

# *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. ---Sister Who*

## *Gestation*

*For the unborn chick, the shell is a cold unyielding wall, making the experience of life cramped and restrictive at best. Perhaps such chicks even rant and complain against such things, wanting instead to dance about. For the hen incubating the eggs with the warmth of her body, the shell is a protection from many of the adversarial experiences the world has to offer. So is the shell there to keep the chicks in or to keep the rest of reality out?*

*Often there are times in which every attempt to do something new and wonderful seems to resound hollowly against an unyielding shell which will not let us move forward. At other times we may wish for a shell capable of keeping adversarial forces at bay.*

*Sometimes we are impatient to move things forward when they seem most stuck. Sometimes, like the shell, they are stuck for a very good reason.*

*A few of you may know that I have been striving to move to a better neighborhood in a location closer to my day-job for quite some time now. It seems progress in that direction is finally being made. Hopefully there will be much good news for me to share in next month's newsletter. For now, everything seems to be in mid-process.*

*Going to look at a couple of house possibilities a few days ago, I stopped for gas in my car along the way and slid the gasoline charge card through the appropriate slot on the gas pump. Superficially just words on the display screen, my intuition suddenly shouted that it meant something much more for me, when the text appeared: "Please wait."*

*Please wait? I'd seen those words a thousand other times, when refueling my car, but somehow it seemed to be saying more to me that day, than just to wait for the gas pump computer to finish its calculations. Please wait for a new home for myself and my two dogs? Doing so would be so much easier if I had more information (such as for how long, what would follow that I would then know*

*was worth the wait, etc. ).*

*Yet somehow I think I understood. When I've done all I can think of to do, it's simply time to go home and relax, knowing somehow that the Divine will take care of the rest.*

*Why is that so difficult? Because of the all of the times I so clearly remember, when it seems that the Divine did not, in fact, take care of the rest. I remember prayers that went on for months and even years, with no apparent answer. I remember finally adapting to certain needs remaining unmet for similar amounts of time, while surrounded by people who continued to take for granted, what was conspicuously missing from my life experience.*

*Perhaps it was simply one more experience of some aspect of the experience of life which would be my own, waiting for its appropriate time to finally crack the shell open, to encounter both the opportunities and the adversaries of a larger world than I had fully understood existed only a thickness of a shell away.*

*Reflecting back upon stages of my life, for twenty-six years, I knew I was different but I did not consciously know I was gay (or even what being gay means). Then from somewhere deep within me, quite unexpected, emerged a spiritual alter-ego of Sister Who. Within the process of reinventing myself as a single gay man after nine years of relationship with my lifepartner, I again found myself time and time again chipping away at various restrictive shells, always wanting them gone as quickly as I became aware of them rather than waiting until everything was ready for the shell to be carefully, gently, perhaps even tediously removed.*

*"Please wait."*

*The request seemed, from a place of deeper knowing and frequently mysterious intuition, like a gentle plea which understood how difficult the struggle toward a more empowered life has been. I sensed also a*

subtle invitation to consider the possibility of a perspective from which all the waiting and struggle made sense--an invitation, mind you, not a demand.

It may be perfectly true that the shell is very necessary for the time that it remains all around its precious occupant, but it is not for that reason a more hospitable place to be and incomprehensible demands to stop struggling only serve to give the speaker the appearance of being uncaring.

Is the Divine uncaring, simply because we receive no complete explanation of a world beyond the shell we could not possibly comprehend? The Divine is still the Divine, whether or not we understand, but that hardly suffices to make our struggles less painful.

"Please wait."

A gentle plea coupled with a specific word of guidance, coming from someplace beyond my current moment of confusion and struggle.

An acknowledgement (from my intuition, I mean) that someone was really there, aware of what I was going through, aware of all the potential negative outcomes I feared. In the midst of my mad dash to stay ahead of rows of dominoes which seemed to be tumbling all around me, a small quiet voice of reassurance that everything really would be alright.

And for the first time in a very long time, I was able to relax a little, knowing that I was not alone in all that I face. So to whomever used that simple gas pump to get a message through to me: "Thank you."

