

Sister Who's Perspective

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Life is a collaborative effort, encompassing more than we know. In a time of abundant "information overload," news, communication, and travel across great distances, we often talk at each other without listening, communicating, or understanding. Humanity needs its icons, but also its iconoclasts to grow beyond the good and bad qualities that now limit and describe us. The essences of both God and us remain, in the midst of questions, to be discovered, experienced, and expressed. Please share in this ongoing dialogue, remembering to indicate whether and how you wish to be identified. Blessings, love, and peace to you. ---Sister Who

Overview

In reflecting upon the work of Sister Who, I often find that the current task is that of increasing others' perception. Within past newsletters, I have spoken of seeing "multi-dimensionally," that is, to see the meaning and the relationships and the form of any particular person or thing.

An additional challenge within learning to see, is learning to manage and interpret distractions, of which life offers us far too many. It seems that within each moment is an inescapable process of sifting too much information, stimulus, language, or experience. It is easy to speak of prioritizing, but much more difficult to do it effectively--and prioritizing is only the beginning of harmonizing life's diverse components.

May the thoughts shared here empower you throughout the coming weeks, as you engage this continuous process of sifting and living.

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

The Distraction of Religiosity

When I first encountered alternative spiritual paths, I was eager to learn about the forms which were employed--to learn how to "do it right." Later, thankfully, I learned of the spirit and of the values which guided the creation and selection of each path's forms. It would have been easy at certain points, to get stuck in concerns about correct form, to the exclusion of ongoing joyous accomplishment.

In learning to waltz, it is common to count the steps/beats of music, to stare down at one's feet, and to move in a robotic fashion. When one has practiced the steps over and over, however, the correct steps seem to happen automatically and the mind's focus is no longer upon counting, but rather upon feeling the music. It could even be argued that one does not really dance, until one can dance without consciously thinking about dancing.

Similarly, to be genuinely spiritual involves acting from a place deep inside that is not dependent upon conscious thought or choice, but that, like dancing, has become instinctual.

I have often been involved in teaching others how to ski, but I know that once all of the explanations have been said, explaining further will just be a convenient excuse for the particular student to avoid actual practice--so I say what I need to say and then move far enough away that no further conversation is possible. The message I wish to convey by my departure is "Now it's time to work at actually doing it." I watch from a distance, however, in order to monitor the success of my student's attempts.

Infuriating to me, are people who make spiritual/religious claims and use endless discussion to prevent actual practice of their faith. Faith that has no effect upon how we live is neither genuine nor real. If such persons are sincere, they are sincerely lying to themselves and to everyone else--including God.

To have within one's heart a gift of understanding and insight, oriented to the manifestation of faith and love, and to leave it unexpressed while immersed within a world desperately in need of psychological, emotional, physical, and spiritual healing, is negligent and irresponsible--perhaps even evil.

It is not our faithfulness to our church meetings, our meditation sessions, or our disconnected superficially charitable volunteerism that provide essential spiritual integrity to our souls. If we are to be servants of truth, of light, of love, and of peace, then we must be willing to hug people in the trenches, use our rituals as tools and means to nurture healing and growth, and immerse ourselves in complex and difficult ongoing questions.

If we forget our individuality, forsake our tolerance of being questioned, and apathetically shrug off involvement with anyone who does not satisfy our ideas of what we think an ideal person should be, we will discover neither the beauty of each other nor the beauty of ourselves, and we will never notice the fingerprints of the Divine, scattered across the surfaces of everything all around us.

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

The Distraction of Consumerism

I recall many past holiday seasons, when the most important thing on my mind was to find the perfect gift for a particular loved one. For weeks, with all the best intentions, it seemed like nothing else really mattered. Unfortunately, this sometimes included my loved one himself. "Why can't we take a day off and go hiking together on Saturday?" "Because I still need to find your Christmas present." Caught within a capitalistic world of advertising, promotion, and monetary exchange, it was easy to forget that what my loved one wanted most was me.

Getting one's needs met does produce happiness and within our current era, this is greatly assisted by having adequate financial resources. Visiting interesting places expands one's perceptual horizons and suggests greater possibilities than perhaps we've ever before imagined. Having more resources than are needed for mere survival, can free one's attention toward significantly greater personal and social achievement. None of these, however, can effectively substitute for the fundamental presence of love, truth, and wisdom within one's life.

Growing up within an economically lower-middle-class household meant, among other things, that in order to satisfy various needs, I had to discover methods which did not depend upon money. I've lost count of the number of times I've met people who, not having had this experience, could not imagine resolving a particular challenge without a major influx of cash. Whenever I insisted that alternatives do in fact exist, they almost accused me of either lying or being delusional. Because they had never discovered or seen such alternatives, they could not believe that such things actually existed.

