

# 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*

## Overview

English is not a particularly precise language. Many words have more than one meaning according to their context or the surrounding subculture. Distinctions must be made and communicated.

One important group of distinctions are the differences between knowledge and wisdom and the differences between one kind of knowledge and another.

Yet they are all included within the word, "knowledge" and their interrelationship is not hierarchical. It may be a simple thing to dispel darkness from a room by flipping a light switch, but if I do not know where the switch is or how it works, I will remain in darkness. Here are just a few related ideas.

## Head Knowledge

It is an easy and relatively common practice to demean or devalue what one might call "head knowledge" (those understandings which arise from mental processes only) because it is in and of itself incomplete. Nonetheless, it too is an essential part of the larger picture of life experience. So perhaps it would be more helpful to consider its place within that larger picture and its relationships to other parts.

I have often been encouraged to stop thinking so much, but have found this about as manageable as choosing to make my lungs breathe more slowly or my heart beat with less intensity in response to stressful circumstances. The brain thinks because some need exists for it to do so.

What I have chosen to alter or refocus, during the last thirty years or so, is to what role the mind or brain is assigned. For me, it has been specifically empowering to assign to my mind the task of accurately recording events, experiences, conversations, and dreams. A good record must be maintained. In terms of professions which are perhaps familiar to us, one might say that my brain is the stenographer, recording every action and aspect of my inner court room without (as much as

possible) making any comment or subjective interpretation.

The interpretation of everything my ears hear, my eyes see, my tongue tastes, my nose smells, my fingers touch, and my intuition perceives, is done by a jury composed of my past experiences, my ideals, and the deepest truths of my soul. Responses are also decided by this collective jury and indeed must be, since I am the one who must live with the decisions' consequences.

To live according to others' beliefs, values, or interpretations which are not genuinely held by myself, is to live a lie. To do so requires me to jettison my integrity, my values, and my unique way of perceiving and understanding. God did not create us with individually unique perspectives and constitutive elements to spend our lives being the embodiment of someone else's values, ideals, dreams, and choices. We may in fact be an answer to prayer, the unique combination God will use to steer humanity's course in a more positive direction. If we are not individually true to ourselves, the positive alteration of humanity's course is less likely to happen.

One of the gifts of head knowledge specifically relevant at this point, is that by measuring one thing against another and carefully examining relationships, the mind is often able to detect when "things just don't add up." More bluntly stated, some have referred to this ability as "bullshit detection"--to which institutionalized religion too often responds with an accusation of too little faith.

Perhaps we do need more faith, but I doubt that true faith is dependent upon repression of good healthy mental expression. They are both equally part of the body and larger picture of life which God has made and provided for our instruction, for our growth, and ultimately for our redemption. In living life to the fullest, we inevitably discover more of ourselves and more of God.

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

## Heart Knowledge

In spite of centuries of poets, composers, artists, and philosophers, we are no closer to a final definition of love than we ever were. The heart, as well as many other aspects of life (not the least of which is God), revels in mystery. We are pulled first one way and then the other, usually unable to completely understand what is happening. Yet much later we often do understand a little bit of why things turned out as they did and what good finally came of it. At such moments, if we are able, we find ourselves metaphorically within the throne room of God, recognizing that in ways we cannot explain, life has been wiser than we ever could have been.

How do we know when we're in love and conversely when we are not in love? How do we know what is the right thing to do, even when no relevant or specific instruction has been given? I am reminded of the scene within the movie, "Short Circuit" in which the robot with great astonishment asks the scientist who created him, how he could possibly not know that it is wrong to kill. The scientist responds that of course he is well aware of that moral standard. The question, however, is who told the robot, to which the answer given is simply, "I told me."

The heart knows the emotions of life, the internal forces stronger than any mental persuasion; more often feared than revered, specifically because they are mysterious and never completely under control. The question has occasionally been asked, why God would curse humanity with emotions and whether positive evolution therefore includes growing beyond the reach and experience of emotions. Perhaps emotions are yet one more area in which the extreme limitation of what it means to be human briefly comes into intense contact with some aspect of what it means to be the mystery of God. Unfortunately, the experience is frequently so overwhelming that the mind's response is much less constructive than it could be.

