

# Sister Who's Perspective

Sister Who's Perspective, Issue #133, July 2010, copyright

*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

As the chorus proclaims within a song of my third album of similar name: *"Limitation upon limitation and limitless possibility—put the two together and what do you get? Well, it sure looks an awful lot like me."* Life remains a sometimes perplexing integration of opposites and of innumerable moments calling for deep and wise discernment.

Within this month's newsletter, four different approaches are offered, to this ongoing internal reflection and re-evaluation of ourselves, our lives, our world, and the times within which we live. Drawing upon text from a scene of the third act of Thornton Wilder's play *Our Town*, I pray that we may know that we live while we do. I also pray that we may receive divine blessing upon our processes of discernment so that our lives become ever greater manifestations of wisdom and of love.

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

## Bottled or Unbottled?

I have often heard and read over the years, that restraining all expression of one's emotions is a very unhealthy thing to do. Often described as bottling up one's feelings in a way similar to the bottling of expansive gasses and liquids, internal pressure begins to build. If at any point that pressure exceeds the strength of the container to restrain it, the container ruptures and the contents explode upon the surrounding world in ways that are (at the very least) quite disturbing.

Innocent childhood curiosity has on many occasions inspired a child to toss and shake a warm can of a carbonated beverage, until the internal pressure either resulted in a sudden explosion of foam when the can ruptured or until the can was handed to an unsuspecting person who opened the can and was immediately sprayed by its contents.

Similarly, within those whom we love, significant internal pressure may be building if they are subject to stressful and difficult circumstances without any constructive way of expressing their

emotional distress. Suddenly a seemingly insignificant remark seems to set them off, revealing to the rest of us at last, that there was a hidden emotional problem. If only we'd known, we might have been able to help them, while the problem was still small and relatively manageable. When emotions explode, much greater problems are generally created.

In contrast, however, are problems that result from unrestrained and frequent emotional explosions. Among the strategies invented to deal with internal emotional pressure was the "primal scream," during which (often without warning) emotional distress would be channeled into a loud vocal burst. This was obviously distressing to innocent bystanders, within unfocused social settings. Engaging in this sort of relationship with one's emotions might also leave one feeling controlled, manipulated, or subject to fluctuating emotional tides.

For the primal scream to be effective, therefore, it required the presence and protection of a supportive and sympathetic support group (i.e. friends, family, associates, colleagues, etc.). Additionally, a primal scream is ideally a choice and not a reaction; a coping strategy and not a "fight or flight" response, which is affected by consideration and discernment within the mind of the individual.

Although we must give each other the freedom to utilize tools of emotional health constructively, we must also never forget how very interconnected our lives are and consider before acting, whether we are improving or further exacerbating each moment of our lives.

The unfortunate truth, however, is that every choice we make will do both. What is beneficial to one may be adversarial to another, but a choice is nevertheless unavoidable. We must not only make such choices, but also hold ourselves responsible for their implications and consequences within others' lives, if we are to be a blessing to those whom we love and to the rest of the world as well.

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

## Boxed or Unboxed?

"Thinking out of the box" has been a popular phrase for a number of years and refers to unconventional or creative thinking which departs from traditional norms and expectations. In some cases, those who have used this phrase have simply gone on to create their own boxes—different from those which preceded, but still possessing a similar rigidity and demand for conformity in relationship to definitive practices and ideas.

For myself I generally respond, "Box? I don't remember any box." This is not, however, a suggestion that I have not had to deal on far too many occasions with others' expectations and occasionally even demands for conformity. Rather, it is an affirmation of my ongoing commitment to my own internal integrity and creativity—both of which I hold to be divine gifts bestowed upon me even before the first physical breath I ever took within this life.

As much as boxes need to be ultimately unsuccessful in containing the expansive and creative energy of life, they can serve as carrying containers or temporary residences during certain phases of creation and growth.

Whenever a small pet (i.e. puppy, kitten, gerbil, or lizard) was brought into my childhood home, the typical first response was to place it within a box for its own protection. A certain preoccupation which generally followed, was the task of equipping the box with everything the particular pet could possibly need—as well as lifting the pet out of the box from time to time for supervised exercise, bathing, and so forth. If the pet escaped and was not supervised, however, any number of dangers could be encountered, some of which might prove to be fatal.

