

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

Wisdom often attributed to Eleanor Roosevelt advises that, "Great minds discuss ideas. Average minds discuss events. Small minds discuss people." The thing to remember about every concise statement, however, is that there is nearly always great depth and breadth of understanding behind each and all of those carefully chosen words. Those who do not explore that depth and breadth, however, can hardly make any legitimate claim to understand any such words.

Superficially, it would be easy to interpret Roosevelt's words as a declaration of hierarchy. I believe that a deeper understanding of her words, however, reveals a much more humble sense of awe at how interconnected, interrelated, and interactive the unfolding of life can be—if we are willing to move further and further into the landscape of our thoughts, dreams, and ideas.

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

Great Minds

Great minds filled with continuing aspiration will dare to question everything, discuss all sorts of advantages and disadvantages, and wrestle continuously with the actual questions being asked—all in pursuit of ever-more-effective application and demonstration of what it means to be alive. The vastness of interior or intangible space, however, can sometimes leave one speechless in awe and thoroughly mesmerized by just how vast it is—so much so that we must sometimes be nudged back into interactive awareness of the need to respond.

As true and wonderful as it may be that the natural reaction to any perception or experience of the transcendent is awe, it is equally true that if we allow such feelings to paralyze us, that which was given to empower us will instead have had the opposite effect. If loving Godde (an inclusive term for Divine Mystery) somehow directly or indirectly interferes with our ability to love each other, to love the earth, or to love the allegedly unlovable, one's life experience is no longer holistically integrated nor

even truly healthy. If raising one's vibration places one out of reach of those in need and of the symbiotic relationships upon which one's life depends, then raising one's vibration has become a bad thing.

The nemesis, once again, is narcissism: the negation of relationship with persons, places, things, and dynamics all around us. In severing relationship, one inevitably creates limitation. Greatness, conversely, is associated with decreasing limitations and accomplishing what certain limitations consider impossible.

Here, however, we encounter the paradox of separating ourselves from limitation, in pursuit of true greatness. Within my own life, I have separated myself from biological family, certain past employers, and a variety of past friends and acquaintances. In each case, my reasons were specifically a response to the others' negative choices. In one way or another, they considered truth, honesty, growth, love, and wisdom to be too difficult. Specifically because I pursue these things as being central to being genuinely and fully alive, our life-paths diverged and there was no longer any way for me to walk beside them or to go where they were going. More concisely, I found that I could no longer live within their worlds.

Have I thereby accomplished true greatness? It certainly does not seem so to me, but a certain hope persists that I really am at least moving in that direction—and that may be the real choice that each of us faces, within each moment of life: in what direction will we decide to move? If we open the door to our minds becoming great—to considering perplexing ideas in appropriately measured (rather than overwhelming) ways—we give ourselves the chance to transcend every limited or hurtful moment of past experience, whether of our own or that of humanity as a whole.

We can become more than we've ever been and each of us can also be a way for humanity to become more than it has ever been.

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

Average Minds

An average mind aspiring to become a great mind may begin by parroting others' statements about ideas. It is the endless supply of distracting events (of occurrences within time), however, that is more accurately the explanation for a preoccupation with sequential or simultaneous interactions. Considered together, these interactions create the meaning which the particular mind assigns to the ever-growing collection of memories. The thing to remember about average minds, however, is that the only thing that makes them average, is the fact that many others are thinking the same way. If one is relocated to a place where most surrounding people think differently, suddenly—without changing anything—one is no longer average.

In some ways this is analogous to the time over twenty years ago when I first discovered what it means to be gay and that this spectrum of meanings specifically included me. One day my self-image was of a heterosexual young man with more commonalities than distinctions in relationship to those around me. The next day, I looked in the mirror and wondered how it was that I had so abruptly become so different, so alien, and so isolated—simply by discovering a fundamental truth of myself. This was clearly a pivotal event for me, which I still occasionally ponder and about which I still occasionally speak. Specifically because I continue to move through an ever-fluctuating spectrum of humanity within diverse places and circumstances, the action of "coming out" or declaring one's self to be what one is, never ends—but at least now the struggle is on the outside rather than within me.

All of which can make being average a very tempting prospect—especially when I am simply weary of always being the anomaly. The counterweight to that envy, however, is that there is no way to undo or remove from personal history that moment and event of self-discovery. It was an event that literally changed the course of my life, followed by a broad spectrum of consequences.

