

sister who's perspective

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Overview

When bad things happen, especially things greater than one's self, weariness and discouragement are understandable. Anger has no outlet and consequently may fester deep inside one's heart. Maintaining a personal discipline of responsiveness, however, even if the best one can do is purely symbolic, sows the seeds of constructive future growth. Have faith, dear human soul; life will prevail.

A Response to Conformity

To want what one already has, has been occasionally presented as a primary key to experiencing peace and contentment. If one is willing to engage in closer inspection of the results, however, it might quickly become clear that what presents itself as allegedly being an accomplishment, is in actuality a major set-back and perhaps even a sort of surrendering to oppression. Gratitude is certainly a commendable attitude, but wanting *only* what one already has, reduces actual engagement with all of life's wonders to a mere equivalent of shadow-boxing or, worse yet, to stagnation. Additionally, any move toward accepting what is morally not at all acceptable, can even erode one's soul.

While greed is defined by wanting more than one needs, suffering can sometimes be defined as wanting less. Societal pressure to refrain from speaking of needs, in order to create a completely artificial appearance of pleasantness, is not an expression of love, but rather serves only to devalue life itself.

If there is a complaint that someone speaks of needs too often, my question to everyone else present is why those needs have not been satisfied such that they no longer exist. It would seem the truth is more accurately that society objects to being

reminded of short-comings it not only hasn't effectively addressed but perhaps has no intention of addressing--which could be seen as an effect of pathological narcissism.

The response, however, is not that a societal demand for conformity should be dismissed, but rather that a dialogue should begin, to learn from what legitimate need such a fear-driven request has arisen. I suspect the reason that many people are afraid of tyranny or victimization from others in their community, is that either they do not know or they are not known, in relation to those others. True and healthy community arises from both knowing and loving every member who is objectively (officially or unofficially) part of one's community.

If or when such mutual knowledge and love become normative, life can shift from conformity to communal collaboration. To the extent that humanity is unwilling to relinquish its ignorance, dysfunctional conditions unavoidably persist. To the extent that love becomes normative, life--in all of its diversity and creativity--begins to thrive.

It is specifically in loving the diversity and uniqueness of each other instead of only what we have in common, that each of us effectively expands our knowledge, our ability, and our perception. Telling someone to hide his or her hands within mittens, because I cannot tolerate the sight of fingers, makes no sense whatsoever--especially if the creative task of the moment is the playing of a beautiful piece of music on a piano.

No one should ever be asked to hide that which is potentially a resource or an ability from which the immediate community or humanity at large could ultimately benefit. It would in fact be a transgression against both the community and humanity to do so. In considering things that are truthfully sinful, this is one that immediately comes to mind.

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

A Response to Narcissism

From a certain perspective, this is an impossible task. By its very nature, response indicates interactive relationship, but by its very nature, narcissism is a negation of all relationship and perhaps also the absence of any awareness of itself as a deplorable mental/emotional/relational state.

Conversely, a primary adversary of narcissism, would be curiosity. To the extent that curiosity is discouraged, narcissism is nurtured. As long as persons, creatures, and all phenomena beyond one's self are regarded as fascinating, intriguing, and worthy of exploration, narcissism finds little opportunity to take root within one's heart, mind, spirit, and ever-unfolding life.

I've read that the human mind is far more active during sleep than anyone realizes, because dreams that are able to reach completion are generally not remembered. It is, according to the article I read, only those dreams from which one awakens before the particular dream reaches complete resolution, which are able to thereafter be consciously recalled. The test reported by the article was that people awakened during what was called REM sleep (rapid eye movement, a deeper mental state of sleep), were consistently able to recall their dreams, while those who passed through this state and returned to less intense states of sleep, were not able recall any such experiences.

What this says to me, is that it is through interaction that we become more conscious and through isolation that far more of what we experience escapes detection--which would grant the opportunity to consider what may initially be mysterious, but through contemplation and discussion might be transformed into valuable material for personal and/or spiritual growth. Clearly a balance must be maintained, however, because of the negative effects that too little sleep would also have. It may be that we are always surrounded by more educational material than we have the ability to absorb, recommending that we utilize as many of our opportunities as we can, without berating ourselves for failing to utilize every one.

That we are currently living within a world reeling from the effects of virtually epidemic narcissism, seems quite obvious. It is within responding to this opportunity by engaging in healing modalities of every kind, that lives of enormous purposefulness are available to each and every person. Every action of kindness or education is in one way or another an action of extending healing to the world within which we all live.

In contrast to all of these statements is the possibility of responding to narcissism with avoidance--and essentially thereby integrating degrees of narcissism into one's self. Clearly nothing good can come of this, beyond an artificial and temporary sort of peacefulness that leaves one empty and hollow, experiencing only regret for actions not taken, when the time comes to face one's own mortality and realize that there is no more time to do anything at all.

It is nonetheless a matter of choice: one may choose to respond relationally to whatever life provides or one may choose to respond narcissistically and let innumerable opportunities slip by. It is perhaps because I recall moments when I could have acted but didn't, that it seems all the more imperative that I act whenever I can. Phrased another way, it is perhaps specifically because I have seen narcissism's face that embracing everyone with love whom I possibly can, is so very important to me.

