

sister who's perspective

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Overview

"Hold on," one often calls to whomever's around, when the road ahead looks bumpy; I even say that to Bedivere when we're traveling here and there on my motorcycle, in spite of the fact that he has no real way of doing so.

It seems that a big part of the problem, however, is not the bumps themselves, but rather the fear of their destructive potential.

This month's essays are thus an attempt to replace such fear with faith.

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

The Stability of Motion

Wherever I look, it seems that stability is experienced as reassuring and instability as threatening. Within times of radical global or environmental shifts and changes, therefore, it may be extremely helpful to broaden one's definitions of the forms in which stability is able to manifest; the ways in which we are able to honestly tell ourselves that everything's okay.

I do not panic when skiing at relatively high speeds down a mountainside, as long as the skis slide along smoothly and respond constructively to even the slightest pressure or shift of weight that I apply, so that I may direct my path between whatever obstacles lie ahead. In riding my motorcycle at even faster speeds within highway traffic situations, everything feels okay as long as the behaviors of my motorcycle and other vehicles remain mutually respectful, consistent, and (mostly) predictable. Finally, within sports games, a ball flying through the air toward one's self is no cause for alarm as long as the trajectory is predictably directional, the form of the ball is clearly seen, and one has sufficient ability to either catch the ball or step aside.

It is not any particular motion itself which terrifies, therefore, but rather the lack of belief that one can cope.

The stability of motion can therefore be found within choosing to dance rather than to stumble and fall. Remaining absolutely still, conversely, is impossible. Among the available responses, is that of learning how to dance with anything and everything that may ever cross one's path and thereby preparing one's self--as much as one can--for every imaginable outcome.

The problem with that, of course, is that life remains stubbornly unpredictable. Even those we love may unexpectedly become stuck in anger, depression, or fear in ways that are dangerous for everything and everyone nearby.

The only thing that makes any sense within such moments, is to keep dancing--transforming whatever occurs, into constructive formation of better moments to follow. To do any less is to be complicit in self-destruction.

Physical life is not going to last forever, no matter what one does. As natural as it may be to avoid pain and especially to avoid chronic or severe pain, the pain is never all there is; we must persevere in living for that which is larger and greater than the pain: the vast collective wholeness of our lives and being. The pain cannot be allowed to become blinding, if our lives are to retain any good meaning and purpose whatsoever.

In a sense, when pain becomes blinding, perspective has become paralyzed. It is never the case that nothing more remains to be seen, but rather that one has lost the ability (hopefully only temporarily) to truly see anything at all. Truly seeing pain, for example, must include perception of pain's limitations.

Similarly, truly seeing a person in pain or in need, must include seeing the hopes, dreams, struggles, and accomplishments the person has endured--just to accomplish as much as has been accomplished. It is these underlying motivations from which future surges of strength can ultimately be drawn.

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

The Stability of Leaning

In learning downhill skiing many years ago, I was instructed to "lean into the turn," specifically because that posture is what would cause the sharp edge of the ski to carve a desirable path through the underlying ice and snow. Within any moment that I leaned away from the direction I was sliding, disaster usually followed. This is similar to psychologist and author Scott Peck's observation that the primary characteristic of pseudo-community is that it strives to avoid conflict, while the primary characteristic of true community is that it strives to genuinely resolve conflict.

In constructively leaning into an opportunity for conflict, therefore, and thereby seeking a genuine resolution, a strong, healthy, and true sense of community is maintained--with all of the empowerment, stability, and beneficial effects that only true community is able to provide. The goal is consequently not avoidance of the conflict, but rather utilizing it toward the goal of genuine resolution of a particular challenge. If others are for whatever reason unwilling to join the effort, it remains possible to press forward as a community of one, while maintaining an open invitation to collaborators--instead of pushing away those who wish to help, as if the particular challenge were an object to be possessed rather than an opportunity to be shared. Sharing--even or especially our struggles--is how mutually empowering relationships are ultimately built.

