

## Brief Encounter with the Taos Institute

July 2022



### “Walk in Good Company”

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In our fast-paced world, we are immersed in expectations and desires to be “successful” which usually means garnering more money and possessions, achieving positions of power and prestige, and/or having the ability to make the world different. In today’s lingo, we want to maximize our potential. This can take the form of an unacknowledged driven-ness (or even when noticed, we may see this as simply “the way it is”). Social constructionist-leaning people oftentimes question social practices that are embraced without consideration of how they could be otherwise.

In earlier Taos Brief Encounters, writers have wondered about how we could “do more” to improve our worlds through using what we know about relational practices, collaboration and dialogue. In the last couple of months of Brief Encounters, Sheila McNamee crafted some key questions: *How do we call others to dialogue when their interest is only directed toward wealth and power? How do we adopt a curiosity for ideas that are so different from our own? Is it possible to refrain from judgment of one who believes that the color of one’s skin is surely linked to the degree of one’s humanity? How do we cultivate curiosity about another nation’s apparent disregard for human life?*



These are questions that our social constructionist leanings can help in answering or addressing (and some have already begun doing this).

Social constructionist ideas show how who we are is constituted through interactions—our identities are not exclusively individualistic, private or genetically generated. We are who we are by the “company we keep” in terms of people we associate with, the ideas we embrace, and the social institutions we affiliate with. My point in this Brief Encounter is to express that as valuable as the relational is in constituting our identities and helping to craft action in the world to make it a better place for all, relations with others is a good in and of itself.

A line from k. d. lang’s song “The Valley” caught my attention last week on a road trip through Montana on my way back home to Calgary—“. . . walk in good company” (I am not referring to organizations or businesses - 😊). We all have people in our lives who are “good company” for us. We enjoy being with them and we seem happier when together. These people could be family members, friends, neighbours, co-workers—they could be anyone in our lives. With these people, our lives seem enhanced, they may question or challenge us in ways we can embrace, we are significant to them, time seems to melt away when we are together, we look forward. I think walking in good company is as important as any initiatives we may undertake in our lives to become successful or change the world for the better. With all the forces demanding attention in our everyday personal and professional lives, what space is there for walking in good company? Who is good company in your life?