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Subject: "Let the void be void" (Summer 2013)
Date: Monday, July 22, 2013 11:15:22 AM

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"Let the void be void."

"Living With Purpose And Passion"
The Dan Keusal e-newsletter

Summer 2013

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be void."
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my work as a
Psychotherapist,
Speaker, and
Workshop Leader,
visit my web site,
DanKeusal.com,
by clicking
here .

Quotes for Inspiration And Reflection:

*"Nobody else can make
the sound you make."
(Yo-Yo Ma)*

* * *

*"When we are no longer
able to change
a situation,
we are challenged
to change ourselves"
(Viktor Frankl)*

* * *

"To love a person

Dear Dan,



Over the last few months, I've received three lovely reminders that this newsletter, now in its 6th year, still seems to resonate with the lived experience of my readers, still makes a difference, however small, in people's lives. The first reminder came when the Board members of the **Washington Pastoral Counselors Association**, several of whom subscribe to my newsletter, asked me to facilitate a workshop for other therapists on using e-newsletters in their own practices. The workshop, titled **"Giving The Soul A Voice,"** will be on October 12, 2013; details are [here](#), and below in the "Upcoming Workshops" section. The second reminder came when the **New Spirit Journal** reprinted essays from two of my e-newsletters in recent issues of *NSJ*: **"The Pole In The Middle of the Room"** (from the Winter 2011-2012 edition of my newsletter) appeared in their March 2013 issue, and **"A Day At The Beach: Diving In"** (from the Summer 2010 edition of my newsletter) appears in the current, July 2013, issue. The third reminder, perhaps my favorite of the three, came just a few weeks ago, at a party, when someone on my mailing list walked up to me and said "Last week I was feeling a little down, and so I went in search of some kind of a pick-me-up, a booster shot...and I decided to go back and re-read one of your newsletters, and that turned out to be exactly what I needed."

I hope you'll find something in this newsletter...that is exactly what you need at this point in your journey.

Enjoy,

-Dan

Remember: anything in **dark red bold face** type is a link; click on it to be taken to some other interesting place on the web....

Reflections: "Let the void be void."

This past Spring, I moved my office for the first time in 11 years. With the help of eight friends (who completed the entire move in less than two hours, and did so without my help, since I was

*is to learn the song
that is in their heart,
and to sing it to them
when they have
forgotten."
(Thomas Chandler)*

* * *

*"For a tree's branches
to reach to heaven,
it's roots must reach
to hell."
(medieval alchemical
dictum)*

* * *

*"Madness dislocates us,
out of our bodies,
out of our minds.
And yet,
in the midst of madness
dots of light appear;
Jung calls them
scintillae.
These act as
creative points
indicating something
bright, hopeful.
Strung together,
the dots construct
a path,
which can transfigure
our madness into
creative contributions."
(Anne Belford Ulanov)*

* * *

injured), the move itself went exceptionally well. I'm settling into the new space, a space that feels good both to me and to my clients.

My furniture is all in place, along with a few items that help set the tone for my space--the vase where I've placed fresh flowers every week for years, the candle holder where a tea light burns during each session, my favorite piece of pottery, and an old piece of twisted driftwood that evokes the waters and beaches of the northwest--but in the spirit of "a fresh start," I decided to bring none of the art I'd had hanging on the walls of my old office...to my new office. Instead, I'm waiting and listening until this new space tells me what it wants. I'm finding this a little uncomfortable, as my clients and I continue to stare at blank walls.

In the midst of this listening, this waiting, something rose up from memory, something I first heard years ago during my theological studies at Notre Dame, a simple (but not easy) piece of advice from the mystic Simon Weil: "Let the void be void."

This advice is difficult enough to follow when "the void" constitutes a few square feet of blank space on the walls of an office. But what about when that void is something that tugs a little harder at our longings: the relational void of loneliness? the vocational void of unemployment, under-employment, or soul-sapping employment? the financial void of being strapped for cash? the spiritual void of experiencing spirit as seemingly absent? even the 'therapeutic' void of coming in session after session and thinking that nothing is happening, that no progress is being made?

In a culture whose tolerance for uncertainty, ambiguity, and the otherwise unknown is pretty thin, a culture where we want it all, we want it fast, and we want it now, the temptation is to try and fill such voids as quickly and easily as possible, to put something "up on the walls" just so it doesn't feel so blank, so empty.

What if we could stretch just a bit, expanding our capacity for letting the void be void?

