

WISE HOPE

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In this time when “optimism” seems naïve and the despair of hopelessness is unacceptable, I’m thinking about what others have called “wise hope.” The idea has been around a long time, but it was Vaclav Havel’s letter from prison that first impressed me:

“Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out. “

Then there’s Rumi:

I died from a mineral and plant became, Died from the plant, took a sentient frame; Died from the beast, donned a human dress - **When by my dying did I ever grow less?**

Finally, the image that has been on my mind lately is the journey of metamorphosis. A squat, ugly worm is born. Its life consists of munching its way through countless leaves and growing fat. Somehow or the other it weaves a shell and has an indefinite period of “life in the mush” as a friend called it many years ago. At some point, the cocoon breaks open, and a brand new, totally different creature emerges. It can be a small brown moth or a Blue Morpho or a Monarch, but whatever its frame, there’s simply no denying that it’s a miracle. The source of its happening is pure, unadulterated mystery.

And somehow, these elements are combining to give me a sense of what I mean with “wise hope”. No, it’s not optimism about the future or dreams of life returning to “normal”. The entire world has been traumatized with the relentless reminder of its powerlessness. It’s not having MY personal timeline for ‘life in the mush’ or even for what will emerge when the cocoon opens.

Confidence in a future with meaning must reside in the certainty that it will look different, that it may not be at all what you want, that positive change may not happen before you die. So it’s a miracle to be able to say “thank you” and dwell in gratitude that we’re here for this awakening. It’s a miracle that you’re alive, that every day comes new and opens a portal to the future.

There’s a singer I love named Carrie Newcomer. Besides writing rich, thought-provoking songs, she has a quirk I appreciate. Her songs just sorta end. She’s singing, then she’s not singing. The song hangs in the air, unresolved. And there’s a whiff, a tiny whiff, of anticipation.

Perhaps that’s as close as I can get.