

sister who's perspective

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Overview

Being real is a matter of love, but it is also a matter of truth. Sometimes it involves the challenge of becoming aware, at other times it may involve getting distractions out of the way, and at yet still other times it is a question of perceiving from an ever-more-intelligent perspective. As we learn and grow, we not only see more than we did, we also see differently, perhaps, than we did. May this month's essays bring you new insights.

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

Authentically Alive

I'm not sure who said it first, but I have to completely agree that "life is not a dress rehearsal." Unlike the television show "Person of Interest," there are no opportunities to re-do an action or event that didn't turn out as hoped, which to some extent is what makes life what it is and also removes it from the category of things which can honestly be regarded as "safe." This idea is similarly presented by the book seller within the movie "The NeverEnding Story," when he explains that some stories are not safe; that they are real and not as easily dismissed as simply closing the book.

This does not, however, recommend being afraid, but rather places one in a position of being a co-creator of life experience, inviting conscious and active engagement with circumstances and opportunities, and accepting responsibility for whatever choices and/or contributions one makes. At the same time, however, this also does not make one omnipotent, specifically because of the myriad of other interests, agendas, choices, ideas, and perspectives which are contributed by others and which together collaboratively constitute the world within which we all live.

Yes, the world is a shared space and we cannot fully control all of the other participants,

but we are also not without the ability to affect or even alter (sometimes significantly) particular outcomes. As presented by the metaphorical movie just mentioned, we can help write the story by adding our intentions, contributions, and choices, thus empowering others to also carry the story even further.

Please note: none of this happens by accident. Being fully present--mentally, spiritually, emotionally, physically, socially, and so forth--sometimes involves a great amount of effort, time, and energy. For the most part, however, I have never had to worry about whether the resulting accomplishments are worth the effort. Using the metaphor of hiking up a mountain, it does indeed require a significant amount of time as well as tolerating adverse conditions, sore feet, sometimes getting soaked in one's own sweat, and even stumbling a little here and there along the way, but the view of the surrounding world and the constructive alterations in my spiritual state and self-perception are so priceless that I would eagerly do it again a thousand more times, given opportunity.

The particular circumstance or method varies from one individual to the next, but this is most concisely what is meant by being authentically alive: that mental, emotional, and spiritual state within which everything feels right and no justification is needed, for being whoever and whatever one truthfully is. There is freedom without apathy or disregard; the soul breathes in a way that infuses every atom of one's being with inspiration and finds joy in every happiness experienced by anyone anywhere; and there is nothing silly nor any reason to feel embarrassed about embracing faith in unseen spiritual realities beyond human comprehension, which are merely waiting to be discovered by poetry, intuition, or imagination.

If each finds something unique, a more complete picture of life may even emerge.

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

Authentically Verbal

Another way of contemplating this particular topic might be a deeper exploration of honesty--what it is, how it works, and why it's important--except that the focus of this essay is whether or how well one chooses to actually speak the words which will hopefully convey one's own internal understandings. As important as it is to know one's own answers to life's more difficult questions, relationships limp along in a diminished form whenever full understanding is lacking. The notion of disclosing more information or less information according to an opinion of whether the other person "needs to know" is, in most cases, presumptuous, arrogant, and self-sabotaging, specifically because this speculates about whether or how the other person will be able to appreciate and/or utilize the information presented. In many cases, friends and acquaintances have later told me of ways that comments I made and considered to be trivial were actually quite pivotal within their own thought and growth processes, thereby inspiring me to conclude that I often participate in others' growth without realizing that I do.

In choosing to be authentically verbal, I reach for the greatest possible congruity between the words I speak and the inner reality I experience. This serves many purposes, among which is diminishing the statement, "I had no idea you felt that way." Additionally, knowing the challenges with which any specific person is currently struggling, provides opportunities for the development of symbiotic relationships and even community. Within that is the ability to feel both valuable and valued by making contributions to the lives of others, as well as perceiving one's self as interconnected rather than isolated.

Being authentically verbal does not, however, happen without effort. Learning the complexities of languages and expanding one's vocabulary within any particular language is essential, if any sort of empowered fluency is to be demonstrated. From a certain perspective, there is no such thing as a master of any particular language, specifically because there is always more to learn.

In direct contrast to authenticity,

however, is the manipulation of words to avoid honest disclosure and secure some sort of perceived advantage. In reality, manipulation is not truly advantageous, because any specific situation is usually more complex than one's current understanding of it. In virtually all cases, there is more that could be known but will not be known, if the other is not invited to volunteer additional information. By adding additional intellectual strength, positive possibilities resulting from collaboration can be dramatically increased.

At the beginning of this entire process of communication, however, is the choice to disclose one's self truthfully, lovingly, and openly. If you do not truly know me and I do not truly know you, the ways within which we can be a blessing to each others' lives are very limited. Being authentically verbal is a means of allowing you to know me and me to know you that empowers both of us to make better things happen.

Another consideration that is both relevant and important, whether directly stated or merely implied, is the commitment to stand behind or remain true to whatever words one has chosen to speak; more concisely, to be "as good as [one's] word." If I have said that I am going to do something, then I am responsible to either actually do it or to notify all relevant persons if I change my mind or discover an inability to deliver what I promised. If I do any less, I erode my own authenticity and identify myself as less than completely trustworthy.

This is similarly why I chose to decline one or two writing opportunities in the past. I was told to submit some writing, but to understand that it may be edited in any way whatsoever, according to the editor's preferences--without any commitment to maintaining the integrity of the perspective I presented. I responded that if that's what the particular editor wanted to do, that he should sign his own name to the piece instead.

I choose my words carefully specifically because I wish them to be authentically mine; no word is chosen by accident and all have meaning. If you do not listen to the all of the words, you will not discover all of the meaning.

