

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

As a writer, I am intrigued by words and their meanings; by the variety of instructive and fascinating combinations, interpretations, and insights; and by the myriad of miraculous possibilities of perception and understanding that even a small handful of well-chosen words can encompass.

It is my hope each month that by wrestling for hours with such possibilities, some sort of small insight or empowerment might make it through to the hearts, minds, and faces of countless persons whose growth it is an honor to serve.

It is trite to say that we live within a time of transition, but we do and because this is so, it is our presence in wisdom and love within this current time that lays the foundation—the "auto-pilot"—for present and future generations to go even further.

Thank you for being here too.

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

Thoughts on Auto-pilot

Most of the tools we use to get through life are inherently neither good nor bad, can be used or abused, and provide both blessings and limitations of various kinds. On a related note, the goal, of course, is not so much to get through life and get it behind us, as to make the most of life while we're here. If we are engaging in an auto-pilot strategy of living life, therefore, like any pilot navigating an airplane through any particular journey, we need to pay attention to whether or not the auto-pilot function is working correctly and when is it or is it not appropriate to utilize this tool.

Without some awareness of both the abilities and the limitations of auto-pilot; without some awareness of surrounding environmental conditions; and without some awareness of location—relationally, geographically, and developmentally—wise choices cannot be made. Thus, as with every decision, the first task is the collection of relevant and helpful information, perhaps in a sense taking inventory of what resources and influences are

available that recommend for or against using auto-pilot within that specific moment. Additionally, it must be remembered that using auto-pilot is not synonymous with being unattentive, but rather with being able to expand one's attention to include even more things, most especially any changes that recommend a quick shift back toward more direct control—an unexpected object or development along the path ahead, for example.

In choosing within appropriate moments to use auto-pilot to expand one's attention to include even more things, there is also the possibility of making better use of whatever resources of time and energy are available. The highest measure of any resource, after all, is how much good can be accomplished by managing the particular resource as wisely as possible. It is not a question of never using auto-pilot nor of always using auto-pilot, but rather of using auto-pilot wisely.

What is at the heart of this particular discussion are the routines and patterns of thought one specifically encourages within one's self, which essentially become the principles according to which one's own inner auto-pilot operates. One example from my own life, is that I chose during my early teenage years to respond to every negative accusation by first asking myself whether the particular accusation was in any way true. If not, then what would inspire the accuser to make that particular accusation? The more I began to recognize what was behind others' accusations, the more I was able to move past conflict to collaboration.

When we shape our natural reaction to interruptions to be an instinctive reaching for positive relationship and love, many other collaborative miracles become possible—but this is not an option if the dailyness of our lives succeeds in creating constant distraction from the succession of our interactive moments and relationships. Essentially, wisely used, auto-pilot can empower us to be more fully present.

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

Words on Auto-pilot

The time-honored adage advises, "Think before you speak." What it does not specify, however, is when to do the thinking. I suspect there may always be times when I reflect upon a recent conversation and think of something I wish I'd said but didn't. As long ago I read within biblical literature, words come from whatever fills the heart. If that is true (and it certainly seems to be), then filling my heart with good things will provide a similar reservoir of words.

So the first step of empowering my verbal auto-pilot is to fill my heart with as much wisdom as possible. Among the ways that I personally strive for this are extensive reading of many different books and embracing challenging conversations with many different people. The freedom to disagree with me may be the most important conversational blessing that I can give to others, who will otherwise be limited by the limitations of my own knowledge, opinion, and perspective. I have found that I can indeed learn something from everyone whom I ever meet, if I have the patience, wisdom, and attentiveness to do so. Interpersonal conversations that go nowhere, however, are analogous to wheels spinning on ice-covered roads: no constructive purpose is being served and possibilities of negative consequences are increased.

As much as there are plenty of opportunities for words to be spoken, however, I must remember that every opportunity to speak is also an opportunity to remain silent. Specifically because the world is a shared space, the virtue of humility includes an understanding that if the words are truly essential and I do not speak them, someone else eventually will. The point of this is that verbal auto-pilot must never be narcissistic. That is, I do not speak because my words are most essential; I speak in order to make a positive contribution whenever and however I can. I speak to give understanding instead of speaking to take another's time, energy, or attention.

