

sister who's perspective

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Overview

That we are unique individuals and that every individual is inescapably surrounded by a constellation of relationships is fairly undeniable. If we give more conscious attention to such relationships, however, we also get more out of them, in much the same way that giving one's self to daily practice of any musical, physical, or intellectual exercise can ultimately create mastery.

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

Blending In

It is undeniable that there are a myriad of examples within the natural world of animals and insects which survive by visually blending into the background within their native environments. Two important considerations when noticing this, however, are that the animal or insect coexists with predators and that to such adversaries, one is considered as no more than an available food source. Within a more ideal perception of humanity, however, is the hope that we have mentally, socially, and perhaps even physically evolved beyond any need for competition and camouflage.

Yes, there are still forces and entities within our world that may at times objectify and consider us to be merely an available food source. Even the understanding of community espoused by Plato presumed that there would always be someone to conquer for purposes of stealing whatever resources one needs. I like to think, however, that humanity's individual and collective spiritual, mental, and emotional development now offers us better paradigms or methods for creating society and civilization within our world—if we will just take the initiative to constructively use them.

I am reminded of the silly and fictitious anecdote about two unintelligent individuals who went to a hardware store and purchased a

gasoline-powered chainsaw in order to cut firewood to burn for warmth during the coming winter. The sales clerk assured them that they could cut an enormous quantity of wood in a single day, using this machine. After several days of trying, however, they returned the saw to the store, explaining that the machine had completely failed to produce what the clerk had described—that the machine was heavy, slow, awkward, and inefficient. The clerk was baffled by their report and wanted to confirm that the saw was working correctly. When the clerk pulled the cord and the motor roared to life, however, the two individuals jumped back and exclaimed, "What's that?!"

The point, obviously, is that if we do not know the capabilities and dynamics of the new and unfamiliar tool or person standing before us, we will not be able to receive the best possibilities thereby available to us. Blending into the background, prevents this from happening and basically forces us backward into the more competitive, primitive, and adversarial relationship of predators and prey. The opposite of blending into the background and of thinking in terms of "either... or...", therefore, is discovering and embracing our individual and collective potential. There really are solutions which are better described as "both... and..." which introduce greater potential, possibility, and inclusivity. Failing to be inclusive, therefore, impoverishes humanity.

A primary question within our overall growth and development is whether—or when—we will finally learn to value each other sufficiently to move beyond any need to blend into the background and thus also beyond any habit of doing without the blessings and capabilities each new person or tool has to offer. We are surrounded by gifts and opportunities but live in need, only because of short-sighted ignorance. We live in fear only because we have not discovered true love.

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blessed and loved ever be.

Sticking Out

Superficially, sticking out or being conspicuous is merely an objective description without any moral or ethical value. Whether this is regarded as desirable or undesirable, is inseparable from human values, expectations, and speculations. If one considers one way of being better than another, one anticipates or visualizes a particular future. Within that particular future, the general tendency is to project an outcome as if it were guaranteed instead of uncertain. Sticking out, being obvious, or making one's self conspicuous thus becomes emotionally and/or morally charged.

None of which makes the particular action or characteristic inherently wrong. It does mean, however, that there may be a higher price to pay, just for being one's true and authentic self. The paradox within such moments is that while knowing truth has created freedom from the harmful effects of falsehood, self-sabotaging dynamics, and spiritual break-down, truth may have also catapulted one into a nasty arena of social adversity, populated by those who are in fact opposed to the freedom such truth offers.

How could anyone be opposed to truth or freedom? Hm. I wonder sometimes if even making such a statement identifies me as quintessentially American, since this value is not embraced with equal fervor in other parts of the world. Be that as it may, freedom remains extremely important to me. Only you can answer how important it is to you.

Drawing from the instruction I received while at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City while studying the theater of ancient Greece, a life-destroying flaw is often simply a virtue that has been pushed to an unhealthy extreme. As important as freedom may be when exercised wisely and appropriately, it is equally possible for this and any other tool to be abused. Many people know the first verse of the popular song, "America, the Beautiful," but apparently only a few are aware of two more verses, one of which includes the words, "...confirm thy soul in self-control; thy liberty in law."

What I have drawn from this is the understanding that if one is going to stick out, it

should be done as wisely and as responsibly as possible—remembering, among other things, that the world is a shared space. Additionally, one must remember that among the primary reasons this is so, is because of the myriad of ways we learn from and depend upon each other. All things considered (including all the aggravations and frustrations that may occur), we really do need each other in order to live—which includes the persons and things that stick out or somehow challenge us.

Imagine a finger of a hand that didn't want to stick out, but rather preferred to blend into the crowd. Playing the correct notes of a melody on a piano would immediately become impossible. Grasping certain objects would also become extremely difficult. Each finger of my hand must be willing to do whatever it can do. Anything less, especially in more extreme forms, would be at least an unhelpful limitation and at most a crisis.

In contrast are the times and situations within which the fingers must operate in perfect harmony. When participating in a group effort, however, the littlest finger of my right hand does not suddenly become something else; rather it participates in the group effort in the specific way that a little finger would. We cannot spend our entire lives, however, being the embodiment of the particular group's aspirations—as if each of us were nothing more than an embodiment or example of the group.

Whether one is acting individually or collectively, however, confidence and self-acceptance are essential to being fully present and to making one's best contribution. I cannot do my best if I am worrying about whether my best is good enough. I may not realize, for example, that I am the only person who knows what to do within a particular situation. I may also have to deal with one so fearful of not knowing what to do, that he or she is over-compensating by doing the wrong thing in an overly confident manner.

