

sister who's perspective

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Overview

I continue to find that much of life is about learning how to fully perceive all that there is to see--which equally includes all that is most often regarded as invisible. With this in mind, I offer the following essays for your contemplation and consideration. I remain also available to engage in any personal conversations you might find empowering.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be. -- S.W.

The Importance of Beauty

I suppose it would be so much more convenient for pragmatists if a human being was more like an automobile: keep it clean, provide oil and fuel as needed, operate it within normal parameters, and no problems need to be anticipated. For better or for worse, there are additional dimensions of being to consider when dealing with humans, among which are emotions, spiritual beliefs, and various relational configurations. What one feels, thinks, believes, and does, very much affects what one can do.

This is why, if it ever does become truly widespread, I very much support having an annual "Day without Art"--although in truth, I'm not sure it's even possible. Artistic expressions are virtually everywhere and in many cases are of such scale and size that concealing all creativity for even just a single day would be a monstrously difficult task. As much as the benefits of beauty and creative expressions are sometimes very subtle and defy measurement, the absence of such could nonetheless be psychologically and emotionally quite devastating.

From one perspective, it has long been noted that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." While this does seem to create a certain responsibility to perceive the beauty which is subtly everywhere present and

available, it also helps to create a certain expectation that the reason beauty has been hidden and thus can be found within so many distinct places, is to ensure that it is not otherwise overlooked. Either way, the point is that beauty must be at least allowed and ideally encouraged, specifically because of its empowering effect upon human minds, emotions, spirits, and communities.

Like any obsession, however, the point at which one's focus creates blindness to other components of life, is the point at which what was intended to create strength, instead creates subtly debilitating weakness. Beauty remains important, but in this case as a sort of alarm, striving to awaken everyone to a dangerous imbalance. The essence of beauty is thus not self-centeredness, but rather relationship.

Mysteriously, perhaps, love brings a perception of beauty wherever and whenever its manifestation occurs. Like a Romanticist painting, however, both true love and true beauty integrate light and shadow, pleasure and pain, and body and spirit in ways that are compelling. One is unable to be merely an observer and not a participant within the inherent emotion of that creative moment.

In this way, the moment becomes a door of opportunity and, by association, the beauty becomes an opportunity for growth, experience, and development of unimagined dimensions and proportions. What seemed so small only a moment ago, like a tiny glass prism, has painted an enormous rainbow of possibilities across a far wall. One does not create the rainbow; one only hopes to serve its manifestation in whatever ways one can.

A concluding question easily worth additional personal contemplation is "What sort of person would I be without this or any other specific example of beauty, integrated in various ways into my life?"

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

The Requirement of Shadow

I think I've directly mentioned perhaps a half dozen times within conversations of the last several months, that the phenomenon of three-dimensional perception is impossible without inclusion of an appropriate volume and intensity of darkness. If one does not invest sufficient time in contemplating one's shadow, one will never fully know one's own true dimensions and form. An important qualification, however, is that one's shadow is not synonymous with something negative, mistaken, deplorable, or objectionable.

Having a shadow is not a matter of resigning one's self to the persistence of short-comings, negative energy, or any other sort of imperfection. It is rather an awareness of encompassing both the day and the night; the summer and the winter; the beginning and the ending--and being as prepared as one can be for each to unfold within its individually appropriate season and way. The true artist does not, therefore, avoid the darker shades, but rather strives for a deeply insightful and empowering harmony in much the same way that an orchestral director weaves sharply contrasting sounds into an auditory wholeness beyond what any individual instrument could ever produce.

On a similar note, I recall reading many years ago that a central feature of paintings by Vincent Van Gogh was that he would put tiny flecks of contrasting color throughout his works, in order to accentuate and increase the perceived intensity of the surrounding dominant color. It is a very difficult balance to strike, however, between black and white, positive and negative, good and bad, or any other relationship of maximum contrast--especially in matters that can be used as metaphors of moral principles--specifically because of the risk of encouraging what is objectionable to be seen as necessary and indirectly constructive. While being able to transform bad into good is commendable, this does not alter the inherent nature of the raw material or of the inciting incident.

From an opposite perspective, one might even say that the existence of shadow is the

subconscious request for an infusion of that which truly rejuvenates life. Like a child who consciously misbehaves in an attempt to secure attention from a neglectful parent, what some call "the speed-bumps of life" may be individually appropriate divine wake-up calls, pleading for greater awareness and responsiveness to life's opportunities and possibilities. A life devoid of such, might thus legitimately be described a life of minimal opportunity and/or potential.

So is the divine a mischievous child? I'm undecided, because I don't think human language or human conceptions of child-ness are adequate to explain why children have occasionally demonstrated more wisdom and virtue than their elders. It is not unthinkable that the wisdom of the Divine may at times find the methods of children to be most effective within particular situations.

If methods which are rarely utilized are regarded as those which are more often "out of the spotlight" and "hidden within the shadows of the side curtains," then they are hardly confined to contexts associated exclusively with childhood, since these refer to carefully constructed environments of professional theater. The perennial question within that vocational world, of course, is to what extent theater is imitating life or life is imitating theater. The invisible line between theater and spirituality is likewise very thin.

What is vital to all three (e.g. childhood, theater, and spirituality), is constructive use of whatever shadows one perceives. Just as the title figure of *Peter Pan* needed to be reunited with his shadow in order for him to re-establish harmony, there is something that is incomplete about each of us without holistic integration. More concisely, none of us can ever be complete, all by ourselves.

