

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

Transitions are virtually never comfortable and insulating one's self from the reality of any particular transition through money, distance, or distraction should never be more than a momentary coping mechanism. Those who are suffering are an extension of ourselves. Similarly, a victory for one is only truly a victory if its blessings somehow extend to touch as many other lives as possible. To do any less would be pathological narcissism (destructive selfishness).

Within this month's essays, I hope you will find empowerment for your movement through whatever transitions cross your path. Growth itself is unending transition; even dying is transition. Transition will happen; it's up to us to make it good.

If there is ever anything you would like to discuss with me more directly, please do not hesitate to let me know that as well.

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

Transitioning Inward

What? Do you mean to say that I'm not already there? Yes, no matter how far we've come or how much we've experienced, there is always more to learn—all around and deep within us as well.

This was first presented to me when I was about seven years old, while watching the conclusion of an animation of Dr. Suess' book, "Horton Hears a Who." The population living on that speck of dust, having been spared annihilation by the successful persuasion of the citizens of Horton's world of their reality, are confronted with the probability of an even tinier population on an even tinier speck of dust—who are also calling for help from unknown persons larger than themselves.

An important lesson within this story is how very important tiny things are—if for no other reason than for the qualities of wisdom, mercy, humility, generosity, benevolence, gentleness, kindness, faith, and patience that interaction with these smaller worlds unavoidably requires.

By involving himself in struggles for the

welfare of the people living on the dust speck, Horton became more Christ-like—engaging in self-sacrifice, kindness, humility, commitment, and a host of other qualities of personal virtue. More concisely, Horton became a better elephant by involving himself in the struggles of these tiny other people, who were so small that he could never hope to directly even see them; Horton became more than he had been before the experience occurred.

The transition inward, as in the story of Horton and the Who's, begins with finding adequate faith to believe that such things exist at all. The transition toward nurturing one's soul, similarly, must begin with believing that one's soul does in fact exist. Having established that, the next step is to recognize that the soul needs to be nurtured in order to be alive and consequently that one must learn which things are nurturing and which things are adversarial to the life of one's soul.

An essential corollary to this inward journey is outward expression. If there is no outward evidence of the inward journey, one will have significant difficulty proving (even to one's self) that the inward journey ever happened at all. As Horton made his inward journey, developing faith that people of some description really did live on that tiny dust speck, everything about his daily life was changed. Any successful inward journey will likewise produce an external change. The reverse, however, is not necessarily true; an outward change does not always indicate an inward journey.

What remains once we have pondered and acted upon such things in whatever ways we are able, is that life is unfolding, that the unseen world of spirit is real, and that love is common to all such dimensions—but to truly know that, we must find the courage to live from that place of inner truth. The transition inward is thus the task of learning to live outward in a manner that makes the inner principles and commitments positively real and obvious.

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

Transitioning Outward

It is easy when disappointment and betrayal of trust happens, to betray our own faith in relationships and to attempt to live in isolation—but it never works. Interdependence is inescapable.

The magic of an individual who is multi-dimensional, whole, and complete, is that the essences of both inner and outer realities are equally present and harmoniously integrated. One of the primary challenges of the present age, is that humanity, individually and collectively, is, in general, neither whole nor complete. Life is often, metaphorically, like being the only sane person trapped within an asylum for the insane, invited thereby to do whatever we can to encourage the mental and emotional healing of those around us.

The transition which needs to happen is to return to being people of faith—individuals who believe in something bigger than themselves and much bigger than the limits of human theology can ever describe. Part of that something bigger, is the collective identity we form by acting together. In the words of Erik Weihenmayer, the first blind person to climb to the summit of Mount Everest (5/25/01), "When we join our hands to those around us, we can do even better than transforming our own lives, we can transform the very face of the earth."

Another part of that something bigger is the transcendent energy that some of us call "God." It is not so important to me what name any particular person uses. Remarkably, perhaps, nearly all of the Atheists whom I've met, impressed me as being remarkably spiritually alive and aware. In practice, therefore, it seems to me that the categorical label of "atheist" most accurately indicates an adversarial attitude toward historical and societal religious institutions. In and of itself, an adversarial attitude toward institutionalized religion requires no specific opinion at all, toward that which is truly the embodiment of wisdom and love which seems to balance and maintain every detail of the universe within which we all live.