Conversely, the world sometimes struggles with excessive silence and a desperate need for words to be spoken—for voices to speak for those who are unable to speak for themselves. If I have filled my heart and mind with wisdom, my heart will know what to say when such moments come. If I have listened enough to know to at least some degree the language of those within hearing of my voice, I will be able to trust my verbal auto-pilot to fill the silence with constructive power.

Once again, however, using auto-pilot is not synonymous with being unattentive. If the listener has ceased to listen, why should the speaker continue speaking? If the words have ceased to have meaning, for what purpose would I be sending them forth into the world? Should I continue to lecture unseen spirits who may already be far more wise than myself? Silence may then be the greatest wisdom immediately available.

Yet a third option also remains, especially for writers and certain other artists: the possibility that one does not speak or create for one's own generation of humanity. Human history widely suggests that perhaps the majority of artists, philosophers, visionaries, and inventors are comparatively ahead of their times. The contemporaries of such people generally never understood them. It is us, who have arrived perhaps hundreds of years later, for whom their work was clearly intended.

When the heart and mind have been filled with wisdom and love and the inspiration to speak or write remains, therefore, we may choose to accept that the work is wiser than ourselves and to proceed with the work's creation, even if many years will pass before the world in general has learned how to appreciate and how to begin to understand the work that was created. It is difficult to imagine the current world, for example, without the contributions of Leonardo da Vinci, Michaelangelo, Beethoven, Hadyn, Hildegard of Bingen, Dante, Shakespeare, Julian of Norwich, Emerson, Joan of Arc, Galileo, Thoreau, Copernicus, Lao Tzu, Rumi, Dickens, and a long list of other men and women who were creatively guided to defy the times and places within which they lived. Yet where would we be today without the words they left behind?

Where will future generations be, if we do not leave our wisdom, understanding, and creativity behind as well? One of the most magical things a human life can do, is to create beauty that will outlive it. In filling our hearts and minds with wisdom and love, we empower our verbal auto-pilot for conversational journeys that it would otherwise be unwise to even attempt; we open ourselves to existing in relationship with everything around us in ways that are mutually inspiring, mutually empowering, and infinitely expanding; and we transform ourselves into embodiments of wisdom and love that can speak to the yet unborn.

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

Actions on Auto-pilot

I find myself to be a complex combination of diverse qualities, experiences, beliefs, and abilities and after participation in five body-building competitions (thus far), I remain convinced that the importance of careful preparation cannot be overstated—knowing all the while that the moment for which I prepare will be astonishingly brief, incredibly intense, and forever after locked within the past. The experience of video production, of theatrical rehearsal, and of expertise in playing a musical instrument are all similar: confidence within performance comes from diligence within preparation and within the briefest of moments the experience is transformed into a memory that will hopefully be eternally treasured. Specifically because there are so many things that must happen simultaneously within the moment of a performance, being able to delegate certain actions to auto-pilot is nearly essential.

I suppose it is an aspect of being human that is rarely considered by most, that too much awareness can be overwhelming. Training ourselves to reliably and safely perform certain tasks by auto-pilot is therefore more or less essential to survival. To some extent, our own bodies have even already set an example for us, since the heart, lungs, and numerous other essential functions carry on constant activity with virtually no accompanying conscious thought.

Conversely, it is imperative that we notice whenever our actions on auto-pilot are not performing correctly, reliably, or wisely. It is perhaps one of the wonders of the body that it can perform as well as it can, even when conditions, circumstances, and resources are not optimal, but this ability can just as easily enable us to be lazy as to give us time to make things right. All too often, debilitating conditions are encountered late in life as a consequence of squandering the ability to be proactive during previous decades.

In preparing to put my actions on auto-pilot,

*"Actions can make a difference,
if we find the wisdom, the love,
and the courage
to do the right ones
at the right times."*

-- Sister Who

therefore, it is essential to spend appropriate amounts of time looking far ahead, far behind, and at whatever is immediately around me as well. To do any less would be to sabotage the good that could otherwise occur. It is important to understand, however, that the most good I can do within the present requires the greatest wisdom of the past and the most visionary glimpse of the future as well.

I noticed a number of years ago that virtually everyone is blessed with more opportunities to do good than to which we could ever respond—leaving each of us to decide among the possibilities and thereby show the world what sort of persons we truly are. As challenging as it may be to consider, I strongly suspect that there is no truly wrong choice—if, that is, one approaches the choice with love and wisdom rather than selfish narcissism. Specifically so that the present with its myriad of possibilities and opportunities is not overwhelming, I have found that establishing and maintaining certain fundamental routines is genuinely empowering. It is not that I must do these routines daily, but rather that by doing so, a great many additional things become possible. Whenever I have neglected to maintain any sort of routine at all for more than a day or two, I have quickly begun to feel as if I was "spinning my wheels and going nowhere fast." Restarting my action auto-pilot was often the most effective way to eradicate any feeling of being stuck in whatever place or situation.

