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*Alice laughed: "There's no use trying," she said;
"one can't believe impossible things."
"I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen.
"When I was younger, I always did it for half an hour a day.
Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible
things before breakfast.*

LEWIS CARROL, *Alice in Wonderland*

Dearest friends

When I think back to my younger adulthood, I sometimes marvel at my abject arrogance and the ignorance from which it arose! You'd have to be so thickly immersed in the received knowledge of the world and its custodians within science and religion (to name a few) to be as impressed by it as I was, and to be so invested in it that I couldn't and wouldn't see through or beyond it!

Having been born and raised in a Catholic family (daily mass and holy communion, daily evening prayers including five decades of the rosary with out-stretched arms on the fifth, weekly confession, abstinence from meat every Fridays - not hard to do as we were too poor to afford meat anyway - observance of all the days of obligation and feast days of several saints and other prominent religious figures like Mary), as well as an academic pathway in Science, you might say I got armoured with a double whammy of orthodoxy!

I was Alice-like in my dismissal of anything that I perceived to be unscientific or immoral and of anyone who was sympathetic to such notions and beliefs. So sure was I that I knew better and, wait for it, that I knew *everything that was worth knowing*!

Ohhhh, how I can cringe now when I think of that miserable young woman! And she was miserable indeed, most of the time, because when you close yourself off to the wondrous possibilities of Life, you indeed confine yourself to an infinitesimally tiny bandwidth of tired, recycled and unimaginative set of certainties.

I had, at least to some degree, what the Franciscan monk, writer and progressive teacher, Richard Rohr, calls 'mouthy certitude'. He describes it like this:

Mouthy certitude is filled with bravado, overstatement, quick, dogmatic conclusions, and a rush to judgment. Underneath the "mouthiness" is a lot of anxiety about being right.

He goes on to say that 'mouthy certitude' comes with defensiveness, a sharp contrast to '*mystical certitude*' which has the quality of a calm, collected presence. Quoting a Jesuit contemporary, Greg Boyle, he says that nowhere in the gospels is Jesus ever defensive, that rather than seek to win an argument, Jesus was only interested in *making* the argument.

To Rohr's compelling description of 'mouthy certitude', I would add the habit of dismissiveness, something that I have observed in our treatment of issues around health (the COVID pandemic being a recent case in point), gender, sexuality, politics and the environment, among many others, by proponents on both sides of these debates. Both claim the authority and certitude of Science.

Richard Bach, a pilot who became famous for his book, *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull* (a story about a seagull who would not be limited by the conventional wisdom of his tribe), says quite plainly and correctly:

Argue for your limitations, and sure enough they're yours.

Often, with eloquence and arrogance, dare I say, we will justify and defend our position with scientific 'evidence' which we maintain is 'irrefutable'. In doing so, we leave no room for the childlike quality of sincere curiosity (the spirit of true scientific endeavour) or the Zen quality of '*don't know*' mind. Why would we when we are so certain of what we insist 'Science' tells us, even when equally reputable scientists tell us contradicting things!

Dear friends, in writing about certitude, I am really wanting to invite you to consider how it plays out in your life. What are the things that you are so certain about that you are prepared to dismiss the possibilities of anything different?

For instance, what do you perceive as your limitations and why? What beliefs underlie these perceptions? How have you acquired these beliefs?

In psychology, there is something known as the '*self-fulfilling prophecy*'. The quote from Richard Bach speaks to this directly as does the following by the founder of the automobile industry, Henry Ford:

Whether you believe you can or you can't, you are right.

If you consider the things that you desire, and have possibly dismissed in life, would it not be worth asking *Why?* Who or what has told you, either directly or by implication, that your desires are unrealistic or selfish or impossible or inappropriate or beyond your capability or your lifetime?

Last week, I wrote about the parable of the three servants and the talents they were given by their master. The third servant was so certain that, no matter what he did, his exacting master would be cruel and unfair in his judgement and response. Consequently, he

buried his talent and returned it, unused, to his master earning his master's ire and banishment.

