

sister who's perspective

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Overview

Awareness seems to be one of the popular ideas of late and like most such ideas is widely discussed, but (to my observation) rarely understood. Certainly this issues essays are by no means the last word within this broader discussion, but hopefully they will open up some new avenues of honest inquiry and dialogue for you and those around you. It is my sincere hope that they are helpful to you.

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

Awareness of Safety

At numerous points within my life, specific attempts to add beauty to the world around me have been destroyed by bullies with greater resources, leaving me victimized and without any sense of safety or security. While it is perhaps commendable that I continue to persist in doing whatever good I can in spite of them, it is much more difficult to effectively address challenges of doctoral writing, video production, and so forth while attempting to simultaneously attend to my own emotional and psychological health.

I do recognize, as so eloquently phrased by Helen Keller, that "security is a fiction and does not exist in nature" and I consequently must accept that any blessing I currently experience might disappear within the next second due to forces beyond my control, but I am still searching for a way to prevent such awareness from developing into a sort of psychological paralysis. Perhaps this is at least partially due to my high-functioning autism, which has made a life-long daily struggle of avoiding feelings of being overwhelmed by life's myriad of details.

An additional typical symptom of autism is sleep disturbances, which for me equates to the experience of nightmares during more than half of all the nights in my life. Curiously, I did

not notice until a recent conversation with a new friend, that virtually all of these are concerned with a search for safety. Due to autism, I could vividly and clearly see the details of the terrifying dreams, but not the generality they all had in common.

So if safety and security are so non-existent and virtually impossible, why are they such a fundamental psychological need? What purpose does this hunger serve? From one perspective, it may be the ultimate carrot-dangling by a string from the end of a long pole, that inspires the mule in many whimsical illustrations to continue pulling the cart forward.

The mule doesn't know where it's going and may not even be paying any attention to what is being pulled. Perhaps the only awareness is of the desirability of the delicious food dangling in front of its face. As much as I would hope that humanity has evolved far beyond the thought processes of a mule, we may have more in common with such beasts than we'd like to admit.

More pertinent to the current topic, however, is that the mule gives little heed to potential dangers while pursuing the bright orange carrot. Similarly, when I first began riding my motorcycle on busy highways, it was very difficult to relax and concentrate on the journey itself, because my mind was often so distracted by real possibilities of life-threatening danger. Indeed, every time anyone drives a motorized vehicle of any description from one place to another, a myriad of tragic possibilities are both accepted and ignored. Excessive awareness could altogether prevent a journey.

Sometimes, in order to function, I must focus my awareness narrowly. At other times, the focus must be wider and more inclusive. Perhaps most important, is for the particular focus to be appropriate. Learning how, when, and where to focus, is a life-long process offering both individual and collective rewards.

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

Awareness of Ability

Pop psychology and promoters of affirmations seem to be generally thrilled with the witticism, "they can because they think they can," first penned by the Roman poet Virgil during the first century B.C. The so-called "Enlightenment" within European history chose a scientific and reasoned approach which could also be described as potentially cynical and limited. Somewhere between the two, lies the truth of a universe that includes both science and faith and acknowledges that while faith sometimes reaches too far, science often doesn't reach far enough.

To truly embrace awareness of my abilities, I must grant the possibility of abilities thus far undiscovered. Additionally, there are abilities that I do not currently possess, but that I may acquire through my ability to learn—as well as certain abilities that no amount of study will bring within my reach. It can nevertheless be inspiring to contemplate the existence within myself of undiscovered potential. A life without awareness, however, is never truly lived.

Having accomplished a certain awareness of ability, the next step involves the choices of where, when, what, how, and how much I invest in the development of which particular abilities. In the area of musical instruments, for example, I have noticed that (in general) the more time one spends with a particular instrument, the more one's abilities improve. I suspect a similar dynamic can be found within every other ability (that the more one does "it," the better one gets at doing "it").

A disconcerting reality, however, is that this dynamic applies to negative abilities just as much as to positive ones. The more a person lies, for example, the more expert that person becomes in the ability to deceive. The more someone avoids conflict rather than engaging and resolving it, the more adept one becomes at avoiding all conflict—including that which is necessary for growth and development.

More concisely, I do have the ability to be less than the combination that my known and unknown potential could create. I could decide at any point that the frustration, exhaustion, and pain of giving birth to new ideas, artistic works, and versions of myself are

simply too much and consequently decide to quit. Yet within every time that I have refused to quit until the particular accomplishment was made real, I have never once felt any regret nor thought to myself afterward that, given the opportunity to do it all again, I would choose not to do so. I cannot imagine choosing to be less than the greater person I have become, once the accomplishment is made real.

Yet in unfortunately numerous cases, I observe friends making exactly that choice—choosing to restrict their lives in response to threats or expectations imposed upon them by others. It's as if their faith in themselves has somehow been stolen and taken away from them, restricting them to a limited and shallow existence from that point onward. I could hope that my perception is mistaken and I would most definitely defend their right to make their own choices, but I cannot keep from mourning the loss of the creative and ambitious souls I previously knew them to be.

More succinctly, one cannot have the capacity to be aware of ability without a corresponding capacity to be aware of ability's absence. To this as well, however, there are two sides: one which recognizes the loss of ability previously possessed and the other which is filled with gratitude for having experienced the ability at all—especially since some people never do. At some point, we must all face the reality that everything this life on earth includes will at some point be described as past. The primary question then will be which side will define our awareness: the pain of loss or the blessing of gratitude.

To be fully aware of one's ability, one must be aware of both. In the awareness of loss and pain, we can learn what the true cost of particular accomplishments includes. Within the awareness of gratitude or accomplishment, we can learn a larger perspective of the unfolding of our individual and collective lives, that an amazing cornucopia of contributions, blessings, resources, and collaborators is very present within each and every moment.

