

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 Godde 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

Reflecting upon timeless wisdom originally penned by Henry S. Haskins, that "What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are tiny matters, compared to what lies within us," there is always more to discover by looking inward. A curious paradox of life, however, is that our inward vision can be specifically empowered by genuinely perceiving and responding to all that is around us. Yet while both inward and outward vision are essential, it is also true that neither can substitute for the other.

The metaphors of this month's newsletter are intended not to dictate what answers are correct for you, but rather to provide new ways of seeing potential and ability that you may not have realized you have. What exactly you will discover as you continue on your own unique journey of personal growth, of course, only time will tell.

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

Each One an Orchestra

I apologize to the unknown author, but I was not able to locate the source of an expression I overheard quite a number of years ago, which basically expressed that the creation of an orchestra does not require the annihilation of violins (or any other instrument). More directly, neither playing harmoniously within an orchestra nor making one's unique contribution to a larger collection of voices, requires any particular voice to become anything other than its true self. In fact, it is various unique aspects and abilities that make each individual voice all the more valuable to the collective chorus of instruments. The question which remains, unfortunately, is whether within each such instance the orchestra will be willing to receive and to integrate the particular contribution.

The variety of thoughts that move through one's head and the diversity of activities that traverse one's life-path each day, are like an orchestra seeking its own kind of harmony. It is not necessary to censor any of the thoughts, if the

various thoughts can be brought into harmonious collaboration. Timing, placement, intensity, and rhythm can all help to turn an annoying internal distraction into an effective transition to something even better. It is not necessary to decide which to include or to exclude, if one can instead devise effective methods of integration.

Once again, the task begins with love. One must love the particular quality enough to listen to it, to get to know it, and to seek to constructively include it. Including a quality in a patronizing manner, however, demonstrates neither inclusivity nor love. The lies cloaked within patronizing relational dynamics, will ultimately be wounding and not empowering when truth comes out—which it always does.

It is not, after all, mere tolerance that the members of the orchestra must seek, but rather an intelligent and active valuing of each and every resource. I am aware of qualities within myself which, in all honesty, I am frequently tempted to eliminate. In some cases this is a point of personal growth and the elimination of bad habits or addictive behaviors is genuinely wise. In other cases, however, the reason I wish to eliminate the particular quality, I must concede, is that I do not understand the quality.

I am not, for example, very good at dealing with frustration—in fact, I think I behave very badly in this area. When I have worked very hard toward a particular outcome and my efforts meet with more failure than success, it is understandable if I am upset because my efforts are being devalued, creating an experience of loss. A contrasting voice is needed, however, to alert me to what is happening, as my emotions begin to spiral out of control.

I must learn, therefore, to empower my internal orchestral conductor to notice such moments and to act quickly to call the orchestra back to harmony—perhaps with the aid of an anomalous voice that somehow rises above the din, if I have wisely trained myself to listen.

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

Each One a Community

Before I begin, please let me be clear that nothing within the following essay's discussion should be interpreted as insensitivity toward those who struggle with genuine multiple-personality disorder, which is a serious and daunting mental condition. Without going to such extremes, however, there is a sense within which multiple and contrasting perspectives exist within each of us. As much as being holistically healthy recommends effective integration of the entire spectrum of thoughts and emotions within ourselves, it can also be helpful to consider each thought and feeling individually, as members of a community who occasionally have interests and needs which appear to be competing for attention.

The question "how are you" has always been difficult for me, specifically because I have always found myself to be unusually aware of the diversity of feelings and thoughts within myself. Sometimes while one aspect or emotion is weary, another is restless. Constructively responding to them both at the same time requires a certain wisdom about inter-relational dynamics that took a long time to learn (and I am still learning).

Drawing from the wisdom of the author and psychologist Scott Peck, however, that a true community is oriented around conflict resolution and a pseudo community is oriented around conflict avoidance, I know that it is important to discount neither emotion involved within any specific internal conflict. Each has legitimate reasons for its presence, its state, and its goals. The resulting task, however, is the search for the answer that satisfies all concerns—in contemporary language, the "win-win" solution.

It would be easy to overlook those internal voices and impulses which initially appear to be inconvenient, annoying, unimportant, or somehow "out of synch" with the rest of the internal community. To do so, however, would ultimately impoverish that community, leaving it less equipped to deal with present and future challenges. Whether or not one believes in a transcendent spiritual being external to one's self, this is where setting aside time for prayer and/or meditation can create space for internal dialogues to more effectively address whatever issues arise.

