

sister who's perspective

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Overview

In keeping with this ministerial alter-ego being more or less my autistic voice and thus oriented to moving from details toward unity rather than vice versa (as would be the case for a neurotypical orientation), this month's essays seek to weave together contrasts and opposites toward greater wholeness. I earnestly pray that you will find them to be empowering in whatever ways are individually appropriate. Blessings. -- S.W.

A Unity of Diversity

Are we many or are we one? The only true answer is that we are both--individually and collectively. On both levels, however, the additional question is whether one and all are a combined and integrated entity symbiotically demonstrating love or instead convulsing in chaos. Merely verbalizing the former, it must be noted, will not make it so.

A unity which is no more than a claim, is a lie--abandoning the specific example of diversity to the probability of adversarial relationships. To truly be what it is, integrity must always have a backbone; a spine by which to stand up and be known. More concisely, it is only by joining hands that individuals truly become a circle.

Conversely, it is only by including and integrating sometimes-eccentric individuals that a circle encompasses an ever-larger space within which life is able to move and develop as needed. Nonetheless, certain individuals may be more challenging than others and no amount of effort will change the fact that certain personalities just don't mix. This is why "it takes a village" applies to much more than raising a child.

The hope is that within every village, there is someone who will be able to respond to any anomalous example that is ever present. If the members of the village have

so categorized each other that no room for innovation or ingenuity is left, however, it is not difficult to see how categorization is sometimes a devastatingly self-sabotaging dynamic. What one has done in the past, should never be interpreted as all that one can do; discovery of new abilities, aptitudes, and approaches is a life-long necessity.

Yet all of this occurs within individual lives--as if the unity of a single life is the most readily available metaphor for integrating sometimes extreme diversity. Part of that integration, however, is also integrating one's limits and constraints. No single person can do what can only be done by the combined efforts of the particular individuals any specific community encompasses.

An adversarial dynamic which seems to be surging within the current time, however, is abandonment. The power of unity, of solidarity, and of collaboration is radically diminished whenever a society consciously or unconsciously demonstrates a belief that certain persons don't matter. Any claim to value diversity is likewise made false, if there are examples of diversity which are allowed abundant experiences of being victimized.

I am aware of having chosen personal integrity over comfort and convenience many years ago when a primary relationship in my life ended. I had envisioned that association as a small demonstration of unity of diversity, but am now most saddened by indications that the nine years I invested are of little worth to the other person involved. I remain nonetheless unable to say that I made a mistake by leaving, because I continue to find that integrity writes its name into eternity in ways that comfort will never be able to do.

This emphasizes to me that at the heart of a unity of diversity, is an embrace of something larger than one's self, that holds the self to be a most valuable contributor.

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

A Multi-faceted Oneness

I don't know if many people realize consciously why a diamond is perceived as sparkling. The fact of the facets may be at least obvious, but what allows any one facet to appear brilliant, is specifically that it is immediately adjacent to a facet that--from a singular perspective--appears dark. It is thus the juxtaposition of light and dark and not the exclusive presence or absence of one or the other, which allows for such perception.

Applying this metaphorically to life's journey, raises the possibility that one must pass through dark times as well as bright ones, in order for the whole of life (one might even say the holiness of life) to sparkle and shine its beauty in every direction. Yet the singularity of the life experience belonging to a particular soul remains at the center of all of the intersections and convergences which are involved. As tempting as it may be to wish the dark times away (for which I have often prayerfully pleaded), I have to believe that the wisdom and love of the Divine understands the larger configuration and that it is specifically this understanding which allows divine love to tolerate human suffering--much like a loving parent allowing a child to make choices, experience painful consequences, and thus grow and mature.

The difference, of course, is that the parent can explain the lesson fully to the child thereafter, whereas communication with the Divine is much less concrete and much more vulnerable to misunderstanding. In the moment of struggle, still surrounded by nearly infinite possibility, it can be most difficult to know which particular interpretive facet will prove to be most empowering. All of them will bring light to the situation, but all possibilities of light do not have one and the same empowerment or light to bestow.

Oneness may thus be a quality of any experience, but this does not mean that all experiences lead to the same perception of oneness. If the Divine Itself is an example of multi-faceted oneness, then one must likewise anticipate perception of both dark and light facets, that all exist in singularly unique but nonetheless harmonious ways. I

recall at this point, words attributed to Max Weber: "If you understand it, it's not God."

So it is that I have a long-standing and very much ongoing argument with Godde regarding convergences of human suffering and divine love, but I try to accept that it is largely a matter of perspective. Specifically because the divine perspective is not fully available to me, I insist upon the right to honestly experience anger, frustration, and sadness while responding to awareness of human suffering. I think it must be the divine perspective specifically, which grants the strength to endure awareness of a loved one suffering and refrain from sabotaging the ultimately positive effects of the experience by hasty and impulsive intervention.

"Are you sure you don't want me to help you?" a parent may call. "I think this is something I need to do on my own," a wise youth might reply. Only after the struggle has concluded and an inventory of growth in wisdom and ability is made, can both be truly grateful for the absence of intervention that allowed the personal development to unfold.

During the experience, however, it may be difficult to even breathe, hoping and praying all the while for a successful outcome. I'm sure I've said it numerous times in the past, perhaps mostly because of the ways that so many wish to envision exclusively positive outcomes, but every physical birth of a human being is such a complex convergence of variables, that no true guarantee of success exists. The struggle begins and proceeds, but no one honestly knows how it will end.