The life experience within the box was not so much a measure of the life within the particular animal as it was a measure of the wisdom and dedication within the caretaker. If I was negligent, my pet's life would be much less fulfilling than if I were willing and able to spend time providing care and constructive interaction. My efforts were generally rewarded, however, by affectionate responses, some of which were so subtle as to be unnoticed by those unfamiliar with the relationship which I had with each pet.

Among the most amazing aspects of such relationships, is that although we had no common language—no words, thoughts, or gestures to communicate complex ideas—certain basic

understandings nevertheless passed between us. It would be a gross exaggeration to say that we fully understood each other, but clearly there was some sort of relationship in which I recognized my pet and my pet recognized me, as distinct from all others. I imagine my relationships with my dogs are much the same—a certain awareness, but a certain pervasive mystery also.

Not having a box certainly has certain advantages—freedom, possibility, and so forth—but there is also a certain absence of both connection and societal definition.

The experience of living within a particular box, for example, is not something that I share with certain other people whom I meet. For an individual who has lived all of her or his life within the context of a particular church, a sudden removal of the structure that association provided could be very disorienting.

Attempting to describe life experience which has included no such box, conversely, would make little sense to such a person. We might therefore find ourselves unable to effectively communicate and consequently feel distant and disconnected from each other. Similarly, when I feel a need to make a creative contribution to humanity, many doors of opportunity may remain closed to me, specifically because I do not have the familiar association which would otherwise allow entrance.

Within professional circles this is true as well. One's abilities often matter less than one's associations, in regard to being granted access to certain professional opportunities.

In all likelihood, each of us will move in and out of various boxes throughout our lives, some of which we will choose and some of which will be imposed upon us by others. Sometimes these "others" will have good intentions toward ourselves, but at other times the intentions may be predominantly shaped by greed and narcissism.

Whether the suggestion or recommendation of a particular box comes from ourselves or from others, however, the invitation remains to be one who lives life within it instead of one who is victimized and limited by such restriction. In the words of the seventeenth century English poet, Richard Lovelace, *"Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage. Minds innocent and quiet take that for an hermitage. If I have freedom in my love and in my soul am free, angels alone that soar above enjoy such liberty."*

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

## Censored or Uncensored?

I'm sure there are many who prefer that truths I find within myself remain there, because truth has the power to change whatever it touches.

My family of biological origin prefers complete omission from all conversation and personal interaction, of anything testifying to the fact that I am a gay man. Perhaps the majority of those whom I meet each day who embrace the social custom of asking "How are you" but really don't want to know, would prefer that I lie and answer with a word I find dishonest and offensive: "fine." Within most administrative or political settings, those who resort to rhetorical questions clearly prefer the absence of disagreement (i.e. "...and of course we all agree that..., don't we?").

If the goal is a healthy and intelligent society, disagreement has the power to eliminate problems while they are small, rather than allowing them to fester unseen until they are much larger and more formidable.

Conversely, however, a complete lack of censorship can also make things more difficult. On those thankfully few occasions when I have been compelled for various reasons to interact with hypodermic-needle-wielding medical professionals, my severe phobia of such instruments has barely been prevented from overwhelming me by distracting myself with conversation and turning my gaze elsewhere.

Once again, discernment is vital to the decisions of whether, how, and how much to censor perception and whether hidden and selfish agendas are also present.

Within oppressive circumstances, tyrants and oppressors of course want everything pertaining to their evil deeds to be censored from public awareness. In virtually every instance, censorship for reasons of political or economic control leads only to a mentally or emotionally enslaved people.

Even more reprehensible is when this is accompanied by declarations related to freedom and political liberty. Words do not make freedom real and specifically because life is as thoroughly interconnected as it is and always has been, no

*"If I am not free to disagree,  
then you are not free to learn."*

--Sister Who

one is free unless everyone is free.

So do I censor myself for the sake of others' comfort? Perhaps a better question is whether my self-censorship will result in healthy forms of empowerment for the world around me.

Conversely, do I resist self-censorship in order to empower those around me, no matter how disturbing that process of re-evaluation and change may be to existing routines and norms?

A difficult aspect of this entire discussion, of course, is that human perception is so chronically limited. I cannot fully know whether my self-censorship (or my lack thereof) will have an ultimately good or bad effect upon those around me—because this depends upon how they themselves respond, upon the choices they make in response to the information I provide.

