

SISTER WHO'S PERSPECTIVE

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Overview

One's reflection in a mirror is never of the categories and classifications that others have assigned, but always of one's self. Perhaps this is consequently where awareness, identity, and growth should begin and include ways that what is perceived exists in symbiotic relationship.

Unknown Individuality

As long as the complex multi-dimensional potential of an individual is unknown and even unexplored, it could not be legitimate to describe that person as being preoccupied with him or her self. S/he may be preoccupied with something, but it is clearly not the true self. So a good place to begin might be investigation of specifically what one's preoccupation is--and thereafter either consciously supporting that or changing it to something more recommendable.

Even basic questions of what one truly likes, dislikes, prefers, experiences as empowering, or by which one feels diminished and weakened, for many individuals, have never been asked. The surrounding world has so distracted the majority of its citizens with "making a living" that it remains highly questionable how to succeed in "making a life." One must always remember that all of the money stays here in this world, even as the Monopoly money stays with the game and is worthless outside of that context.

If the primary purpose of money, therefore, is only the good that one is thereby empowered to do, a primary activity of life is investigating what one's contribution could be that no one else is able to make and, likewise, what deters others from making their respective contributions as well. In many cases, mental and emotional dysfunctions are very complex and I have often heard corresponding therapists and social workers complain that their methods didn't work, as if it was the responsibility of their clients to only have challenges that corresponded to the chosen methods. This leads again to urging that one stop "chasing the categories" and investigate

the particular individual who is actually the focus of whatever growth and development is needed.

I have never heard it expressed as a basic point of belief, but by spending many years striving to understand unstated assumptions and unsupported claims, I came to the conclusion that I do not believe in an uncaused effect. Every result, effect, or manifestation of any quality or thing, has a cause. In most cases, very little effort has been invested to learn what it is.

As originally written by Henry S. Haskins and quoted by many others, "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us." Every individual could thus be considered to be a treasure house of insights, abilities, and virtually infinite possibility, if one could discover ways of bringing all of that out into the light. The potential benefits to humanity are immeasurable, but the current obsession of the corporate/business mentality with profit, leaves humanity profoundly impoverished.

In pondering an inclusive approach to utilize within operation of a genuinely interfaith spiritual retreat and conference center, entitled "God Space Sanctuary," the first recommendation I would therefore make to any individual wishing to use available resources, is to begin by learning to listen to one's own heart. The second step would be to bring to conscious awareness the symbiotic relationships upon which one's life ultimately depends and to move from "either/or" thinking toward a more inclusive "both/and." The implications of even only these two dynamics fully put into practice, are vast indeed.

Ubuntu: "I am because we are and we are because I am"--but what exactly am I and what exactly are we? I suspect many lifetimes will be required to fully and accurately answer that question, but a vast number of other questions will be thereby answered. I do what I do because of who I am and all that I've experienced, but I am still investigating the ways this may be true of each person I meet, who deserves unconditional love and respect every bit as much as I do.

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

Explored Individuality

It is most peculiar, the lengths to which some will go to avoid honest and complete perception of themselves, in spite of the fact that it is only such perception that will empower them to overcome the particular challenges they are facing. It was written long ago that "you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free," but the devices and dynamics which are common and pointed in the opposite direction make it fairly miraculous that genuine insights are discovered at all. In contrast, the first advice of the ancient oracle of Delphi was "know thyself!"

On a similar note, it became apparent to me while in graduate school that those who will not tolerate being questioned, should never be fully trusted. The corollary to that is that those who truly know their area of expertise including its limitations, have no need to feel threatened by questions, but instead welcome them as opportunities for their own understandings to be refined and developed in various ways. One's individuality thereby becomes a product of not only one's own wisdom and understanding, but rather the result of symbiotic relationship and interpersonal dialogue as well, by drawing from the intellectual resources of multiple people.

Feeling insecure about anything could thus be viewed not as any sort of threat, but rather as an invitation to develop symbiotic relationships in wisely constructive ways. The current obsession with "I can do it myself" is thus self-sabotaging rather than empowering. A wiser response when a short-coming is discovered or noted by others, without blindly surrendering to manipulation or control, would be to ask, "What more effective method or approach would you suggest?"