Within architecture, the notion of stability that is specifically created by leaning one thing against another, is a very common element. It may be an A-frame house, the two sides of an arch, or the contrasting legs of a free-standing step-ladder; the result in every case is greater stability. If one were to discover such an object and wonder how it was able to stand, a careful examination of the object would presumably reveal the contrasting pieces leaning against each other. In a similar way, in carefully examining what allows our lives to remain stable within adversarial circumstances, it is probable that one will discover contrasting pieces leaning against each other.

Just as liberty requires responsibility and freedom depends upon self-discipline in

order to avoid giving opportunity to the worst within ourselves, a focus upon the future effectively prepares us for approaching challenges only when it is balanced by wise awareness of where we have been and what we have learned from the past. It is specifically by the integration of these two that we can find a truly good place to stand within the present.

As with skiing, however, this way of thinking is often contrary to common reactive habits and instincts. The primal instinct is to withdraw from that which feels in any way threatening or dangerous. Consequently, leaning into a challenge requires a wise and constructive choice and cannot be expected to occur accidentally. Until instruction had been provided, making the choice to lean into a turn while skiing, was not something I was able to do; the very thought of doing so had never occurred to me nor was there any easily accessible reason that it might.

So who were the teachers who provided such instruction and insight into skiing? At least two or three dozen different individuals, most of whom did not formally consider themselves to be teachers of anything at all.

We can all learn from each other, but this will not happen as long as we are standing evenly balanced on our own feet, rather than leaning into others' available wisdom. It is not that anyone else necessarily has the "right" answer for my particular concern, but rather that by hearing a diversity of answers and integrating them, I may be able to finally construct a new, effective, and unique form that is perfectly suited to who I truly am.

Leaning is not, however, purely parasitic, if one's own contributions are also being integrated. It is not just that I am leaning against you, but also that you are leaning against me. It is not just that I enjoy nutritious food at a potluck dinner, but that I also contributed something to the buffet table.

It is not just that the Divine has provided a miraculous world within which to live, but that this world welcomes positive individual and collective contributions, each leaning into the other as wisely as we can--and thereby creating a healthy, stable, and enduring planet.

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

The Stability of Becoming

In one way or another, most things destabilize and/or wear out. To maintain effectiveness, stable mental and emotional health, and basic physical functionality, one must embrace continuous processes of healing and renewal. More directly, we cannot remain who we have been; we must be always moving toward renewed versions of ourselves.

To the extent that renewal is ongoing, our abilities to cope remain stable and effective also. Children depend upon particular adults to provide certain essential resources. At some point, however, those particular adults will no longer be available. Consequently, it is imperative to either instruct children in ways to cope with that possibility or to create other mutually agreeable courses of action--specifically because the current circumstances will unavoidably change. To the extent that we are continuously engaged in becoming more capable and empowered than we currently are, this is not a serious problem.

To the extent that I also have a hope, an intention, and a plan related to my own becoming, the larger picture of my life retains a stability that protects me to varying degrees during times of self-doubt; during times when hopes are disappointed and plans and intentions need to be revised. It may sound very odd, but I have found that a disappointed hope is still better than no hope at all, if I consider every hope to be an ongoing project subject to constant revision and improvement.

There have unfortunately been many times within my life, however, within which all hopes, intentions, and plans were destroyed by circumstances beyond my control. In seeking to re-establish stability within such moments, what became clear to me was that it was not true that I had nothing; what I had was the opportunity for a new beginning; a persistent invitation from life itself to become something

*"Form must serve essence
in order to avoid the poison
of narcissism."*

-- Sister Who

more than I had ever been. In embracing my own becoming as wisely, constructively, and proactively as I could, the accomplishments which followed were ones I had never imagined to be possible--and resulted to some degree in the gradual re-establishment of stability within my life, sufficient to launch new hopes, intentions, and plans.

The most adversarial persons I have encountered along the way, curiously, were people who demonstrated resistance to their own constructive becoming. Indeed, it has still not ceased to amaze me, how committed certain individuals have been to maintaining their own brokenness--even to the point of driving others to repeat and thereby validate the negative past experiences which may have created the brokenness in the first place.

