

sister who's perspective

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Overview

One perspective wishes to argue that, "It is what it is," while a contrasting one insists, "It is potentially what it can be become." Any moment of joy that crosses one's path brings a longing for permanence that cannot be, because--by its very nature--life must be ever growing and changing, inseparable as it is from time. Granting permission sagaciously, one moves from being merely a victim, to having a voice in the creation of all that is.

Permission to Grow

Imagine if Michelangelo had submitted a proposal to paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling and been turned down. "It's not within our current specifications for how ceilings are supposed to be painted. White is the usual color and you are expected to comply with all such established expectations."

Or imagine that Saint Francis of Assisi was prohibited from restoring the decaying chapel at San Damiano, much less living within it. "You don't have an occupancy permit," so, consequently, none of the societal renewal he launched ever managed to become reality. It seems quite legitimate to say that European history would have been radically different--and probably worse.

I am beginning to lose count of the many times within my life, when I have arrived at a particular societal circumstance, volunteered to donate my creativity and work-ethic to one or more possibilities of growth and positive development, and been told "no, we'd rather die than change." The time-worn relevant warning of course is, "Be careful for what you wish, because you might actually get it."

Logically, opposing growth and positive development is at least self-sabotaging and at most suicidal. Nonetheless, considering how extensive the implications of change can

be, it does make sense to thoroughly contemplate who and what an individual or a community will become, if a particular course is (or is not) pursued. The relevant frustration is that one can never know for certain; there are always unseen variables.

If I had been granted opportunity in one area, subsequent opportunities in which I was involved, would never have happened. I have no way of knowing, however, whether that would be better or worse. "Better or worse for whom?" might be the more important question to contemplate--but I resist any notion that one person or creative work is more valuable than another, except for the distinction that one is willing to allow positive development and growth while the other is not.

Thus it is not a question of inherent value, but rather of willingness to collaborate, by which particular individuals or administrators consciously or unconsciously assign value--or not--to themselves. As I've said within other contexts, it is not so much that Godde judges us, as that we judge ourselves by our own choices and actions--or lack thereof. This may also be related to why I and most others judge ourselves more harshly for what we didn't do, than for what we did.

In the words of Martin Luther King, "all that is necessary for the triumph of evil, is for good to do nothing." This applies as much to one's relationship with the self as to anything unfolding within one's local, regional, or national community. Bullies within social and governmental contexts seem aware of this, however, and often use individual survival as the persuasion to discourage addressing their attacks upon societal survival--as if it were actually possible for individuals to survive without healthy communities.

Once again, words of Benjamin Franklin echo to the present time: "Either we all hang together or we shall all hang separately."

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

Permission to Renew

"We've always done it this way"--which of course is never true, because every pattern of behavior within human history has point in time, prior to which it did not exist. In addition to this, is the probability that the stagnation referenced by such words, is equally the explanation for innumerable current problems and adversarial circumstances. As someone many years ago noted, "If you want what has never been, do what has never been done."

Likewise, "It works fine for me," chooses to ignore--sometimes without conscious intention--certain negative implications and effects while favoring others. "Complete and accurate information wisely integrated," is a description that truthfully applies to virtually no historical choice or decision. There is always additional information and/or understanding that could have improved particular outcomes, had such been both available and wisely integrated.

Yet time moves onward and so does life itself. Choices and decisions must be made, despite insufficient information to ensure a positive outcome. One could even say that--after recognition that change is the only constant within the universe--one must accept and integrate the reality of virtually universal uncertainty as well.

This seems to be related to ways that I feel increasingly pushed within each passing year, toward the conclusion that the only hope we have for confronting the two inherent and inescapable challenges of change and uncertainty effectively, is to be found within each other. Narcissism and selfish greed are consequently among the most devastating ways to attack the human species. Inclusive and unconditional love is an obvious and essential counter-strategy.

Every other species on this planet insists by its dominant behaviors suggestive of forms of love, that constant renewal is essential; much of humanity, conversely, appears to be blind to this underlying dynamic. One should not merely celebrate the birth of a child, therefore, but also celebrate the ways that this person may grow up to be a significant force within the larger phenomenon of the

renewal of humanity as a whole--if, that is, the rest of us are individually and collectively willing to allow such renewal to happen. In far too many cases, it would seem that such permission is conspicuously absent--no matter how essential it may otherwise be.

A central element of having permission to renew is also having permission to be fully honest and complete in addressing societal issues. I am beginning to find it very tedious, how often people within the academic world crow about concern for "social justice issues," while restricting their involvement to mere intellectual discussion. Even more so are the extremes to which many of them will go, to avoid any acknowledgement of the fact that in virtually every instance, social justice issues are inseparable from various manifestations of economic disparity--which is also a central and fundamental component of capitalism.

Permission to renew must thus include permission to evolve out of current systems and into newer, wiser, and more effective patterns and forms. As a minister I knew many years ago noted, "A church that marries one generation, becomes a widow within the next." Consequently, I find within claims of concern about social justice issues, without simultaneous attempts to address economic disparity, a conspicuous absence of personal and professional integrity.

Capitalism is a system which needs to be outgrown, because it is no longer effectively serving its creators and participants. What the next system will be, however, is still being defined, because innumerable competing elements must be brought into symbiotic balance. Future definitions remain elusive, however, when one does not even have permission to discover and perfect them.

The path of growth and improvement within an individual, a community, or a world, is unavoidably a laborious process of placing stepping stones, adjusting their positions and interrelationship, and thereafter having the courage to place one's full weight upon them within each subsequent step. For those steps to seem easy, however, the preceding work must be done as well as possible.

