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Reaching for the Stars

Mayan Lesson Number 167

SOME LAWS OF POSSIBILITY

TRIAL BY TEST

THE TEST OF AFFINITY

STEP CAREFULLY, BUT STEP

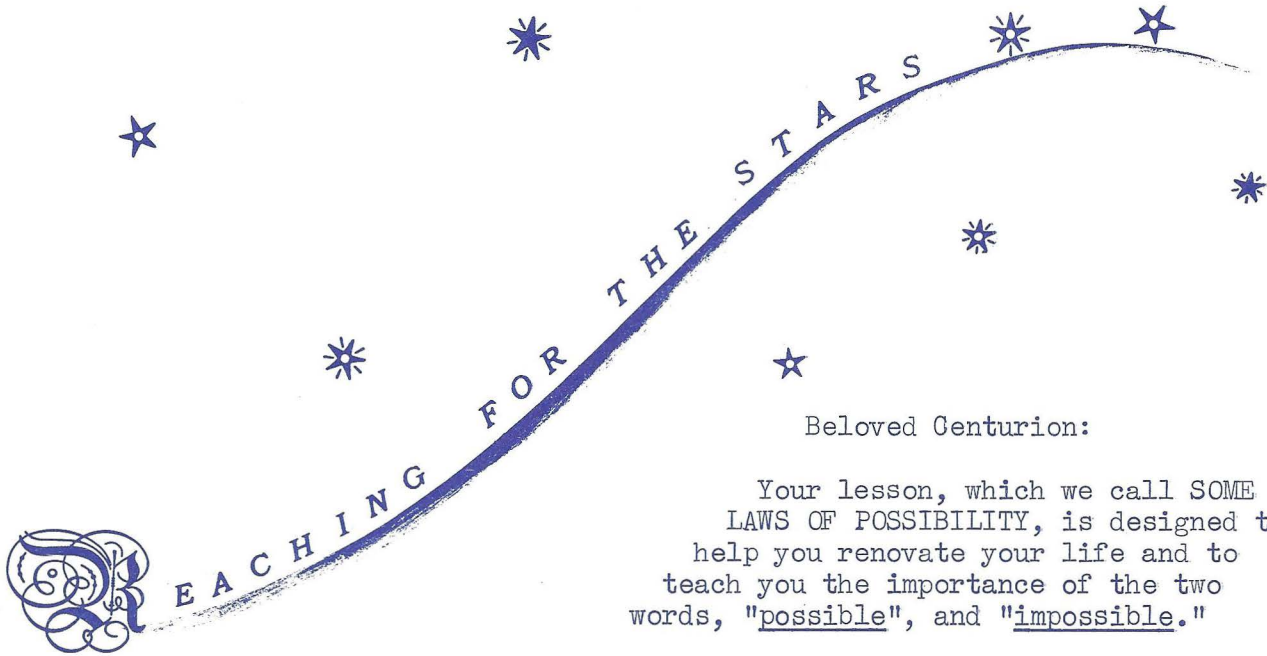
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MEDITATION



Beloved Centurion:

Your lesson, which we call SOME LAWS OF POSSIBILITY, is designed to help you renovate your life and to teach you the importance of the two words, "possible", and "impossible."

I would like to say right here before going further that the material given you is prepared for all ages. There are some who believe if they are middle-aged, or past, it is too late for them to do anything about their lives, and this is so very wrong. If you feel you have only a little longer in this life, it is still important that you make the very best possible use of it, not only for the time which is left for you, but for that next life which is to come.

God gave us the gift of life and He expected us to make the most of it, just as set forth in the Parable of the Talents. Each of the three men made a different use of that which had been given by God, and the man who used not his gift of a talent lost it. Many have abilities which they do not know they possess, because they have fallen into a habit of thinking which is negative, and they believe that there are many things they would like to do, but they go along the line of least resistance, thinking that all is impossible.

Nothing is impossible. There are ways that lead to everything, and if we have the will, we will always have the means of doing those things which we have fallen into the habit of saying are an impossibility. Very often it is merely an excuse when we say something is impossible. If you stop for a moment and think of all that has happened in the last 50 years, you will realize that many of them were considered absolutely impossible. You can imagine, as far back as 20 years ago, what would have happened if a man had said that we would one day send a rocket to the moon, or that we would send a satellite to circle our earth. If you were to have said such a thing only a few years back, anyone listening to you would have thought you were of unsound mind. Such a thing would have been considered by them to be impossible.

