The natural consequences of this place of peace include: (1) never having to remember who you are, simply because the energy of your inner knowing is so powerful, (2) never having to justify yourself, to anyone else or to yourself, simply because truth is so powerful it doesn't need to be defended, (3) not having to ‘process’ every request from others, simply because your truth acts like a giant “life filter for the unnecessary,” so you instantly know whether someone's request fits with your truth or not, (in other words, “no, thank you” becomes your new best friend), and (4) others won't mess with you much, simply because the energy of your personal presence is so powerful and so clear that the *unconscious* in them will step back from the *conscious* in you.



My new book, ***A Field Guide to Life: Navigating the Challenges of our Lives and Times*** is available for purchase [HERE!!](#) If your life is a struggle, there's a reason for it – and it's not the reason you may think. This book explores 11 common struggles of our times, and with ideas, perspectives, examples, personal reflection and exercises, helps you trace them back to their causes (most often thoughts from the ancient past, lessons of others, and your lack of awareness of the cause-and-effect linkage). Topics include our relationships with Silence, Not Knowing, Reality, Critical Thinking, Conflict, Self-Care, Living Authentically and Living Sustainably. If you have the courage and openness to allow new ways of seeing to change you, this book may be an option you didn't know you had, one that will open pathways never imagined possible – and back to dreams you may have abandoned long ago as hopeless.

My first book: ***Living Authentically ... in a World That Would Rather You Didn't***. Its premise is simple: in the midst of a world that has lost its way, you need never lose your own. Get to know, then honor, your unique truth. The self-trust that emerges will light your way forever. Insights, perspectives, personal reflections, exercises ... so you can make your life your own, not someone else's. It's all [HERE](#) – intro, samples, purchase link – for you or as a gift.

Book of the month: *A Field Guide to Life*, by Bradford Glass. OK, self-promotion, but here you'll find an opening to a world beyond today's stress, struggle and overwhelm. This month's article, exercise and book intros offer some perspective ... so give yourself a gift, or give a gift to someone you love. Begin to **create** the world you want to live in! Not sure? Listen to the [podcast intro!](#) If you want a deep dive, go for both books. And if you're on Cape Cod, you'll find both at the Market Street Bookshop in Mashpee Commons; 508-539-6985.