Likewise, no community can ever be holistically complete without detailed and specific recognition and integration of the diverse individuals encompassed. As with the African word, "Ubuntu": "I am because we are; we are because I am." Wherever there is both light and life, will be shadow; wherever there is shadow, will be both light and life.

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The Value of Purpose

Within those moments characterized by greatest loss and/or confusion, having a sense of purpose--that is, serving something greater than myself--has consistently given greater strength to endure whatever mental, emotional, and even physical pain I was feeling at the time. It has been said that "courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the awareness of something more important than the fear." In a similar way, perseverance is not an absence of pain, but rather an awareness of that which is more important than any pain.

Within a verse of a song I wrote a number of years ago, which was requested and inspired by a friend who (if I understand correctly) later committed suicide, are the words, "Where would a dreamer be needed more than where dreams cannot be found; where better the musician's tune than where there isn't any sound?" What is too often overlooked is the very high personal price paid by artists, dreamers, musicians, and singers for being the societal anomalies that they inescapably always are. The fact that their work inherently has value, does not guarantee that they will always be sufficiently valued, to be blessed with legitimate ways to meet all basic and vocational needs.

Even any such deficiency, however, does not diminish how very essential their works are to the holistic health and development of the human species. What changes are the mode, method, quantity, and location of their creative expressions--and consequently the identity and number of persons whose lives are thereby impacted. More concisely, it is a question of where, when, how, and how much life enrichment happens.

As much as some spiritual paths have adopted cynical attitudes about asking "why," perhaps due to frustration with being unable

to find a satisfactory answer, the greatest meaning and value I've found, has been discovered while wrestling specifically and directly with the question of "Why?". Only when I began doing so, did I begin to notice what supported or affirmed the particular idea or practice I was contemplating. Taken one step further, if my spirit, mind, and body's supports are insufficiently understood, maintained, and developed, all that I am and/or could do, could ultimately implode.

I am reminded of Robin Williams, an actor who blessed the world with amazing insights, understanding, and growth, but was ultimately defeated by depression that most would never have even guessed to be his nemesis. What else would he have created, had that personal battle not been lost? To me, his life-purpose was clear, but perhaps to him within his final moments, it was not.

Yes, knowing one's purpose can provide enormous strength, but it can also create challenges which others will never face and thus will consequently never be able to fully understand. Within the strength of symbiotic rather than parasitic community, this is not an insurmountable problem. Narcissism, in any degree or form, conversely, is analogous to an infestation of termites within a house made entirely of wood.

The more one stands alone or allows others to do so against any challenges that arise, the more defeat and loss become the probable outcomes. It is, therefore, not only one's own purpose to be contemplated, embraced, and dedicated to something greater than itself in order to avoid becoming small and petty. Like love, purpose must also become positive practice communally in order to constructively matter.

Phrased another way, purpose gives one a place to start, which is--for better or for worse--dependent upon whatever action follows. Having a piece of ground that has been designated a garden means nothing--until one begins to plant seeds, water sprouts, remove weeds, and protect from adversarial infestations. By thus living through one's garden, life truly becomes life.

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

*"The testimony of every failure
is that one had
sufficient courage to try."*

-- Sister Who

The Power of Meaning

I've sometimes overheard people who wish to combat weakness, speak of claiming one's personal power. In contemplating such an approach, however, my observation is that pursuits of power most often result in dysfunctional egos, while humble, holistic, and respectful pursuits of truth, generally produce personal power. What also often happens, is that people are only being part and not all of who and what they are--and even then never in a wise, effectively integrated, and clearly demonstrated way.

Specifically because meaning resides at a deeper level of one's being, it infuses every expression in ways that are not always obvious or apparent. It is perhaps similar to the basic piano skills I learned while in college, which included particular hand positions that quickly and easily created basic chord configurations. To switch from a major chord to a minor one, required only that I move my middle finger one key toward the left on the piano keyboard.

When I thus played *Lavender's Blue* in the usual way with major chords, followed by moving one finger in my hand position and playing the song with minor chords, my youngest brother instantly made a face expressing displeasure. So it is that the slightest shifts in meaning can likewise change the color of every other note within the songs of our lives. As I look around me, however, through each moment of life, it seems that those who consciously consider meaning within the unfolding of their lives, are a most rare and precious minority who are too seldom valued, integrated, or heard.

The flip side of this is that those who fail to engage in such self-contemplation, go through their lives without the power that the deeper self-awareness arising from such contemplation would bring. Perhaps their pursuits of power are subconscious pleas for the power of meaning to constructively bless their lives. Yet such blessing will not come until self-contemplation, greater wholeness, and increased awareness are engaged.

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

On a Personal Note

Some progress has been made, but the Medicare/Medicaid/Social Security Disability Income bureaucratic roadblock has still not been resolved, meaning that all medical resources are still unavailable to me, leaving the extremely painful and chronic problem in my left knee-joint undiagnosed and minimally treated. Being the stubborn and proactive person I've always been, I nonetheless continue to carry on with usual activities as well as I can. My dogs seem to be doing mostly okay, but would clearly prefer having a dog door and a fenced back yard instead of the limitations of apartment living.

I am striving to make as much progress on various writing projects as possible, which now includes translating the book which accompanies *The Tarot of Sister Who* into German. Possibilities of translating my works into Spanish have been presented as well, but none of those who have offered to assist have followed through when I said I would very much like to collaborate. I'm also still hoping by the end of this year to finally finish composition of Sister Who's "autobiography" (which it is, but not in a strictly chronological or factual sort of way).

All that being said, I very much miss being able to set up my portable chapel and talk with people directly about whatever challenges or blessings they experience. I can only hope such times will soon return.

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