Only very recently a great church, which had been practically destroyed by fire, was being rebuilt, and the process of rebuilding was going very slowly. The architects, themselves, were very discouraged, and those working closely with the architects on committees were discouraged. They were beginning to feel that

the whole program of rebuilding was taking on the aspects of an impossibility, due to various unusual delays. Then, all of a sudden, the program started to go forward and I heard one man, who had been working on the project, make a speech, and he explained this sudden progress was a result of the wonderful encouragement they had received. As he said, "Somebody just put a fire under us and urged us forward with their encouragement and faith in us that the job could be done, and that what we thought were impossible obstacles to overcome could be surmounted." And they were.

I only cite this example to you as a reason for bringing you this lesson. I feel that many of you need only encouragement and faith in yourself to get going. You need to reach a little further, a little higher for your star. With each reach you will be stronger until finally you have surmounted and climbed over the mountain which we think of as "impossibility". I believe it was Carlyle who said, "Impossibility is not a lucky word; no good comes of those who have it so often in their mouths."


One of the greatest needs today is a stronger faith. Always keep this thought in mind if you attempt to do what you have always felt is impossible. As a weak limb grows stronger by exercising, so will your faith be strengthened by the very effort you make in stretching it out toward things unseen.

Make a firm decision now to make the most of that which you have received, and repeat with your Companions the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, I realize that I am living in
a wonderful world, and passing through a
wonderful life - both gifts from Thee.
Guide me in the pathway of Thy will for me,
and help me to follow it courageously.

Amen.

TRIAL BY TEST

 THE test for the possibility of anything is not theoretical. Fine arguments can be made for the possibility of things that will not work, while something for which we can think of nothing good to say will work very well. Of course other considerations may be involved, but the ultimate test of anything is the practical one, so you never know till you try.

Some fearful and hesitating soul may say that he knew someone who tried that and it did not work. Yes, but that was someone else. He may not have gone about it as you would, and so he got a different result than what you would.

You may even say that once you yourself tried that particular thing, and it was no good. Maybe you expected too much on the first try. The hinges of a door may require a little harder push before they yield well. This attempt may have been at something which takes more than one try. That is true of some of

life's best possibilities. Remember the general theme of this whole series of lessons - THAT IT MAKES YOU TALLER TO REACH FOR A STAR EVEN IF IT ELUDES YOU. THE REACH MUST EXCEED THE GRASP.


You surely do not know whether a thing is possible till you try it, and you may not know till you have tried it again and again. Each new effort extends your reach as you try to find a better way and as you put more effort into it, or as you understand better what is necessary.

The fact is that we are a race of wasters, and needlessly so. Many people right now are missing the best life has for them because they do not reach for it, because they do not try. They do not see it, or they do not feel the thrill of its wonder and worth for them, or they assume with no good reason that it is not for them, or they just didn't have the initiative to begin, or they didn't want to pay the price.

Of course, if a given thing is not best for you, you are fortunate if the way to it is closed. That is one of the mercies of God. But somewhere within reach there is a privilege, an advancement, a greater usefulness, a new and valuable quality, that is for you, and the door is unlocked. The door might not really be unlocked, you say? How do you know unless you try it? Surely the possibility of further progress toward destiny is worth that much effort.

Some have failed so many times they have fallen into a negative attitude toward opportunities and possibilities. The psychologist would say that they have conditioned their minds to failure. If that has happened to you, recondition your mind to success. Put the stopper in your red ink bottle, and give your attention to the credit side of the ledger for a change. This is an important lesson for you to learn - it happens to everyone at some time in life.

THE TEST OF AFFINITY

OW is one to know whether a certain line of procedure is the right one for him? That is an important question, and one that must be considered if a person is to be on the safe side. No one wants or should want to be taking a chance on something that would neither suit his capabilities or satisfy his soul.

If you let anyone else make such a decision for you, you run great risk of making a mistake. No one can select a destiny for another, no matter how capable or intelligent he is, because one person does not know the feelings and longings or feel the sense of fitness or unfitness in another's heart. He may suggest, or express his personal opinion, but that is as far as he should go.

In none of these discussions have we ventured any specific suggestion of the particular road for anyone to go. We have confined our attention wholly to the principles involved. That is because only you can finally determine the right road for YOU to go. We only ask you to make the choice with care.

