

sister who's perspective

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Overview

As much as current popular psychology recommends focusing exclusively upon the positive, there are also negatives to be avoided by treading wisely through the challenges of one's daily life. The time-worn adage advises, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Maintaining one's wholeness is often the best deterrent to problems that might arise from being an incomplete or partially formed person.

Avoiding Physical Death

Perhaps the first observation of human thinking and behavior in this area, is that it spans such a broad spectrum: everything from daredevil stunts, to those who go to the most extreme lengths to avoid any and all contact with anything and everything that hurts even the least little bit. In contrast, the South African psychologist Susan David notes, "life's beauty is inseparable from its fragility" and recommends "emotional agility" over "emotional rigidity."

None of which negates the inevitability of this literal rite of passage. I'm reminded of the scene within the movie, "Heidi," in which Peter's grandmother, is played by the actress Patricia Neal and begins with Heidi running into the room after a doctor's examination, protesting "You can't die!" Grandmother calmly responds, "Why of course I can. It's very natural," but then offers more insight.

This event, she explains, is redefined by being remembered and is also tied to being true to one's self. The question with which each individual must wrestle throughout life, therefore, is "how much resistance is the right amount?" Some try to avoid the subject altogether, thereby ensuring that they will do nothing in response.

Far too many focus only upon avoiding the outcome, without contemplating the best

use of one's time between now and then, so that a balance between acceptance and effort is maintained. Too little effort suggests one does not adequately believe in the value of one's own life; too much effort implies an aggressively adversarial stance toward the fact of one's inherent mortality. In contrast, Peter's Grandmother knew the difference between a life of quantity and a life of quality.

One cannot fight against one's inherent reality without being at war with one's self and any sense of being at war is adversarial to qualities of peace and love. That being noted, genuine realities of peace and love require self-control, wisdom, and mutual respect in order to manifest in healthy and recommendable ways. Where there is no love, only ugliness remains; indeed, any avoidance of physical death becomes ugly and self-sabotaging whenever love is absent.

Avoiding physical death affirms life; both pursuing and warring against death's reality, do not. Within the very individualistic ways that this dynamic is played out within an infinite spectrum of circumstances, is an invitation to transcend the mere facts of one's physical reality--to be more than just the sum of one's parts. Wise embrace of this, is sadly a rare dynamic throughout human history.

Within the magic of life, however, is that in spite of such neglect, the opportunity remains eternally available. What must not be overlooked is that this avoidance requires conscious thought, personal intention, and deliberate action. Additionally, whenever avoidance of this kind can be seen "from the inside," it is equally an affirmation of life that is specifically characterized by love.

Death will come within its individually appointed hour and way. Meeting it as a friend rather than as an adversary whose shadow taints all earthly existence, requires a deep and abiding respect for all the good that life is able to include--one moment at a time.

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

Avoiding Emotional Death

Noted within countless movies and television shows, are moments of life when some occurrence of trauma results in a sort of emotional numbness; feeling nothing, due to the shock of whatever redefinition has just occurred. Within an analogous theme, the context of which I cannot completely recall, I stumbled onto the phrase many years ago, of "a hurt too deep to ever heal." Becoming numb to it would presumably be a substitute for actual healing, but I have always been more inclined to believe that it is only by going into the wound with eyes wide open, and finding effective ways to process the full volume and variety of pain residing therein, that true healing finally finds a way to occur.

Perhaps this is why in several places within the biblical Old Testament literature, the death of an auspicious person was followed by thirty days of more-or-less continuous mourning. Within the present time, conversely, some people seem very impatient if a funeral lasts more than an hour or, at the most, two--and then wonder why it is so difficult to "move on" with their usual day-to-day lives. Mysterious though it may be, an embrace of the widest spectrum between extremes of joy and grief, seems inherent within being fully and truly alive.

If one runs away from awareness and engagement with everything that hurts, all that is unjust or unfair, and an infinite spectrum of disappointments--essentially choosing not to feel anything unpleasant--it becomes a sort of emotional suicide. The life of one's emotions is (for all essential purposes) over and done, leaving only a generalized unwillingness to feel anything at all. I cannot believe for even one moment that such a state was, is, or ever will be within the scope of divine intention.

If, conversely, the opposite is true, that emotions are a most powerful resource, given to humanity to redefine and expand life in ways that nothing else could, then fleeing from one's emotions or from any variant of emotional awareness, would be undeniably a self-sabotaging and unintelligent response. I would rather endure any emotion than allow

my life to be less than its potential, during the many or few years I am allowed to live. A fundamental and persistent reality of physical life is, after all, that it is finite rather than eternal, and might end at any moment.

Yet the human part of myself persists in wishing that experiences could be less painful, less frustrating, and especially less limited. As the repetitious question of my second modern "morality play" persists, however, "What sort of person will you show yourself to be?" I must remember that I do what I do because of who I am and because I wish to be more than just a reflection of every evil word and action ever done to me.

From such a perspective, it is perhaps a rebellious and even revolutionary action to dare to feel, precisely when what one feels is painful or in any way unpleasant. Yet if one does not, it is questionable whether one is truly alive. While striving to respect whatever choice anyone else wishes to make, I absolutely and resolutely choose to be alive.

I think this is possibly why a biblical passage urges its readers to "rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep." In so doing, life retains both integrity and completeness, while avoiding the very destructive effects of hypocrisy--effects which are so prevalent within the current era that one might wonder how any contrary expression of virtue could still be possible. I gave up believing in the word "impossible" a very long time ago, however, so if I have managed to carve out even a square foot of space within which no hypocrisy can be found, that accomplishment alone could be interpreted as a certain measure of success.