There currently seem to be a great many people, however, who expect every community, person, and voice to be self-regulating—as if self-discipline and self-development were out-dated and quaint concerns of previous generations—

instead of being every bit as essential to holistic health as they ever were. Without self-discipline, liberty leads to enslavement; without self-development, mere existence leads to stagnation. Life is the opportunity and invitation to transcend both of these while there is still time to do so.

In this way, I find that life includes a lot of hard work, but I have never regretted doing any such work, because of the rewards that creating a more empowered sense of self has produced. For those who have not seen any such rewards, however, it is easier to speculate that neither win-win solutions nor emotional and psychological rewards actually exist. I can assure you that they do, but until you see them for yourself, my words will likely be no more than an intellectual idea.

To learn of the existence of win-win solutions and non-material rewards, however, it was necessary for me to listen to all of the voices within my internal community—especially those to whom it was most unpleasant to listen. During classes in pastoral counseling while pursuing a Masters degree in Theological Studies, it seemed that every example of an addiction that was named, was actually an attempt to silence or run from such voices instead of listening to them. If I had not held myself to listening, however, I would never have acquired whatever wisdom could therein be found. Clearly, I chose to embrace the wisdom, rather than to run.

I don't think the phrase is true that "one can never go home again," but the distinction which has been overlooked within the inspiration for that phrase is that one can never go home again in the same form as one left. Venturing out from a community will inevitably lead to wisdom and experience the particular community could not produce. The formation of a person, a city, a state, a nation, or a world thus requires a community of communities of communities of communities of communities. In a sense, all of us together are an illustration of genuine infinity in diversity of possibility, form, and expression.

All of this places the attainment of a goal of complete comprehension very, very far into the future. This is not a discouragement to continuing the journey, however, but rather recommends humility and open-mindedness along the way. It may be that limiting judgmental attitudes find their inspiration within the demand that such goals lie within reach, rather than, like stars and horizons, simply beckoning us ever onward.

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

Each One a Library

I remember many years ago discovering a "do-it-yourself" kind of book within the public library of the town of my childhood, that presented clear and comprehensible directions for everything from creating novel-looking acrylic jewelry to building a row boat from boards one could purchase at any local lumberyard. All of these had previously seemed like mysterious magical abilities possessed only by highly trained experts, yet here was a book that not only asserted that virtually anyone could do these things, but even offered clear directions in how to do them. The book appeared to have been published in the late 1940s or early 1950s—before I was even born—so it seemed like an archeological relic of a former time in which more was known than my parents and teachers seemed to ever understand. Most of what was presented to me throughout childhood was a gospel of personal limitation. Here was an opportunity and an invitation to believe something more empowering; here was an unknown author saying, "you can do this."

I don't know how many other people took the time to read that book from cover to cover, but I found it at least as engrossing as the stories I'd read of Robin Hood and King Arthur's knights. I recall telling others of the book's existence and content, but they were skeptical that the things the book described were as possible to do as the book claimed. For them, the answer to every life challenge was to acquire enough money to pay others to provide whatever they wanted, rather than learning how to do it themselves. Without sufficient funds or available craftsmen, they would simply choose to do without whatever such funds and craftsmen would otherwise produce.

Fairly early in life, however, I discerned that whatever knowledge and/or ability we build into ourselves, travels with us throughout life. Unlike my relationship with that book, we don't need to go to a public library and no one can take such knowledge or ability away from us without our consent or cooperation. In a sense, we ourselves can become the library.

*"Those who flee from truth
are more dangerous to life
than truth itself will ever be."*

--Sister Who

In many ways, we already have. Each person is a collection of stories, of instructions about certain tasks, and of understandings of language, relationships, and life. Frequently, we are so busy with life's daily-ness, that we overlook how well-equipped we are for its challenges. Perhaps among the greatest of such, is that life is so overflowing with simultaneous activity that we must wade through a sea of distractions to get to our own particular boats, which can carry us wherever our dreams inspire us to go.