In and of themselves, emotions are neither good nor bad. They are whatever they are. A significant part of psychological and emotional health is accomplished by being able to be positively reconciled to the truth of whatever is. Fear, anger, love, sorrow--all of them have messages to convey, ways of perceiving and understanding which are helpful within certain life experiences. New aspects of the deepest parts of

ourselves can be thereby revealed. If I do not feel what is perhaps uncomfortable to some part of myself, I may not know for certain whether that part of me really exists. Given a choice, I would rather achieve self-awareness in less painful ways; but if the only way to feel is to have pain, I would rather have the pain than feel nothing at all.

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of heart knowledge is that it is generally completely unwilling to listen to reason. The heart knows what it wants and will settle for nothing less, though it may be willing to accept a more unconventional satisfaction of the particular need if the usual solutions are not available.

For some, this is very problematic. We want the needs and knowledge of the heart to conduct their complete existence within certain socially prescribed rules. Human civilizations (especially at local levels) have frequently rewarded degrees of conformity and oppressed all disagreement and diversity. If for any reason, however, the heart is not able to satisfy its needs, is not able to experience love, is not able to find fulfillment, and is not able to move on to the next step or phase of life.

What is perhaps most important at such points is to remember that anywhere there is knowledge, there is also the ability to learn--no matter how neglected or previously unused that ability may be.

By reflecting upon past experiences, noting to ourselves how things felt, how they looked, and how we responded, we invite the acquisition of a larger vocabulary of understanding. We (hopefully) learn that things may not have meant what we thought they meant, but may have meant something new, something different, something better. Though the mind initially may have no explanation, the heart knows the possibilities are endless and waiting to be discovered. The mind reaches for understanding horizontally. The heart reaches for understanding vertically, probing through things hidden either below or above the experiences we encounter each and every day.

When a new discovery, perspective, or understanding comes to light, there is a sigh of relief, as the question or challenge is lifted away from our shoulders and we are finally able to step forward into a new way of being--into a new way of loving. The mind may be bewildered, but the heart knows that everything is going to be alright.

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

## Body Knowledge

Although knowledge is most commonly associated with the mind, it is perhaps the knowledge of the body which is in fact most common.

One example is my ability to play guitar. I understood within a matter of moments what my fingers needed to do in order to create certain specific sounds from this instrument. Hours, weeks, months, and perhaps even years of practice were required, however, before my fingers would reliably do what my mind had quickly envisioned.

Similarly, for the (so far) three physique/bodybuilding events in which I have participated, a series of poses choreographed within my mind had to be practiced over and over until the knowledge had been transferred to the body. When the moment on stage finally came, the body needed to move smoothly from pose to the next without any hesitation or listening for conscious mental instruction. If mental concentration was preoccupied with the poses instead of focusing upon positive emotional connection with the audience and judges, the result was an awkward and forced-looking performance. A good posing routine during my sixty seconds onstage required seamless collaboration between the mind and the body.

***" Learning  
is really about  
out-growing  
my definitions  
and letting go  
of them  
whenever I do."***

***-- Sister Who***

All of which suggests that body knowledge is the slowest of all, in terms of the speed of learning new things. In that the body is a more dense material than the mind, heart, or spirit, this would make sense. On the other hand, it is certainly easier to move across a room than to change someone's opinion on any passionately held belief.

So what does the body know? That life is finite and time is limited. That strength fades and weariness increases, between times of rest. That no matter where the spirit soars and no matter what new possibilities the mind discovers, there must be a place to which they can return when they too need to rest.

I know there are people who live without a concrete sense of home and the best I can reply is that I don't know how they do it. Does it really matter where I can go if I have nothing good to which to come home--or perhaps no place which I can even call home?

My home is the launching pad of my life, a place specifically designed and shaped (to the best of my resources and abilities) for refreshing, rejuvenating, and (as much as possible) restoring the mind, heart, body, and spirit to maximum effectiveness. Why? So that I can once again journey forth to have a part in healing the world within which I now live.