What are the 'talents' i.e. potential that you have that you keep buried and avoid expressing because you believe that failure is a cruel master? Or because the world will disapprove? Or because you feel unworthy?

What are your beliefs about your health, your financial and social status, your age, your relationships, your culture, your religion or spirituality, that prevent you from living a more empowered, free, healthy, abundant and joyous life?

What are your beliefs about the world that deny you the willingness to focus on the innate goodness and wondrous possibilities of Life? That, instead, helplessly fixate your attention, and thus your energy, to what you perceive as wrong, bad or evil?

Dear friends, the year is still new and collectively, we are all held in the frequencies of new and exciting possibilities. I invite you to take advantage of this collective positioning at the portal of what could be different and scarily exciting possibilities for you, more empowering and liberating for you, more joyous and enriching for you, and therefore, for the whole world!

No, this is not pollyannaish insofar as *pretending* that things are wonderful and nothing is amiss. Rather, it is *knowing* that things are wonderful and that nothing is amiss - a realization that we spontaneously have when we allow the thinking mind to settle.

It is about focusing on what we want rather than on what we don't, both in our personal lives as well as in this world of interbeing. It is about being childlike - innocent rather than prejudging - in our expectations of ourselves and the world while being adult in our commitment and response-ability to the events in our life.

Am I serious?

Yes, very. Because what we see is a result of *how* we see which is a result of *how we have learned to see*.

One of the most useful things about Buddhism is that it teaches us *how to see* i.e. to see things as they truly are, not as we have

learned to see them. This is what we do in the practice of meditation - to see without judgment, without the filters of our conditioning i.e. our self-absorbed cravings, attachments and aversions, all of which arise out of our grasping to an identity that we call 'I'. (I often refer to this 'I' as the ASS - the Apparently Separated Self).

In this regard, let me share an idea, or an ideal actually, that the philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, sought to embrace - the ideal of *amor fati*:

I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who makes things beautiful. Amor fati: let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. Looking away shall be my only negation. And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer...

In sharing this, I want to highlight his commitment to looking at the beauty in life while accepting the necessary/true nature of our life experiences. This acceptance is often interpreted incorrectly (in my opinion) as a fatalistic attitude toward life.

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I believe that Nietzsche was far from fatalistic. If he were, he would not have chosen to see things differently and make things beautiful. He was deeply committed to seeing the beauty in all things, having dispensed with the mouthy certitudes of 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong'. Instead, he was going for the mystical certitude of calm presence, of acceptance without fighting, of saying 'Yes' more and more to the beauty, grandeur and endless possibilities of Life. But, as the White Queen said to Alice, it needs practice!

So, what do you say? What perceived limitations are you willing to give up the fight for? What ideal are you willing to commit to? How much beauty and goodness and possibility are you willing to see? How ready and willing are you to live the life of beauty and goodness, the kingdom of heaven, if you like? And when do you intend to start?

*Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children,
you will never enter the kingdom of heaven*
Mathew 18

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Tuesdays 6pm and Thursdays 11am Brisbane AEST time

Contemplate

Those who know always know that they don't know. That's the character of the mystic. The very word "mystical" comes from the Sanskrit "mū," which was associated with being tongue-tied or hushed to silence
RICHARD ROHR

Pause. Take a deep breath...

What can you appreciate right now that is either of direct and personal benefit to you or that is of no apparent personal benefit to you? In truth, everything benefits us as we are all in a web of interconnectedness!

Right now...I am appreciating the freedom of allowing myself to not know...

Prayer for the World

Let me fill the world with my openness and curiosity. Let me be the child who expects only good and the adult who accepts without resentment, unforgiving and defensiveness. Let me give myself permission to sit in the grandeur of silence and know.

**You are loved. You matter.
Life recreates you moment by moment!**



If you'd like to find out about working with me in a Mentoring program, in Self-Awareness and Empowerment workshops, or would simply like to receive my weekly emails, please contact me [HERE](#).

This weekly message was produced by Lucy at
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