
Kluwer Mediation Blog

We Can Each Make a Difference in 2020

John Sturrock (Core Solutions Group) · Saturday, December 28th, 2019

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the festive season is receiving and reading books that one might not have come across otherwise.

This year, I have been enjoying two quite contrasting works of literature. The first is a *Manual for Spectrum Agents* (Haynes Publishing) providing “*detailed information about the Spectrum organisation*”, based on the classic 1960’s Supermarionation television series, Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons. For those of us who grew up with Captain Scarlet (and its predecessor, Thunderbirds), produced by the visionary Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, it is hard to understate the remarkable effect these TV programmes, set 100 years into the future, had on our generation. The book brings it all back. It is a serious exercise in nostalgia.

The book reminds us that the basic premise of the TV series was that, by 2068, peace and prosperity had been achieved for the majority of the world’s inhabitants, under the guidance and control of a World Government. A Treaty of Tranquility had been signed in 2046, banning acts of war and aggression between countries and binding them together to fight for one cause – the defence of the Earth. The Republic of Britain was an early dissenter, though it had signed by 2050 following the overthrow of its military dictatorship in 2047.

The book narrates all the beneficial outcomes of the World Government, including a revolutionary worldwide approach to generating energy. Unfortunately, in 2068, these achievements were all now endangered by an external threat to the future of Earth, a mysterious alien force from Mars known as the Mysterons. In Earth’s defence, along came Spectrum and Captain Scarlet.

All fantasy of course. The idea of an existential threat to the future of the planet, and the need for a worldwide response, was the stuff of science fiction in the 1960s (as it had been at the turn of the 20th century when H.G. Wells’ *War of the Worlds* was published). Only a few people had anticipated the extent of the threat which climate change would pose half a century later. However, for many of us as we enter 2020, the idea of some kind of world government, a treaty of tranquility, and a sense of common purpose in defending the Earth (or at least significant parts of it), now makes a whole lot of practical sense.

Following the disappointment of the COP25 climate talks recently in Madrid, one cannot overstate the importance of COP26 next November, taking place in Glasgow just 50 miles from where I sit writing this. Might we be asking what we could do to move towards that idea of common purpose at world government level?

I turn to the second book which has captured my attention this festive season, a present from my daughter. The beautifully illustrated work, *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* (Penguin books) is a best seller and utterly captivating in its simplicity and charm. Its author, Charlie Mackesy, began as a cartoonist for The Spectator magazine and a book illustrator for Oxford University Press and has exhibited drawings in galleries in London, New York and Edinburgh. His book is full of practical wisdom, dispensed by its characters.

The book speaks of courage, kindness and asking for help when we need it. It challenges us to make a difference however small we think we are. *“Always remember you matter...you bring to this world things no one else can.”*

Comparing ourselves to others is the biggest waste of time, says the mole. *“One of our greatest freedoms is how we react to things”*, he says. *“Everyone is a bit scared”*, says the horse, *“but we are less scared together”*. The greatest illusion is that life should be perfect.

“To be honest, I often feel I have nothing interesting to say”, says the fox. *“Being honest is always interesting”* replies the horse. *“When the dark clouds come...keep going.”* *“When the big things feel out of control...focus on what you love right under your nose.”*

“Sometimes I want to say I love you all,” says the mole, *“but I find it difficult.”* *“Do you?”* says the boy. *“Yes, so I say something like I’m glad we are all here.”* *“Ok,”* says the boy. *“I’m glad we are all here.”* *“We are so glad you are here too,”* comes the reply.

In big ways or small ways, we can each, in our uniqueness, make a difference. That must continue to be the aspiration of mediators around the world as we begin a new decade.

I wonder if the mole might have been referring to mediators as well as his own species when he observed: *“Most of the old moles I know wish they had listened less to their fears and more to their dreams.”*

Happy New Year!

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