All that being said, within virtually every library are texts which might be considered to be sacred and authoritative. Some believe that such texts should never be questioned. I think if this were true, I would not have been given the ability to question them. Furthermore, what I have learned of life and spirituality specifically by questioning the content of sacred texts, has so expanded and empowered my understanding of relationship with the Divine, that I cannot imagine that Godde intended our relationship to be any other way—and I am once again persuaded that life is primarily about the growth of the soul.

An added wrinkle to this whole discussion is that I have sometimes learned of Godde while reading books that are generally not regarded as being sacred text. If what makes the text sacred is that it brings understanding of the Divine, then it is possible that every book might at least potentially be sacred text. Within my experience, at least, it is not that some human author intended the text to be sacred that in fact makes it sacred text, but rather that the spirit of the Divine chooses for whatever reason to speak to a particular heart and mind through whatever text is available. It is therefore the Spirit and not the text itself, which grants the miracle of perception and understanding.

So why are there times when I read but do not understand? Can I order the Divine to grant transcendent perception and understanding? Of course not, but if I develop the patience, discipline, and organization which is inseparable from every well-run library, it is very unlikely that Godde would pass up such a fantastic opportunity—once there is certainty of my sincerity and persistence.

Even a bookmobile demonstrates certain commitments to the distribution of wisdom. We too, like a bookmobile driving from one neighborhood to the next, can bring the light of truth wherever we go. Everything we need in order to begin, is already within us.

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

Each One a Language

I grew up within the midwestern region of the United States and consequently developed a certain understanding of the English language, which was especially empowered by the dedicated nuns who taught at the Roman Catholic elementary school I attended. In retrospect, I think they often saw potential within me that I myself didn't realize I had. What became clear to me over a much longer period of time, however, was that I was not using language and words in exactly the same way that everyone else was. In fact, as much as others claimed to speak a common language, I began to notice more and more with each passing year that they were not using language and words in exactly the same way as each other. Their assumption that this was not the case, however, prevented me from asking as often as I otherwise would have, "what exactly do you mean by that?"

In high school, I studied German language; in college, French. Now, in the interest of becoming able to speak to neighbors who live down the street from me and have inadequate knowledge of English, a friend is helping me to learn Spanish. Actual conversation of any complexity, I've been told, will most likely not be possible for at least two or three years yet, but the point is that I am moving in that direction.

In each case, there is an extensive collection of assumptions, associations, and thought processes that formally or informally governs the use of the particular language. Specifically because such assumptions, associations, and thought processes vary widely between individuals even within a single small town, there are ways in which each person's practice of any particular language is somewhat individualistic and unique. To accurately understand my use of any particular language, therefore, one must also have at least some understanding of me.

In conversing with that which is beyond ourselves, we must acknowledge that we once again unavoidably and unintentionally put our own unique spin on the meanings of words and language. Ultimately, linguistically, we live within a universe of approximations—somehow carrying on collaborative life without ever having exactly the same understanding of virtually anything.

Yet if we love each other, it mostly works.

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

On a Personal Note

The accomplishments and activities of the past four weeks or so have included both great accomplishment and intensely frustrating adversity. Still, I think it was a good month.

Reconstruction of the street has progressed, the new concrete sidewalk and driveway entrance are done, and flowers have been planted between the new sidewalk and the fence surrounding the completely reconstructed meditation garden in the front yard. An inspector has decided there is inadequate slope to the driveway, however, so additional concrete work will need to be done there.

Just over half of the photos needed for the 2013 calendar are done and the rest will hopefully be accomplished within the next two weeks. The finished photos do not, however, reveal any of the frustration I experienced while attempting to get Gareth to pull a dogsled or the surge of adrenaline when the horse on which I was riding bolted instead of stopping as I'd intended. Among the efforts that were so unproductive that substitutions were made, was an intention to photograph my Geo Tracker ascending Saxon Mountain and a hope to collaborate with a segway tour company for a quick photo of Sister Who on one of their devices. Sometimes just being more stubborn than the problems is what gets the job done, but one also has to recognize when there's just no other alternative method left to try.

With regard to my doctoral program, good progress is being made, but it nevertheless remains a long process.

With regard to God Space Sanctuary, four wonderful additions to the Board of Directors within recent weeks suggest that the next year will be a truly wonderful one, in developing the ministry of that organization. Please let me know whether you would like your email or postal address to be added to the distribution list of that organization, to be alerted to its events and activities.

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

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