

Tracking Wonder – Depthing Wonder

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'I must turn aside and look at this great sight.' (Moses Exodus 3:3)

'The place on which you are standing is holy ground.' (Exodus 3:5)



TRACKING - NOT HUNTING

A master animal tracker will spend days, months, years observing the habits of various animal species to protect and enable that species to evolve rather than become extinct.

Such tracking requires different faculties than our standard awareness. The demands of animal tracking surpass the analytical intellect. They require imagination to envisage the animal's shape and movement, empathy to sense its mood and intuition to find where its haunts might be. Tracking occurs mostly in stillness and silence, and a tracker must shift between 'knowing' and 'not knowing'. A tracker must stay open to possibilities.

Wonder can be tracked as a pathway in contemplative evolution.

DEPTHING WONDER

Towards the end of last year, I heard an interview on *Sounds True*, with the guest: Jeffrey Davis.¹ Davis had released a book titled *Tracking Wonder: Reclaiming a Life of Meaning and Possibility in a World Obsessed with Productivity*.² Davis takes this way of 'wondering' to the workplace. However, on reflection, it seems that *Tracking Wonder* may also be a pathway in contemplative evolution.

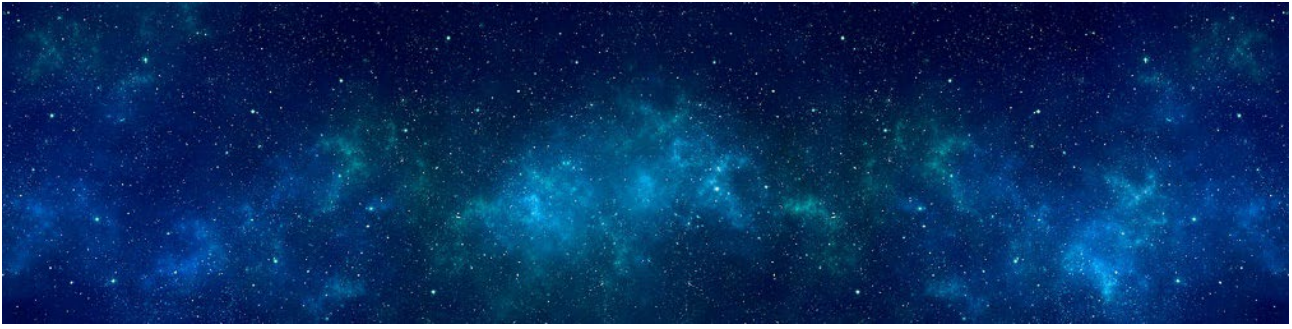
Can we really put words on such an ethereal experience as wonder?

A simple definition of Wonder, as given by Jeffrey Davis, is:

*Wonder – a heightened state of awareness brought on by something unexpected that delights us, disorients us or both.*³

To deepen our understanding and practice of authentic wonder, Davis offers us six expressions or facets of wonder that we can foster or develop: Openness and Curiosity; Bewilderment and Hope; Connection and Admiration. Each of these six experiences may be a doorway into Wonder—Wonder akin to a Moses Experience—a deeper realisation that the ground on which we stand is holy; the very ground of our being is holy.

Since wonder is more experiential than theoretical, a **metaphor is provided** for each facet. This helps us to **experience the essence** of each facet more fully. Each respective **metaphor** communicates to us **beyond rational language**.⁴



1. **Openness: The Wide Sky** - the 'wide-eyed' wonder of adults. It is the talent of knowing when and how to suspend biases and reveal unknown biases; to dare to 'un-know' and be receptive to possibilities instead of immediately judging them.
2. **Curiosity: The Rebel** - the proactive, playful and creative mindset that comes out of wonder's more receptive nature. Curiosity questions the 'way we've always done things' and prompts us to take action on those questions.

3. **Bewilderment: The Deep Woods** - the disorienting facet of wonder. It is a response to simultaneous positive and negative input. Bewildering confusion is a feeling most of us are uncomfortable with - but if you track bewilderment, you can ultimately reach creative and personal breakthroughs.



4. **Hope: The Rainbow** - Hope can buoy you in turbulent times and help you find a way through suffering.
5. **Connection: The Flock** - the facet we feel when wonder allows us to be, to create, and to feel supported by others. It teaches us how to achieve with loved ones and deepen our working relationships.
6. **Admiration: The Mirror** - This builds on the other facets because it is an emotion focused on others. To admire someone is to feel wonder at the display of another's excellence.

Working in pairs: Openness and curiosity tap our innate ability to live each day with more creativity and less reactivity. As a mindset, these two facets are foundational, and in Davis' experience, they are the easiest to start tracking.

Fostering and tracking the two facets of **bewilderment and hope** together can strengthen our resilience and fortitude in trying times. They can shift or transform one's view of our life in beneficial ways. (Start here when you are having a hard time.)

Connection and admiration enable us to shift our direction outwards and deeper. As we know, relationships with others are essential – especially in the tenor of the world in which we live.

Tracking any of these facets takes us further into wonder and ultimately into knowing 'we are on holy ground'. We are experiencing **the Mystery**: wonder–fullness.

TRACKING WONDER INTO MYSTERY

As we know, transformation/renewal is a lifelong process. It is not an escape from our present or future trials of life – it is a pilgrimage to truth. Wonder is the beginning of a pilgrimage into the truth, into Mystery. We were born with wonder.

Any moment can be a moment of wonder if we have a **'tracking wonder' way of being**. This is very akin to *'The Sacrament of the Present Moment.'*

Wonder is a healing force. It opens us to deep beauty, peace and goodness.