To retain the freedom to choose, we must extend the same respect and freedom we wish to receive—even if the choice means taking a stand for what is right by sticking out in ways that are uncomfortable.

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

Provoking Growth

The primary difficulty of growth within our loved ones and the world at large, is that there is in fact no way to provoke, cause, or coerce positive development within any other person without specific cooperation from that other person. Such approaches are generally masculine in character, wanting and perhaps even demanding particular response. In contrast, however, are the possibilities of nurturing, inviting, and suggesting, which leave decision-making in the hands of the one who is doing the actual living.

As correct as such thinking may be from a purely human perspective, life does occasionally impose a decidedly masculine approach—forcing response to sometimes devastating challenges one would have avoided. Apparently, Godde or the Universe is of the opinion that the resulting growth or change is somehow essential.

I frequently argue with such opinions, but it does seem that (within certain cases) resistance is futile. As phrased by Carl Jung, "what you resist, persists." Nonetheless, I persist in practicing resistance whenever it seems both wise and possible. No simple phrase is a "one size fits all" answer. The ongoing imperative of our lives is discernment.

I remain rather bewildered and baffled, however, by persons who simultaneously crow about personal growth almost constantly, but when faced with any such opportunity, strongly resist any sort of change. Similar to this are

*"I have never done anything
just to get attention;
I do what I do
to express who I am,
because if I didn't,
no one would know—
and I am not content
to spend my short life being
the undiscovered treasure."*

-- Sister Who

those who long for new relationships, but somehow expect that integrating such persons can occur without any major shifts in values, activities, or the use of resources. It may be that the most radical action of provoking growth is to simply take an honest look in the mirror.

I have long regarded every person, situation, and experience as a potential mirror, allowing me to see aspects of myself which would otherwise remain either invisible or unnoticed. Specifically because of this, when a particularly strange "mirror" appears, I take an even more intense look.

An example of this would be the trip to Belgium this past summer, which was inspired by intuitive prompting last January to participate in an archery event of the World OutGames there. I failed to consider the possibility, however, that I would never actually participate, while serving other purposes (the identity and nature of which are still a mystery).

Nonetheless, because the opportunity was extraordinary, it was also clearly one capable of producing significant growth—so I accepted the challenge, knowing that many other things would not happen within the same time period, because of the associated investment of time and energy. Was it a mistake? I still have difficulty answering that.

That this past experience has altered the ways in which I perceive myself, I have no doubt. I am still working on transforming this complex negative memory into something more empowering, however, so that it will provoke even more growth, love, and wisdom yet. At the very least, the combination of perceptions and sensations were clearly too intense to be meaningless—yet the language of this experience remains unfamiliar and confusing.

Provoking growth, therefore, may often (and perhaps even always) be the challenge of learning a new symbolic language. Learning to be fully alive is (among other things) always a challenge of learning to see and understand even more than everything we've seen and understood in the past and to embrace the possibility that every action, effect, and symbol may be a word within a new language—inviting us to communicate, to collaborate, and to care.

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Inspiring Life

It is interesting that although one may aspire to be inspiring, whether or not one succeeds is entirely up to the perceiver rather than the one demonstrating exceptional qualities. Among the insights such situations provide is the realization that interconnection is always far more true than hierarchy. Within the world of the theater, this is expressed within the oft-quoted witticism, "There are no small parts; only small players.

It would seem, therefore, that the best way to inspire life is to live as fully, as honestly, as passionately, and as interactively as possible—responding deeply to whatever challenges and opportunities come along, regardless of whether the expression of that is obvious or subtle. All too often, in the interest of satisfying social expectations, we hold back and fail to speak the truth and insight that may unexpectedly fill our minds. It may be, however, that the truth and insight within our minds are attempts by the Divine to heal our our frequently confused and stumbling world.

All too often, unfortunately, we fail to see this and are skeptical of our ability to be the presence of Godde, within whatever our present circumstances may be. Suffice to say, within any situation, if Godde's presence is there in an active rather than passive way, life will inescapably be altered. The presence of greatest love can never tolerate apathy or complacency as a response to a person or situation in need of healing.

Specifically by a willingness to act as divine hands in righting wrongs, removing ignorance, and infusing compassion, we inspire life to be at least a little bit better than it has previously been. If we are conspicuous to those around us while doing so, it may be because they were (perhaps unknowingly) moving in the opposite direction. Specifically because we are human, however, we can not only choose to change, but to a large extent we can also choose how we change.

In harmoniously weaving our changes together, we can create a genuinely inspiring tapestry of wise and loving life experience.

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

On a Personal Note

I had hoped that the roof and foundation problems of my house would be resolved this year, but apparently that is not going to happen. As it turned out, I finally decided I couldn't wait any longer for the rain to stop and the mud to dry, so I spent five or six hours stumbling through nearly liquid mud, shoveling enough of it out of a large hole next to a particular part of the foundation of my house, to reinstall some styrofoam insulation panels.

Nonetheless, six new television episodes were created a couple of days ago and five more production sessions are anticipated within the next two months. An overall plan has even been created that charts production of future episodes all the way to number 350. How peculiar, therefore, that I had any worries at the end of 1994 that the series might end with only fifty-five shows.

The 2014 calendar is temporarily on hold, pending cooperative weather and available days for creating the necessary photos, but both of these concerns may be resolved within the next two weeks, allowing the new calendar to be available online and by postal mail shortly thereafter.

My doctoral writing and my development as a person with high-functioning autism are similarly progressing in spite of adversity. The work of self-definition may be one of the less-obvious ongoing struggles of life, but it is still one of the most important—specifically because of all that it empowers to follow.

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