

SISTER WHO'S PERSPECTIVE

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Overview

It is somehow surprising that being who and what one is, where one is within space and time, is a most difficult challenge for a vast number of people. As much as I have learned that truth is contextual, this would seem to be a foundation for all that follows--yet innumerable individuals and political leaders spend their entire lives running in the opposite direction. Hopefully these essays can help to make that unnecessary.

Physical Maintenance

What one becomes by making no effort or investment, can never be one's best. The excuse of being busy, is not one to which I have ever responded well, because I have always made a point of being busy, but still managing to get important things done. As many have already said, this means choices of various kinds, although they use the word "priorities," which invokes hierarchical views that I find to be adversarial.

This too is something I have considered extensively--hierarchical versus egalitarian ways of viewing life and all of its diverse dimensions and experiences. I continue to find far more opportunity within egalitarian perceptions than within hierarchical ones. I have consequently tried to weave everything together into a multi-dimensional wholeness that is truly rather than falsely empowering.

Every interactive posture can make a positive contribution, but one must first be willing to depart from conventional norms. If the way everyone else does it, is personally not particularly empowering, as some would say, one's Godde-given ingenuity may have a better answer. Giving permission to live one's life creatively and thoughtfully, raises the bar, so to speak, on what is possible.

Insisting upon norms which, conversely, do not empower one's life to reach new

horizons, is fundamentally self-sabotaging. I remain amazed, however, at how often such a choice is embraced, but never surprised by any limitation which follows. Life is in effect defined as unable to transcend anything that does not or has not already existed.

The primary challenge of being physical, perhaps, is that bodies are creations of time that eventually wear out; that testify in many ways to the long and difficult paths they have traversed. That being noted, it is always easier to maintain than to recover what has somehow--usually unintentionally--been lost along the way. Without notice, therefore, each moment one invests and the ways that one invests each moment, have a striking effect upon the abilities one thereafter has within one's reach or capability.

Among these is also the ability to enter into times of prayer and meditation. One does not truly leave one's physical body behind while engaging in times of spiritual focus. Particular postures such as kneeling or sitting on the floor may be subtly helpful to a predominantly spiritual focus, in much the same way that being able to eliminate noises in the background may empower any and all conversation with another person.

If it is a posture used only during times of spiritual focus, the physical positioning of the body may predispose one to more effective focus during subsequent times. Failing to do whatever stretches are necessary to retain the physical ability, may negatively impact ability to engage in spiritual conversations that may be empowering to the rest of one's life. Indeed, doing the stretches themselves can be orchestrated into being a sort of moving meditation inviting deeper spirituality.

Pretending something does not exist, fails to make it so, but rather only changes the relationship one has to it. Embracing a truly empowering dynamic, however, is wondrous.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

Mental Maintenance

I think imagination and speculation need to be encouraged, but encouragement loses integrity when it is not accompanied by some sort of accountability. Without responsibility to higher truth, interpersonal perceptions and interactions may quickly degenerate into suspicion and paranoia--both of which lead to greater vulnerability to manipulation. The alternative is learning to think and live for a sense of self that is relational rather than narcissistic in character.

While the world remains a shared space, the essence of that is inseparable from being interconnected and relational rather than isolated and narcissistic. Attempting to make anyone think less of him or her self, is in effect an attack on humanity as well. If that individual becomes permeated with doubt, discouragement, and stigmatic guilt (that which is not earned but assigned merely on the basis of living), possibilities of love, truth, kindness, and positive relationship are unavoidably diminished also.

The practice of "fact checking" may be a first step and a very worthy one at that, but innumerable components can never be proven either true or false. As such, it is imperative that the person associated with love refrain from using them as a basis for judgment or discrimination. Such attitudes and actions emanate from intellectual and emotional understandings.

Maintaining one's self mentally, therefore, is a matter of wrestling with questions, pursuing answers, and accepting that not everything has a conclusion within the current time. Life within and all around, is in process and consequently never finished. If one foregoes all thoughts that are difficult, humanity will never know or understand any more than it already does.

None of this, however, discourages tentative conclusions. What is discouraged is choosing to stop wherever one is and look no further. One must likewise discern when a particular social or political game is being played, within which it is no longer wise for one to in any way participate.

The task of the mind is ultimately to notice

as much as it can while remaining open to growth, discernment, and expanding into new ways of being. The danger of manipulation is knowing or doing no more than with which the instigator is familiar. None of us is the limit beyond which humanity should never go.

The concept of stigmatic guilt has been around much longer than most realize, having merely been formalized during the Medieval time period by religious authorities. What is most curtailed are creative expressions, since significant amounts of an individual's time and energy are redirected toward resolving an issue of identity, about which they can do absolutely nothing--not even positive or negative confirmation (that it definitely is or is not what it claims to be). The goal is not even any confirmation of truth, but rather merely a quest for power and control.

Jimi Hendrix again comes to mind: "When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace." A huge amount of mental energy is used within attempts to moderate power struggles. If love were the motivation instead, that energy would go toward the creation of new and better ways of relating to one another and to the myriad of challenges life presents.

The most liberating thing I can therefore sometimes do, is to opt out of a manipulation that refuses to collaboratively share control. I must be careful, however, that opting out does not equate to prematurely relinquishing any positive contribution I could otherwise make. An ongoing frustration for myself and a great many other people, however, is discovering only afterward, something good one could have said or done.

