

sister who's perspective

Sister Who's Perspective, Issue 174, December 2013, copyright

Overview

The central component of a lobotomy is the act of severing connections between specific parts of the brain related to experiencing, managing, and expressing emotions. This month, you are invited to contemplate the implications of managing emotions by removing or repressing them. As always, you are encouraged to form your own opinion, as well as a deeper understanding of why you hold the opinions that you do.

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

Social Lobotomy

When feelings are hidden, there can be no certainty that one knows the true meaning of words that are spoken. When it is socially required that feelings be hidden, we have been manipulated into fleeing from our humanness and have been enslaved to values which are inherently unhealthy. This makes even less sense when one considers that it is aspects of our humanness which provide the best reasons for living and the most effective ways to do so.

None of those observations dismiss the importance of self-control and wise conduct, but self-repression to extremes that emulate the effects of a lobotomy is fundamentally disempowering, even if such self-repression may appear to be temporarily necessary. Wisdom does offer better alternatives, if we are willing to do the work of discovering them. I persist in my belief, however, that there is no recipe that will wisely remove all struggle and pain from the experience of life, specifically because of the constructive contributions these can make.

From one perspective, a lobotomy can make virtually everything about life easier and could even be construed as an artificial example of spiritual accomplishment as defined by the Buddhist practice of being detached from expectations, possessions, and

so forth. Such a perspective is far from holistic, however, and the costs of embracing such an approach to life are extremely high. An additional important consideration is a radical increase in the difficulty of distinguishing detachment from the pathology of apathy, which is more or less synonymous with an inability to truly love.

All things thus considered, lobotomy can legitimately be considered the removal of the ability to truly love—anything or anyone. All passion, ambition, and ability to be inspired are gone. If one cannot remember the last time one felt genuinely inspired by something, an insidious subtle sort of lobotomy may have somehow slipped into the living of one's life.

Social lobotomy is also blinding, discouraging not only awareness and perception of itself, but also of beauty, harmony, and goodness anywhere and everywhere these may occur. A consequent loss is the ability to appreciate such things, rather than taking them for granted. It could be said, therefore, that truly living is often a matter of learning to truly see all that there is to see, since seeing is never complete if it does not include appreciation. Nonetheless, it is not that there is nothing to see, but rather that so much is allowed to slip by unnoticed.

If we are to legitimately claim to be seekers of truth, we must know equally both the oyster's rough exterior shell and the pearl temporarily hidden from view. Similarly, to truly know any person—even ourselves—we must know both the shell that bears the scars of contact with a frequently adversarial world and the spirit that shines as the fundamental reason for making any constructive effort at all.

We do not need to exclude emotions, creativity, or original thoughts in order to serve the greatest possibilities hidden within ourselves. What we need is to finally know and fully appreciate the treasure each one of us is.

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

Spiritual Lobotomy

A great many science fiction movies and novels have suggested that spiritual development involves (and in some cases even requires) diminished experience of emotions. A few reluctantly concede that if such troublesome feelings must remain, they must also be carefully controlled—yet life by its very nature has never consented to being completely controlled by anyone or anything.

Among the most commonly named control-oriented entities is institutionalized religion, which I interpret as societal attempts to systematize and standardize management of the spiritual part of each person. Godde may or may not choose to manifest through the practices of such, but of greater concern for the moment are the ways in which religious organizations have required individuals to adapt to the perceived demands of the particular institution's perception of the Divine.

Some have taught practices of so-called reverence that ignore the truth of individual human experience. One cannot flee from truth, however, and simultaneously draw near to Godde. Nonetheless, there are experiences to which humans are frequently subject, which are so complex and challenging that only a divine mind could comprehend them. Stripping ourselves of the ability to feel anything in order to resign ourselves to the tyranny of divine will (as defined by particular religious institutions), however, denies the Godde-given capacities we possess to make things better.

Even if one holds no belief in any conception of the Divine, a persistent awareness of our own consciousness demands that we pay attention to those parts of ourselves which are not physical, but nonetheless inescapably real. In such cases, a spiritual lobotomy involves the accomplishment of apathy, of an inability to love, and of an inability to either notice or be inspired by any non-physical component of life; we exist but cannot accurately be described as truly alive.

