

Something Great Out of Nothing

by Catherine Browning

There comes a point where the mind takes a higher plane of knowledge, but can never prove how it got there. All great discoveries have involved such a leap.

— Albert Einstein

Some of Albert Einstein's greatest ideas came out of seeming nothingness. He knew that phenomenal secrets of the universe are revealed to those who make room for nothingness and that befriending mystery makes sense out of nonsense. He spent long hours in intellectual solitude visualizing possibilities involving light, space, and time. He discovered the general theory of relativity by following his intuitive hunches. Einstein trusted his imagination more than his knowledge.

For those of us who have been touched by the profound essence of Einstein and the profound awareness that the original fireball explosion burst forth out of nothing, there is a strong imperative to make room, clear out space, and drench ourselves in emptiness. As the Ecozoic Era looms before us, this is the time for something new to emerge; this is the time to take a quantum leap.

The universe is filled with voids, vacuums, and gaps—big, gaping gaps. On the macroscopic level, we live in a universe with over a 100 billion galaxies. Each galaxy has at least 100 billion stars, and many of those stars have developed planets. Between solar systems, there are light years of space. Between galaxies, there are tens of millions of light years of space. On the microscopic level, living cells cushion themselves with interstitial space. They bathe in voids—the neurons with their synaptic gaps, the kidneys suspended in thoracic cavities, the mouth with its room to savor. All of creation is padded with raw roominess. Similarly, the universe thrives on breathing room. The universe is most creative when it has an open-air theatre in which to perform.

All creatures of this Earth need space. They have to be free to roam and explore, grow and expand. Since great things are prone to be born out of nothing, it's essential to look at the nothingness in our world and ask,



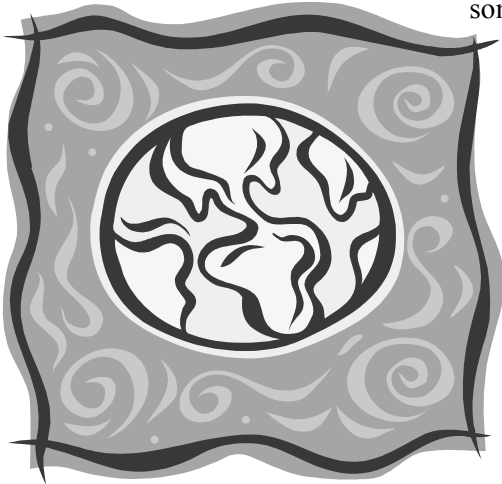
“Is there enough of it?” Most humans are too closely packed together on this planet. That’s a frightening reality. In the West our lives are cluttered with stuff. We cram-pack our schedules with agenda items and to-do lists. We sacrifice brilliance for immediate satisfaction from a task hastily completed. We risk losing our intuitive greatness for short-term, material satisfaction. How can we be great if nothingness is zapped from our lives? How can we do our Great Work if we are tied down with stifling, routine thinking?

What if the real danger in having too much stuff isn’t that we become enslaved by materialism, but that we lose the potential for fertile newness to break forth? That’s a scarier thought than the threat of being plagued by consumer addictions. If the human species loses its ability to be a receptacle for the universe—to be the eyes, ears, touch, reflections, actions, celebrations, and thoughts of the universe—then it loses its sense of purpose. Humans risk forfeiting their niche in the larger community of life. And if we lose our place, lose our ability to contribute, then we are doomed for extinction.

When we reach the saturation point in our individual and collective lives, it’s time to let go, to empty, to be emptied. This doesn’t mean to surrender into a comfortable, vegetative state, but to surrender into a conscious emptying and a heightened state of active listening. Learning to wait in our emptying, to be still in the pause moments of life, requires trusting the larger process. Just as it’s ineffective to fill in someone else’s sentences while they are talking, so too it’s wasteful to rush in and start

something new just because we are

uncomfortable with the unknown. Perhaps this is what tempted Einstein during his most challenging moment. As he sat alone with the universe’s wisdom pouring forth through his own intuition, he may have been frightened by the truths that were revealed. Trusting newness is never easy, especially when it comes out of seeming nothingness. Especially when what we hear may be contrary to what people want us to say. Especially when we realize that things aren’t always as they appear.



But as we learn to trust the patterns, images, and symbols revealed to us through the unveiling of nothingness, we experience a paradoxical humility. On the one hand, we become our most brilliant self when we allow the universe to speak through us. On the other hand, we realize that we are not responsible for this greatness. For it is the universe itself who speaks, and we are merely the messengers. The universe knows how the universe began, how it is developing, and where it is headed. The universe knows what lies beneath the mysterious tides and what is really going on in our nighttime dreams. The universe speaks to us through deep states of relaxation, silence, daydreaming, meditation, prayer, imaging, ceremony, breathing, storytelling, and music. The universe knows what words will work best on our paper before we even put the pen in our hand or what color we could paint on an easel before our brush even takes a stroke. It's in learning to trust this wisdom, in consciously surrendering into its mysterious creativity, that we become our best selves and provide solutions to our most pressing problems. The Ecozoic leader, therefore, is called by the universe to be a worthy vessel, an effective messenger of life-changing discoveries in these precarious times.

The universe thrives
on breathing room.

At the risk of sounding like a scholastic heretic, I suggest that Ecozoic leadership requires less data, less critical thinking, and fewer research-based outcomes. Not that logic doesn't have its place in the process—of course it does—but balance is what we seek. We are good at talking to the universe. It's the listening that we need to work on. If we all commit ourselves, individually and collectively, to letting go of *everything* in our lives that does not resonate with our highest Ecozoic ideals, then we might open ourselves to some awesome changes.

If we carefully, and sacredly, let go of every piece of scrap paper, every piece of furniture, memento, distracting memory, cluttering thought, habit, acquaintance, chore, irrelevant detail of our lives that does not represent the Ecozoic, then we will create a huge abyss. Though waiting in that abyss might be painful for awhile, and we will feel tempted to run away or clutter up our lives with immediate, short-term fixes, the rewards for snuggling up to the abyss, for nurturing the abyss, will be great. As we sink into stillness, our instinctual knowing, our gut hunches and our intuitive genius will inevitably reveal themselves. As we learn to receive insights from the universe, as we learn to really listen to the universe, we will find that something great will come out of nothing.