Encountering such moments is probably a fairly average experience. Allowing such moments to expand one's very soul, however, is apparently a rare phenomenon. It is only when I begin to notice how much others avoid such changes and transitions, that I am able to appreciate how non-average I've become. Like a hiking to a mountain's summit, the longer and more difficult the trail, the fewer companions one will have at the

summit. Nonetheless, I have never experienced regret upon reaching a mountain's summit.

All that being said, perhaps the most gratifying aspect of retaining an average mind, is having the greatest amount of commonality with the surrounding population. The land of average minds is a land with an overabundance of bridges between one's self and others. Communication, collaboration, and camaraderie are common commodities, exchanged freely and easily—perhaps even to the point of being taken for granted or presuming that one is simply entitled to the resource or advantage. If you would ever like to truly know what something is worth, however, ask those who must for whatever reason live without that particular thing.

It has been suggested within a great many books and movies that life acquires much deeper and richer meaning and significance, whenever one moves beyond taking anything for granted and instead lives with an attitude of gratitude for each resource and opportunity. For an average mind, however, this may seem like too much work; too much struggle; or too much awareness.

Conversely, when the weight of too much awareness has made one weary, being average at least for a little while, may be a suitable way to rest and recuperate. Perhaps this is why events oriented toward particular categories can be so therapeutic. Gay pride festivals, women's retreats, band camps, ethnic celebrations—the list of possibilities is endless but in each case allows people of particular descriptions to temporarily release the stresses of being the different one. To remain within such contexts would impoverish the rest of humanity, but to never experience such contexts would impoverish one's self.

Having an average mindset is therefore only problematic if it is the only mindset one ever has—or, conversely, if it is the mindset one never experiences. The average mind may be simply the next step within one's stairway of personal and/or spiritual growth. The point is not the rightness or wrongness of being on a particular step, but rather that the purpose of a stairway is to allow one to move up or down. More concisely, it's a matter of movement more than of location.

A final point to remember about the old adage that "average minds talk about events," is that they do talk; they do not remain silent. Within respectful dialogue one may in fact find one's own essential up or down movements of life.

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

Small Minds

A small mind aspiring to become an average mind may begin by parroting others' comments about events, but even before that is a preoccupation with the question of "who." Within a category of smallness, however, are additional sub-categories of small, medium, and great. A small mind viewing others in a small way, for example, will tend to see them as one-dimensional incarnations of a particular category or behavior. The question of "who is he" would receive answers such as "he's white (or black or Asian or whatever)," "he's a policeman (or a lawyer or a factory worker or whatever)," or "he's a teenager (or middle-aged or elderly or whatever)." In each case, the person is assigned a single descriptive word, as if that word were able to describe every essential quality of that person.

Specifically because of literally thousands of conversations, observations, and experiences, however, I remain adamantly convinced that no individual is the embodiment of a category. Categorical labels are assigned from the outside; truth grows from within. One is not autistic because a licensed psychologist has confirmed this, but rather because of the brain chemistry, composition, and functionality which the particular individual experiences. One's race is not established by the completion of government forms or the documentation of family lineage, but by the inherent genetic composition of one's body. The selection of shoes which are truly perfect for one's feet is not determined by fashion designers in some distant location, but rather by the activities, characteristics, and skeletal relationships of one's own particular feet.

Regardless, what is much more at stake within any concern for having a small mind, is whether or not that mind is open to learning more; open to the possibility that others have contrasting experiences; and open to developing new qualities and abilities within one's self.

*"To truly live,
the mind must be filled
with creative ideas
and the heart must be filled
with the power of love."*

--Sister Who

In spite of its size, a small mind must retain awareness of its context; of the body, community, and environment within which it lives. In noticing others, even a small mind must accept that many of them wrestle with questions and challenges as daunting, complex, and possibly overwhelming as any that the particular mind experiences. Even the small mind must acknowledge that most things are simply not as small as they appear at first glance.

As trivial, for example, as anxiety about being bullied may seem to those whose financial resources or particular social network protect them from such worries, what is at stake is having a sense of safety and security, within an otherwise insane and out-of-balance world.