How then does one find what is right for him to try? You can take an aptitude test, but that will only indicate what might be suited to your apparent abilities. You might have your I.Q., your intelligence quotient, determined, but will only show how quick and accurate your reactions are now. You might make a survey of the fields, but that will only show you where you might roam rather than where you should settle down.

You can do all these things and still miss the way that is best for you. You can even choose something you think you like only to find that you were presuming too much. These tests are all good, but inadequate alone.

Under, and behind, and above them all, stands the test of affinity, the tests by which friendships are made and by which sensible young people choose their life companions. It is used by people who know that appearances, first impressions, and superficial facts, are not dependable tests in important matters. With all such things, the choice of a mate, a home, or a work in life, may still not be right, and without them, it may still be perfect.

This applies to the choice of the ideals by which one proposes to live, to the life work he chooses as his contribution to the good of mankind, and to any special undertakings one thinks to add to the furnishings of his life to enrich it and make it more worthwhile to himself and others. Now and then we all need to renovate our lives, perhaps rather thoroughly, and what we add to them should be something for which we have an affinity, something that suits and fits our inner selves, something that was made for us and we for it.

The program between which and you there is a distinct affinity is good; not having begun it long ago, you should begin it now. Other dreams may wear out, but this one keeps its freshness like an evergreen tree. Aptitudes, I. Q. charts, and all the rest will have their importance and value, as will your cool mental appraisals; but let your heart also help you decide, and over all let the voice of Duty have its say.

S T E P C A R E F U L L Y , B U T S T E P



Of course it is to be understood that all these things we are talking about are to be done with care. It is easy to make a mistake, and not so easy to correct it; yet one must do something. When you choose your grand adventure of setting your life to rights or further improving it do not mistake a passing fancy, a superficial admiration, or a momentary impulse, for affinity or adding together the elements that make completeness. Take time, but not too much time. Take pains, but do not let them prevent action.

If you spend so much time and effort making sure, the making sure will not do you any good. As an old adage ran, be sure you are right and then go ahead. Neither the sureness nor the going ahead is much good without the other.

"Watch your step", says the elevator starter in the lobby of the business building. "Watch your step", says the warning before you on the stair riser of the escalator. "Watch your step", says the stewardess as you leave the plane or

the porter as you leave the Pullman. "Watch your step", says life as you move along the road you are traveling by choice or chance. "Watch your step", we wish to add here - but take the step.

What a miserable thing it is to be tied down for a long period of time and never go anywhere! But how much worse it is to be rolling over the miles, watching the towns and fields go by on the way to the wrong place, or to one you do not wish to see, or to one of which you will grow weary, or to one where it is of no use to go!


So when you plan your program of living, do your best to make it the best one that could possibly be for you. Then when you have planned it, and are sure it is so, begin to do it. This last is vital, for there is a last moment hesitation that stops many people when they are all ready to go, and leaves them stranded ever afterward wondering how they could so have cheated themselves. Watch out for that temptation to back out when everything is right and you are all ready.

But suppose you just can't assure yourself that everything is right, what then? If no particular loss or damage is involved, you can try it and see; but one reason why many people cannot be sure, and why nothing they try is very certain to work out well, is that they forget to take God into partnership both during the period of decision and that of action.

The remedy for that is simple. Just take Him into partnership. You might as well, for He will be the determining factor anyway. Ask Him to guide you when the road is not plain. Ask Him to assure you when you are not quite certain. Ask Him to restrain you when you are about to err. That combination will not fail. If it leads to any change, the change will be an improvement.

Youth tends to be over-confident, while maturity and age tends to be under-confident. If you are young, you probably need to ask God to hold you steady. If you are older you probably need to ask Him to sustain and empower you. But at any age you need His guiding pillar of cloud and fire to go before you. But remember you may not catch up with it again if you let it get too far ahead of you.

K N O W Y O U R T E C H N I Q U E S

 O matter how idealistic our attitude, motive, and plan, there is a practical side to everything we undertake, whether choosing a major profession or making a new start or addition to an original plan for living. We must know the technique of whatever we propose to do. Only by occasional chance does haphazard effort lead to anything of importance and worth. As the man on the street says, "one must know his stuff", whatever it may be, and however great or small may be the procedure involved.