Nevertheless, within each moment, I must make a choice with which I am willing to live and for which I am willing to be held responsible—by others, by myself, and by that higher wisdom and love that rules the foundations of the universe.

There is no "one-size-fits-all" answer here. It may be that the primary reason the Divine bestowed upon humanity the frequently paradoxical and perplexing phenomena of brains, was because of how unavoidable and pervasive throughout life the action and process of discernment would be.

We have to use our brains within each moment to discern between friend and foe, between safety and danger, between truth and lies, between perception and blindness, and between speaking and censorship. To do any less, is to cease living.

By standing with each other through hard times, poor times, and adversarial times, we can also be a discernment team for each other, helping each other to see other aspects by which greater truth, greater love, and greater relationship become not only possible but probable.

Somewhere at some point in time, the answer to every problem will be provided. If we are all listening and watching attentively, one of us will see it and may have opportunity to call out the good news, providing hope and joy to others. The challenge within such moments, of course, is to distinguish the false hope from the true. If we put our heads together, so to speak, the combination of all of our greatest wisdom working together, will make a way where previously there was none.

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

## Repressed or Expressed?

I am so very grateful that innumerable artists, composers, scientists, writers, teachers, philosophers, and theologians dared to express what they found within their hearts, in spite of societal adversity. I am equally grateful that they found the strength to adequately repress their less admirable qualities, so that their work was not thereby sabotaged. Clearly none of them were perfect human beings and at various points within their lives, they made mistakes. It would have been easy within such moments to surrender to despair, disappointment, disillusionment, and defeat, but they were able to repress the inclination to lie down and die and instead rose up to again do whatever creative work they found opportunity to do. To all of them, I offer my deepest and most sincere heart-felt gratitude.

It may be that we will be regarded as just such people by future generations—as those who persisted in spite of adversity in pushing humanity toward better forms and expressions, as those who persisted in spite of adversity in being people of faith, of hope, of love, and of wisdom.

Shall we repress or express whatever we find within ourselves? To what degree and in what manner shall we do this? These are questions that no one can or should answer for you and me. It is left to the individual to decide those things for which that individual must bear both the responsibility and the consequences. It is left to the individual also, I believe, to likewise ultimately receive the punishment or the reward, in the way, in the form, and in the time that God knows best.

Should I repress my relationship with God simply because it is not the same as everyone else's? Conversely, should I express my particular and probably unique relationship with the Divine within those circumstances within which apparently nothing good would come of it? The answer in both cases is, "sometimes" and the only guardian angel to which I can point within such instances is intuition (or as some say, "what does your gut tell you to do?").

The question of whether to repress or express is not going to go away, because it is fundamental to the living of life within each moment that has more than one option. Thankfully, love and faith can still make things turn out right, no matter what we decide to do.

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

## On a Personal Note

Once again, life is pitching curve-balls.

I was in a major car accident a week ago and my vehicle is now a total loss. Thankfully, there were no injuries and no other vehicles involved. As near as anyone can tell, some part of the right-front axle of my vehicle (perhaps one of the ball joints) suddenly broke while driving on a nearby highway. This sent my vehicle into a horizontal spin, thanks to a sudden burst of rain which allowed the tires to slide (rather than grabbing and causing the vehicle to roll over). The entire incident lasted only about three seconds and included a momentary sideways collision with a guard rail—another reason my vehicle was prevented from rolling over. The skills which I learned in Driver's Education in high school may also have minimized the incident's severity.

Although generous donations have provided some funds toward the purchase of my next vehicle, no affordable option has yet presented itself. Although significant progress has been made, my motorcycle is still being repaired.

In the midst of all of this, it remains very, very important to me to launch the ministry of God Space Sanctuary, so at very great personal sacrifice I am proceeding with my plan to squeeze the necessary funds out of my personal financial resources to go ahead with the application for full tax-exempt status in relationship to the IRS and thereby make God Space Sanctuary into an officially recognized non-profit, tax-exempt ministerial organization.

I am also proceeding with my preparations for the bodybuilding competition in Cologne, Germany, during the first week of August. I anticipate during that week that I will expand my self-definition and abilities, do significant work as Sister Who while there, and empower myself for whatever work yet lies ahead. I continue to believe that opportunities to be intelligently extraordinary, should never be ignored.

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

### Subscription Information:

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