

Animals are closer to God than humans. Humans are lost in mind forms. Being is obscured to humans because of the overlay of ego and mental formation.

-Takuan Soho



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Who Moved My Cheese?



Who Moved my Cheese? The book, written by Spencer Johnson M.D. is quite a well written spell. Unfortunately, it is often used by management to try and teach the staff various life lessons. No one likes to be manipulated into learning. Rule #1 of *Learn: A Project*. Respecting the pace of individual growth and also learning one's own pace is quite enough. There is really no such thing as a teacher, or at least not room for a teacher like that. Let's take a moment and ponder the lessons together of *Who Moved my Cheese?*

The book is basically a lengthy dissertation on the idea of change and the supposed two basic responses of different people to change. First idea is quite basic, Buddha said it best, but invoking Buddha in the Occident is likely going to upset people, so we will paraphrase and say Lou Holtz said it, "Life is stressful. It's how we respond to the stress that makes us." For those who don't care Buddha said, "Life is suffering." I'm sure to many this sounds pessimistic, but let me expound. Life is suffering in the sense that we are going to lose our

parents, our pets, sometimes our jobs, and our health. This is an inevitable part of life and change. Heraclitus, the philosopher often referred to as sad or weeping, states "There is one constant in life, so no reason to worry, but the constant is change."

Second side of the coin is the responses we have to this change. Life seems more than just what, or who, or how we respond to it. Here is where I place a question mark in Spencer's work. There isn't ever just two responses to life. I would say ideological dime-store psychology would like that to be so, but it simply isn't true.

Life is how we respond, yes, but it's also lived in three's: either/or/and, cause/effect/change. thesis/antithesis/synthesis. This is referred to in philosophy as dialectics. So often the panic is caused by two, rather than change. The mind tends towards two, but in reality the two are working together towards three at all times. The desire for life to always be the same and never change is simply the desire for comfort. Comfort can only be found within the change, within the process. Learning to let go.

As I journeyed through either/or and *Who Moved my Cheese?* I wondered, what do we fear. I concluded again that what we fear is this either/or in our mind's eye, or that we have become "third eye blind" if you wish. If you simply allow for "and" in your life, when all is changed, synthesized, what will be left will be beautiful and good. You will be changed by fire, alchemized, have new magic you were unaware of, and new tools to use in your life.

Chuang Tzu: The Absolute Value of Being Useless?

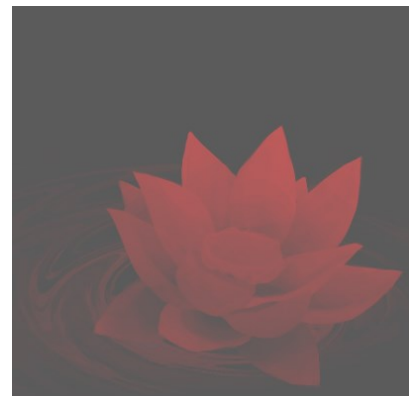


Shih the carpenter was on his way to the state of Chi. When he got to Chu Yuan, he saw an oak tree by the village shrine. The tree was large enough to shade several thousand oxen and was a hundred spans around. It towered above the hilltops with its lowest branches eighty feet from the ground. More than ten of its branches were big enough to be made into boats. There were crowds of people as in a marketplace. The master carpenter did not even turn his head but walked on without stopping.

His apprentice took a long look, then ran after Shih the carpenter and said, "Since I took up my ax and followed you, master, I have never seen timber as beautiful as this. But you do not even bother to look at it and walk on without stopping. Why is this?"

Shih the carpenter replied, "Stop! Say no more! That tree is useless. A boat made from it would sink, a coffin would soon rot, a tool would split, a door would ooze sap, and a beam would have termites. It is worthless timber and is of no use. That is why it has reached such a ripe old age."

After Shih the carpenter had returned home, the sacred oak appeared to him in a dream, saying, "What are you comparing me with? Are you comparing me with useful trees? There are cherry, apple, pear, orange, citron, pomelo, and other fruit trees. As soon as the fruit is ripe, the trees are stripped and abused. Their large branches are split, and the smaller ones torn off. Their life is bitter because of their usefulness. That is why they do not live out their natural lives, but are cut off in their prime. They attract the attentions of the common world. This is so for all things. As for me, I have been trying for a long time to be useless. I was almost destroyed several times. Finally, I attained the great mystery of being useless."



A bodhisattva is someone who has compassion within himself or herself and who is able to make another person smile or help someone suffer less. Every one of us is capable of this.

— *Thich Hanh* —