The body knows that discipline and exercise are essential to the maintenance of abilities and reminds me immediately whenever I have neglected stretching or physical activity. By using as many of the body's abilities as possible, abilities are retained.

The body knows that if it wants to run, this ability will only be acquired and maintained by running--no matter how poor initial examples of this activity may be. The body knows that pain doesn't always mean stop. Sometimes pain is the recognition that new and wider limits are being attained, that from this day forward (for as long as the daily exercise is maintained) possibilities of movement are increased.

Body knowledge, like skin, defines the shape of all other knowledge within the physical world. It is not the same as the other forms of knowledge, but it provides their shape and expression within the world as we now know it. It provides a stage upon which the mind, the heart, and the spirit can dance.

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

## Spiritual Knowledge

How does God know and why does God share only a part of that knowledge with us--and why does God often share bits and pieces with those we consider inherently unqualified to be couriers of divine wisdom?

Of the three types of knowledge discussed within this newsletter, spiritual knowledge is the most powerful, the most life-changing, and yet the most enigmatic--coming without being called or turning a deaf ear to our most earnest pleading. It may give us an inexplicable sense of security just when we have nothing upon which to stand. Then it may be conspicuously absent when the ground seems firm but we are nevertheless afraid.

Yet it is real. Having seen prayers answered in miraculous ways on many occasions, I cannot believe otherwise.

Measured by human comprehension, it is also irrational. Drawing from biblical old testament records, spiritual knowledge can channel itself through a child, a shepherd, a bush, a cloud, or a donkey. Only occasionally did it channel itself through those in professional and socially accepted religious occupations.

It is not ultimately who we are, what we have, or what we know that empowers us to choose to draw spiritual knowledge to ourselves, but rather the will and creative impulse of God. It is not a formula of interaction which must be followed but a relationship which must be nurtured and most especially trusted.

Spiritual knowledge is not a cart we possess for which we are seeking a horse, so that we may transport this knowledge to others in diverse places. Rather, it is the result of relationship which defies description, an effect of a transcendent way of being to which I daily aspire, and an understanding bestowed for the most part as an unmerited gift from God. Ultimately God's grace opens the gateways for spiritual knowledge to flow into and throughout our lives, when God knows the time is right. Similarly, God closes the gateways when we are wading around in more available knowledge than we can absorb.

Is the water of spiritual knowledge flowing? Then be open to the healing and life it brings. Has the river gone dry and do the clouds above refuse to release any rain? Look around; God is waiting for us to make good use of what we already have.

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

## On a Personal Note

Progress continues toward production of new television shows (which will then be available on DVD), though at a slow pace, mostly due to other time commitments.

All photos for the 2006 Sister Who calendar have been taken and are now being edited in preparation for distribution beginning in December. Additionally, more than thirty different photos of Sister Who (each with an accompanying caption) are now available for five dollars each, as approximately eight by ten inch prints suitable for framing. Among the photos are those which have appeared within past and current calendars as well as some of the photos taken on the summits of successful mountain climbing excursions.

Graduate school continues to be the horrendous challenge it has consistently been since the very first day, but I am surviving the experience and growing in many unanticipated ways as I do so. As with my college experiences, I'm doubtful whether I'm learning what my professors intend for me to learn, but there is no question that my understanding and abilities are being stretched to new and larger proportions.

My dogs (Galahad, Tristan, and Gerath) are well. It's an interesting sight, however, when we all go jogging together each morning. Galahad is leashed to Tristan, who is leashed to Gerath, whose leash I hold. In order to discourage pandemonium, I hold a light hiking staff horizontally in front of their noses, such that we all progress down the street in one even line with the three dogs on my right. They've not only gotten quite used to this routine but eagerly anticipate the moment I finish some preliminary stretches and exercises.

As to my home, repairs and renovations continue at a painfully slow pace and the refrigerator always has plenty of room in it, but one way or another needs are being met and life is going on--which is as it should be.

May God's blessings, love, and peace be with you now and always, *Sister Who*

### *Subscription Information:*

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