I was recently blessed with an opportunity to view a film about the destruction of not two but three World Trade Center towers in New York City on September 11, 2001. Among the many fascinating details presented within this call by over 1700 engineers and architects for a competent and scientific investigation of the event (many details being drawn from the same news footage that was broadcast to the majority of Americans on the very day of the event), I noticed an additional quality the film's narrator failed to consider—the possibility that the psychological trauma created by this event was related to economic class. As interviews with certain accomplished professionals described feelings of betrayal, of vulnerability, and of overwhelming fear, I found myself feeling a bit baffled by their reactions, since these qualities have been frequent companions throughout my life. I strongly suspect that most poor and working-class Americans would give a similar report.

I mention this only as an example of how focus upon an event can be negatively employed to prevent important and inclusive focus upon individual persons affected by the particular event. Conversely, focusing upon the individuals so much that the event goes unscrutinized, is hardly a recommendable alternative. Even small minds live within contexts and who we are (or perceive ourselves to be) within those contexts has a dramatic affect upon how we honestly respond—and upon the amount of freedom we give others to honestly respond also.

In moments when minds feel small, awareness is weary, and psychological reach is tentative, the task of preserving life within ourselves and each other requires remaining able to speak of who and what a whole person truly is.

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

Symbiotic Minds

The curious discovery for me as I pondered this month's focus and content, was that a holistically healthy mind and heart must make use of all three of the levels mentioned.

There is something about ideas that inspires and animates one's consciousness and life in ways that nothing else can. Without ever-unfolding ideas, routine and limitation become the norm and comprehension remains superficial.

Similarly, there is something about events that creates multi-dimensional stories from which (thanks to memory) we can be drawing additional meanings and insights continuously, from now until the lungs' last breath. Without events, there is nothing to which to respond and all notions of relationship become frozen and mystifying tableaux, devoid of language.

Finally, there is something about people which will always be mysterious and potentially enlightening, because the more we learn to communicate with and to understand each other, the more we comprehend the multi-dimensional mysteries of ourselves. Without people, we would find ourselves in an exhausting void of every moment creating the entire world around us all by ourselves, rather than benefitting (consciously and unconsciously) from how very collaborative all that populates this planet truly is.

Whether something is in fact collaborative or adversarial, is more often a reflection of how successful we are at finding ways to utilize whatever force or energy is presented to us. All too often, I anticipate responses and contributions in ways that limit my willingness to even try. In some cases, this is because I acknowledge that I do not have adequate strength to cope with a particular example of rejection. In other cases, however, I am unable to ignore what a particular person has previously communicated to me.

Through all of this constant fluctuation of initiation and response, the mind and the heart are entwined but never able to fully comprehend each other. The mind wants to protect the heart and vice versa, but all too often each cannot find the words to make the other understand why particular behavior occurs.

The challenge which therefore remains, is that of infusing the people and events of my life with the greatest ideas and meanings that are available—while there is still time to do so.

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

On a Personal Note

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the past four weeks is the completion of the inspirational calendar, "Journeying Through Life in 2013." It is now available on the Internet within the website at www.SisterWho.com/Calendar.html. Typically, the next year's calendar is not available until November or December of the preceding year. Considering general anxiety about the transitional nature of the current year, however, I wanted to offer my opinion, my encouragement, and a gesture of faith, that there really will be a 2013 to celebrate. Special thanks for assistance in creating photos goes to Zumas Rescue Ranch (www.ZumasRescueRanch.com), Martin and Carri for use of the canoe, Tom Loux of White Birds Unlimited (www.WhiteBirdsUnlimited.com) for use of the golfcart, and photographer John Nelson.

Landscaping projects related to the reconstruction of the street in front of the house are nearly completed, including complete painting of the benches within the front yard Meditation Garden with the assistance of a fellow Board member of God Space Sanctuary and his son. In spite of financial and other limitations, I have also succeeded in completing a basic automatic watering system, to sustain the trees, bushes, and flowers throughout the hot summer months ahead. The good news is that regardless of the enormous amount of additional work the transformation of the Meditation Garden included, it really did wind up significantly better than its previous form.

Summer seems to have come to Colorado early this year, so if the weather cooperates, I am hoping to make successful ascents of Mount Columbia (14,073' elevation) and Mount Harvard (14,420' elevation), sometime within the coming weeks. If there is anyone who would like to join me on either or both of these pilgrimages, please do let me know at your very earliest convenience, so that I may keep you apprised of preparations and scheduling developments.

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

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