

Continuing Invitations and Denials

I was saddened but not surprised the other day, when a newspaper headline declared that Jefferson County had chosen not to participate in a study of violence, as it pertains to high schools, teenagers, and so forth. It seems that even the tragedy of fifteen bodies after a day of gunfire last May, has proven inadequate to dislodge a significant commitment to denial from present-day suburbia. We can be reasonably certain that it is only a matter of time until a similar tragedy occurs.

In an effort to create empathy, a distribution of small bumper-stickers began shortly after the shooting that bore the words, "we are all Columbine (the name of the high school where the shooting took place)." I'm not sure the creators of that bumper-sticker understood the depth of meaning the simple statement contained.

Until we can find the strength to face both dark and light within ourselves individually, we cannot expect potentially violent forms of social schizophrenia to disappear from within ourselves collectively. To argue that such introspection is inconvenient is truly pathetic and creates a social playing field upon which another Adolf Hitler may easily rise to power.

Certainly the social phenomenon of suburbia has created visually beautiful neighborhoods and superficially peaceful communities, but the shootings only a few months ago at Columbine high school are but one of the many events by which the absence of integrity in these communities is exposed.

On a personal level, inconsiderate driving habits is one of the many ways that my own lack of integrity is sometimes exposed. I may say that I believe in the beauty and value of every other person, but cutting someone off in traffic makes my words ring hollow.

Integrity is honesty in action every day of my life, in every situation I face. When God spoke to Moses through the burning bush, the divine name was given as "I Am"--sometimes interpreted as "I Am What I Am,"

sometimes as "I Am What I Am Becoming," and sometimes in other ways.

Created in God's image, can I echo those words honestly, that I am keeping all my inward and outward qualities as consistent as I possibly can, or have I forsaken my divine heritage?

"Today may be
'another day
working in the mine,'
but Today is also
another day to bring out
some more gold."

--Sister Who

Subscription Information:

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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.

A Note of Explanation

I apologize that this issue does not include new recommendations for a book and a movie, but space limitations left me to decide between these and other current news that I really wanted to share with you. I expect to resume these two regular features in the next newsletter and hope that you will find the content of this one to be thought-provoking, inspiring, and empowering in relation to the situations and challenges that you face each day. Blessings, love and peace to you, now and always.

--Sister Who

Foreign Caves and Mines

In a particular class during my very first year of college, I was presented with an ancient literary work that contains one of the most basic and yet enduringly instructive metaphors of all. Though written by Plato in the days of ancient Greece, humanity will probably never finish analyzing his illustration of the cave and the implications and interpretations of the relationships the story describes.

Severely condensed, the core of the story concerns a person tied to the side of ramp inside of a cave, in such a way that the person could only look straight ahead at the shadows projected onto the far wall, of things moving up and down the ramp behind the person's head.

Later the person's head is released and direct perception of the things on the ramp is possible. This is followed by successive stages of greater and greater freedom, allowing the person to progress up the ramp and eventually out of the cave into the sunlight.

Plato's metaphor of the cave has been used to illustrate and teach a great number of ideas and is far from being exhausted. The challenge that seems to have received the least amount of attention, however, is that of integrating all of the different perspectives and definitions of reality that the story includes--indeed, I suppose many would say that such integration is impossible.

My contention is that the word "impossible" used in this way, is just another way of someone saying that he or she is not interested in creating such integration, or is not willing to do whatever hard work is required to make that integration a reality. Whenever we have the strength and opportunity, we need to do the work.

The beginning of the creation of wholeness and integration is the willingness to be a foreigner, to be initially (perhaps for a very long initial period) misunderstood and shunned. Every person who has ever gone into a totally foreign culture knows what a tedious process it can be to establish commonality in language and understanding. The basic task of effective communication can take decades to accomplish, but without individuals who are very committed to that task we would not have reached the point of massive international trade and travel nor would the United Nations (such as it is, at times) exist.

But this sort of cross-cultural communication is obvious. What about the smaller and more subtle divisions that hide beneath our popular myths of national and regional identity?

On one hand, believing that we have something in common with others (whether in fact we do or not) allows for communal collaboration. On the other hand, believing to have something in common which we truthfully don't, or remaining blind to something which we truthfully do have in common, leaves social and familial foundations always in cycles of deterioration and repair.