More than a month after I'd moved into the office, I was shopping in my regular grocery store, in the part of the store where the produce department and the floral department meet--I sometimes wonder: was the store laid out so that the two departments most filled with actual living things would be close to each other? As I rolled my cart along, a plant on display caught my attention. I backed up to take a closer look: it was not a particularly exotic species, but something about it--the size, the shape, the vibrant variations in the shades of green in its leaves--seemed "just right" for the spot on top of the filing cabinet that sits in one corner of my office.

As I went through the checkout line to pay for it, "Anna," one of the many regular cashiers there who know me, commented on how much she liked the plant, and when I said it was for my office, she said "You always pick out beautiful things for your office--I bet it's a very nice space."

The plant is now sitting on top of that file cabinet in one corner of my office. The walls in that corner are still bare, as are the other walls in the room, but that particular corner has a little more life to it than it did before this plant found me. I trust that if I can continue to tolerate the uncertainty, the emptiness, the void, other things,

things that truly belong there, will also find me...even if it takes a year, or more.

Jung once wrote that "everything which belongs to an individual's life shall enter into it." Whether or not we notice such things, such people, such opportunities, such plants, when they *do* "enter"...may depend on our continued gentle attention, and on our willingness...to let the void be void.

3 Good Poems

*"Part of what makes poetry different from other kinds of writing is that you can't paraphrase a poem. It can only be said in that way."
-Elizabeth Austen*

Click on the titles below to read the poems online; you can also access them by going to the "**Writings**" page of my web site, finding the link for my "e-newsletters," and then clicking on the link for the Summer 2013 edition:

1. "**The Guitarist Tunes Up**" (Frances Cornford)
2. "**At The Berkeley Free Speech Cafe**" (Thomas Moore)
3. "**Drugstore**" (Carl Dennis)

Resources for a richer life...

More than just "self-help," Resources For A Richer Life is meant to bring you music, movies, books, articles, web sites, events, videos and more that will stir your soul, and awaken the deepest, most alive parts of you.

(article) "**Don't Do Something; Just Sit There**" (Abigail Zuger, MD). I often spend my lunch hour perusing the news on my smartphone. Here is an article from the New York Times that caught my attention. It's about a doctor who worked long and hard with a patient, only to have that patient show no progress...until the doctor learned the value of "doing nothing."

(slide show): "**If planets were as close as the moon.**" How often have you found yourself trying to "keep things in perspective"? Well this slide show offers an original perspective...on what "Perspective" really means. It begins with a simple photo of the full moon over a highway in Death Valley, and then superimposes, one at a time, each of the planets on that same scene--and shows what it would look like if each planet were as close to earth as the moon is. Clicking through all the slides will take less than 60 seconds...but it may change your perspective dramatically.

(video) **Chicago teacher's letter of resignation.** This 10-minute video, modest and homemade, but deeply moving, is from a Chicago school teacher, tearfully reading her letter of resignation. In articulating her reasons for doing so, I think she sheds light on how "standardization" is sucking the life not only from education, but from medicine, psychotherapy, the law, journalism, business, and many

other the other disciplines that have, traditionally, sustained us. And in naming the ways that "sense of humor, personality, creativity, self-expression, and passion" are being "crushed," she may be showing us a way to restore depth, soul, and excellence to a world that longs for these experiences.

Upcoming workshops & lectures by Dan Keusal

"Giving The Soul A Voice: The Unique Role of e-Newsletters in Conveying Therapeutic Wisdom." October 12, 2013. Sponsored by the Washington Pastoral Counselors Association.

NOTE: This workshop is limited to 12 participants, so sign up now!

For a full description, click [here](#). To download the brochure & registration form, click [here](#).

For news about my lectures and workshops, watch future editions of this e-newsletter.

If you would like me to come speak to your group, please call me at (206) 523-1340, or [email](#) me.

On my web site, you can view a list of the [organizations](#) that have invited me to speak, and a list of my [recent workshops](#).

Psychotherapy for Individuals & Couples

*"The greatest and most important problems in life
can never be solved,
only outgrown."*

~C.G. Jung

I offer Jungian-oriented psychotherapy for individuals and couples. Whether you come to me with a problem (like depression, stress, anxiety, relationship issues) or simply the sense that it's time for a change, I help you look at how that starting point is calling you to grow, and how you can respond with creativity, vitality, and hope.

To learn more, visit my web site by clicking [here](#).

To schedule an appointment,
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I never give or sell my mailing list to anyone for any reason, period. I use Constant Contact to manage my email list because they support my commitment to providing you with excellent content while keeping your contact information private.

That's it for this issue of "Living With Purpose and Passion." As always, I welcome your comments & suggestions. You can send me an **email** or you can call me at (206) 523-1340.

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