Yet specifically because no one knows how it will end, giving up is never an acceptable choice. The possibility of success must be relentlessly pursued. As obvious as this may be within matters pertaining to the material world around us, this is the same stubborn determination which must be applied to spiritual matters as well, if miracles are to ever again happen.

Ultimately, we are the facets that allow the larger wholeness of life to shine with awe-inspiring brilliance and beauty.

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

An Integrated Complexity

The traditional marriage vows pledged commitment "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health," but it seems that most don't honestly envision the usually unpredictable fluctuation between all of these that follows. While I understand that no single coping strategy works for everyone and that even a particular strategy that was truly effective at least once, may not work the same way every time, the common thread running through this complex promise is that the persons involved will never stop trying. I strive, therefore, to remember during the more difficult times, to be the integrated person capable of making such a promise.

As much as I know how to deal with adversity and keep myself going, I also know how to notice and fully celebrate a moment of genuine love whenever it happens. The times I most wish for more of such moments, of course, is when they seem few and far between. Knowing only such moments, however, would cause me to wonder if I had inadvertently become short-sighted, lacking in compassion, apathetic, or complacent, since there are always others whose lives matter every bit as much as mine, but which may be temporarily overshadowed by pain.

Among the witticisms I composed many years ago, is the one that instructs, "Life is a collaborative effort: we all take turns being the one in need." I have also frequently expounded on the fact that most people wish to avoid taking their turn. An additional wrinkle to that conversation, are the times when people we admire must take their turns and we must go on loving and supporting them while they are not at their best.

Whether one places one's self on top of a

*"As much as I advocate
for having a choice,
reckless choices
always tend to become
regretted choices."*

-- Sister Who

pedestal or is placed there by others, there is not much room within such a circumstance to be a complete person or to have any kind of multi-dimensional life. A flat cardboard photo of me cannot breathe, sing, dance, or create in the ways that only I can, during the limited space of time my life affords. Time is merely the window through which all of these can be shared, before it's too late.

What is perhaps even more amazing, is how much can still be created within even the most unsuitable circumstances. Ignoring or trivializing such adversity, however, is not something a genuinely loving heart could ever do. Within such moments, it is not enough to sit in the audience and cheer; love is what drives such persons to their feet and moves them to stand with the soul that is bravely battling the moment of genesis.

The metaphor of physical birth is perhaps the most overused but equally the most complex phenomenon from which humanity may still be learning for millennia yet to come, but it must be remembered that while the transition is in process, no one knows for absolute certain how it will end. The number of variables which therein converge, is quite possibly incomprehensible. Blessed with an effective integration, however, the result is a new life of miraculous potential.

What is perhaps at least silly, when one finally notices it, is the supposition that this is the last time this little person will experience emerging as a new person within the various perceptions of others. In actuality, life is filled with successive moments of "coming out" as new and different, within various and sometimes radically contrasting situations. A perhaps universal hope and prayer, is that all such moments are welcomed, supported, and guided toward greater empowerment of the one at the center of the experience.

Yet none of that minimizes any of the struggle which must be embraced and overcome--no matter how much time and effort are required. Specifically because of individual uniqueness, joining hands with each other while such moments unfold, may be the greatest affirmation of life we ever do.

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

A Visionary Reality

I am often impatient with a current religious fad of "living [only] in the present," as if "now" were the only real existence. All of my contemplation and reading in this area, continues to insist that this obsession is far better at serving narcissism, greed, and stagnation than advancing the personal and collective growth of wisdom and love within humanity. Embodying the African word, "ubuntu," true development recognizes no competition between individuality and community, but rather requires symbiosis.

In a similar way, it is not that one must choose between past, present, and future, but rather that one must move toward greater understanding of how they are symbiotically interconnected. Perhaps the majority of accomplishments throughout my life, were only initiated because of a vision of future accomplishment that had sufficient inspirational strength to drive a daily routine or commitment to steps of development which were learned in the past. The most significant adversary throughout the process was usually that I was standing so close to the struggles of the present that it was often quite difficult to retain my grasp upon that future vision, which was throughout most of the process, somewhere beyond the horizon.

An additional adversarial circumstance I commonly encountered, was a predominant absence of friends and family willing to embrace the vision; essentially, I had to make the journey and live within a visionary reality--all alone. This remains profoundly confusing to me, considering how often I speak of people working together for both individual and communal accomplishment. I noticed throughout past studies of human history, however, that virtually all of the names I studied, were likewise individuals who were forced to do their work alone.

Yet humanity would not be what it now is without these contributions--making it clear that their present sacrifices ultimately honored the past and empowered the future.

Hopefully I will do so as well.

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

On a Personal Note

The past month has been a study of ways to do remarkable work within what appears to be the least conducive circumstances. I am now living within an apartment in Loveland, Colorado, because it was the only available option, while simultaneously being identified to me as "moving in the wrong direction." My faith is being severely tested by multiple disappointments and the absence of innumerable supports upon which I have relied in the past, but the only thing that makes any sense, is to persist.

So I've been wrestling almost constantly with definitions of faith, of divine love, and of a spiritually guided journey through life. I remain grateful for my team of canines, who care for virtually nothing except being with me every moment that they can. Sadly, it is unlikely that any more recognition of the holiday season will visit our household than the large poinsettia given by a friend, since all decorations are packed away and thus out of reach and I have no human family or community with whom to gather.

Be that as it may, I continue to pray for the return of a true sense of home for myself and my dogs, perhaps to reward us in some way for having survived the tribulations of the last four years of imposed wandering. Much has changed, but, as I have often remarked of late, "in one form or another, life goes on."

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

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