

sister who's perspective

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Overview

Ultimately all we have are perceptions, only some of which can be confirmed by others. Perceptions which cannot be confirmed, however, are not for that reason necessarily false. It is entirely possible to be the only one who was looking in a particular direction when a wondrous thing passed by.

Among the questions that linger afterward, are how will we respond and how will life change, because of what was seen?

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

The Impression of Me

It's been quite a while since I walked in the wet sand of an ocean beach, looking back after a bit to see the actual shapes of my own footprints. Nonetheless, I still remember being a bit puzzled by the difference between the actual feet and the impressions they left in the sand as I moved along. I recall a book in my parents' house during childhood that similarly included both drawings of animals commonly hunted in North America as well as drawings of the corresponding footprints each would leave in mud or snow. There wasn't much within any particular footprint that would tell much about the truth of the particular animal.

In much the same way, I could be regarded as a unique creature who leaves various metaphorical footprints within diverse places and times. In some cases, the lingering impressions can only be found on the surface of others' souls, if one has the eyes to see such things. My prayer is that the impressions are somehow empowering, but even if they are, they fail to reveal the larger truth of me.

If I walk across stone, for example, the impression of each step ranges from minimal to non-existent. If the material underfoot is wet mud, the impression is distorted when I again lift my foot to accomplish additional steps. If

the material is dry sand, innumerable surrounding grains rush back into the void when my foot is removed. Only with just the right balance of moisture and substance, is an impression created that accurately displays the shape of the foot that used to be there.

So how can one truly know the actual feet that created the footprints? By being fully present when they passed; by remembering what was seen, felt, and spoken; and by inviting those same feet to return, if there is ever a means and an opportunity to do so. In some cases, however, one must accept that the feet will never return and one must allow imagination to fill in the gaps--remembering as well that imagination is exactly that and making no claim to historical accuracy.

Can an impression of me be historically accurate? From a different perspective, does such an impression actually need to be? As a child, the stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table were absolutely fascinating and completely inspiring to me, regardless of the presence or absence of historical accuracy.

Could we be that inspiring to others within present or future times, unconcerned about accuracy as long as what we inspire is genuinely good and empowering? Is this what Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, and countless others believed as well--that it is far more important that their contributions to human history inspire what is good, than that they be accurately recorded? Could this in fact be precisely what the Divine wanted of them?

All of which leads me to the question of whether an inaccurate historical record is a lie, a mistake, or a matter of little consequence, as long as the effect within others' lives produces greater capacities of wisdom and love. To say that accuracy doesn't matter goes too far, but strictly requiring accuracy is also problematic; what must be remembered, therefore, is that footprints in sand are subject to change.

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

The Projection of Me

From earliest childhood, projected images have been a significant part of my life--slide shows, film strips, overhead projectors, and movies, to name just a few. In each instance, what I perceived was a combination of an image, a source of light, and (in most cases) a complex interpretation. What is typically overlooked is that the particular object being presented was never actually there.

In this manner, I saw an image of the Statue of Liberty many years before I climbed the stairs and walked through its crown. It is important to note that the experience of being in the crown was quite different from merely viewing a photograph of it. Similarly, I viewed representations of towns within other countries long before having any opportunity to travel outside of the United States. Again, the photo was unable to capture the personalities and the perceptions of environmental conditions that were inseparable from actually being there. A third example would be the numerous times of viewing photos within The Children's Book of Knowledge (a child-oriented encyclopedia which my parents had within their small library), staring closely into the eyes of many dangerous predators without ever being in danger. None of the projections were real examples of what the things to which they referred otherwise included. Occasionally it was also made known to me that it was possible to experience a particular reality which a projection introduced, by journeying to particular places within future times.

In much the same way, diverse individuals have unique perceptions of me whenever and wherever I appear in the ritual garb that is essential to the unique ministerial service I provide. I must always remember, however, that what each of these perceive often reveals much more of the idiosyncrasies of the viewer's personal perception than of the actual truth of myself or the work that I do.

More concisely, immediately upon meeting me, each person interprets a perception and consequently forms a projection with varying degrees of holistic accuracy. In the most holistic sense, however, I am not what others project me to be.

In one sense, this is quite empowering, because I consequently exist in countless diverse ways within an equal number of unique individuals' minds. In other ways, however, I find myself frequently attempting to clarify and add to the partial and incomplete perceptions which others form within their minds. This is not something, however, which applies only to me. Whether or not it is consciously realized, we all spend our entire lives attempting to convey to certain others, more complete perceptions of ourselves. Attempting to convey this to absolutely everyone could very easily be overwhelming, but for various reasons certain individuals warrant more effort than others.

The central and important thing to remember, however, is that we are operating socially--virtually all of the time--with partial and limited understanding. Consequently, it remains essential to be humble and open to new insights, but not blindly or naively so.

The intention of every projection is the acquisition of new information and increased understanding. The reality, however, is that no particular projection--or perception--is able to contain all that can ultimately be learned. A further implication of this is that (even for myself) there is always more to discover.

I wonder sometimes if this is Godde's experience as well: attempting to respond to the billions of diverse perceptions of the Divine which occur within individual human minds. I suspect that only something or someone legitimately and accurately described as divine, could in fact have any hope of engaging billions of unique and slowly evolving perceptions without being absolutely overwhelmed--not to mention the enormous patience with humanity's slowness to learn, which would be required as well.

All of which is why I strongly suspect that it must bring very great joy to Godde when genuine progress is occasionally made. More concisely, when we genuinely grow, Godde rejoices--perhaps laughing ecstatically and dancing around exuberantly in gratitude, to know--at least for a moment--that our creation was not a monumental cosmic mistake.

