

YOU & YOUR MUSE

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Against All Odds

1969, a high-school science class:

Again he asked: “Does anyone want to change their mind to agree with him?” Him being me. Heads shook and all hands remained down. He looked at me. “Do you want to change your mind to agree with them?”

I looked around at the 39 faces looking back at me... I peered and puzzled at the diagram on the blackboard, my face scrunching. “I can’t sir. I just don’t get how it can be like they say.”

He asked why and I couldn’t answer – that bothered me. The trouble for me, the nerd, was that I had no answer, no knowledge, no inkling of why I disagreed but the feeling was strong. As that nerd, I *needed* concrete answers to feel *good*, but *something* was telling me, ‘No, stand your ground.’ Turned out that I was correct, to the horror of the 39 faces and to the amusement of the teacher.

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To this day, I’ve followed my gut when I get this same feeling – I accept that I don’t have to know why or how. This *something* in me has no name, no gender, just called *my gut feeling* – some other part of me that *always* had interesting and creative answers to problems [though *not always* practical]. Sometimes ‘it’ just started writing; sometimes the typical ‘aha’ popped out as I became aware of an answer to some query; sometimes I just went somewhere else while it *fixed* the situation on automatic. In exams, I learned to trust it when I didn’t consciously ‘know’ [and it has worked *very well* for me, though initially scary].

‘It’ was always accompanied with a lovely, lovely feeling of being lost, without fear, without cares, and in a buzz, energized [and often with lots of amusement!]

I’ve had a poor factual memory all of my life. I practised with memory courses, put effort into memorizing, struggled, until eventually I let go and let ‘it’, the memory or result, emerge. Emergence wasn’t always timely but it got better over decades. I ‘knew’ that an answer, a story, a process, a direction, or whatever was needed *would come*. There are tricks to coaxing ‘it’ out – trust is big – first trust *it*. I can tell when

it's working furiously in the background but I've learned that you can't push the river. It will flood and burst the banks when the time comes and I have to be ready. I have to feed it, of course. I openly feed it skills, process, facts, perspectives, etc – *it's* endlessly hungry.

Raw intuition [my '*it*'] is just that – raw, biological/evolved – untrained in contemporary things like language, writing, programming, thinking, driving, or whatever complex social skill is to be learned and expressed. *Trained* intuition is awesome [a shiver just ran up my spine]. In recent years, I learned about Flow – the 'space' where experience, training, and knowledge meet with some pressure to extend oneself – a goal *just out of reach*. To get there, to the Flow version [the *same* state as '*it*' brings], you have to always push your boundaries – always stretch yourself.

I *know* that I have hidden in my depths of experience enough to find a creative [a.k.a. new] solution, another view, another expression, whether artistic or practical. And in creating a Flow space, I *allow* that unconscious part of me to do its stuff far faster than I could when conscious pondering and *with almost no effort*. My '*it*', intuition, gut, muse does its work – making connections, producing lots, hundreds, thousands of potential solutions and then filtering and processing unbidden until the 'pop' of awareness. The 'pop' always has an element of amused satisfaction that comes with it.

The previous section wrote itself... I'm now stuck so I am sitting in a 'brown study' – staring at nothing, thinking nothing, waiting... smiling! Time for a drink of water. As I walked from the fridge, '*it*' started again and I had to hurry back to the keyboard with my cup.

I found one of the best ways to push *my* boundaries was to teach something. Others always had new perspectives, new questions, new *pressures* for me. These questions tickled the beast into jumping into action. I just step back and let it go – it's fun, it's mostly automatic. Of course, these insights, or *itsights*, have come at considerable cost – I spent more time studying *my* behaviour and how *I* think than I have learning any degree, any job, any other skill or interest in my life combined. Understanding behaviour invokes my passions like nothing else ever has.

How I know when *it's* near is that my amused muse often seeps out in my face through a wry smile. Or my eyes flicker looking for something hidden, or my head twitches as I change thinking modes [I have watched the latter over decades]. An intensity fills my body like a balloon ready to burst. I am becoming one with '*it*', my other self, my unconscious. I accept it in its mystery and its wisdom and it's amused by the clumsy, slow, dumb, limited me [though it doesn't judge].

When it comes to writing, I do the herding cats bit: I just put lumps of meat in my writing path and wait for *it* to walk or run along, or not! A sigh emerges – that's me waiting for '*it*' again. It's still amused. We have this standoff so I *must* be patient.

Damn it! It's playing with me – still amused – I can feel it.

In another world, in dreaming, 'it' has free reign. I often remember dreams well or at least the gist of them. It teaches me and I practise stuff with it guiding me in these dreams. They are vivid. I know these various states of 'it' are the same – they feel the same. My knowledge now says they are the same.

I like my muse – the feeling it invokes, its capacity, its creativeness. I trust it implicitly [within the bounds of its experiences. It gets a bit *off the planet* in new domains but that's mostly ok in writing].