It seems obvious that no individual is omniscient, that we are all learning and developing in various ways, but I sometimes wonder why so many are desperately trying to behave as if this were not so. Until one is willing to embrace the questions, however, further progress, growth, and learning are rendered impossible. The fact that some answers require more time and effort to be fully defined and implemented, in no way suggests unworthiness.

The time and effort that are invested in such pursuits, demonstrate that exploration and growth are in fact occurring. Ideally these activities would be encouraged, supported, and

rewarded rather than discouraged, but far too many areas of societal structure are obsessed with maintaining answers utilized in the past rather than allowing those answers to grow into their future forms. In a very real sense, such approaches are oriented to death rather than ongoing life of any true vitality.

More concisely, a simple question very much supportive of ongoing life, is "What next?" As wonderful or terrible as any current moment may be, no single moment has the ability to encompass the totality of one's life experience, personal reality, or full potential. We are creatures of time and consequently move through an incomprehensible number and variety of moments and experiences during the temporal span each of us lives.

One cannot fully live, if one is not willing to explore the dimensions of possibility, but this does not mean blindly throwing one's self in harm's way either. It is possible, for example, to study falling objects without recklessly throwing one's self off a dangerous precipice. Dialogue remains an essential ingredient, because what cannot be named and understood, cannot be effectively addressed or given a response.

All that being said, it is imperative to recognize when the task to be done, cannot be done by anyone other than one's self. Once again, I offer the witticism, "Whoever wants the muscles, must lift the weights." The surrounding community can nonetheless provide effective exercise equipment, methods, and opportunities.

The town in which I grew up, for example, had exercise stations installed along a jogging path in a large public park (i.e., pull-up bars, balance beams, and so forth). Nonetheless, it was the responsibility of each citizen to utilize the equipment with sufficient regularity, in order to maintain optimal health. Public libraries likewise offer possibilities of intellectual exercise, waiting to be effectively used.

What most seem to overlook, however, is the vast realm of spirituality--as if that dimension was unimportant, when in fact the current condition of the world is saturated with the negative effects of neglect. Once again, I persist that the Divine is less concerned with how one engages, as that one does in fact engage in living this dimension of individual and collective life.

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

Embraced Individuality

Every constructive developmental process within a human soul begins with first taking inventory of what abilities, resources, and opportunities are available. In most cases, this involves becoming aware of what one does not see. Sometimes this is because one is looking only outward rather than also inward.

If I were going to build a bridge across a river containing strong currents, staring at the far shore for hours would accomplish nothing. I must first begin where I am, using whatever tools and resources are immediately available, yet in a way that never presupposes that's all there is. Discovering collaborative possibilities is often an essential step, but can require more time than is generally preferred.

In some cases, such discovery equates to building friendships and familial relationships of durable integrity. Sacrificing individuality for perceptions of community, a common practice, is virtually always self-sabotaging. Asking any community to sacrifice its integrity in order to integrate individuals, however, is equally counter-productive.

Faith in myself and in others insists there is a way to integrate both, but it may require perseverance to find it. I have never given anyone a hug while knowing the complete and total reality of the individual whom I was hugging. An embrace is therefore not based upon knowledge, but rather upon commitment.

I commit myself to integrating the other's needs, sensitivities, and reality in whatever ways I can. A hug is therefore not based upon anything in the past, although it may be a response to what previously occurred, but rather looks toward building something better in the future--something that requires participants to work together to create that reality. On some level, therefore, what every individual seeks is to be more fully embraced.

"I think Godde created autistics, because some jobs were so detail-oriented and difficult, that neurotypicals would never get them done."

– Sister Who

I recall seeing a poster by an unknown author stating, "Someday someone is going to hug you so tight that all of your broken pieces will stick back together." I think that is the healing for which most of humanity's individuals are longing. I refuse to believe it is impossible, simply because one has not yet learned how.