The work of a carpenter, or a typesetter, or a blacksmith, or anything else, may look easy. One may say, "Why I could do that". But just try doing it, and see how quickly you arrive at the point where you have no idea what to do, and have to stop to keep from spoiling something if you have not already done so. You never dreamed that it could involve such baffling processes and techniques.

You do not simply decide that you are going to do social work, or literary work, or lecture work, or carry on a business at home, or even overhaul your way of thinking and living, without knowing how to go about it. You do not just choose something you would like to do and depend on inspiration to carry you through. Inspiration alone simply will not do it. That would be like trying to build a beautiful house without a foundation. Inspiration is a wonderful element to include in a process; but it is an additive, not a substitute.

This would be true, even if you were a prodigy, or had shown early precocity, even along this very line. A certain eminent musician of a century ago is a case in point.


He was a child prodigy with the violin and the piano. People used to see him rolling a hoop or playing ball in a small boy's costume during the day, and in the evening on the platform playing distinguished music or even directing an orchestra with competence.

But when he became a young man he was not content to amaze audiences with music played in this primitive though successful way. He demanded of himself the best training for his future career as a musician. He spent years under the finest teachers to be found in the world till he had perfected his technique. Then he entered upon a really great career, because he had put a foundation under his gift of inspiration.

If you want to speak in public, learn how and furnish your mind so you will have something to say. If you want to write, do the same. If you want to teach, try to be an inspired teacher, but be sure you know what you are doing and how. Whatever you want to do, learn your trade and seek inspiration, too.

This will help you to be solidly successful in whatever you undertake. It will give your efforts a quality that will make them both serve their purpose and endure. It will also keep you happy in the doing.

ENTHUSIASM COMES WITH THE WARM - U P

 HE know-how, as we call it, and the enthusiasm necessary to put one's self wholly into an effort, are as much parts of each other as the canvas and the paints in a picture. The canvas alone is dead and uninteresting, and the colors alone would be meaningless and useless.

Some people stop with the know-how of an undertaking. They become good workmen, but never great ones. Others have the fire of enthusiasm. With this alone they become eager workmen, but never dependable ones. They would be brilliant workmen if they had anything to shine on, but they haven't.

The only problem connected with the know-how of an undertaking is taking the time and trouble to acquire it. There are good instructors of about everything available anywhere, and they could teach the know-how to many people who neglect to give them an opportunity. But they could not teach enthusiasm, though they might pass on its contagion if they have it. It is something different. It cannot be

purchased, or raised in the ground, or taught. It can only be taken from one who has it as one candle is lighted from another.

Flashes of it may come to anyone at any time, but not necessarily at the right time. The middle of the night, for instance, is one of its favorite times to appear, and keep one awake so he will be too tired to catch it next day when he could use it. When it comes in a lonely hour one is hardly in a position to do anything about it. Is there no dependable way to get the enthusiasm to fire one's work at the right time?

Fortunately there is. If you ever saw a boy scout start a fire without a match or even a flint and steel, you have seen a perfect illustration of how the fire of enthusiasm can be started. It takes friction, and that requires action. Get motion started, and warmth will come, and that will bring freedom of action.


You carry a reservoir of enthusiasm around with you all the time. It is as much a part of you as your power of thought, speed, or action. If its glow does not come upon you, loosening and stimulating every power used, it is because you have not done or had happen the action necessary to the warm-up that would turn it on.

What happens when a boy scout wants a fire far away from ordinary means of starting one? He makes a little heap of dry kindling and piles a few heavier pieces of wood on top. Then he rubs two pieces of dry, soft wood together till heat is generated by the friction and makes a spark, which he catches on a little dry, flammable material. When that is ablaze he ignites the kindling with it.

The fire of enthusiasm for one's work often has to be generated in some such way. Having decided what you want to do, and having learned how, all you have to do to enjoy it is to get yourself started. No matter how cold it is, or how small is your desire to do it, you will find that enthusiasm will come with the warm-up.

But how to start the warm-up? That is a good question, and there is a good answer, especially if it is your mental and spiritual powers that are slow to start. Try the formula of the psalmist, who says in Psalm 39:3, "My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue."

P I O N E E R S M U S T B U I L D B R I D G E S

VERYONE is potentially, and should be actually, a pioneer. That is really what we are here for. History is made and human progress is achieved by individuals and groups who toil in some Egypt in the bondage of needless limitation; but, dreaming of a Canaan of freedom and richer living, they set out on the way through whatever wilderness may intervene. These Canaans may be of the hand, mind, spirit, or condition; but whatever they are, arrival there will be another step toward the making of a new and better world.

