

SISTER WHO'S PERSPECTIVE

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Overview

I'm reminded of the observation within the movie, *Starman*, that we are at our best when things are at their worst, which seems especially essential during recent times. My hope is that this month's essays may provide inspiration for readers to embrace exactly that.

Coexisting with Societal Breakdown

I've encountered a number of individuals during recent decades who have become understandably cynical and resorted to a general policy of not trusting anyone--or so they say. It may not be part of conscious thought, but they still trust that most oncoming drivers on the highway will not cross the center line and so forth. Yet embracing the assumption that "everyone lies," often only means that they will lie to me, if it seems advantageous to do so.

I do not need to embrace such cynicism myself, simply because many others have. A more recommendable approach is to recognize that many individuals are in need of healing and no single answer will work for all of them. The additional reality to remember is that brokenness will always try to reproduce itself and only love and wisdom can prevent this.

What remains astonishing to me is how many individuals wish to go through troublesome times "on autopilot" or in some form of psychological denial rather than with eyes, ears, and mind wide open. I once heard the witticism of "Being so open-minded his brain fell out," but what this recognizes is that listening to new ideas is only half the process. The other half is careful evaluation of related components and dynamics.

Within times of societal breakdown, there is often very little actual listening occurring. There may be many who are likewise looking, but not truly seeing. They certainly have the necessary eyes and ears, but are careless in the ways that these sensory resources are utilized.

Being so overwhelmed by so many thoughts and perceptions to process, there are likewise

those who may become careless in matters of basic hygiene and cleanliness, allowing for the resurgence of uncommon diseases as well as the proliferation of new ones--even those related to increased environmental pollution, some of which is electronically or nutritionally invisible.

Yet responding with fear and paranoia adds to one's susceptibility to manipulation. Reliable knowledge and information become invaluable, but simultaneously more difficult to obtain. Being ignorant or uninformed can nonetheless be fatal.

Standing in the midst of competing opinions--many of which are passionately held--might even encourage isolation precisely when family and community become more essential. Not having either such resource, individuals such as myself may have to work much harder to maintain any relationships at all. Yet it remains inescapably true that no example of individuality is able to survive without a constellation of relationships.

I persist that reliable answers are to be found within practices of love and wisdom, and that essential to survival are symbiotic relationships. I consequently spend a great amount of time pondering my contribution to the surrounding world and how to make this contribution without embracing ineffective patterns or systems. "The surrounding world" is likewise composed of both individuals and communities of varying needs.

Yet I do not need to create a single answer that works for everyone. I only need to be honest and authentic and allow others to utilize whatever is individually or communally beneficial to them. I often encourage those with whom I speak to "hold onto whatever is helpful and let the rest go--it must be for someone else."

From whence comes my creative inspiration I do not precisely know, but specifically because of responses received in the past, I strive to trust creative works and release them like butterflies into the wind. The effect of a single pollination of a flower may be unnoticeable, but the collective contributions of butterflies to life are so much more essential than may ever be obvious.

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

Coexisting with Societal Rebirth

A witticism I coined some time ago was that “Discontent may be Godde’s prompting for you to grow.” At the moment immediately preceding societal rebirth it is likewise probable that many expressions of discontent will populate societal landscapes. Precisely when individually or collectively humanity decides to shift from discontent to innovation, however, remains predominantly unpredictable.

It is nonetheless possible to encourage, support, and guide that shift in innumerable ways. Please note, however, that guidance does not imply repressing, restricting, or making demands upon any or all creative processes that are occurring. Part of collaborating with any creativity is to begin by noting spiritual elements, characteristics, and dynamics.

The next step is usually to initiate dialogue so that one’s observations, interpretations, and projections can be confirmed. “Does that mean this” is a very legitimate initial question within any collaboration. Proceeding with knowledge rather than conjecture encourages success.

Expecting anything to be exactly as it was in the past, however, devalues and may even insult any newness one encounters. Courtesy is a complicated phenomenon, because one view recognizes being the embodiment of others’ expectations to be self-sabotaging. From a contrasting vantage point, however, courtesy encourages commonality within interactions and may prevent potential conflicts from occurring.