Transitioning outward, therefore, is, among other things, about getting beyond the labels and categories to a full embrace of truth that is (in many cases) beyond human comprehension. The most common experience of this, regardless of whichever context within which it occurs, is the emotion of awe. When people experience awe, there is a sense in which they experience God, but it may be a perception of God which is beyond the

descriptive capabilities of one's own (or any other) language and easily beyond the limits of formalized theological description.

As I often insisted while in graduate school, "if God is no bigger than human theology, then God is not big enough to be God." Transitioning outward is allowing within my limited human mind and heart, the idea that no matter how indescribable or incomprehensible, God nevertheless exists and beckons me toward a larger universe than any I have thus far known. Within such mysterious but nevertheless real perceptions, size is irrelevant and distance is a linguistic necessity but not an objective reality.

The reason this is so important to understand, I think, is that this larger universe is as close as my own fingertips. As noted within the movie, "Step Mom," by Susan Sarandon's character attempting to explain her impending death to her son, "Just because you can't see it, doesn't mean it's not there." The effect of any action of love, of patience, of empathy, and so on, therefore, reverberates outward through time and space, having positive effects we may never directly observe but which are essential to the lives of innumerable others.

An important qualification at this point, is that we ourselves are transitioning outward by direct involvement in whatever ways are within our means. It is not enough to sit in complete safety and send no more than a prayer outward, when the physical bodies we have been given are capable of so much more. The energy of life—within ourselves, within other people, and within the universe as a whole—needs far more than the bread crumbs that fall from our tables.

Transitioning outward, among other things, means coming to an understanding that there is some part of myself to be discovered within each person whom I meet and within each experience I genuinely have opportunity to do. To fail to respond, is to leave perhaps the best parts of myself undiscovered. If I wait too long, I may even run out of time altogether, in which case I can only hope that someone else is able to make the discovery that I neglected both to make and to share with those around me.

When I do fail, of course—which I will from time to time—transitioning outward is about finding the grace to forgive and to try again. When others fail, I must pray for their ability to try again also.

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

Transitioning Downward

I confess that I am often weary of exhortations to "raise one's vibration" by various well-intentioned spiritual and philosophical teachers, because virtually none of them have included any exhortation to also be grounded in love, in wisdom, in interdependence, and in relationship. I sometimes wonder if, for some, the ascent into a higher vibrational state has also been an ascent into isolation and disconnection. The promise seems to be that realms of higher vibration are enormously populated, but, initially at least, everyone and everything there would be strange and unfamiliar to me. Is there really no love, no interconnection, and no relationship here to give this earthly life at least a chance of being meaningful and ultimately empowering?

Transitioning downward, therefore, is about feeling our roots and coming to an understanding of the foundation the past can provide for the present. It's about remaining aware of those upon whom we can call in time of need—who will also feel neglected and unloved if we do not call upon them in time of need and give them the chance to help us. Similarly, transitioning downward is about nurturing benevolence and generosity, about learning how to empower the needy without enabling their challenges to indefinitely remain oppressive forces within their lives.

Transitioning downward is not merely concerned with nurturing one's own roots, but also with nurturing the roots of everyone else too. In order to nurture others' roots, however, one must love them enough to know their leaves as well. In failing to know the leaves, one cannot know what tasks or substances the roots must be engineered to support.

Like all transitions, transitioning downward is a journey of discovery. Challenges arise in response to each step along the way, calling forth abilities and ingenuity we never realized we had;

*"The one who wins all alone,
in truth,
has won nothing at all;
a victory is not a victory
until it is shared."*

--Sister Who

bringing to light resources or obstacles we never expected to find. An inspection of the basement of a house, for example, may illuminate cracks in the foundation which will become much worse without appropriate attention and care. Perhaps unwelcome visitors have found their way in and are doing significant damage to the support beams of the house. Perhaps the climate itself is too damp or poisoned in some way that threatens the longevity of the structure. Our own vigilance, honest perception, and responsiveness are frequently the best weapons we have. Transitioning downward, in this sense, is an act of embracing the truth that has the power to set us free to pursue wondrously beautiful future dreams—instead of placing ourselves on a collision course with disaster.

Basements have often regarded as frightening places, however, perhaps because of possibilities darkness, vermin, decay, and so forth. The point of mentioning this is that transitioning downward, like every other transition or journey, requires courage and perseverance—neither of which is synonymous with the absence of fear. It is quite possible and perhaps even normal to feel both fear and courage at the same time. What makes victors victorious is that they keep moving forward, no matter what they feel.