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

Authentically Moving

It is easy to complain about problems encountered within the daily-ness of life and it seems that there are many discouragements to openly discussing what is unpleasant or in any way undesirable. In perhaps a quiet sort of rebellion against such censorship, I allow for abundant discussion of negative things, but try to always respond with some form of "so what are you going to do?" I have found within my own life that until I respond--even if the response is purely symbolic--the particular challenge buzzes around inside my head, distracting me from dealing effectively with all other concerns. My response may be tentative and subject to further modification later, but a response must nonetheless be given.

I recall a quote attributed to Mother Theresa when she was accused of being exceptional, that it was not about being special, but rather a matter of going to a situation, seeing what one can do, and doing it. A brief glance at human history suggests that only a portion of the population will take the time to go to any particular situation or circumstance, a smaller number will perceive possibilities of constructive response, and only a tiny fraction will put their perceptions into action. I aspire to be among those exceptional people who put ideas and perceptions into action.

"Playing along" with what others insist is the correct response to a specific challenge, conversely, is the supreme example of action lacking in authenticity, if I do not truthfully agree that the particular action is the best response. At the heart of the matter is once again the dynamic of congruity (or the absence thereof); that is, making one's self aware of

"If one is unwilling or unable to compassionately and constructively respond to adversity, negativity, and pain, claims of spiritual superiority are not to be believed."

-- Sister Who

whether the action or movement expresses, echoes, or somehow resonates with the deepest beliefs, convictions, and values of one's spirit. More concisely, I live as I do, because of the understandings and beliefs in the most foundational parts of my soul.

What is perhaps most peculiar to note at this point, is how very many people pay no conscious attention to how they live at all--moving from one immediate need or impulse to the next without ever considering the persistent patterns that are becoming virtually embedded within their ongoing daily life experience. To move with authenticity, is to have at least some awareness of what discourages, inspires, empowers, or weakens one's soul and to respond with choices that empower ever greater possibilities. In a very real sense, one becomes the embodiment of particular truth.

As such, the value of authenticity is in providing the world around us with a unique glimpse of particular truth, to which it will no longer have direct access when we are gone--which is why it is so important to express our authenticity toward others, either directly or indirectly by creating a body of work which can exceed our physical lives. We are adding to the truth of the universe (hopefully in good ways) by truly being who we are, in a way that shines light, love, and wisdom into others' lives.

For myself at least, moving with purpose toward the embodiment of transcendent possibilities is inspiring. I occasionally meet individuals, however, whose experiences push them toward perceiving such depth as burdensome and laborious; they want things to be easy, casual, and superficial, perhaps to avoid becoming exhausted by the work involved. I suspect because of autism and its continuous engagement with excessive detail, I have never experienced the world in such ways and I would have to wonder whether life without such depth would seem real at all. I'm not sure the endless struggle to survive would be worthwhile, if no deeper meaning were possible. It is specifically because of the meanings I have found, that the endless struggle is made worthwhile. If this is truly my life's work, I choose to strive for the very best.

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

Authentically Being

I recall the profound question quietly slipped into the noisy ballroom scene within "The Sound of Music," when the baroness asks, "Where are you?" and the captain responds, "In a world that's disappearing."

Negatively, this invokes a sense of loss; positively, however, this identifies the captain as a bridge between one time and another, living within a time of transition. The same is true of each and every one of us. Specifically because the world is always changing and evolving from one era or collective way of being to the next, we are invited to be bridges by which future generations empower themselves with accumulated wisdom, without treating preceding forms as restrictions or barriers to renewal, creativity, and ingenuity.

The first and most important task of being, consequently, is being truly and fully alive--in ways that include, integrate, and transcend physical form, specifically because of life's inseparability from growth. What makes this so incredibly difficult, however, is life's apparent fondness for embracing the unfamiliar. Specifically because growth is a matter of going where we've never gone, doing what we've never done, and becoming what we've never been, we must be open to gazing into a mirror and seeing things we've never before seen--and responding with love and acceptance. In the more timeless sense of every moment of my life being already a potential reality, I must be ready to love myself in unfamiliar forms yet to be revealed within future times. The future me is just as much who I am as the present and past ones.

Striving to be the embodiment of someone else's expectations or projections, conversely, robs both myself and everyone else of the unique and perhaps divine light striving to shine through me. If that light brings challenges, questions, and mental or emotional discomfort, these may be the voices of angels by which further growth is guided toward more wondrous possibilities. We must therefore be careful to listen, whenever they come, to hear and heed such words as we individually will.

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

On a Personal Note

The move to New Hampshire was a long, tedious, and now familiar four-day trip and the additional journey to New York was difficult but completely successful, allowing me to reclaim all of the pieces of the Cathedral (including the seven concrete-and-wood benches), accessories of the portable chapel, the twelve-foot pew, and a large number of other resources.

Work on the new house in New Hampshire is proceeding well, but proving to be significantly more involved than was obvious within my brief earlier visit. Upgrades to wiring, plumbing, and heating all need to happen between now and autumn and I am trying to ready for the first-floor apartment for renting as quickly as I'm able (to provide money for annual property taxes).

I am addressing landscaping projects (to include removal of an old shed and rebuilding of the Cathedral and meditation labyrinth) and the question of whether or how God Space Sanctuary may be relocated to New Hampshire will hopefully be answered by the end of September at the latest. It is likely that all of this will exhaust available financial resources completely, but the money will be well-spent if all relevant needs are satisfied.

I also have ideas for transforming the living room into a studio for new episodes of "Sister Who Presents" and of course there is the 2016 calendar to consider soon too.

I think it's going to be a very busy year.

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

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