*"In snowflakes  
and dragons  
and everything else in between,  
if we see our reflections there,  
we get a glimpse of our souls  
and begin to understand  
who we are  
and what we are therefore  
here to do."*

*---Sister Who*

## Recommended Reading

I was recently loaned a small book entitled, *Redefining Our Relationships* by Wendy-O Matik. The focus of the book is upon non-traditional relationships, which is at best a controversial subject even within today's supposedly more liberal social circles.

I recommend the book not as an opinion one way or the other as to whether such relationships are appropriate for any specific individual, but rather because I found the author's open, honest perspective and occasionally poetic style to be both intriguing and enlightening.

It does seem that humanity is moving in the direction of broader definitions of family and relationship and that a corresponding broader perspective upon the ways that we relate to each other would be most helpful. Demonizing whatever we do not understand has been the typical response of humanity for far too long.

The added challenge of reading such a book as this, however, is the potential discovery of what we have in common with people of whose ways of living we may not approve. If the only thing reading such a book accomplishes, however, is the ability to look upon others with less judgment, that alone is another step toward peace in the world and peace within our lives.

Nevertheless, with this and all other books I recommend, it is imperative to read with eyes wide open. Certain passages may be enchanting while others seem to lack depth or be for whatever reason completely unacceptable. As with everything else you ever read or hear or see, I encourage you take what is helpful to you and leave the rest for someone else.

What is most important, with this and all other books, is to nurture honesty and discovery of one's self and one's relationships to one's self, other people, and the Divine, because this is the substance of inner growth by which we reach our maximum potential as beings created in the image of the Divine.

Reading books is at its best, a quest to understand what previously was beyond our understanding and perhaps in our way to love what we previously found unlovable. This is not to say, however, that we embody everything we read; only that we accept that it has its appropriate place within the diversity of humanity and the rest of the universe.

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

## *The Politics of Hypocrisy*

*I have to wonder sometimes, considering how very common hypocrisy is within humanity, if it might not be a genetic condition of some sort.*

*Considering in any case, that it is available almost anywhere humanity can be found and is perhaps the greatest and most available adversary of honesty and truth one could name, I am even more surprised at how unconsciously it is allowed to flourish like the very worst of noxious weeds. The difference of course is that from what I've read and heard, most if not all plants which have been given the label, "noxious weed," do in fact serve some helpful purpose.*

*So what exactly is hypocrisy anyway, besides being the sin against which Jesus spoke more than any other? For purposes of this discussion, let's begin with the definition that it is an external performance which is in more or less direct contradiction to internally held principles. What possible good use could come from such duplicity? Is this not the embodiment of the maxim, "we have found the enemy and it is ourselves"?*

*If all of this is true, then why does hypocrisy receive so little attention, so little curative effort, and so much tolerance?*

*These are some of the questions that came to my mind recently, when I was confronted with yet another incidence of petty interpersonal politics at the office where I work as an administrative assistant. For example, somehow I had hoped that people would be more understanding that because I recently experienced not one but two auto accidents and am also in the process of moving from a home forty miles away to a home perhaps four miles away, I would temporarily be receiving more personal phone calls at work to deal with these challenges. I had, after all, taken steps to insure that neither my nor anyone else's productivity would be thereby negatively affected. Perhaps one of my faults is that I always trust people to be better than they are. Perhaps one of my virtues is that I always encourage them to be better than they are.*

*In any case, because the specific activities of my position within that office fluctuate quite a bit and because I am often perceived to be "the low man on the totem pole" and therefore the one for whom respect is least required, a number of accusations were directed toward me, as reported by one of the two owners of the company, who knows me too well to place much stock in them. I'm glad he relayed*

*the criticisms to me, so that I may be more aware of the minefield I am traversing, but I was nevertheless discouraged to be alerted to how little progress has been made toward the approximately twenty people in the office becoming an effective and mutually supportive and collaborative team. Perhaps they are simply a microcosm of what is happening all across this country and perhaps even around the world, judging by recent newspaper headlines.*

*As a friend and I were commenting some time ago, "Why do I always have to be the mature one?" With another friend attempting to cope with the frustration of such office situations, I recently remarked, "It's a corollary of Murphy's Law. If a bad person does something wrong, he will get away with it. If a good person does something wrong, he will get caught every time. The chances of getting caught are proportional to the quality of a person's character."*