Major societal shifts are sometimes described metaphorically as earthquakes, but the curious thing about such metaphorical earthquakes is that they can all be prevented from being experienced as such. Through love, communication, and education, it is possible to experience such shifts peacefully, empoweringly, and collaboratively.

There is no societal shift, however, that will not be made worse by the threat, presence, or utilization of violence--which presumes competition where none needs to be. Sadly, there are individuals and administrators throughout our world who seem to know no other language--at least not yet. Irrational though it may be, I persist in believing in the ability to learn and in Life's ability to lead where one might otherwise never choose to go.

In the midst of such foreboding societal circumstances, it seems all the more important to celebrate each day of sunshine, each new creative work, each playtime with my dogs, and each new friendship that crosses my path. I do not need limit myself to being only the result of every negative perception and experience. As a living growing human being, I can choose to respond to any darkness by lighting more candles; I can respond to any exclusivity with more insistence upon its opposite; and I can embrace the positive healing invitations and opportunities of each unfolding moment of life.

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

The Stability of Instability

I recall the first time I put on my jump-boots, in preparation for the photo used on the September page of my 2013 calendar, and discovered that it was quite difficult to stand perfectly still. As long as I was willing to continuously shift from one foot to another, varying angle and placement accordingly, however, it was not difficult to remain upright and to avoid any sensation of being in danger.

What this symbolized for me within that moment was the imperative of being actively involved in life and living; that when all movement stops, we die; that within the endless instability is a sort of prompting to stay active and thereby to stay alive.

On a similar note, although I actually prefer small-town life in many ways (but am a bit too creative and innovative for any small town of which I'm aware), I once pointed out to someone the danger of the stability of small-town life becoming a sort of societal "rigor mortis" (the stiffening of a corpse shortly after the occurrence of physical death).

What offers even small towns the ability to maintain vitality, conversely, is the task of nurturing each anomalous or innovative individual within its respective geographical reach. While on one hand I must respect that such persons bring instability and change, on the other I feel a need to point out that such interactions bring possibilities of renewal and of endearing the particular town in all of its multi-generational reality to present and future populations. It is specifically the instability of growth, of each cell of our bodies reproducing itself again and again, which creates a mostly reliable expectation that physical life will go on.

It is specifically the perception that there is more to reality than meets the eye, that allows what we see, to potentially have mysterious transcendent meanings which make our any unavoidable struggles more tolerable--thereby granting our undiscovered potential the opportunity of another new day.

It is specifically because of wondrous, unpredictable, and mysterious possibilities that the horizon remains reliably worth pursuing.

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

On a Personal Note

I choose to remain a generous and compassionate person, but I readily concede that this choice will occasionally come at a high price. In the case of this past month, this was demonstrated by an attempt to help a friend in need who had mental and emotional issues beyond my ability to address. My attempts to bring closure to the interaction unfortunately generated thankfully minimal but nevertheless negative involvement of law enforcement personnel. In retrospect, I continue to wonder how such challenges could be addressed.

In regard to my canine family here, in spite of the event just described, Bedivere is in much better spirits than he has been since Gareth died, because of the recent additions of Percival (five months old) and Gawain (18 months old), both lab-shepherd mixes. The boys spend at least a couple hours each day playing happily all over the backyard.

Video production of three modern "morality plays" featuring myself is proceeding well and may possibly be completed by the end of October or shortly thereafter, to be quickly followed by production of a 2015 calendar.

The September metaphysical fair was a mixed experience, but mostly quite wonderful, as measured by the depth and substance of ministerial conversations and networking.

This coming Sunday will be the annual fundraiser of The Second Wind Fund (teen suicide prevention) at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds in Lakewood, Colorado.

Yes, I'm staying busy. May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

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*Sister Who a/k/a Rev. Denver NeVaar, MTS
3170 West Longfellow Pl., Denver, CO 80221
email: dn@SisterWho.com*

Internet website: <http://www.SisterWho.com>

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