

CAST INTO THE FUTURE

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I am reminded of one of our trips to Tibet when we climbed to the Crystal Cave of Guru Rinpoche, a pretty inaccessible place. It was an all-day hike and we needed whatever help we could get, so we started out having a local Tibetan drive us up an old creek bed in a small trailer on the back of one of those Tibetan tractor-like machines. There we were riding in the back, as the tractor very slowly crept up the dry stream bed.

And we (too soon for me) reached a point where the tractor could not pull us any farther and it was get out and help push or just walk. We walked, and that was still at the beginning of the beginning of the climb. It was not long after that that we were literally walking among the clouds.

Life has points like that, where we just have to get out and walk on our own, whether we like it or not, times when we are betwixt and between one phase of life and the next. We may have worn out our welcome in one area or are bored, yet still not be sure we want to venture beyond the known into the next phase. Most often we find that we have no choice anyway. Like the tide pushes the driftwood gradually up the beach, life floats and then leaves us higher, but always more stranded than when we were a free floater. We get stuck in time.

At some point we have to pick up our bed and just walk, for we are eventually going to cross those narrow straits (sometimes a tightrope walk) from the known into the unknown, ready or not. I am not saying this happens all that often, but it does happen and to each of us.

So, as I tell myself, don't get too comfortable. Things change. Oh yes, they eventually work out and we acclimatize to whatever new territory we find ourselves in. The unknown becomes known and we set up shop and make a little home wherever we find ourselves. That is a given. We adapt.

I am more talking about the transition time and those indelible words of Shakespeare are never far from my ears, "The undiscover'd country from whose bourn no traveler returns." It is the unknown we wonder at, and once we enter that unknown, there is no return, at least in the form we entered with. Obviously change changes us, and since it is "we" who are changing, there is no going back or even remembering much what we were like before. Unfortunately (or fortunately) there is no way of knowing.

And the kicker is that in the last analysis, we have no choice whatsoever. Our only choice is to go with the flow. There is no turning around, no backward current, or even some small eddy we can slip into and put off the inevitable for very long. Linear time is inexorable in that regard. As they say, time marches on, and we are carried with it.

Ready or not, here we come.

I apologize if this appears negative. I am not feeling that way. It is more that I sense change in the air; I am on the verge. A whiff or two of the unknown wakes me up to some kind of vigil I am already on. We are all waiting, searching the frontiers of the mind for signs of the future, which future always unexpectedly comes upon us. That is what change is: change.

It is the transition I am writing about here, and the waiting, like waiting for a train. Or, like sensing rain in the air, it wakes me up and kind of spoils whatever I happen to be doing and mired in at the moment. I begin to sense that I will soon be leaving and leaving things just as they are, done, undone, partially done. It does not matter. When it is time to go, that's it. And I am not talking about death. I am talking about change. Change is a mini-death, but it brings renewed life.

I am talking about change that spoils whatever little nest and dreams I have going for me as I sense that what is really important is just about to emerge, so why bother rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic just now.

I must admit there is a bit of nausea at all I have done and am now doing, that is: compared to the smelling salts of the unknown, to what I will soon be doing. How unimportant so much of life is and yet, at the same time, I try to do everything as best I can, as best I know how. There are limits. We can't just bolt into our future and have that. It takes time and change to get there. And I am a teleological being, interested in the stages in time, not so much in time itself.

So here I am, out standing on the verge, sensing enough change in the air to not bother finishing too much just now, but not yet enough to actually change. Is this what they mean by "the future beckons?"

Perhaps.