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

The Memory of Me

Perhaps because of autism, perhaps because of a life-long fascination with symbols and metaphors, or perhaps because of some sort of subconscious remembering beyond full comprehension by a human mind, I have never been afraid of death. If anything, I think I am more afraid of losing all access to the resources, opportunities, and possibilities that this physical life includes. Phrased another way, I'm not bothered by the thought of going; I'm bothered by the thought of being gone.

Regardless, I have always lived with the awareness that each moment is to be treasured, because (within this physical life) there is not an infinite number of them.

Consequently, talking about death has never bothered me and I have always lived with the awareness that although I am here now, there will be a time (at some point) when I am gone and any work that continues will have to be done by others. While I have opportunity, therefore, I strive to make my best contribution to the memory which will persist when I leave.

I must always remember, however, that complete definition of such memory, is absolutely beyond my control. What each takes with him or her after an encounter with me, is a combination of innumerable unseen variables, complex interpretations, and diverse influences arising from other memories as well, since memories of myself are far from the only ones that anyone has. As with impressions and projections, however, no particular memory or collection of memories is able to contain my complete reality.

On a different note, although I would like to be remembered, if I am not, it doesn't mean that I failed--in any way whatsoever. Granting that describing a life as successful or as a failure is a very subjective action, my principles

"In reaching for only the form rather than also the essence, all that can actually be created is a container of emptiness."

-- Sister Who

and values lead to the conclusion that a life that demonstrates increasing understanding and practices of love and wisdom is truly a successful life and it is not validation or others' approval that causes this. The occurrence of love and/or wisdom itself is enough.

The challenge at hand, in any case, is the creation--whether by myself, by others, or by circumstances--of memories of myself. To a certain extent this is unavoidable. Any moment when one soul interacts with another, a memory springs into being. A curiosity of human experience is that even when numerous individuals witness the exact same event, not only do they each perceive and remember something different in comparison to each other, but, within every example, it can also be verified that none of them remembers all that transpired. Each has a piece, but none has it all. If we collaborate in remembering the event, however, this is not a problem.

Focusing upon the event of any particular moment or moments of a particular life, a resulting challenge is that because each witness leaves with a memory of only a portion of the complete event, it's as if the single event has now evolved into innumerable events, each with a slightly different history of a single person. A derivative of this challenge is therefore the possibility that others' memory of me may misrepresent me to them and to others to whom they pass their varying reports.

If we are seekers of truth, there is no need to feel threatened by questions, since these are simply one of the primary ways that we sift through the multitude of diverse reports, attempting to discern what the common genesis of those reports was. We do not change the event or any person therein involved, simply by changing the report. The only thing we can change is our perception. It can thus be concluded that we do not create truth; we only discover it. Among the greatest gifts we can give to each other, therefore, is the ability to discover.

Memories of the past can thus create greater possibilities in the future, but the ideal is that both will empower us to be more fully present within each moment, as it unfolds.

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The Truth of Me

Some say that truth is timeless, but this is only partially true, since it is always expanding, often in new and unexpected ways which frequently integrate echoes of previously existing patterns--pointing to pervasive interconnectedness and greater wholeness.

An inescapable conclusion is thus that each of us is composed of more mystery than verifiable fact. Perhaps this is yet another indication of divine heritage, within the view of many religious paradigms.

An ongoing related problem, is that we too easily forget how sacred each person and moment is; how each is a container within which divine truth may be silently awaiting discovery. I know that for myself at least, when I look into a mirror--literal or metaphorical--and strive to understand not only the appearance but also the meaning, sacredness is difficult to detect--yet it is not for that reason absent. An ongoing invitation within each moment of life, therefore, is the discovery of not only what Godde has hidden within me, but also of the ways that I am allowing this to expand.

Ideally, this expansion is guided by ever-increasing love and wisdom. In actual practice, my life experiences and the ways they are nurtured are typically less than ideal. The struggle between these contrasting truths, however, is nonetheless the substance of life.

A conclusion which has persisted for quite some time within my life, is that the events and conditions of my life are far less important than what I become, specifically because of the perceptions and interpretations that simultaneously occur. As true as this may be, however, it is not terribly reassuring during painful moments when all I want is for the pain to stop. It is nonetheless difficult for me to later wish such moments had never happened, because of the awareness that I would be otherwise less than I have become. Had I previously known what pain would occur, however, it is questionable whether I would have embraced the moment.

It is thus our ignorance of future truth that sometimes empowers us to embrace it.

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

On a Personal Note

It has been an exhausting month, filled with challenging personal interactions, many hours of video editing, and persistent efforts to communicate with potential collaborators (some of which were ultimately successful).

I continue to embrace innumerable transitions as well, many of which are related to Gareth's passing. The dachshunds have all gone to live with my former lifepartner in Montana and seem to be enjoying their new life so much that I wonder at times whether they even miss me. As I hoped, my relationship with Bedivere seems to be developing more positively, making him an ever more effective autism service dog.

My doctoral program continues to move forward, persevering through challenges to interpersonal communication and the creation of relevant documents. I am eager to conclude this chapter of my life, but I'm well aware that there are still hundreds if not thousands of hours of work still ahead of me.

Financial limitations are still all too common and I am aware of being forced into a survival-oriented mental state (the roof is leaking again), but I try to see these as tools of divine guidance, by which accomplishments will occur at ideal rather than premature times.

If a summary statement is necessary, I suppose it would be that life remains a rather complex mix. Still, one way or another, I strive to move onward and upward.

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

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