But between Egypt and Canaan always rolls a Red Sea and a flood-swollen

Jordan River, and between these lies the reach of sullen, frowning, forbidding desert. Getting across it to that new frontier of hope and happiness will take heroic effort, but it will be worth it. It is a task for pioneers.

The pioneer must take the conditions he finds and master them. If he surrenders to them, his quest ends there, and he will have no place on the scroll of heroes. Sometimes the way will lie across peaceful plains or through quiet valleys. At other times there will be mountains to climb or seas to cross, where he must look to the God of all questing souls in the faith that is not in vain.

Sometimes he will have to make a road where there is no road, toiling to the rhythm of a divine voice whispering within him, "Thou hast not passed this way heretofore." Sometimes he must blaze a trail where there has never been even a footprint. It is really pioneering to be a pathfinder and making a way to a value which without him the race would not have had.

Sometimes he must build bridges where not even a road could be made; bridges over towering heights and deep waters, bridges that enlarge the world for him and will do so for others who come after him. That is super-pioneering. It is the essence of history because it is the filling of the forbidding gaps of destiny.

That is the kind of thing Reed, and Gorgas, and Pasteur, and Koch, and Jenner, and Banting, and Salk did when they found ways to get people across the yawning chasms of disease that for ages had been swallowing them up. That was what Whitney, and Fulton, and Morse, and Bell, and Marconi, and Edison, and Goodyear did in finding ways to supply long-felt needs. They and others like them were building bridges to connect with new roads of hope and well-being.

What is building a bridge but reaching for something out of reach and thus arranging to go forward over a road that isn't there? That is what human genius is for. The fact that so many have done it to reach their Promised Land is evidence that you can do it to reach yours.

The fact that the reach exceeds the grasp is nothing to be discouraged about. It is not a sign that your hope is impossible to attain. It is merely a sign that attaining it will make you bigger and stronger.

WHERE DOES THE IMPOSSIBLE BEGIN?



E talk glibly about the possible and the impossible, but we do not often enough and deeply enough ponder what they mean. What is each one, what is the real difference between them, and where does the line of demarcation run? The first two parts of the question we have already answered directly or by implication. The third part let us consider now:

Where runs the line between what can be done and what cannot be done? Each generation has thought it knew, but none of them did. Some think they know now, but those who have observed the course of the ages have seen very clearly that we do not. We do not even know whether there is any such line.

A former generation thought Yellow Fever could not be prevented, that there was no way by which sound could be transmitted over long distances with and even without an intervening wire, that sound could not be automatically stored and reproduced at will, that man could never devise a means by which to fly through the air. The farther back we go in time the longer is the list of these supposed impossibilities, and the farther forward we come the shorter it grows. The farther we go into the future, then, the shorter still it is bound to become.

What can we conclude but that there is no real fixed limit on possibility? The only line there is is an imaginary one, and it never stays any length of time in the same place. The only difference between the possible and the impossible is that the possible means things that have been done, while the impossible means things that have not been accomplished but may be any day. In other words, the so-called impossible is only the undemonstrated possible, just as the so-called supernatural is only the natural whose governing laws we have not yet come to understand and learned to use. Or should we say that the natural is only that part of the supernatural with which we are familiar?

Concerning the possible and the impossible too many of us are like the man in the menagerie who viewed a giraffe and announced with conviction that there is no such animal. Why anyone can be so reluctant as some are to believe in his own possibilities and those of God and nature is an old mystery. One would think he would be eager to believe as much as possible rather than as little as possible. The I-don't-believe-it people of Galilee never fared very well when the blessings of the Master were being given out. "According to your faith be it done unto you", was his formula.

In every day of incredulity have been living people who were destined in time to accomplish some of the very things that were then so firmly believed impossible. Yet Jesus assured people who wondered at the great things he did that they should one day do even greater ones, and that all things are possible to him who believes.

Erase your arbitrary line between the accomplished possible and the supposed impossible. Stop letting it hold you back from what you could do if you would. Too many people have been afraid to cross it when it wasn't even there. Whatever is necessary is possible, and whatever is truly good can be done.

M E D I T A T I O N

The removal of a sense of impossibility widens my world and enlarges my universe. Henceforth I walk in this amplified existence.

YOUR CLASS INSTRUCTOR.