An important distinction must be made at this point, however, between actions on auto-pilot and actions as escapism. I do not begin routines in order to avoid something that really needs to be faced; I begin routines in order to reawaken greater involvement in life and in personal growth. If I find that I am attempting to switch on my actions' auto-pilot because I am uncomfortable with a new development, a new circumstance, or a new insight, I am abusing a tool that was intended to be a source of empowerment. Whatever has arisen along my life's path, it is imperative that I begin with the action of constructively embracing it, before ever switching to auto-pilot again.

In contemplating explanations of life from many perspectives, I remain convinced that life is ultimately about the growth of the soul. The final test of any action, therefore, is the basic question of whether and/or how I am growing—which usually involves how I am helping others to grow as well.

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

Life on Auto-pilot

Perhaps the most important thing to remember about anything that is running on auto-pilot, is that the computer program that has been created to automatically pilot the vehicle, has been programmed by someone. To some extent, this is a validation of the old adage, "garbage in, garbage out" or the so-called "Golden Rule" that directs us to "do to others as you would have them do to you." More concisely, among the questions this presents to each of us are, "What habits have I developed?", "What daily routines empower the larger picture of my life?", and "What personal choices and values are evident within the routines that I allow to govern my life?"

As I have listened to various people tell their stories of success or failure over the years, I have met very few whose life paths could accurately be attributed to laziness. For most, it seemed to me, getting where they've gotten has been mostly a question of following one opportunity to the next, of being present, and of doing the best they could with whatever was available. What was missing in most cases, however, was awareness. "Living life on auto-pilot" has too often (by myself as well) been interpreted as living without awareness, when it would be more accurate to say that the tool of auto-pilot was simply being abused rather than constructively used.

To constructively live life on auto-pilot, therefore, is a matter of filling one's self with wisdom and love, establishing supportive routines and monitoring those routines to be sure they remain supportive, and using the resulting empowerment and freedom to expand into larger spaces, activities, and relationships than could otherwise ever be embraced. The reward for all of this, which to some may be considered extra effort, could legitimately be described as living an abundant life, being abundantly alive, or perhaps the abundant living of whatever life one has been given. It is not a matter of having great resources or few, of being valued or ignored, or of embodying any other categorical description others may wish to assign. It is a matter of being the unique and beautiful care-package to humanity that one was divinely created and intended to be, in the very best and most beautiful way possible, and knowing that one's very existence can make a very positive difference.

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

On a Personal Note

I continue to wrestle with doctoral writing while longing for the return of cooler weather, when I will no longer be covered by insect bites and a thick layer of my own sweat every time I venture outside of my house. A new and very special friend from Georgia came to visit and brought an insect repellent from that part of the country for me to try, but I'm afraid there is no safe repellent known to humanity that has proven itself to be effective in combination with my unique body chemistry.

Six excellent episodes were recorded with a Maureen Meegan of Elderberry Healing Sanctuary (www.ElderberryHealing.com), but video production is otherwise temporarily stalled while the friend who was to do camera operation spends time outside of Colorado with a relative who is slowly dying. One other person has indicated the possibility of doing camera operation, but has yet to confirm this.

In approximately four weeks, the Labor Day metaphysical fair at the Denver Merchandise Mart will once again include myself and my portable chapel. I have thus far been unable to find any assistance for set-up and removal of the structure from that event, but I know that it is barely possible for me erect the structure all by myself if necessary.

I had hoped to have climbed another fourteen-thousand-foot mountain by now, specifically Mount Antero, but the weather forecast for that area has not included enough days without storms to make any attempt thus far. There may be a possibility next week, however, so perhaps that will be among the good news for next month.

My motorcycle continues to be a major blessing and I am very slowly becoming more accustomed to highway speeds and more challenging traffic situations. My Geo Tracker continues to run well, but the top driverside door hinge has rusted loose from the frame so it is very difficult to climb in and out of the vehicle now. I may have to improvise a repair if I can.

Ah, well, in one form or another, life goes on.

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

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