Consumerism may thus distract us from being able to see each other and each others' life experiences; from seeing the ways in which our experiences have been similar or different, common or unique. When our only response to a challenge is the expectation that we will go to a particular store and buy the answer, however, we are also in danger of losing the abilities to think, to explore, and to discover--perhaps even the ability to create. The forward march of humanity through time, is absolutely dependent upon continuous and continually new forms of creativity--often from apparently unqualified persons.

As much as it can be legitimately argued

that, in general, we have only changed the forms of our lives and not the fundamental challenges of harmonious relationship, sustainability, and symbiotic giving and receiving, there have always been a few within every generation who gave the rest of us hope for a better tomorrow. As much as the majority of humanity within every age has resembled lemmings marching to the sea, there have always been a few who saw beyond such generalities to the underlying principles upon which they could build greater meaning, language, understanding, collaboration, and possibilities.

Within the moments of immediate struggle to create within a very uncreative world, to live within a world that was dying, to find a reason to smile through their tears, and to remain sane when everyone else was crazy, such persons were virtually invisible to others and sometimes even to themselves. They were not trying to be special; they were simply being themselves. Later generations of humanity were more often the ones to recognize how special these unique persons were and how essential the contributions left behind were to better ways of living.

You or I or anyone could be special, but this may not be discovered until after we're gone. If we live within the possibility of being special, however, doing whatever good we can whenever there is opportunity, the long-term effects could be virtually miraculous. No one would then ever have to ask whether or not our struggles were worth the adversity and pain we endured in order to do whatever our hearts told us we needed to do.

The biggest threat of the distraction of consumerism, ultimately, is that it may prevent us from seeing, hearing, or discovering what our hearts tell us that we need to do. If consumerism prevents us from the basic task of loving others and ourselves in healthy and appropriate ways, what greater evil among the effects of consumerism is there to name?

If consumerism prevents us from valuing the traditions, heirlooms, knowledge, and insight of those who preceded us, who wrestled with the same basic questions we ourselves now face, then it has reduced us to a significant degree of tunnel-vision and greatly restricted rather than increased our possibilities and potentiality.

If consumerism prevents us from seeing the most valuable resource of all--the truth of each other--then we will stumble into the future like one who is tragically blind to everything along the way.

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

The Distraction of Capitalism

A common reason for working toward greater economic advantage, is to improve the quality of life. "If I have a bigger paycheck, a better investment, or a greater profit," the reasoning says, "I will finally be able to relax and enjoy life. So why are so few who have such things enjoying life at all (beyond an occasional moment, I mean)? I suspect the answer rests within the rediscovery of that which the distraction of capitalism hides from view.

Within the classic movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, a favorite line which occurs toward the end of the story, is the one during which the dog Toto grabs a hold of a curtain and begins to pull it to the side, revealing the man within, who is operating the controls which produce all of the theatrical effects which accompany appearances of the wizard. "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain," a voice booms through the loudspeakers.

Countless reviewers have judged the man in this scene rather harshly, labeling him a con man, a cheat, a huckster, a charlatan, and a fraud. I suggest he's actually an angel who does not know that he is an angel. The ministry which he unselfishly immediately performs, having been exposed, is to help the protagonists discover the distinctly empowering truth of themselves.

He explains also that he became the so-called wizard by accepting a position of employment because of a particular experience of being in need. I suggest that the curtain which concealed the true man from everyone around him and finally also from himself, may as well have been made of dollar bills all sewn together. The employment of being the wizard did not bring him closer to the truth of who he was or what he could become, but rather provided a distraction by which his ignorance of these insights could be hidden.

It is specifically these insights, however, which empower the energy of life within each of us. It was only when he stopped trying to be more

*"To be fully present
without imposing dogma,
is to serve that moment
with the fullness
of one's creative potential."*

-- Sister Who

than he was, that the wizard discovered the wonders of what he could do to give people new ways of perceiving and understanding themselves and their lives. It was only when he embraced his simplicity and his honesty as well as his (albeit limited) ability, that he was finally able to truly help others. It was only when all financial, employment, and profit-oriented concerns were set aside, that relationships of love could finally shine their life-giving light upon everyone present.