An additional important criteria of any lobotomy is that it is never done by an individual to the self, but rather is always imposed by a surrounding population that demands cooperation and compliance,

regardless of any truth the individual may perceive or be experiencing. One could even say that lobotomy is the demand that one lie to one's self about any and all incongruent realities and truths. The priority is given to conformity and homogeneity—even in matters of non-material reality that the proponents of the common definitions have no way to prove.

It may in fact be that a chief evidence of lobotomy's absence, is the ability to embrace—enthusiastically even—things which are beyond the reach of empiricism, proof, scientific verification, and objective measurement. It is consequently unlikely that anyone who has experienced spiritual lobotomy has the ability to dance; indeed, this may be among the reasons that certain religious institutions have altogether forbidden dancing (so that the reality of the spiritual lobotomy that has been done can go unnoticed). From such a perspective, throwing off personal inhibitions, embracing the joy of simply being alive, and dancing in whatever ways one's body allows, may be the most wonderfully rebellious and radical affirmation of life available. In a country that is constantly crowing about freedom, it is all the more bewildering, therefore, that dancing within national monuments is forbidden and labeled reprehensibly disrespectful.

Spiritual lobotomy, comparatively, is not concerned with freedom, truth, or for that matter even being alive. The concern is rather for satisfying societal expectations and demands. Even more strange is that spiritual lobotomy is not even concerned about genuine and healthy relationship with the Divine, which would superficially seem to be the primary concern of all religious institutions. Indeed, one could wonder whether genuine and healthy relationship with anything greater than ourselves is even possible, within the nebulous world of those who have been lobotomized.

Standing in stark contrast to all of this is the person infused with divine energy, with passion for life, and with zeal for complete and comprehensive truth. I aspire to become such a person, no matter how long it takes—which is perhaps the final thing that spiritual lobotomy lacks: perseverance, especially due to faith.

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

Emotional Lobotomy

At first the idea of being emotionally cut off from one's emotions sounded redundant, but the more I contemplated the juxtaposition, the more convinced I became that typical modern social experience is filled with socially prescribed responses that are often not genuinely our own. We may therefore appear to experience emotions, but these emotions may have actually come from somewhere outside of ourselves.

Social conventions dictate, for example, that one mourn at funerals and anyone who does not do so is considered inappropriate, rebellious, and disrespectful. Within particular subcultures, the funeral is immediately followed by an allegedly joyful outburst, perhaps as an attempt to dispel any gloominess associated with the loss of the particular individual.

What neither practice is willing to acknowledge, however, is whether one is truly experiencing loss and whether one has sufficiently completed a process of mourning to once again embrace joy. The social practice dictates the superficial emotional expression and blending into the crowd of people gathered may consequently require disconnecting from one's own true emotions and, in effect, lying about one's actual feelings.

A fellow student and I had a related conversation during the final days of my masters degree program at Iliff School of Theology, acknowledging that there was not a church service within the entire Denver-metro area which I could attend, that would be free from the societal expectation within polite conversation that "everything is fine." Clearly there are many times when one's overall life experience is not at all fine and certain negative emotions are consequently very real, but must be denied in order to continue any

"Accomplishment is inseparable from struggle; those who refuse to struggle, never accomplish anything."

-- Sister Who

allegedly meaningful social interaction. In effect, lying has become the socially prescribed dominant pattern, because those asking "how are you" don't really want to know. It is nevertheless common to insist that they love you, while requiring you to persist in lying about what your actual experience of life is.

On the other side of this discussion are those who would explain that being confronted with overwhelming needs within the life of another, is more than most people can bear. I suggest this is because humanity has never really learned to embrace a world with as much challenge as our world in fact includes. In a sense, humanity has been running from both truth and Godde, ever since the mythological departure from the Garden of Eden.