As passionate as I may be about blowing the whistle on oppression and evil within the world around me, I know that it is only my own vigilance that prevents these from finding any opportunity to manifest within myself--and from there to spread to the world like some sort of viral disease. Emotions are what expose the highlights and shadows of such threats, allowing them to be seen and (hopefully) immediately removed. For me, at least, this is a daily task.

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

Avoiding Technological Death

Having already recognized within prior issues of this newsletter that a large percentage of humanity is currently largely characterized by economic obsession (a form of mental illness) and that this is for the most part unsustainable (as all conditions of mental illness inherently are), virtually inseparable from this phenomenon is the artificially created need for current manifestations of technology. Just as transportation became an essential need of life, the moment many were unable to live within walking distance of their daily employment, technological tools are now essential to most professional forms of work. Yet in contrast to these societal shifts, wages have been left far behind the surging costs of housing, food, and tools.

It's as if humanity is committing suicide, one inch at a time. The only choices in more constructive directions, apparently involve various forms and degrees of re-establishing slavery and abolishing freedom. Apparently, such a deplorable shift will be allowed (which I personally find to be outrageous), as long as the majority are sufficiently comfortable throughout the process.

Those who do experience technological death, may find that they no longer have any voice in the decisions that shape the form and content of their lives. There are days when I fear that my own voice will eventually be silenced in exactly that way. I can only hope that it will be sufficient consolation, that I did all the good I could, while opportunities were still present and available.

On the positive side, recently, a generous supporter was willing to cover the cost of a

*"If Godde were to paint
the picture of my life
without using any darkness,
it would be indistinguishable
from a blank canvas where
even my existence
would be questionable."*

-- Sister Who

new computer printer. An ongoing challenge, of course, is keeping the printer adequately supplied with toner cartridges. A further recent concern, is that of keeping pace with computer software and hardware.

On one hand, I remain opposed to every form of slavery, but on the other, acquiring the resources necessary to maintain this creative work seems to simultaneously require enabling the destructive obsessions that I adamantly oppose. This is the predicament I often describe as "being caught between my circumstances and my principles." Suffice to say, there is never any easy answer--which might be precisely why perseverance in wrestling with each question is so important: it's how growth happens.

The majority of public media seems to imply that what is not presented, is somehow not fully real; that voices that are not heard, do not truly exist. This indirect censoring of anomalous voices and unpleasant elements, however, is adversarial to truth, compassion, and harmoniously integrated life--leaving a void where love and mutually empowering relationship should be. Technology--having no inherent emotions, original thoughts, or personal values--has no ability to be concerned about such omissions. With the language of psychological analysis, the resulting condition is "sociopathic." So if there is to be any goodness within the world, it must be done by humanity or it will remain conspicuously absent--rendering the world an unfit place in which to live.

Technological death is consequently as concerned with being censored as it is with not having available resources, but, like an invisible elephant in the living room, open discussion of such issues and concerns is often neglected or even discouraged. In speaking truth calmly, intelligently, and clearly, one maintains a foundation upon which subsequent individual and communal health (including spiritual health) is absolutely dependent. This much at least, is within everyone's reach, regardless of financial or societal position or status--allowing words to go forth when or if actions are denied.

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Avoiding Spiritual Death

I've mentioned on many occasions that from an autistic perspective, details are the first reality. Consequently, my perceptions are not measured in years, but rather in moments--525,600 of them within each and every year of my life. In trying once more to come to terms with my decision five and a half years ago to let my three dachshunds go live with my former lifepartner for their own safety (the neighborhood in which my home at that time was located, was deteriorating rapidly, due to economic misfortune), it finally occurred to me just now, that what was most important to them were the moments of love they experienced while living with me.

I did not realize at the time, however, that in choosing their safety, the place to which they were going would not provide love. It is outrageous to me that anyone should ever have to choose between love and safety, but at the time it seemed that I needed to employ a self-sacrificing sort of love in order to give them a safer place in which to live. At no point in time, however, did I ever cease to consider them my dogs--which is why I went to great lengths to create and send blankets with my scent, to be with them during their final moments of life (financial resources were inadequate to go there in person).

To my former lifepartner, however, they were little more than livestock--to be fed and sheltered as he deemed appropriate and presumed to have no thoughts or feelings. I was quite upset to learn later that the special blankets I sent were left in a drawer rather than being utilized for their intended purpose. The only comfort available seems to be in hoping that all of us have and are serving higher purposes than the facts of our earthly lives are able to encompass.

I was blessed to see the last dachshund in October and he seemed to be pleading every moment that I take him with me, but my former lifepartner flatly refused to allow any such reunion. So as I said good-bye, I begged him to never forget my love and, in time, to meet me at the rainbow bridge.

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

On a Personal Note

After four days of exhausting and intense labor that included perhaps only four to six hours of sleep, a transition to a residence within the opposite corner of Colorado was accomplished, but unpacking, configuring, and creating new contexts and routines will understandably require significantly more time. In some ways, a mental and emotional weight has been lifted, but in other ways a peculiar sort of disconnection has arisen. I remain, as always, as proactive as I can be, but, also as always, it seems, struggle against a variety of limitations as well.

None of which prevented the submission of twenty-four new episodes of "Sister Who Presents..." to Denver Community Media, which has assigned a cable-casting slot of 12 noon on Sundays for new episodes of this ongoing show. Doing so, however, required five hours of driving to get there and four more to arrive at home again. I am hoping within the next week to re-establish the video production set within my living room, inviting the creation of still more episodes within the relatively near future--including episode 500.

My doctoral program continues to evolve also, suggesting that a primary element may be some aspect of relationship between my ministerial alter-ego and the growing societal phenomenon of "spiritual but not religious." I may not have previously described myself this way, but I nonetheless find truth within it.

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

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