It is true that even when we are honest with ourselves about things which we do or do not have in common, that continual readjustment is necessary. Growth of any kind includes constantly changing perspectives, but ideally this will be experienced as a positive sort of evolution rather than in the generally more destructive pattern of cycles of sickness and health--which nevertheless also create constantly changing perspectives and have their own lessons to teach.

The point at which we begin to become foreigners, from the inside outward, is when we finally begin to see patterns and relationships that were there all along. As wonderful as it may be to remove forms of blindness from

one's self, many of the people we see every day may still be at that point of personal evolution that we have just (somewhat) escaped. The major differences between us and them are time and experience. The result, however, is that we now appear (in relation to others) to be speaking a foreign language and operating from a foreign understanding.

I want to be absolutely clear at this point that notions of superiority, greater maturity, or any other form of hierarchy are specifically disempowering, because all such notions close the door to clear and empowering communication. My precise answer to such notions may be exactly imitated as follows. Extend your tongue outward past your lips. Now close your lips tightly around your tongue both above and below. Now exhale strongly through your mouth and you have my perhaps undignified reply.

The greatest challenge of the foreign-ness that growth brings, is maintaining it in the midst of social situations. I have never tried to be different and I do not recommend that anyone seek to be different just for the sake of being different. What I have done and what I do recommend, that often accomplishes the same incongruity with society, is the practice of integrity--being true to one's self, one's deepest beliefs, and one's deepest and most pervasive personal truth. I do not believe anyone's personal integrity to be inconsistent with God's truth, except within the limitations of human understanding.

In writing of his experiences at Walden Pond, one of Henry David Thoreau's conclusions was that the real challenge was to practice the peace and clarity of life at the pond while in the midst of noisy urban interaction. To those who knew nothing but the noisy urban interaction, however, Thoreau would have seemed like a foreigner by acting from a very different

understanding and perception of life. But if Thoreau (or any of us today) was not willing to be misunderstood and live with integrity, all that he'd learned at Walden Pond would have been lost.

To live without integrity is like flushing hundreds of dollars down the toilet, just because one's neighbors don't have similar financial resources. If we share whatever we have, everyone's wealth increases. Flushing or hoarding (or hiding?) one's wealth for the sake of social acceptance leaves all of us impoverished.

I believe that God has hidden within each human soul a veritable gold mine, but just as the mining of gold is a lot of physical work, the mining of the treasures hidden within the human soul is equally so. Moments or perhaps even seasons of social alienation are part of the process, but even in the face of occasional doubts I am able to say that the rewards are easily worth the effort. Today may be "another day working in the mine," but today is also another day to bring out some more gold.

Future Cable-Television Production

The first 53 episodes of "Sister Who Presents..." and two Christmas specials were produced beginning in July of 1992 and concluding in December of 1994, through the facilities of Denver Community Television, in Denver, Colorado. The next 28 episodes were produced beginning in November of 1997 and concluding in July of 1998, through the facilities of Community Seven Television in Billings, Montana.

Having moved back to the Denver-Metro area of Colorado, I am once again working towards producing more cable television shows.

The Colorado Psychic Center has offered free use of its very large classroom as a studio space, since the equipment contained within Denver Community Television's van (essentially a mobile studio control room) is generally kept in better condition than the equipment within their studios located at 2900 Welton Street. All available set pieces have been moved to the

Psychic Center classroom, but need a bit of refurbishing and repainting--which may or may not happen before the first new production is videotaped (probably in October), depending upon my financial resources. In the event that funds are lacking, I will simply have to use the set pieces in their present condition.

Additionally, however, as many as 5 new 60-minute 3/4" videotapes will need to be purchased each month, upon which the master copy of each episode will be videotaped. Considering that the current cost of such tapes is about \$25 each, the pace at which new shows are created may be limited.

Nevertheless, I am excited about getting back into production and trust that divine providence will provide financial resources through whatever means, at whatever pace is truly best. I will simply have to try to adjust my enthusiasm and capacity for impatience accordingly.

If anyone reading this has both an opportunity and an interest, to facilitate any sort of networking between myself and others, progress could be made toward the goal of wider distribution of these television shows. This could be anything from knowing someone who works with cable-television in your area, to making phone calls to local cable and broadcast television companies, to facilitating communication between myself and relevant business professionals, to passing a copy of this newsletter along to an individual or group who might be interested in financially supporting this activity.

Life invites each of us to participate in its unfolding, even before we have any idea of where things will go. With the usual human feelings of trepidation, I choose to go as far as I can and to discover whatever I can in the process.