Growing up, growing outta. Yeah, nah



There might be those who'd opine that my mental age is stuck at 17. And in some senses (mostly) they'd be right; for I've maintained an enduring passion for many things from that distant personal era.

And it's a list of the stuff that really matters in life. Like endless curiosity for all things, from opera to rap, fusions thereof and everything else in between. An impatience with the wilful blindness and crafted ignorance of the comfortable classes. Love of simple stuff. Art. Birds. Dogs. Farming. Outdoors. Poetry. Sailing. Saving the planet (well, actually ourselves). The other gender(s). Visionary politics. Leadership that cuts through BS. And laughter, and joking in different languages.

But there are some things that have fallen off the list. Some things I have grown up and out of. And yes, this is a possible – and liberating thing. Stuff that was once central to your life need no longer be. Things changes, context changes, and we can change along with them.

All of which got me thinking of the value and the potentialities of moving on. Which include learning new things; about myself, society and the wider world.

For example, among the most lovely and memorable moments of my early life were days spent fishing with my Dad. We were always onto it, and in various guises: in crystal clear icy mountain streams; dark, peaty lakes; the great grey-green rivers of Africa; silt-laden dams the colour of the veld itself; limpid tropical lagoons; crashing turquoise surf, and offshore in deep blue water. Always bothering the fish. Often unsuccessfully, but we did it anyway.

My father's philosophical bent stretched to celebrating fishing (especially the fresh-water coarse kind) as an activity where you were doing basically nothing, but allowed you to say you were actually doing something. The ultimate justification of simple laziness. Suited me.

So yes, fishing was central to my life. To our lives. And now – not. I've come to learn about the undeniable damage being done to the living ecosystems of the Hauraki Gulf. And the result was a natural choice.

Rugby too. Back in the day it was the main thing. From being a compulsory activity at the high school I went to; to becoming aficionados of a well-stomped haka (even being able to predict the outcome of an All Black match on the strength of that) there it was – always there. But then we learned how the Women's Refuge is over-run after every All Black defeat, and I thought nah….. Until the winning women's world cup team came along. Horay!

These are but small and simple examples. But the world, the entire world, stands on the brink of necessary, deep-seated, systemic change. In just about every area of humanity's existence and impact. We just gotta change. Otherwise….

Thing is, we can do this. We all have the ability to shake old habits and embrace new ones, and be better off for it. To grow up and out of. And in this case our mokopuna, generations down, will benefit too.

So if a simple farm boy like me can do, so can we all. Let's make a real start at changing – for real.

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