

Let Go of the Rope – Introduction

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**“It takes more courage to face the empty page
than to face the bull in the ring.”**

Ernest Hemingway

Do you suspect there may be something more to life, a rich existence you have never had time for? Do you think it is time to open to what you have been Promised?

“Yeah, I suppose so...”

What if I told you have been living your life behind a Wall which keeps that Promise hidden? What if you discover you are a slave -- a well-dressed, prosperous person, yes, but a slave, nevertheless? It is our fear of not **having enough** as well as our fear of not having **done enough** that keep us in slavery. We never feel **done, finished, sufficient**.

What if I gave you a certificate that you have **completed**, with honors, this portion of your life? You have graduated, you are cleared to go on, to discover *Space and Grace*.

Living within the landscape of *Space and Grace* is compelling, exciting and, most importantly, it is accessible to you through this book.

Space – room to explore, to expand beyond the narrow confines of Work and Family, Work and Family, Work and Family. **Grace** – ease, freedom from striving and stricture.

In your mid teens, you began to see that the comparatively carefree and idyllic world of school would not go on forever, and a realization crept over you. It hit right between the eyes: the central dynamic and dilemma of a developing, constructive life as a member of society.

“I’ve got to make my way!”

Your way to where? How? With what?

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“I’ve got to get a job, a profession, a career! So, I can establish myself. Make a life!”

Yeah, everyone does. They’ve got to support themselves, build a future, become independent. To do that, they must reach an accommodation with the Great Machine.

“Great Machine? What’s that?”

You take your place at the foot of the Great Machine. At that starting point, you find, lying at your feet, a Rope. Gingerly at first, you pick it up and are “taught the ropes”. As you catch on, you grasp it with both hands and, alongside the others, are rewarded with compensation. You’ll be given enough to live, to thrive with an enticing Promise of a bit more than that if you persist. You trade that compensation for food, lodging, maybe more. Maybe you forge a lasting relationship with a partner, create a home, a family. You go on, crafting a career, or a business. And behind you? At the other end of the Rope? A whole raft – of possessions, aspirations, relationships, expectations, career – accumulates behind you in your Wagon.

At first, it is fun, pulling on the Rope, watching your Wagon fill up. It doesn’t bother you even when the Road is rough and you hit a few potholes. Then that traverse becomes just life, the way it is. Over time, the going becomes harder, heavier. You adjust to the demands, keeping yourself in shape so you can pull more, for longer. You get more efficient, smarter. But the expectations to move forward dragging the burdens of the Wagon just seems greater and greater. And the Road you’re traversing is not always smooth. Sometimes the Wagon can run away on you or get stuck in the mud.

All this takes a toll, a heavy toll. Unsurprisingly, you begin to wonder: What happened to the Promise?

You know the Promise I speak of – that one day you will have enough and have done enough, that you will **be enough**. Only then can you change up your life, put down the Rope. The Promise, central to your motivation all these years has been the luring carrot in front of the “slave/horse”. When is it time to call in the chips, to cash in?

You have come to the Wall: the endpoint of the Predicament. It is right in front of you. There you are, looking up at it, a stone wall, 20 feet high: an implacable, insurmountable obstacle of smooth-surfaced block. There are no visible handholds for climbing – it is nearly vertical. Downcast, stopped cold, exhausted, you stand there, still holding the Rope, bracing against the

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hill that brought you to this high impasse, steadying your Wagon so it doesn't start to roll backwards down the slope of the Road.

“Oh, no! This is too much. I can't get over that...”

This realization moment may be caused by a personal scare: a close call health-wise, or perhaps a profound reversal in your career world – a fire in a building; a necessity to sign on for renewed commitment that just isn't in you to give. Some arrive at the Wall via an orderly pre-planned unfolding of affairs. Maybe this epiphany is precipitated by a development external to you. It is not personal, it is imposed: the 2008 crash, or a worldwide halt like 9/11 or the 2020 pandemic crisis.

“Time to exit stage left! But where to go, now?”

At that crystalizing moment, when the Predicament reaches its end point, what are your options in attitude? Some possibilities:

1. “Pick up that rope! Pull some more, pull harder. You've gotten over hard spots before!”
2. Take a gentle left saying, I guess it's time to 'retire.' Time to kick in plan B and be consigned to a life of reading the paper, going golfing, playing bridge, going on cruises.
3. Maybe you want to game the situation: “I'm going to put some chocks in these wagon wheels. Then I'm going to scramble up over that Wall somehow, maybe drop a rope down the other side, so I can get back if I need to...”
4. “This is exciting! It may be just what I've been hoping for...I can see a narrow opening over here with a turnstile. I'm going through!”