*What makes office politics so frustrating is that more often than not, I will never have the chance to face my accuser and negotiate a better working relationship. If I protest that I am being singled out for more negative treatment than others, management will generally resort to strict enforcement of a particular policy in a way that irritates everyone in the entire office and I will be blamed for the general reduction in employee privileges. If I hadn't complained, the greater enforcement would not have happened, or so the argument goes. Ultimately, if I want things to get better rather than worse, I am left to simply do a better job than ever before, to live and work according to a higher standard than is generally enforced--or to leave the company and find another place to earn the check that pays my mortgage, electric bill, phone bill, and so forth.*

*The more intelligent option of course is to educate the work force in better interpersonal dynamics, most of which can be summed up within the goal of learning to actively care about and support each other--more concisely, reminding ourselves to love one another. The worlds within the office and outside of it are not so separate as would be more convenient to the capitalistic systems of the world of business and economic trade. People with troubled lives outside of the office will not be able to do their best within it.*

*So, with regard to this discussion, the real problem is the absence of love and the consequences are the politics of hypocrisy, which*

are at least as reprehensible as any political scandal this country or any country has ever endured. The politics of hypocrisy are not, however, all that far from basic relational conflicts throughout humanity.

In both humanity's relational conflicts and the politics of hypocrisy, for example, when Bad viciously accuses Good of doing bad, Good cannot with any integrity do the same. When Good makes an accusation, in order to maintain integrity and not become Bad, the accusation must be made calmly, objectively, and with good hard evidence or reliable testimony.

Within such a process, the human emotions of being hurt, wronged, and devalued, may never receive the healing they need, but the fact remains that answering negative with negative only produces more negative. Someone must begin answering negative with positive.

One of the basic truths running through this whole discussion though often overlooked, is that living strictly by rules produces only robots and not living, breathing, loving human beings. This too is hypocrisy, that in attempting to create relatively harmonious civilizations, far too often we have resorted to embracing rules in ways that deny our inherent humanity--our abilities to think and feel and empathize with one another's perspectives, experiences, and longings.

So I suggest that in reawakening our spirits, re-inspiring our minds, re-embracing our souls, and re-acquainting ourselves with the most beautiful aspects of each other, we can begin to love again in that broad sense which is absolutely essential to humanity's survival, in ways that no robot ever could. Perhaps that will finally be the liberation of humanity: when the politics of hypocrisy no longer have any place within our hearts, within our communities, or within our world.

In the meantime, however, perhaps there is an affirmation which can be drawn between the ideal we continue to preserve within ourselves, in

spite of thousands of years of failing to demonstrate that ideal of unconditional love within our lives. We haven't given up. We're still striving toward a pattern of life characterized by unconditional love (well, some of us at least and the others may follow our lead at some point in the future).

Love is, after all, what ultimately defeats corrupt politics of every kind. Our governments are no more corrupt than our own hearts have collectively become and the healing of one will follow the healing of the other. Love is what sweeps hypocrisy aside, insisting that we do not have to pretend to be something we're not--especially since we already have more than enough good within ourselves just waiting to be expressed, though we may have to dig down through layers of all sorts of emotional and spiritual mud to find it. Love is what allows us and even empowers us to live the ideals to which our hearts continue to cling.

In digging through such emotional and spiritual mud, we may even have to discover and wash away our own expressions of hypocrisy.

This again is looking into whatever mirror the Divine provides, to see myself as I truly am--all the soiled beauty, all the untapped potential, and all of the unrecognized value. Learning to love myself is ultimately about learning to see myself as the Divine sees me and learning to love others is about learning to see others as the Divine sees them.

Politics, both interpersonal and governmental, is about imposing blindness. Within all political situations and interactions, attention is drawn toward a specific point of focus at the expense of noticing other details within the complete picture.

In my heart with regard to myself and also in my country, I pray for a return to statesmanship: the craft of wise administration of diverse qualities, perspectives, needs, and dreams toward the goal of a truly beautiful experience of life for one and all and everything.

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--S.W.