

# sister who's perspective

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## Overview

If one spends too much time distracted by what surrounds with too little awareness of all that is within, the prevailing dynamic can be legitimately described as self-sabotaging.

Specifically because inner awareness is required for discovery, however, this cannot be determined by those looking only from the outside. Questions can be posed which may encourage investigation, but only the self can measure its invisible dimensions.

## The Waiting Relational Self

I often find myself to be a valuable person who is nonetheless not valued, but there is no reason to think that I'm the only one who experiences this. In some cases, as noted by Stanislaw Lem, such persons are ahead of their times and must wait within most uncomfortable circumstances, for everyone else to catch up. Every example of individuality which has ever existed, however, is nonetheless surrounded by a vast constellation of symbiotic relationships.

Any individual may at times fail to realize and perhaps even be without any ability to realize, how very important and/or even essential these relationships are. Within the writing of human history, only in retrospect are innumerable simple actions recognized as pivotal. Within any present moment, the focus nonetheless knows nothing except to act with integrity and trust life's unfolding.

Standing nose to nose with the present unfolding of life's experiences and events, however, can easily give the impression that virtually everything has gone tragically wrong. Powerful insight and understanding may be hidden within the most unlikely of persons, awaiting some future configuration of persons and influences before making itself known. In recently being able to finally

view the movie, "The Last Jedi," it was not lost on me, that throughout the entire vast universe, there was only one person willing to make the effort to seek and find Luke Skywalker and plead for his assistance.

I suggest that any one of us may actually be the last jedi--hidden within urban chaos, rural remoteness, or a virtual ocean of ever-shifting diversions that effectively conceal the true nature of one's spirit--awaiting the arrival of the learner who will carry a greater work forward in ways surpassing any human imagination. It is thus virtually impossible for any person *not* to matter or to be truthfully disconnected from the larger universe. What remains to be seen is whether one's contribution will be selfish or heroic; limited or infinite; apathetic or passionate.

The fact that such a self is quietly waiting, however, includes no implication that it is for that reason less truly present. We live within a universe of infinite possibility that resides as much within ourselves as within all that is around us. Finding ways to tear down the walls and adversity that stand between us and the manifestation of every beautiful dream, is ultimately that around which the core essence of meaningful life is oriented.

So it is that the divine self within each of us waits, but cannot wait forever. Our time on this planet is finite and so also is the number of chances the treasures within us will have to emerge. A dear friend once expressed that the path I walk in my unusual ministerial role is ultimately humanity's path also and I was grieved to think that the season of very painful loss I have endured for the past three years is but a shadow of what others will eventually face also.

Whether the path ahead is loss or gain, however, the tree's roots can grow even in winter--such that when spring returns, no moment needs to have been truly wasted.

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

## The Visionary Relational Self

Are visions given or created--or are they both, at various and randomly alternating times? Clearly there are times when one needs them in order to keep going and, as within the movie, "Jakob the Liar," starring Robin Williams, one must consider the title character's example, that "when all hope was lost, he invented it." Yet the masterful irony is that what he invented, was ultimately true.

Was it that he trusted it would be true; that his demonstration was ultimately one of faith rather than foolishness? How could he have known? The truth, of course, is that he didn't know but nonetheless somehow found the strength to believe.

The truth is also that even those reported to be giants in terms of faith, sometimes run out of strength and wrestle long and hard with doubt--more often than not, all alone. I cannot say with any certainty that such persons always prevail, nor whether I myself am such a person. I am sufficiently a scholar to ask in response, however, what confirms that one has, in fact, prevailed and when is the correct time to make that determination?

That particular part of the relational self which is visionary, in any case, must by definition be larger than the circumstances of the particular present moment. If one is not consciously aware of this part, however, one cannot be empowered thereby. What makes human imagination so essential, therefore, is not the need to satisfy an elementary school art teacher, but rather the need to satisfy a demand for purpose and inspiration within the most bewildering life experiences that unfold within subsequent years of one's life.

The mere facts of any one physical being will never be sufficiently compelling to ensure humanity's individual and collective survival; for that, the non-physical or spiritual aspects are absolutely required--regardless of which particular ideology is selected to efficiently govern them. To clarify an important point, however, please note that I said "govern" and not "repress" or "control." They are there and their presence is vital, but they must also be nurtured and guided toward the most positive development within reach.

That being said, it has often been noted that any tool that can be used, can also be abused--and this is no less true of human spirituality than of anything else. The holistic and healthy example of humanity, therefore, must be both visionary and relational. At no point does the earth become less a shared space, nor any example less dependent upon its symbiotic--which in some instances also includes ideological--relationships.

I derive at least a significant part of my sense of purpose in life, from the fact that three registered support dogs are dependent upon me both for survival and for behavioral guidance. When our relational selves are in conflict, I must also be sufficiently visionary to remember that the disobedience of the moment is not all there is to the relationships I have with each of them. I choose to keep them present as often as I can, specifically because within both present and future, symbiosis is an enduring reality.

Bedivere, Gawain, and Percival are the names by which the power of love is directly known within my household, without which all other powers and abilities I possess would be rendered utterly meaningless. If I did not have sufficient vision to recognize this, then I would be stumbling through my days like a man wearing a blindfold that refused to come off. It could thus be legitimately said that their love provides me with the ability to more clearly and completely see my own life--even when they cannot be physically present.

While grateful for their contributions, I also recognize their limitations--which is why none of them accompanied me during my recent third attempt and ultimately successful ascent of Mount Columbia. I nonetheless chose to carry the ashes of my Old English Sheepdog, Gareth, who was with me during my first attempt, but died before the second.