Even then I try not be judgmental toward myself, however, because of the many times I have later been told of a positive effect my imperfect words had upon someone else who was present. Doing nothing simply because I could not do what I thought was the perfect thing, would have prevented unseen good effects from happening. Yes, I need to do my best, but I will be far more equipped to do better, if I maintain my mind as much as my body, throughout preceding periods of time.

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Emotional Maintenance

I suppose I will never be especially popular, because I continue to speak out against "the happiness cult." My contention has consistently been that it is not so important to always be happy, as to feel whatever is appropriate to the context and experiences one actually has. Nonetheless, one must constantly demonstrate good stewardship within any and all contexts.

The question is not, therefore, whether or not one is happy, but rather whether or not one knows how to constructively be any specific emotion one is feeling. Does one know how to grieve or to be angry with just as much pragmatic application and expression as within those times one feels joy? I remember reading the Christian Bible through from cover to cover many times during my late teenage years and always finding it curious within the Old Testament record that the death of a leader was typically followed by thirty days within which the primary focus was mourning.

While nothing described how that period of mourning was spent, I can think of no example within modern times that lasts for an entire thirty days. Perhaps that is why for some, mourning never ends--and I will probably never be "over" losing my Old English Sheepdog, Gareth. Yes, emotions can be very difficult and it may require an entire lifetime to learn how to effectively manage particular examples.

All of which makes maintenance of skills, processes, and dynamics in this area so very important. It may even be that a lack of ability in this area, may become a handicap throughout the rest of one's life. I strongly suspect that losing the ability to feel anything and everything, also equates to a loss of one's fundamental humanity--without which nothing else in life truly matters.

*"Within a wise integration
of mind and heart,
growth is unstoppable."*

-- Sister Who

So what is it that makes emotions constructive? Again I return to my notion of relational individuality. As important as it is to be who one truly is, it is equally important to empathize with all of the relationships that make that relational individuality a reality.

By nurturing those relationships in any way one can, both one's own individuality and the surrounding world are empowered to be the very best that they can be. In order to nurture those relationships, one must be simultaneously nurturing, empowering, and developing one's self toward increased capacities to give to others. It is not truly competitive but rather a collaborative; not one or the other, but rather both that matter.

The notion that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, seems to have begun with John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, who died in 1902. In carefully contemplating this witticism, however, it occurred to me that there is only one exception. Love is the power which brings all other powers into balance and harmony, but only if love goes first and all others follow.

Yet losing the ability to love is not usually considered to be a crisis which needs to be immediately and effectively addressed in any and every way possible. Drawing from the literature of the Christian Bible, love is also equated to the Divine. By implication, the one who is unable to love, is unable to positively or constructively relate to the Divine.

Just to be clear, this is no condemnation of Atheism, for whom the Divine takes a very different form. Indeed, were it not for religious abuse, it is unlikely that the word, "Atheism," would even exist. What is important is to spend some time contemplating how one would define that which is transcendent, mysterious, or for whatever reason unknown.

Emotional maintenance is concerned with finding constructive and effective ways to live with whatever conclusions one chooses. The step of divorcing the Divine from religion, may in fact be a first step of true growth. Religion may empower one's relationship to the Divine, but the Divine should never be expected to empower one's relationship to religion.

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Spiritual Maintenance

What is often overlooked is that tasks of maintenance are not primarily concerned with stagnation, but rather with preparedness for positive opportunities and processes which may follow. In training for participation in bodybuilding competitions, I was always very conscious that I did not want the moment of my participation to arrive and find that the only reason I failed was because I had neglected moments of maintenance and investment--so I persisted in doing the exercises, no matter how uncomfortable they might feel at the time. Why should the other areas of one's life be any different?

If I wish to meet each new moment of life equipped to make the best of whatever resources and opportunities that moment presents, I need to be as attentive as possible to the resources and development which will most serve that moment. Keeping appearances pretty means nothing, if the constitutive components are not equipped to act. Whitewashing a house that has rotted due to neglect, will not create a structure able to endure future cycles of weather and shelter all who seek refuge therein.

I do not read books and accumulate knowledge and wisdom in order to be considered intelligent; the goal is not merely myself. I invest in myself in order to be adequately prepared for whatever the future brings. I do not want to fail, simply because of my own neglect.

This does not mean I will never fail; it only means that I will not be among the reasons I did so. Addressing the true reasons for failure, is the ongoing task of intelligent and decent examples of humanity. Taking time each day to focus upon greatest love and highest wisdom--no what conceptualization one employs--helps me to retain focus upon the worthiest of life goals.

Any spiritual practice which brings a view of highest wisdom and greatest love into clear and relevant focus, gives all--individually and collectively--reason to have hope and faith that whatever the future holds can be good.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

On a Personal Note

In spite of the fact that no cause of the past few months of neurological challenges has ever been determined, my symptoms have decreased radically. I am nonetheless still looking for alternative ways to do the face-paint details so that I can continue with various video production projects. The book manuscript about becoming and being the unconventional minister that I am, is slowly progressing and there is a very real chance that this will be the year it is finally finished, but only time will tell.

My doctoral program has entered the dissertation phase also and seems to be progressing well, but there is of course much more to be done. Is my life only concerned with autism or with being Sister Who? It only looks that way, I believe, to people who look at nothing else and avoid viewing just how multi-dimensional I truly am.

Among the significant developments of the past month is the probability that this newsletter may be translated into Spanish and made available to innumerable viewers of my ongoing television show, who reside in Central and South America. Clearly I need to acquire more skills in this language, but I know from experience just how long and how much personal investment learning a language may require. Regardless, I urge you to be the best expressions you can be.

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