It is not only that every one matters, but also that potentially every thing matters—because of the abilities of love and wisdom.

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

Awareness of Limitation

Perhaps the most important aspect of limitations to bear in mind, is that each and every one of them has the capacity to act as a magical portal to another world of infinite possibility. If all I see whenever someone opposes me in any way is the pain that is inflicted upon me, the interaction will be defined by limitation. If, conversely, I interpret a symbolic revelation of that person's deeper self—a clue to that one's personal history of how and perhaps even when he or she was hurt by someone else in the past—then new possibilities of collaboration and friendship may be within reach. This was powerfully illustrated within the movie "Powder" within a scene near the end of the movie, when the protagonist reminds a bully that the words he uses within that scene are an echo of words previously used during his own experience of abuse.

The problem of course (not having the extraordinary abilities of the protagonist of that movie) is that we cannot so easily perceive what past wound inspired a more present action. The person within whom the wound resides may even be so fearful of experiencing yet more pain that he or she opposes any otherwise curative intervention, in much the same way that wounded dogs, figuratively blinded by pain, are inclined to snap at anyone who comes near.

From a certain perspective, a part of who and what one is, gets stuck at the point in time at which the injury occurs and remains

"Every adversarial expression shows both brokenness and faithlessness, indicating both a past wound of some kind and an inability to believe in anything better. By a return to faith, liberation becomes a reality."

-- Sister Who

there until mental and emotional healing restores positive growth and development. It may be that the part of the person's mind and heart that has been injured is continuously reliving the incident, attempting to resolve the pain, but often in ways that are ineffective.

The invitation and opportunity that can nevertheless be found within such deep wounds, conversely, is that by working together and employing our best ingenuity and imagination, healing can finally begin. More concisely, awareness of limitation tells us exactly where to start digging for gold—where to start shoveling the dirt and debris aside in order to discover the underlying treasure.

What is not sanctioned by such hopefully well-intentioned explorations, however, is any sort of arrogance or naive dictatorial dominance. No one can legitimately ever claim that they know me better than I know myself, because no one except me knows the emotions, details, and interpretations that my mind has assigned to particular experiences of limitation. Others may suggest possibilities, but only I am able to identify which ones are correct and to thereafter respond constructively.

In contrast, we've all known individuals who were more or less addicted to denial in some area of their lives. Nothing is accomplished, however, by insisting that one is right, if the particular person has neither the interest nor the ability nor the resources to confront the particular challenge that is creating limitation within his or her life. The longer the particular limitation has been present, the more delicate its extraction will most likely be. Considering the myriad of others demands of daily life, addressing deeper wounds requires a more focused and protected mental, emotional, and perhaps even physical space within which to unfold. It is not helpful to be impatient, but neither is it helpful to procrastinate, just because it may turn out to be difficult, unpleasant, or socially questioned.

The wondrous thing about limitations, regardless, is that they themselves are limited; we have a standing invitation within such times to step out of it into a world of great possibility.

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

Awareness of Transformation

I'm sure that positive development would be much easier to appreciate if it would just appear in an instant, accompanied by a stage magician's sudden puff of smoke. Specifically because a large tree grows one tiny leaf at a time, however, no one seems to appreciate where and how the large tree appeared, unless they have been absent for many years while it was growing. It would therefore be reasonable to conclude that for those who remain immediately present and aware within their circumstances, life is measured much more by moments than by years. A manifestation of this for me is the perception that a long time has passed because of the number of moments, while for others the period of time has only been a few weeks.

Consequently, even from one day to the next, I sometimes feel like I am not the person I was even just yesterday; I am aware that the experiences which have occurred in the interim have changed me, sometimes in ways so significant that it may require a few more weeks to understand the full meaning of what exactly has occurred.

The resulting question, drawn from the Broadway musical "Bent," is whether one experiences 525,600 minutes or whether one experiences a year. It is not Time which changes from one perspective to the next, however, but rather perception.

Nonetheless, regardless of the particular perception, those who are aware of moving through changes logically have more ability to participate in navigational choices. Success or failure need not be accidents of fortune or misfortune, but could instead be the result of one's choices, awareness, active participation, and learning about ourselves, life, and Godde.

Like an ever-flowing river, we cannot decide whether or not the water will move around us, but we may be able to steer clear of certain rocks along the way. Alternatively, we might find some of the rocks to be large enough to serve as places to rest and reorient the journey; anything is possible. What is not possible, thankfully, is stagnation.

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

On a Personal Note

I don't seem to do anything half-hearted: when I'm healthy, I'm really healthy; on those rare occasions when I do get sick, I get really sick. As Murphy's law would have it, if sickness does strike, it will be within the most inconvenient of times. Throughout my life, I've faced a lot of things, but somehow what has terrified me the most is that long convulsion of sickness-induced regurgitation when one is unable to breathe. The general consensus seems to be that I somehow contracted an especially strong gastric virus of some kind. In any case, I seem to be slowly coming out of it, but everything will be about a week behind when I finish doing so. Ah, well, I like to think that things happen when they're supposed to happen and there may be unknown reasons for certain accomplishments to be delayed.

In spite of whatever adversity I have encountered, however, the 2014 calendar is complete and available within the website (www.SisterWho.com) or by postal mail. Six new episodes of the ongoing television show have been recorded and a very ambitious production schedule suggests that another thirty or more may be completed before the end of the year. Additionally, preparations for participation in The Conscious Christmas Festival at the Denver Merchandise Mart, November 15-17, are nearly finished too.

Even within the least supportive circumstances, good things continue to occur, if with wisdom and love, we persevere.

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

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