



RULES OF THE ROAD NEVER TRAVELED

No One Has Been to Your Future
H B Gelatt

*Two roads diverged in a wood
And I took the one less traveled
And that has made all the difference.*
Robert Frost

“Take the road less traveled,” at one time was unconventional wisdom. It was considered the risky, creative approach. Robert Frost made the uncommon advice popular. Today it should be considered impossible.

On today’s journey to the future you don’t have a choice between the road less traveled and the road more traveled. No one has been where you are going. No one has experienced the future you will experience. The only choice you have is the road never traveled. You will travel on uncharted waters; there are no road maps, no advanced scouts, or no “white knights” showing the way.

The future you are going to doesn’t exist, and never did for you. Your future needs to be created. You have two choices --- create it or let someone else. The road never traveled requires creativity.

The future is not someplace we are going to, but a place we are creating. John Schaar

The above quote is the theme of this essay, which is part of my Process of Illumination, creating a positive future for everyone ... one open and inclusive worldview at a time.

When traveling a road never taken, to a future that doesn’t exist, you can’t expect to be given rational, authoritative rules by some experienced traveler. Therefore my rules are my rules for my journey. They are more intuitive than rational, unauthorized and unsupported by empirical research --- or by my travel experience. My rules of the road are more like rules of thumb --- somewhere between ambiguous advice and fuzzy formulas. And like my beliefs, they are tentative; they may need to be reinvented as I go.

I am not asking you to adopt my rules of the road but to create your own. Maybe mine will stimulate some ideas for your rules. Or maybe you already have ideas that could become personal rules. Or maybe you already have rules you are unaware of. I hope your road rules (and beliefs) will be tentative and open to revision. Here are my road rules --- for the moment. What are yours?

Rule #1. Focus on the Inner Journey

The only journey is the one within, Rainer Maria Rilke

“Life is a journey, not a destination,” is the well-known metaphor. My first rule of the road is to focus on my inner journey because, the way I see the journey makes all the difference. I have promoted that point-of-view in several POI newsletters and in my previous career of keynote speaking and workshop leading. But I don’t always practice it.

It is hard to practice because our Western culture is so goal-oriented. But James March, decision making authority, tells us that, “Decision making should be as much a process of discovering goals as for achieving them.” And Suzanne Segerstrom, in her 2006 book [Breaking Murphy’s Law](#), says “Happiness, may not be as much about achieving goals as progressing toward them. Getting there is half the fun.”

It is better to travel hopefully than to arrive. Japanese proverb



For me, "Life is a journey," is a useful metaphor. It is not a fact; it is not the truth; it is not a lie; it is not reality. It is a metaphor. It helps me think of my journey as a process. It is a series of actions and changes so that my life's journey is what I am doing, not where I am going. For me, what I am doing on my journey is determined by the way I see the journey. The way I see the journey is determined by me. The way you see the journey, and what you do, is up to you.

At the end of every road you meet yourself. Zen saying

Rule #2. Plan to Take Detours

The shortest distance between two points is always under construction.

Murphy's Law

The main message of my second road rule is to avoid rigid rules. I believe all rules, like all beliefs, should be flexible. Rigid road rules prevent side trips or spontaneous excursions. But these often lead to new discoveries. Detours can be part of my "planned" life's journey. In other words, my road rules should always be under construction.

People usually not only focus on the destination, they want to get there in a hurry --- on the main route. To deviate from a direct course takes time, but it takes time to smell the roses. Detours will happen; most of them are not planned. But maybe some of them should be. I can't resist pointing out that this road rule requires open-mindedness, a basic theme of the Process of Illumination. For me, to be open-minded is to be tentative and flexible --- receptive to new ideas, new goals, new destinations, new roads to travel.

Blinders are sometimes put on horses to prevent side vision, so they won't be distracted and will stay on course. I sometimes put mental blinders on myself so I don't get sidetracked, so I stay on course. Maybe getting sidetracked on one's personal life's journey is sometimes good strategy. If you get sidetracked you may end up somewhere else; and somewhere else may be where you wanted to be but didn't know it. Or you may simply enjoy traveling the detoured path.

Detours are dancing lessons from God. Kurt Vonnegut

#3 Stop, Look, and Imagine

Imagination is more important than knowledge. Albert Einstein

Stopping is helpful because it curtails the rush. It also helps me to reflect, meditate, and contemplate. Looking at where I am, where I have been and where I am going is also helpful. But imagining may be the most help of all. My third rule of the road focuses on developing the skill of imagination.

I can't see or know the future but I can imagine it; in fact I can imagine multiple futures. The problem with only stopping and looking is that my view is always partial. I can't see the whole road ahead. Being able to see what isn't there is called illusion, imagination or vision.

Illusion is "an erroneous perception of reality"; imagination is "a fantasy, an impossible dream," vision is "intelligent foresight." Although everyone has images about their future, most people dread precisely and dream vaguely. Dreams of the future are often vague fantasies. Fears of the future are often precise nightmares. To get good at precise, "pie-in-the-sky" fantasy dreaming, we need practice.

I will try to practice dreaming precisely, in order to learn to become an accomplished dreamer. I want to not only meet my image maker, I want to train it. I believe: *My image of the future may be the most important factor in determining what it will be.*

Imagination promotes inventiveness, creativity, ingenuity and the resourcefulness to dream



possibilities. The way to have a creative idea about the future is to have a lot of ideas. Vision is the ability to see beyond the obvious. This means I need to see the invisible, and to see possibilities that don't yet exist. What about you?

Instead of looking for a visionary leader to guide your future journey, why not create your own vision, use your imagination and follow it?

You raise a pup tent from one sort of vision, a cathedral from another, E. B. White

Reflective Illumination

"We don't need a visionary leader as much as we need support for vision itself."

Marilyn Ferguson

Rules of the Road Not Taken tells us the future is a place you are creating. And if the way you see the journey makes all the difference, and if the only journey is the one within, then your rules of your road are up to you.

Yogi Berra offers this travel advisory: *When you come to a fork in the road, take it.*

Copyright © 2008 H B Gelatt. All rights reserved.