I suspect he was also glad to be present once again when I got thoroughly lost on the way down (as was the case during the first attempt, but not the second). Perhaps it was the presence of that understanding which calmed and strengthened me, when I seriously doubted my ability to return at all.

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

## The Proactive Relational Self

While I have always been an extremely proactive person, never content to sit idly by and wait for circumstances or challenges to work themselves out without positive guidance or support, I've also had to learn how to "dance" with challenges that insist upon being approached indirectly. Like trying to catch a butterfly without a net, an integration of placement, posture, and patience are often required, in order to achieve a desired outcome. It is not just the effects of my well-intended actions which must be considered, but also the effects of my presence as well.

A wonder of each human being, is that s/he can be present in so many different ways. Using the metaphor of a wheel, one might be requested within one societal circumstance to serve as the hub, while at another time one's service might more closely resemble a spoke. The measure of one's service is nonetheless not which role one plays, but rather how well one plays it.

In a similar way, it has metaphorically always been a warning flag for me when I have been instructed never to question a particular teacher or ideology. If a student wishes to fully understand, then every question must be considered an opportunity to see more than has ever previously been seen. The student must consider whether the answer is hidden within what has already

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while I do it  
has not increased my ability  
to make a beautiful moment  
last any longer than it does--  
which reminds me again  
that I am a creature of time  
and must therefore seize  
every opportunity to do good  
that crosses my path."*

-- Sister Who

been said and the teacher must remember that every word has multiple meanings, that every sentence can be diversely interpreted, and that every observation is seen from a myriad of contrasting perspectives.

To be both proactive and relational is thus a matter of integrating eyes, ears, hands, mind, and heart; taking in all of the information that is available, confirming the accuracy of both one's perception and also one's understanding; and acting in whatever ways one is able that are also guided by that complex and multi-faceted integration. To charge ahead and repeat an action designed to meet the challenges of a similar situation which occurred within the past, ignores the ways in which the current instance contrasts with the previous one--which in some cases means ignoring a warning of danger that would be better to avoid. Phrased another way, this alternative sense of self is most obvious within those moments of recognition, that the present moment is *not* in fact an exact replica of the past--most especially because the experiences which have unfolded during the interim, have effectively transformed the self into a larger and greater conglomeration of insight and experience.

All that being said, choosing to pause at just the right moment, is also a legitimately proactive choice. Like a baseball player studying the pitched ball that is approaching, one's actions must be as perfectly timed as possible. Unfortunately, this occasionally may include tolerating undesirable circumstances for "just a moment longer" while various components move toward a more opportunistic constellation.

Specifically because all such components are inescapably relational, it is not merely one's own intentions and actions which matter, but also the ever-fluctuating state of one's surrounding environment. Acting without sufficient information too often ensures failure rather than success. Yet failing to act because available information is inadequate may do the same.

Life is thus both uncertain and filled with infinite possibility for those who fully engage.

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

## The Transcendent Relational Self

Among the many things that life truly is, it is a constant and paradoxical struggle for persons with any significant quantity of awareness, between the smallness one wears externally and the vast dimensions one experiences spiritually or internally. On both sides of the divide, however, symbiotic relationships are everywhere one looks and only remain hidden from consciousness by any failure to understand. Popular notions of familial and societal relationship, assert various definitions of duty and responsibility, but often without a minimal or even merely functional understanding of symbiosis.

At the heart of the transcendence within each person, however, are the abilities to see what is beyond words, to exist within undescrivable dimensions, and to embody mysteries the universe has yet to even imagine (much less fully comprehend). I cannot pretend to speak of such things with any legitimate authority, but if I do not at least mention them, I fear that no one will ever look for more of what can be learned. It is the awareness that incomplete ideas must be cast upon the waters of humanity, in order to give them a chance to grow.

It is not nor has it ever been a wonder that is primarily concerned with myself, except insofar as I am able to serve the greater work. As expressed by some, it may require "getting out of the way of the work." I have too often found, however, that the path the work must follow, runs directly through the center of me--requiring dedication and sacrifice that leave no room for narcissism.

Ultimately, for those with the eyes to see, everything is more than it seems; every word means more than its sounds and letters; and every thought may give rise to a new and better universe, if it can truly be embraced in all of its many dimensions. A big challenge is to refrain from giving up too soon. What I regret most in reflecting upon past years of my life, were the many times I did so--because I was too young, too weak, or too lacking in knowledge. Yet this is why I grew.

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

## On a Personal Note

The third attempt and ultimately successful ascent of Mount Columbia on July 19, was by far the most brutal and difficult hike I've done, requiring eight and a half hours from trailhead to summit and seven and a half hours back to the trailhead again.

There were times on the way back that I was honestly unsure whether I would succeed at all, but I persist in saying that no matter how difficult my hikes in full ritual garb to the summits of now sixteen of Colorado's mountains reaching above fourteen thousand feet were, I do not regret doing a single one of them. In the most recent case, the amazingly profound conversations I had with nearly twenty people along the way, are likely to have positive effects which ripple in unknown directions for many years to come.

I don't think the words have the ability to convey the very complex meanings and understandings behind them, but I think it is both legitimate and accurate to say that I am not the person I was prior to the hike--but I don't know at this point how to specifically describe those very complex meanings and understandings. Phrased another way, I stepped outside of my own sense of "normal" in order to make life extraordinary while I had the opportunity and resources necessary to do so. Although I was walking with a cane for several days afterward, I do not need to wonder whether or not it was worth it.

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

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