The most important qualities to have within such a journey, therefore, is faith that there is something good to be accomplished, hope that some method or another will succeed, and love that provides a reason for making the journey in the first place.

If I did not love the house, those who live within it, or those who will presumably benefit from the work that I do within making the journey, I could not continue. If I had no hope that the strategy being used could succeed, I could not continue. If I had no faith that the accomplishment would make a positive difference, my personal sacrifice would be completely in vain.

If strategies are modified a dozen times along the way, still the journey continues because of faith, of hope, and of love—the three abiding qualities of all human spirituality. So downward and inward and outward I will journey, striving to create the broadest possible parameters for the miracle of life within me, within those whom I love, and within all of my natural relations—who although at times dysfunctional, are still family.

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

Transitioning Upward

As much as I am not afraid of death, I seem to remain very adverse to pain or injuries that could create limitation. Perhaps that is because I trust God more than I trust the American health care system. All that being said, I am in no hurry to make the final transition upward until I have accomplished as much good here on earth as I possibly can. What better way is there to express gratitude for the gift of life itself?

My concern in addressing the challenge of transitioning upward is that we need to remember that this life—this physical world—is not all there is. At some point we will each be leaving. Human bodies (in my opinion, at least) were not designed to be immortal. Remaining within a human body eternally would leave our additional spiritual reality neglected at best. Additionally, there is only just so much that any human life can encompass.

When I turn my mind to the challenge of transitioning upward, I think what I am trying to do is to more fully integrate awareness of the unseen world with awareness of the material world all around me. The absence of certainty about the unseen world works both ways, however, telling me on one hand that while I can't prove the existence of that which is spiritual, neither can I disprove its existence.

Transitioning upward is thus a matter of developing one's subjective certainty to the extent that it begins to empower one's life. Within the upward transition, I must accept that my answers may only be my own answers and that my answers may not necessarily work for anyone else. I'm not sure that this is a problem, as long as everyone else is also able to find answers that work for themselves.

An important consideration to keep in mind is that all answers are tentative, pending the arrival of new information. Because faith journeys are relationships rather than scientific formulas, language and interpersonal dynamics are always evolving. This fact could not be otherwise and still include genuine growth—and we are growing; that much is absolutely plain.

All things considered, the most important thing to remember about transitioning upward is that we can never be complete until we are able to love that which is beyond ourselves—and that we cannot do that until we genuinely love ourselves.

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

On a Personal Note

It has been a month of intense work in many directions, of numerous challenges, and of significant accomplishments.

The portable chapel is almost ready for its appearance at the annual People's Fair, here in Denver, Colorado, on Saturday, June 4, from 10 a.m. until 7 p.m. and Sunday, June 5, from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m., in Civic Center Park. The specific location, for anyone who is able to attend, will be near the northwest corner of the Fair.

Preparations have been completed for a live hour-long call-in television special entitled "Sister Who: Live and on your Screen!" The date and time are Tuesday, June 7, 7-8 p.m. Anyone who wishes to contribute a question or comment by phone during that time may call 720-222-0158. There are three viewing options:

- (1) Comcast Channel 56 within Denver County
- (2) www.DenverOpenMedia.org/LiveStream
- (3) a limited number of cost-free seats are available within the studio (which is wheel-chair accessible). Seats can be reserved by phoning 303-427-5252 or emailing dn@sisterwho.com.

In the interest of creating new possibilities of communication, I finally decided to create a Facebook profile, but since I could not do so under the name of Sister Who (sister is considered a title and thus cannot be used within the "name" field of the form), my profile there has been created under my legal name of Denver NeVaar. It has brought an interesting flow of information into my life, but I'm still figuring out how to use this new resource to its best advantage.

Eighteen more episodes of "Sister Who Presents" have already been planned and another six beyond that are distinct possibilities. How often I wish for an administrative assistant to manage the associated logistical tasks!

In matters of personal relationships, the past few weeks have been a bit unsettling, but I continue to reach for wise and loving choices.

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

Subscription Information:

"Sister Who's Perspective" is a free monthly newsletter. If you have appreciated this newsletter, please consider making a donation to empower the work to continue. (Make checks payable to Denver NeVaar).

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