I have great difficulty believing, however, that I am the only one who has recognized the evil face of narcissism throughout the world around me and it is thus quite alarming to consider that this evil has been seen in ways that failed to inspire any adequate response. If we do not see narcissism for what it is, an evil force capable of dividing us, we risk becoming strangers to each other, who are consequently vulnerable to every future victimizing force or circumstance. All that is necessary to prevent this, however, is remembering to embrace and rediscover each other with love within every moment we are blessed to share.

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A Response to Greed

I grew up within a societal context that silently required all unpleasantness to be ignored instead of addressed. To the best of my observation, however, no demonstration of modesty was ever curative to anyone overcome by the psychological sickness of greed. Something more was clearly needed, but I was led to believe that any attempt I made would be considered very impolite.

As an indirect approach, what I would describe as preventative rather than curative, the nuns who taught within my Catholic grade school stressed as virtues, sharing whatever one had and taking turns whenever necessary. I don't recall hearing any suggestions, however, for times one might be confronted with obvious greed.

The negative and often unintentional consequence of greed, of course, is poverty, which narcissistic perspectives are generally eager to blame on the victims themselves. It has always been my understanding, however, that the world is a shared space, as also are all of its vast--but not infinite--natural and human resources. That being the case, a collected abundance in one place always equates to a corresponding deficiency somewhere else.

During times when I can comfortably do with less, I don't mind if someone else acts according to a perceived need for more. I

*"It is essential to notice,
as the world darkens,
that an infinite number of stars
shine ever more brightly;
that even though night
cannot be prevented,
the stars can be celebrated--
thus filling the darkness
with music and joyful dancing
for as long as the night lasts."*

-- Sister Who

equate such times, however, with a person who is at home instead of being at work, sick in bed with a bad cold. I am happy at such times to provide them with rest, chicken soup, and anything else likely to heal them.

Giving even more to a person consumed by greed, however, is rarely effective. In a perhaps reverse application of the metaphor of "the frog in the frying pan (the notion that if one increases the temperature slowly enough, a frog will not jump out of a frying pan, even though it is literally being cooked alive)," providing the victim with just a little more at a gradual enough pace, acclimates the individual to dangerous extremes, until the life of the spirit within that person is ultimately terminated. Can it ever again be revived? While I do believe in the possibility of divine miracles, I'm not sure they are as available as people often wish--so it's essential in the meantime to do what we can.

An added implication and cause for concern when one encounters a person suffering from the mental illness of greed, is that he or she is suffering from ignorance of the beauty, value, and empowerment of positive relationships with others. When one has no more than one's own resources, the challenges of life and circumstances within the surrounding world can be overwhelming; no one should ever have to face such things all alone. It may be that the reason each person has limited strength, is specifically so that we will reach out to one another and form mutually supportive communities; so that we will finally remember what it is to truly be family to one another--which is why I believe that Godde does not provide all that is needed, specifically hoping we realize that doing so is our collective responsibility.

That is perhaps the most concise and fundamental quality of the response to greed that is needed: that it be a collective one addressing the psychological short-comings of the individual while preventing the pain of poverty from interfering with any of the beauty, creativity, and potentiality of any individual's communal contribution.

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A Response to Apathy

Sometimes the most rebellious thing one can do is to persist in caring and striving to make a positive difference in the world, just at that moment when it would be so much easier and less stressful to do otherwise. As much as being rebellious was discouraged throughout my childhood, innumerable behaviors I observed (and by which I was victimized) were often described as being even worse. Among these was what one might call the non-response of apathy--not caring enough to offer any response at all.

In words attributed to Edmund Burke, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil, is for good to do nothing." Within any response is thus the eradication of apathy. One cannot be apathetic while responding to an event, challenge, or circumstance.

It is specifically within responding to apathy that one has opportunity to positively redefine and perhaps even to renew one's self and it is within renewing one's self, that life finds opportunity to expand beyond all preceding definitions, limitations, and boundaries. Weariness and lethargy within such moments can perhaps be rationalized, but they will never be recommendable. In those times when the best excuse I could offer is that I was too tired or overwhelmed, I find the memory ever after shadowed by regret and a continuing inability to forgive myself for not having found one more ounce of strength to act differently than I did.

I suppose my response to apathy may seem exaggerated at times, but I find that it draws its strength specifically from recalling my own failures to act within pivotal past moments of my life. While I hope that I've made up the difference in other ways, I often wrestle with doubts. The answer I generally receive, is that everything has turned out as it should and it is only my limited human perspective that prevents me from knowing the resulting synchronicity.

There is no question, however, that my response ability has never been idle.

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On a Personal Note

All attempts to sell this house in order to relocate to a more supportive community have thus far been unsuccessful. The nearly constant noise of all-terrain vehicles is maddening, but the town council remains unresponsive to complaints and a general learned helplessness prevents sufficient solidarity from requiring better solutions--which is why recent video productions often include loud traffic noise in the background; no way could be found to prevent it.

Nonetheless, twenty-four new episodes of my ongoing television show have been completed, shipped to public access television in Denver, Colorado, and uploaded to www.YouTube.com/DenverNeVaar on the Internet. Only two or three more photos are required to complete those needed for the 2017 inspirational calendar, so at least in terms of this unconventional ministry, things seem to be more or less on-track.

A pleasant surprise within the past four weeks has been an unexpected surge in subscribers to the website mentioned within the previous paragraph. In perhaps two weeks' time, the number went from 135 to over 900. The meaning of this ultimately only time will tell, but one wants to distribute my shows more directly in Chicago, Illinois.

Only Godde knows what the next month holds. I just try to have faith, day by day.

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