A significant challenge, however, is that many do not realize or have not clearly defined the specific healing that they need, much less whether it is something to be done by others or by themselves--or, more likely, by both. I have often remarked that "Whoever wants the muscles must lift the weights," but creating a well-equipped exercise room may require the collaborative effort of a community. The answer to a specific challenge may thus be symbiotic--something that neither can do alone; that requires both working together.

A common problem within the current world is that so very many have been assigned to jobs that are not truly right for them. "Chasing the categories" presents jobs to be filled and expects individuals to compromise their integrity in order to do them, instead of asking how the specific available individuals could be most effectively utilized. Retirement, as I understand it, is a reward for spending many years doing what was individually inappropriate.

My goal is to find ways of meeting my needs that also allow me to make my best individual contribution to humanity's march through time and to persist in making that contribution until the day I die. Even then, I'm sure I will protest that there was insufficient time to create everything I otherwise would have. I am aware, however, of societal experiences within which my contribution was rejected, that impoverished the particular community.

Embracing any person or thing never occurs automatically, but rather always involves choice --both of whether and also of how. An essential additional component is communication. There is always a reason, but the reasons of the two participants may not be the same.

If each comes to an understanding of the other's reason, however, what began as a simple hug may evolve into a mutually empowering relationship that sends ripples of blessing far beyond its initial occurrence.

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

Inspired Individuality

When a life comes to its end, no matter how long it has lasted, most seem to wonder how it went by so quickly. How is it, for example, that the little puppy I eagerly welcomed into my home is now an elderly service dog whose abilities are rapidly diminishing? Yet even a hundred years would still feel too short, when the final moments arrived.

The specific experiences and memories accumulated are nonetheless more exceptional than most dogs will ever know. Additionally, the lives of my dogs seem to reflect my own in various ways. My life has included many exceptional experiences, but for the many years stretching behind me, I continue to feel very youthful, as if there is still so much to do--if the world would only give me a chance to do it.

The value, possibility, and potential I find within individuality, however, seems perceived as a threat by others seeking to impose uniform expectations that never really fit the unique identities that are genuinely available. It's as if people are more committed to stagnating and dying than to truly and fully living as long as there is opportunity to do it.

Ultimately, it all reduces down to the basic question of whether one believes in life, in others, or in one's self enough to give all of that infinite potential a chance. Inspiration is thus nothing more than seeing things that have never been, but could be. Living without any inspiration is a form of being blind.

Inspired individuality thus equates to living life with eyes open. A significant adversary of this is when one's environmental context is limiting and oppressive. A common current insanity is expecting individuals to live inspired lives within uninspiring contexts.

Surrounding one's self with opportunity and possibility could thus be interpreted as inviting miracles of transformation to happen. I persist in my belief that the seeds of innumerable such miracles are already planted within each unique individual one will ever meet. The challenge is to embrace each as a garden rather than paving over human souls to create parking lots for self-serving industries. Collectively, we can constructively embrace, if we choose.

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

On a Personal Note

I recall an observation by an actor within "The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen," when told of the world being in peril, that, "You're probably too young to know this, but the world is *always* in some kind of peril." I persist that because of the infinite number of variables each person must integrate, the one who must live with the consequences, is the one whose choices need to be respected. No matter what health concern may be currently exaggerated by irresponsible politicians and media for purposes of their own power and control, no such concern is the last one humanity will ever face and certain methods of maintaining health must still be consistently practiced as inclusively as abilities and resources allow.

While some methods are not possible for me, I strive to be consistent in utilizing those that are. The last week has focused upon battling a new strain of the cold virus that has been confirmed to be distinct from Covid. What this suggested to me, in relation to Christian theology, is that if Jesus was never sick, he could not have fully understood being human. It is profoundly challenging, however, to consider that one with ability to do miraculous healing would not be able to heal himself. The point, however, was not to rid the world of all illness, but rather to learn whatever one could from such experiences--usually in subsequent reflection rather than during the experience.

Nonetheless, a large number of video and literary projects are currently in development.

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

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