The added complication is that courtesy so easily slips into dishonesty, if it is not accurately understood. It is not concerned with appeasing the other, but rather with maintaining one’s own integrity within adversarial circumstances. In times of rebirth, maintaining integrity becomes essential to further positive outcomes.

Validating discontent, for example, may be empowering, but must be done in ways that recognize the discontent is not the final effect of one’s participation. The discontent is only temporary, while something new and better emerges, in much the same way as any other form of birth. Specifically because creatures of time often perceive only the present moment, remembering and envisioning what is coming is in many ways an act of faith--all of which is only more problematic to those who wish to embrace

the tunnel-vision of focusing only upon the present moment of their experience.

Glaucoma is not a preferable condition during times one finds all that peripheral vision includes to be overwhelming. The goal is not to avoid seeing the rest, but rather to move toward forms of effective relationship that transform the rest from chaos into constructive order. Whenever one is unwilling to embrace tasks of proactively organizing and responding to the surrounding world, one is not truly living, since doing so is inescapably always a matter of relationship.

Defining relationships during times of rebirth may be more difficult than usual, but specifically because of evolving effects becomes even more important than ever. Decreasing awareness is never empowering, but rather blinding in relation to what may be most important to see. What one sees must nonetheless be recognized as having no permanence and being only educational--no matter how painful it may temporarily be.

Faith remains forever a matter of imagining or perceiving what lies beyond the reach of the physical senses. Hope is focusing upon what *will* enter the realm of those senses, Love is relating constructively to what *has* entered the radius of one’s experience.

Imagination is most basically a process by which an image of something that does not yet exist is created--as wisely as possible. Creativity involves the steps by which an image becomes a reality. Many expressions of creativity absolutely require community in order to reach reality.

A primary point of societal rebirth is that it cannot be done by individuals acting in isolation, but requires members of a community acting collaboratively. From one perspective, both individuals and communities must retain integrity throughout the process of transformation. Yet in order to be ultimately successful, actions must move from being singular to being symbiotic.

Each supports the other in becoming what has in most cases thus far never been. Earlier forms are never the limit of current outcomes, since replicating them leads not to rebirth, but rather to stagnation. If rebirth does not lead to something new, then it is more accurately a form of being “still-born” or a “miscarriage.”

Ever and always, the goal is creating new and somehow better forms of growth and life.

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

Coexisting with Societal Renewal

From one perspective, I despise being regarded as a laboratory rat, dispassionately subjected to all manner of experiments. From another, only by trying new methods will older ones be displaced. The former devalues much of what one has to offer, while the latter provides a chance for everything to transcend.

The attempts are generally accompanied, however, by abundant judgmental attitudes and insistence that new approaches are somehow wrong. What makes them ultimately successful is often little more than persistence. As has been wisely noted, "The race is not always to the swift, but to the one who keeps on running."

Renewal is centered around exactly that. If one's perception is clouded by judgment and prejudice, however, many things will remain unseen. An initial step is simply measuring whatever something is, as well as the cascading effects of its actions.

Conversely, this does not recommend any abandonment of integrity in order to become the embodiment of others' expectations or definitions. The meaning of being an expert is making difficult things look easy, but what is easy for one may nonetheless be impossible for others. Things which come easily to me may do so specifically because I have a skill-set of which I am unaware, but which others envy.

The meaning of community is not that each should develop all the skills of others, but rather that by collaboration, innumerable challenges become manageable. The fingers of each hand perform complimentary rather than identical functions. Individuals can likewise be complimentary fingers while respecting distinct aspects of uniqueness and ability.

To the best of my knowledge, within every historical example, societal rebirth occurs when individuals cease isolating and begin to once again work together. Communication, dialogue, and diversity rather than conformity are all conspicuous elements within such evolution. It

is likewise a time in which expectations and specific plans must occasionally be set aside.

Within every creative work I have ever done, the work takes on a life of its own--often fairly early within the process. If I commit to serving the work rather than my plans, the result is often more wonderful than anything I'd imagined. If I remain rigid and unyielding, the outcome is far more likely to be misshapen and ineffective.