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Permission to Interconnect

In having more than one needs and keeping it all to one's self, one has not become a success; one has become a consummate failure. In its truest and most authentic definition, prosperity is holistic, inclusive, and communal--specifically because of the interdependence and interconnectedness of all that is. The illusion that some people don't matter, is among the most long-standing and even evil ways that humanity has maintained a self-sabotaging and even suicidal relationship to itself.

An excuse I often hear from individuals who are not struggling, to describe persons struggling for basic survival, is that providing their needs from governmental or communal sources will encourage parasitic dependency and relationships. What is fully overlooked, however, are the ways that the provision of such resources, has always thus far been incomplete and absolutely not holistic. The person who is given only enough food to prevent physical death, continues to struggle against elements of mental and emotional health for which they often have no answer.

What is missing are the real relationships which were inherent within interpersonal relationships of tribal societies within times past. I do not have permission to collaborate with others, when others shut me out of their lives, deny me creative opportunities, and marginalize my life-experience. Instead, I remain an inadequately utilized resource and struggle with maintaining adequate meaning and purpose within my life.

On a number of occasions, I specifically and directly put the question to affluent persons with whom I was speaking, "If this (a particular current struggle) were happening to you, you'd be outraged. Why is it okay if it's only happening to me?" Their inability or unwillingness to provide an answer, in effect, left me without permission to interconnect in

any communally meaningful way. More concisely, possibilities of relating to the surrounding community symbiotically, were denied and I was blamed for not being able to create a solution that the resources available to me could not provide.

Why did I fail to interconnect with others in meaningful and mutually empowering ways? Specifically because the only methods available to me did not have that capacity. The question of "why are others so willing to overlook blatantly evil behavior within their administrators and leaders, as long as they provided affluence for a certain portion of the population," however, not only remains completely unanswered, but also persists in contributing to painful struggles.

I suggest that's at least partially because of the ways the majority of the population pays little attention to its own speech--slowly desensitizing itself to the meanings of words and then expecting others to do the same. I confess a certain temptation, every time someone says, "I'm sorry to hear that," to respond, "Should I have avoided telling you?" Another common example would be those who ask, "How are you?" when they really don't want to know.

Conditioning one's self to dishonest or inaccurate duplicity, in effect, discourages and in effect denies permission to honestly interconnect with the truth of others' lives. It is a matter of ongoing self-discipline to pay attention and direct one's word choice more constructively toward expressions such as "I'm sorry that happened to you" and "Good morning; I hope you have a good day."

In summary, relational individuality is holistically healthy, but narcissistic individuality never is--ever; in any situation or circumstance. This is why interpersonal communication is so very important and absolutely worth the effort that so few seem willing to invest. Language may be a messy affair in need of constant revision, but the absence of such effort has the ability to destroy virtually anything and everything one can name, within any family, group, organization, community, or nation.

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

***"Selfishness
makes affluence ugly."***

-- Sister Who

Permission to Be

As often as I hear the exhortation to "take nothing for granted," it seems that the basic ability to exist is so fundamental that it is usually overlooked. A logical corollary to that is that if one wants one's own ability-to-exist, one must be willing to extend the same to others. There is, in fact, no example of individuality which is able to exist at all, without a corresponding constellation of symbiotic relationships.

It really is "all of us or none," which is why the very notion of needing permission seems at least a little bit absurd. "What you give, you receive," "what goes around, comes around," "garbage in, garbage out"--there are perhaps a hundred different versions of this fundamental relational idea, expressed through diverse languages, religions, and philosophical systems. All such formulations stand emphatically in opposition to devaluing others or competing for resources that--ideally--are designed to be shared.

What is even more victimizing, however, is when negative societal dynamics are internalized, reducing a person to not even believing in the value and capabilities of one's self. It has been said that "small minds talk about people; medium-sized minds talk about events; and large minds talk about ideas." I propose that every human ever born is intended to grow and develop into having as large of a mind as possible.

Yet observation suggests that societal, economic, and governmental systems rarely encourage or grant permission for this to happen. Once again, we ourselves must be better than societal systems, better than economics, and better than governments. In this most of all is humanity's hope for a world that is fit for continuing occupancy.

As phrased within a page of my annual calendar a few years ago, "Sometimes the greatest resource we have is each other." Yet if we do not support each one living with absolute integrity, we will sabotage the contribution that would otherwise be made. If each can give, however, all can truly live.

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

On a Personal Note

As often as I lament my frustrations by remarking that "someone up there thinks I haven't suffered enough," there is a calm awareness within the same moments, that miraculous synchronicities can develop even within the most oppressive moments and circumstances. Therefore, from a certain perspective, the negative elements don't matter--because they remain ever and always unable to prevent any good from happening. What empowers that good to happen, is often a complex collaboration, that begins with being always open to the possibility of positive developments.

I am very much at odds with my current environment, simply because of who I am, so I must persist in believing that the current season is a transitional one, which will be followed by better things. What remains nonetheless essential is that I persist within any and all opportunities that cross my path, in doing the very best that I can. As logical as it may be to withhold effort, doing so will fail to push outcomes in positive directions.

A message continually impressed upon my mind and heart is that each day of life must experience renewal, externally and internally. This often includes mysterious and complex incidences of retaining/releasing, without any certainty of which is which. What needs permission, is that whatever the future will be, it will not be identical to the past.

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Sister Who a/k/a Rev. Denver NeVaar, MTS

POB 16074, Golden, CO 80402

email: dn@SisterWho.com

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

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