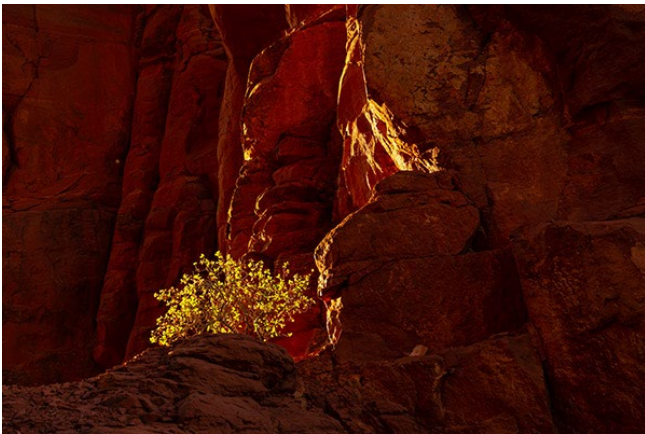
The Sacred dimension is always present, but sometimes it may be experienced as being covered in a grey film, or we have the experience of living in a fog. This is a time to wonder!

Wonder causes us to PAUSE. It is a **circuit breaker** in the busyness of life.

Wonder can **DECENTRE** our sense of self so we can **RECENTRE**.

Wonder is also a **unique doorway** that opens each of us into the mystery of **our present experience**.

THE MOSES EXPERIENCE



'I must turn aside and look at this great sight.'

Like Moses, we become aware of the call **'to turn aside and look at this great sight.'**

We learn to know **through experience** that ***the place in which we are standing is holy ground.***

Believe in your Moses and stand aside to look at this great sight. I believe that God speaks to us from the burning bush of today and the message is still the same one of standing on holy ground – leading us into transformation.⁵

Moses entered that marvellous mystery, that mysterious encounter with God because he listened to the call to **'turn aside and look at this great sight'**.

Moses was told to **take off his shoes**. The image of taking off the shoes becomes more significant when we remember that Moses would, in fact, be asked to undo the thongs made from dead animals - hide sandals - the deadness which prevents us from getting in touch with the holy.

The Moses in my heart may tremble, not quite willing to accept the prophet hidden in my being.⁶

The ground *you stand on* is holy. Take off your shoes!

The ground *of your being* is holy. Take off your shoes!

Take off your shoes and track wonder!

Gerard Hughes describes transformation/renewal as **breaking through fear to the cry of wonder**, as we begin to recognise the truth; the truth that we are 'on holy ground'. We are in the Presence of Mystery - and we wonder.⁶

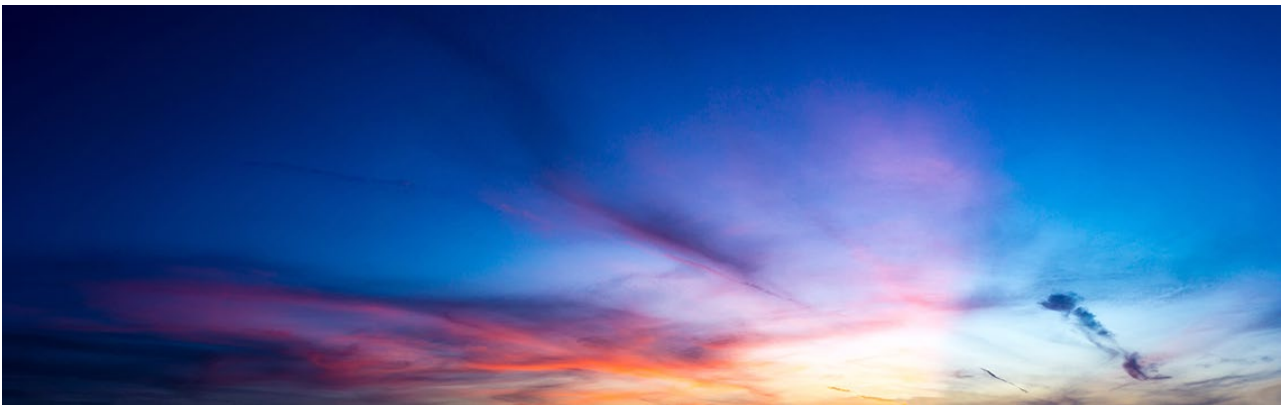
WONDER IS A WAY OF STANDING IN LOVE – not just falling in love, but love as a basic stance of life ('Where you are **standing** is Holy Ground.') - take off your shoes and wonder!

A Last Word from Thomas Merton: The Journey of transformation/renewal calls *for ever deeper surrender*. Merton insisted it was most important **not to undertake any special project of self-transformation** or some attempt to work on myself, but rather just to wander (and wonder): just go for walks, live in peace. **Let change come quietly and invisibly on the inside.**⁶

Just wonder...

There where you are, you will find God.

Mary MacKillop 1871



¹Sounds True: Insights at the Edge. 8th December 2021.

²Jeffrey Davis, *Tracking Wonder: Reclaiming a Life of Meaning and Possibility*, New York: Sounds True Inc, 2021.

³Sounds True: Insights at the Edge. 8th December 2021

⁴*Tracking Wonder*. Chapter 3 – Google Preview.

⁵ Macrina Wiederkehr, *Seasons of Your Heart*, New York: Harper Collins, 1991.

⁶ Gerard W. Hughes *Cry of Wonder*, London: Bloomsbury, 2014

⁷ Esther de Waal, *Lost in Wonder*, Melbourne: John Garratt Publishing, 2003.