Capitalism is a system which was created to satisfy a need experienced by human society. As long as it functioned as a tool and a servant of human society, all was well. When the tool became the goal, however, humanity had once again chosen an idol over a relationship with a living spirit that is the embodiment of greatest love and wisdom. Like the man behind the curtain, we sometimes lose sight of the fact it is not the combination of special effects and theatrical devices we employ to resolve challenges that is the miracle-worker, but rather it is ourselves.

Capitalism has neither values, nor principles, nor morals upon which to base its decisions, nor a brain with which to consider extenuating circumstances, unknown variables, or special conditions. These vital ingredients must come from us. If they do not, a brainless, valueless, unprincipled, unfeeling, inconsiderate, immoral, and insensitive system with no concern beyond its own self-maintenance, will become the master, use us as its servants, victimize us in countless ways, and reduce life to little more than the interconnected energy-producing matrix, described within the movie of the same name.

Some refer to the human combination of values, principles, morals, decisions, thoughts, personality, and feelings as the "soul" (of which there are as many infinitely diverse examples as there are people). Specifically because the machines within the world of the movie, "*Matrix*," could not generate the energy of life, they had to harvest it from human beings. When we neglect the care of our souls and allow that channel of life energy to wither within us, we too become little more than complex machines.

When we return capitalism (and every other economic system) to being a servant rather than a master of life and once again embrace the wise and loving work that only we ourselves can do, wondrous miracles of healing are again not only possible, but also probable.

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

The Perception of Interconnectedness

When love and wisdom are the primary magnetic poles that order and guide the movements and orientations of my life, allowing me to see tools as being tools and positive interrelationship as a most worthy goal, I will have finally what is best, holy, and sacred within myself and the divine spark within will finally shine its healing light throughout my life.

We live within a world filled with possibilities for distraction. From one perspective, we see adversarial relationships and use the metaphor of life as an ongoing battle. As countless voices call for attention, we must also decide which battle to embrace and which to leave for later (or never).

An equally available but perhaps more difficult perspective, is that those voices which seem most adversarial, are actually trying to communicate deeper truths which challenge me to grow in ways that are at the least uncomfortable and at the most quite painful, during the moment of growth. Yet there is empowerment to be found within embracing the truth of myself and of my world, much as there is empowerment to be found within intelligently done physical exercise. As I first stated many years ago, "Whoever wants the muscles, must lift the weight."

Of the most important weights to lift, if we are to ever have the muscles to fully live, is the awareness and understanding that everything is interconnected--that we are inseparably and unavoidably part of each other. To love my enemy only makes sense if I understand that my enemy is another part of myself. To have the muscles to fully live life, I must embrace the challenges that matter, whenever I have opportunity to do so.

This includes continuously remembering my interconnection with that which is above or beyond me, offering me wisdom and love within the riddles and metaphors all around me. Whether I conceive of the universe in a scientific, philosophical, or spiritual way, what matters is that I understand to at least some minimal degree my place within an overall spectrum--that I am between something less developed, loving, and wise than myself and something more developed, loving, and wise than myself. I am also growing and must continue to do so, if I am ever to discover the infinite rainbow of possibilities I encompass--both individually and in collaboration with others; as a universal family.

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

On a Personal Note

Another busy month of intense struggle, but also noteworthy progress. The pickup truck was sold and the money used to purchase my airfare to Cologne, Germany for the Gay Games in August, to once more compete in Bodybuilding (which means I'm back in training). The Toyota 4Runner is repaired and estimated at 80% reliable. The motorcycle mechanic thinks he has finally discovered the source of electrical problems and is in process of completing corresponding repairs.

Video production was again sabotaged by uncooperative audio equipment, but a new configuration which excludes my computer promises to be more reliable. The new set-up has been tested and seems to work well, but will have opportunity to prove itself in practice on January 31. All positive thoughts and prayers on that day are very much appreciated. Allowing that the additional set-back may have also been an opportunity to make further improvements to the set, I have now completed a new backdrop curtain which effectively addresses some of the previously unresolved lighting challenges related to wearing white-face makeup and black ritual garb. The introduction and set of new shows will thus have a new look, from start to finish.

My doctoral writing is progressing and I will also be attending a required conference in Dallas, Texas, during the third week of this month, during which I hope to get a significant amount of additional writing accomplished. For anyone interested, a copy of my first doctoral paper, "The Development of Symbiotic Community," is now available by email, in MS-Word ".doc" file format.

Please remember that the new calendar, "Interconnection in 2010" is now available by request, free of charge, to be sent by postal mail.

All music for a third album of original songs, "Along the Way," has been completed. I hope to record and complete the album within the next four weeks and anticipate an exceptional finished work.

May God's blessings, love, and peace be with you now and always, *Sister Who*

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