



Purposeful Wanderings

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

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When Did You Stop Dreaming?

*"A something in a summer's noon, -- An azure depth,
a wordless tune, transcending ecstasy." – Emily Dickenson*

Have you had the privilege lately to share the experience of life with a child? A young child's curiosity and wonder are contagious. Children instinctively *know* anything is possible, so they think, speak and act a "language of possibility," every day. Indeed, this proclivity for imagining and dreaming must be wired in our DNA.

Until ... we become acculturated into "the way it is." All too early, we begin learning that dreaming isn't productive, that imagination isn't for grownups (we'd already been taught we should want to be grownups), that being rational and calm gains us the approval of others, and that "big people" don't do "childish" things. Believing all we hear – for we cannot do otherwise at that age – we trade away not only our dreams, but along with them, our dreaming, as if this were an admission ticket to adulthood, and to the social acceptance of others. Imagination has been thusly beat out of us, albeit quietly ... our dream unknowingly turned into the nightmare of compliance.

Well, guess what? Although we didn't/couldn't know it then, and although our parents had long since forgotten it, we traded away our connection to a life of possibility, too, for in the dreaming lies the potential we are. Whatever we end up *believing can be true* becomes what *can* be true. Such is the power of our dreams, of our visions.

I looked up *dream* and *dreaming* in a few sources, and what I found was sobering. A few samples (italics mine): an idea or hope that is *impractical* or unlikely ever to be *realized*; a state of *inattention* owing to *preoccupation* with thoughts or *fantasies*; to entertain or *delude* oneself with *imagined* things; something that somebody hopes, longs or is ambitious for, usually something difficult to *attain*, *far removed* from present circumstances. Inattention? Delude? Fantasy? Give me a break! Seems we've lost not only the dreams and the dreaming, but even the support of language to re-engage with an innate part of our human essence.

Dreaming – or *envisioning*, to be "purposeful" – not only creates a powerful picture of a possible future, but creates *energy* that draws you *toward* that future, energy for a *journey* (not a *result*). A vision unites rational energy (of what's possible) with emotional energy (of why it matters), which creates meaning (it's the *meaning* that evokes action). It's in this sense you have power to "dream your world into being," as native cultures both knew and practiced. The dreaming itself sustains and guides you, lighting a path into tomorrow. Without that light, you unconsciously create tomorrows that look alarmingly like yesterday. Visions and dreams are different from goals. There's nothing wrong with a goal if you want to clean your closet, but a vision creates energy while asking neither practicality nor achievement. It is perhaps counterintuitive then, that achievement is a far more likely, and natural outcome of a vision than a goal. The missing ingredient in most goals is the *meaning* needed for sustained action.

Only after 30 years as an adult did I re-find mine, but I'm now "being my dream," exploring with curiosity and wonder how and why the world, and we, work the way we do ... and helping others do the same. I'm fascinated. In one sense, all my articles are really just stories of my fascination – with life, consciousness and our world.

Exercise: *Dreaming your world into being.* Create some personal quiet time, without distraction. As you bring the pace of life to a crawl, re-imagine your early childhood world. What dreams did you dream then? What did you just *know* was, or would be, true for you? Even if your dream was just to "own the world between your house and school," recall the feelings the dream evoked then? What feelings does it evoke *now*? Can you identify or trace where the dream faded, and (if possible), why it did so? Now, even it were by magic, what if the limitless power of your dreaming were instantly restored to you? What dream would you hold for your future? Could the dream sustain you for a lifetime? (If not, dream bigger.) Remember that a dream isn't about forcing a result; it's about evoking and igniting meaning that's already inside you, allowing that energy to guide your way. Do this exercise often; the more you do, and the more fully you embrace its potential, the more energy you create for its fulfillment. As you dream your dream each day, the growing energy pulls you into that dream, allowing it to emerge as reality.

Life lessons from nature: The Aboriginal people of Australia had a notion called Dreamtime, one of many levels of reality, each with its own consciousness. In Dreamtime, land, self and the process of creation were inextricably linked; it was here that the “world was dreamed into being,” as Alberto Villoldo noted in his book, *Courageous Dreaming*. Their stories were inseparable from their life journey, the journey inseparable from the land. In reading about their ways of life, I’m struck that our lost sense of wonder today is related to our lost relationship with the land and its stories ... and with *our own* stories, too. The magic and mystery are gone.

We’re an impatient society. We expect (or demand) our experiences be “right here, right now.” We’ve stopped *cultivating* relationships (which requires patience, intention, dialogue), and instead just demand or take what’s here right now. The same is true in our connection with nature. We’ve come to see nature as an *object, separate* from who we are, something to be *owned*, used, or even destroyed, as we may wish. We’ve lost the reverence and reciprocity that once provided the backdrop for our dreaming. No wonder we don’t dream.

In my limited knowledge of early peoples, I’m aware that animate, intimate conversations with animals were part of their lives. For some, conversations occurred with trees, and with rocks; some tell of the capability for shape-shifting (changing form from human to animal and back). I’m not up to a debate as to whether these stories are literally true or not. What’s interesting to me is that, today, we seem to have diverged so far from that connection with nature that we’d relegate such topics to the occult, refusing even consideration. But along with the denial goes the possibility and power they represent, whether literal or metaphorical. Either way, we’ve lost a piece of who we are, a piece that could open us to a world far bigger than *right here, right now*.

Openings to New Possibility

The Shop at The Road Not Taken:

- *The Road Not Taken Community*, a no-cost subscription that offers you connection, interaction, challenge, and learning. 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.
- My books: available [here](#).
 - ***“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.
 - ***“A Field Guide to Life: Navigating the Challenges of Our Lives and Times.”*** If your life is a struggle, there’s a reason, but not the reason you may think. This book explores 11 struggles common in our times and helps you trace them back to their causes. (When you address true cause, you can develop true solutions.) Topics include our relationships with Silence, Not Knowing, Reality, Critical Thinking, Conflict, Self-Care, Living Authentically, Living Sustainably. 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.
- “In Nature’s Image,” a series of blog posts [here](#), each a simple suggestion for adding meaning to your life, accompanied by one of my images from nature.
- ***Purposeful Wanderings***, 19 years of *The Road Not Taken* newsletters available [here](#) as a pdf file.
- ***Personalized Life Coaching:*** If you’re one of the few with the courage to leave conventional thinking behind so you can live instead with authenticity and freedom, I’ll help you gain clarity and perspective – about yourself, others, life, work and the world – that allows you to do just that, every day. Trade the *way it is* for the *way it could be*. [Contact me](#) for a conversation that *will* change your perspective and may just change your life.

Book of the month: *Think Again*, by Adam Grant. Subtitled, *The Power of Knowing What You Don’t Know*, Grant offers powerful insights and perspectives for a time when they are desperately needed (and disturbingly missing). Through story, research and “fresh thinking,” he speaks masterfully to the value of “fresh thinking.” Consciously or not, we have a strong tendency to believe what makes us feel better, to listen to those who agree with us, and either to preach, prosecute or politicize things ... when we’d be far better off if we stopped, stepped back, and saw all we encounter with a “beginner’s mind,” truly open to learning, to having our minds changed (a starting point for learning and growth.) We might be surprised by beliefs that no longer serve, and thereby constrain, us. And if you’re on Cape Cod, you’ll find this book at the Market Street Bookshop in Mashpee Commons; 508-539-6985.