There is no rational or intelligent reason for doing so, but the response of my thoughts to such a possibility is to immediately ask the reason why. Consequently, I find myself wondering whether humanity as a whole has difficulty forgiving itself for having betrayed (repeatedly, it would seem) the trust and love which in some literal or figurative way offered a world of perfect harmony and beauty. I'm not convinced, however, that the gateway of that archetypal garden isn't still open to us, should we ever decide to return. Making such a return, however, would apparently require a holistic solidarity that continues to be elusive.

Among the components of such solidarity would logically be an intelligent embrace of the emotions we do have, instead of continuing to pretend the ones we don't. A few individuals here and there seemed to have discovered this, but the majority appear to be still floundering in virtually endless distraction, perhaps because they imagine the truth of themselves to be unmanageable. It is in knowing our sadness, however, that the power of joy is made real. It is in having the anchor of sadness, that joy soars like a kite at the end of a string, rather than blindly fluttering toward destruction like a falling leaf.

Similarly, it is in facing and embracing whatever emotions we genuinely do or do not have for each other, that we finally have the ability to positively transform those emotions.

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

Perceptual Lobotomy

It is one thing to be able to perceptually step beyond or outside of ourselves from time to time in order to look back and notice our own behavioral patterns, but quite another to unconsciously be continuously applying a perceptual filter—such that although we always see the events, we never see the feelings.

Throughout my years of elementary and secondary education, required classes in history were common. The assignments and tests which populated those classes, however, typically focused only on names, dates, and locations rather than on deeper understandings of why people in other times thought and acted as they did. Metaphorically, the focus was only upon the body and never upon the spirit.

Perceptual lobotomy once again has the appearance of being a double negative, since lobotomy is already a form of blindness. If we fail to notice the specific ways that perception is affected, however, we will have less ability to counter-act the negative effects.

Within every moment that any human has ever touched, there will be emotional, physical, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects, specifically because these are all parts of the presence that humanity individually and collectively brings wherever it goes. That they are sometimes not seen, makes them no less real. From the perspective of faith, the fact that Godde is not seen makes Godde no less real, but truthful perception (the only kind that I personally believe Godde honors) must concede that whatever the Divine is, is more than any human religion or language has ever been able to describe.

Consequently, when an evangelistic Christian recently challenged me to fit my conception of Godde within a limited theological box, I was unable to exchange an infinite conception of greatest love and wisdom for one capable of being described by human thought and language. While I am ready, willing, and able to perceive Godde through lenses of religious institutions, it would be perceptual lobotomy to insist that those are the only lenses able to perceive Godde at all.

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

On a Personal Note

Doctoral writing, video production, the Conscious Christmas Festival—it has indeed been a busy and mentally exhausting month. One way or another, however, I persist in doing more than most would believe is possible, using more limited resources than any would recommend (including myself). If the alternative is simply accepting the non-existence of any part of the past four weeks' accomplishments, however, that would be less acceptable yet—so I persist.

Still ahead, however, is editing and submission of perhaps thirty new episodes of "Sister Who Presents" as well as uploading to www.YouTube.com/DenverNeVaar, so that they can be seen literally anywhere in the world, via the Internet. The subscription list for this newsletter continues to grow and I have also made inquiries about possible performance of my three modern "morality plays," possibly during February. Obviously I will update everyone through this column as things develop.

An ongoing need, especially now that five annual appearances of the portable chapel are anticipated during 2014, is for reliable and physically capable crew members to assist with transport, set-up, take-down, and re-storage of the portable chapel. Additionally, new camera operators for video production sessions are always welcome. Details regarding these volunteer positions can be found online at www.SisterWho.com.

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

Subscription Information:

"Sister Who's Perspective" is a free monthly newsletter. If you have appreciated this newsletter, please consider supporting the continuance of the work. (Please make checks payable to Denver NeVaar or submit donations through www.PayPal.com to the email address of dn@sisterwho.com). Comments, questions, and suggestions regarding content are always welcome.

*Sister Who a/k/a Rev. Denver NeVaar, MTS
3170 West Longfellow Pl., Denver, CO 80221
email: dn@SisterWho.com*

Internet website: <http://www.SisterWho.com>

Additional Informational Internet Websites:

www.GodSpaceSanctuary.org

www.DenverNeVaar.info

www.YouTube.com/DenverNeVaar