If you're on the #1 track, you can bang your head against the Wall, continue attempting to accumulate on top of everything you've built until reality hits you full in the face. Or who knows? You may find renewed satisfaction in the old Quest: “I'm not finished! There's life in the old me yet!”

If it is #2, and you take the conventional *retirement route* – then you're off to where people like you go to decline and die when their supposedly 'productive' life is over ...

#3 or #4? You can go over. Or through. The Wall.

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Where are you? If you are already on the other side, I hope you use this work as a resource, a source of further enrichment and enhancement of the experience.

If you're not over yet, but are

of a certain age,
reasonably settled, healthy, well fixed and
near or at the end of your time with Great Machine,

I intend this exploration to entice you – on, forward, to a much richer life than heretofore. I want you, in this last gift of time, to **Let Go of the Rope** and experience **Space and Grace**.

Allow me to be your Guide. I am a provocateur, an inciter. I want **more** for you, whoever you are. Not the 'more' I live, but the variety and intensity that is yours for the asking: the kind of 'more' that many people savor and relish. And, on this journey over the Wall to the other side where the Promise awaits, I would like to be your Chief Encourager. I am a fellow traveler with a bit of an edge; I am over there myself and have spent time with many who've gone on ahead. I've gained a few insights, have a little more experience than you. I may not have travelled all of this new land myself but I've travelled far and coached others who've gone further. Many of their stories follow.

This is not an instruction manual, not a "how to" manual for this territory. It is intended to gently introduce, to prod, to demonstrate, not to teach. I will walk alongside, sharing the ups and downs and providing some context.

This land of **Space and Grace**: over on the other side of the Wall is a bit foreign. Not wildly different but the rules and the underlying assumptions are. Exploration of terra incognita is not all full of pure pleasure and joy at release. There are some real tough confrontations, some hard passages to be negotiated. The full exercise of Freedom there is one of the most difficult challenges many will face.

"Let go of the Rope! I can take up that Promise, so long delayed, and make the most of it."

Now which provinces, and which cities, of this new continent will we likely explore?

1. **The new normal**: life on the other side of the Wall, how does it unfold?
2. **Different work: working differently**: some continue their callings, not because they have to, but because it works for them.

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3. **Concentric communities evolve:** we live with partners, kids, friends, communities: but now those relationships are changed, and can be seen from a new and different starting place.
4. **Parenting the parents:** a particular challenge for the sandwich generation, and too important not to factor in and investigate.
5. **Spirit willing. Flesh? Not so much....:** undimmed in appetites, there are limits to what our aging bodies can manage.
6. **Charting fresh latitudes: exercising freedom's prerogatives:** not as straightforward as one might think.
7. **With the end in mind:** what does it mean to deal with eventual realities of decline and termination?
8. **Squaring the circle:** we are coming back to the beginning, but with the discernment of shared wisdom.
9. **On the threshold of liberty:** unimaginable and unprecedented freedom are in the offing – what a prospect!

Each of these sections are comprised of chapters of illustrative tales from fellow travellers. They are introductory to the ins and outs of particular aspects. Some are revelatory and some will feel eerily familiar; known to you already.

The talk, the stories; they might be heroic, modest, funny or difficult. Some are awkward because they go under the veneer, inviting you to experience and share vulnerability. Many are pure fun. People report who are already there, in *Space and Grace*, encountering and dealing with a life different from how it was under their former regimes. Some will speak to your heart. Some you won't relate to...yet. Some may compel you to want to investigate further, understand better.

Meant for the enquiring mind, some jaunts to the corners of *Space and Grace* will prompt further speculations. I will supply some reflections, but most will come from you on your own. You may want to hang out longer, to explore further in a particular place despite its peculiarities. You can surmise, ruminate more on those that have a particular draw for you. Another segment of this country you newly inhabit may not interest you at all and you will just want to resume travelling.

Our useful analogue is that you will want to take another journey – to another city. We are going to embark on these explorations by imagining ourselves crisscrossing the European continent,

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from one entirely different country to the next: a metaphor for what is ahead. Place yourself in the center, in Zurich. That will be our beginning.

As you sample the options in this book, if you're not finding a chapter helpful or invigorating, skip ahead! At anytime you may just want to zap yourself back to the grand hall just inside the Zurich *Hauptbahnhof* – pass in hand – and look up at the departures board to consider other destinations. Do not question this intuitive selection process. This is a smorgasbord: you get to pick and choose. You can embark from all or just some of these offered platforms. The trains are leaving for those destinations anyway, whether you're on them or not. There will be another going somewhere else in a minute. A verdant territory beckons, a place you have only glimpsed on short daydream forays of your own.

“Space and Grace is about Choice. Let's go – and let go of the rope!”