It is ultimately not only society which is being renewed, but also one's self. To become what has never previously been, however, means being willing to do what has never been done--not necessarily what anyone else thinks should be done, but rather something new arising from within one's own heart, mind, and spirit. The corporate or business mentality, however, is rarely welcoming to such innovation--that requires a human heart and spirit.

What ultimately makes us most human is our creativity, of which capitalism, machines, and even the most advanced computers are incapable. All those can do is recombine what human emotion and imagination have created. I persist, therefore, in stressing that the essence of life is to be found within spirits rather than within any form and that any sort of renewal is a matter of bringing life back into forms in which it has in any way inadvertently diminished.

Sometimes this may mean allowing one's plans and expectations to change. At other times this may mean challenging the plans and expectations of others to change. As noted by the Jesuit priest, Father Strickland, "A man may do an immense deal of good, if he doesn't care who gets the credit for it."

What matters, it is hopefully obvious, is that good gets done. Within this process, it is likely that participants will also learn more about what precisely constitutes good work in contrast to that of poor quality. Yet even the best quality is only temporarily so, as newer methods and materials are continuously discovered.

Striving for conformity and stagnation, in contrast, strangles life out of everything that is otherwise attempting to learn, grow, and live. In doing so, all future hopes and possibilities are preemptively terminated. Narcissism is usually central to such efforts, but inherently leads only to death rather than ongoing life.

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

***"Frustration
doesn't teach anything.
Ideally, it inspires proactivity."***

– Sister Who

Retaining Individuality While Coexisting

From one perspective, I'm standing way too close to my own experience to deny its reality, but from another equally real perspective, as long as I do whatever good I can during the many or few days of my life, the days I experienced being impoverished or hungry and without adequate food, are likely to be quickly forgotten. I learned long ago that if one does not live for something greater than one's self, one's life will remain small and petty in its true proportions. A curious aspect of being narcissistic is that multidimensional possibilities of each unique self remain discovered.

How curious that what so many avoid--aspects of individual uniqueness--often hold the most effective answers. Yet living without certainty has never been easy. Metaphorically, it remains a very daunting challenge to sing when the world is most silent.

Yet it is within launching melody into quiet surroundings that miracles of transformation sometimes begin to happen. It is an act of faith as well, trusting life to be wiser than one's self, yet an enormous amount of grief must be inconspicuously carried as one journeys ever onward. It is never more important for a warrior to persist than when feeling most wounded.

The dark clouds rolling across the land are unable to define or control what life interjects upon the topography below. No transforming event is ever described in terms of weather at the time, but rather according to actions of love and wisdom that individuals found the courage to express in spite of circumstances. It is not because circumstances are favorable, but specifically because they are not that the simultaneous infusion of love and wisdom bring unanticipated healing and growth.

One's individuality is consequently not a measure of the adversity one encounters, but rather--ideally--a constructive and empowering response to it. Those most concerned with blending into hostile circumstances will not be part of life moving in better directions. What then matters most is not the abundance of reasons to be depressed, but the opportunities to be reborn and to grow in new directions.

This remains possible within every moment.

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

On a Personal Note

The most devastating development of the past month was that Gawain died suddenly on a Sunday morning after earlier appearing relatively okay. I told him to let me know if he needed anything, but when he called somewhat quietly two or three hours later, I was enmeshed in working on a computer file and responded inappropriately. For the moment, I'm feeling very lost and needing a new sense of home, not having realized that for the last eight years, he embodied my definition of that word.

From one view, I'm concerned about how depressed Bedivere has become, losing his closest buddy. Perhaps I should be equally concerned at how depressed I've become, living within a very unhealthy environment and being repeatedly bureaucratically blocked from relocating to a healthier residence.

Nonetheless, I will always remember that Gawain made the formidable effort to join me in my office during preceding morning hours when I could not sleep and was doing some writing on my computer. I only wish I'd understood that he was saying "good-bye." Simply being together mattered more than anything--and still does, because without him, everything feels even more oppressive.

Yet newsletter composition continues, the book is nearly ready for publication, the next twenty-four television episodes are already planned, and the songs of the fifth album seem exceptionally powerful. In one form or another, life goes on. Please let it be good.

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

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