

sister who's perspective

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Overview

Perhaps the primary problem with the understandable desire to make every moment of life "nice," is how much additional understanding, growth, and opportunity is thereby overlooked. Virtually nothing is only bad or good, in and of itself; what matters, again and again, is how the particular thing is seen and--for that matter--whether the thing in question is fully seen. So this month's essays consider often unseen possibilities.

Toxic People

I have long believed that there is no such thing as an uncaused effect, but most of humanity seems inclined to overlook how this applies equally to relationships. As one who grew up during the so-called "Cold War" years, yet with profound empathy toward virtually everything and everyone, I was deeply impressed when I first read about the siege of Stalingrad. My subsequent rhetorical question was, "Where were you while twenty million Russians were dying?"

Indeed, human history is so filled with individual and collective tragedy, it's virtually impossible for any of us to mentally and emotionally absorb even a fraction of such realities. In the case of both autism and history, however, what cannot be named, cannot be addressed. Nonetheless, any effective process of healing must begin within moving beyond blame and guilt into love that is unconditional and forgiveness that has the power to transform.

No evil is excused by this, but neither is any evil given the power to prevent any and all healing from unfolding within the lives of everyone affected. Speaking of such things in broad societal terms, however, apparently allows many individuals to overlook any and all corresponding manifestations within their own lives. At the heart of virtually every evil

action is a devaluation of someone valuable--a claim that somehow s/he or a related personal experience doesn't matter.

What makes the entire affair all the more messy, intellectually and ethically, is that the perpetrator of such negative assertions, has nearly always previously been the victim of similar assertions. It is thus not so much about the identities of participants, as about an evil dynamic--replicating itself over and over, year after year, generation after generation, without resolution. The result is emotional and mental toxicity that, like any other example of hazardous waste, needs to be intelligently cleaned up and removed.

This is among the reasons I often recommend regular self-reflection and careful evaluation of one's life--to encourage detection of evil that has quietly inserted itself into hearts and minds that are otherwise committed to love, truth, and healing. From the first moment within a basic psychology class in high school that the phenomenon was ever presented to me, I have wondered how one's unconscious mind could ever *not* be more vast than that which one's conscious mind has thus far been able to grasp. Bringing true and honest perception to one's body, mind, and spirit is inherently a lifelong challenge.

All that being said, the inescapable social challenge which remains, is dealing with both the toxicity within others as well as that which is within one's self--choosing to engage or refrain from particular kinds of interaction specifically because of "cleaning operations" which are (hopefully) currently in process. I sincerely do want to help everyone, but I must also come to terms with my limitations; to do what I can without chastising myself for *not* doing what is a job that only a village can effectively manage. Yet what I sometimes do have opportunity to do, is to alert the village to what needs to be done.

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

Dysfunctional Relationships

I've been trying to identify or to imagine any possible example of a dysfunctional relationship that does not include some sort of dishonesty--but I have not been able to do so. In every single case, some truth is being either overlooked or concealed. What is more disturbing, however, is how seldom anyone is even looking for what is missing.

The mere occurrence of dysfunction is the warning bell that could launch the search, but it seems that too many have resigned themselves to problems rather than having faith in the existence of solutions. A common accusation seems to be that such faith is, at best, naive and, at worst, worthy of ridicule. Nothing good can come from such skeptical, pessimistic, and cynical notions.

Ultimately, wherever one finds any sort of dysfunction, it's a pretty safe bet that a deficiency of faith is somewhere nearby (as well as vice versa). The goal is not to be discouraged, however, but rather to embrace such detection as a valuable clue to solving a larger mystery. What actually sustains dysfunctional relationships, is allowing the absence of faith, the specific point of untruth, or the erroneous interpretation, to remain unchallenged and enduringly in place.

The truth which seems to be most often absent, is that positive alternatives have as much opportunity as negative ones. Both positive and negative outcomes, however, are dependent upon human response (or lack thereof). As a generality, perhaps the most untrue statement of all is "I can't," which ignores the myriad of possibilities that are resident within available resources.

Some of those possibilities can be accomplished by individuals, but others require communal collaboration. Wisdom is what allows one to discern which is which. I have observed far too many conversations in which the most significant adversary to an allegedly desirable solution, is the stubborn refusal of the particular individuals to believe that resolution is, in fact, possible.

Making positive things happen is not a matter of having a mountain of faith available within one's self. Rather it is a matter of

having just enough faith to try, just one more time. I don't know whether or not anyone has ever asked, but I have to wonder if the time for which Rosa Parks is remembered was in fact the first time she had ever refused to move to the back of the bus, away from the "white only" seat she initially chose.

So what made that time different? I'm not sure, but I strongly suspect that whatever it was that made that time different, it was not visible or obvious to Rosa within the moment that event was happening. It is the blessing and curse of humanity that as creatures of time, we can create beautiful moments of positive transformation, but we cannot remain within them for any longer than they actually last--and we may not even realize that they were such moments until long after they have faded from view.

The blessing is that such moments occur at all--especially considering all the available reasons they should not. It reminds me of the final song of the musical Camelot, which I saw performed at the Wintergarden theater during the early 1980's (just before the space was completely renovated for the long run of the musical Cats). Arthur is facing the final battle with Mordred, within which it is highly possible that everything he has brought into being, will be lost; he turns to a young boy and instructs him: "Don't let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment that was known, as Camelot."

A thousand years later, embellished and modified, perhaps, versions of the story are still being told. I believe such possibilities are equally hidden within each and every one of us. The question is whether we have the commitment, the courage, and the cunning to effectively bring them out into the light, where they can be shared with others.

If all we see are the dysfunctions--all the times it didn't work--we will miss any glimpse or opportunity for the ways it could work, that may be passing very nearby indeed. Once again, "we have found the enemy and it is ourselves." We do not truly compete with each other, but rather with what limits us within ourselves--and waits for healing.

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

Unfinished Business

A first important distinction to note, is that not all businesses are obsessed with profit or, for that matter, directly involve forms of currency or credit. A "non-profit business," would thus be considered by some to be an oxymoron. All things considered, one would do well to heed the advice of Marley's ghost within Dicken's "Christmas Carol" which instruct:

Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!"

If the central purpose of life is to live it, all of the things just mentioned are absolutely included. Failing to do any of them, as one is able, constitutes unfinished business--which in Marley's case at least, resulted in spiritual enslavement. I wonder, however, had Dickens written a sequel, whether Marley's penance would have been reduced by the ultimately successful transformation of Ebenezer Scrooge--and, of course, of every life his subsequently touched.

So, continuing with the metaphor of Marley within Dicken's literary classic, the chains and boxes weighing down that ghost might symbolize a myriad of neglected opportunities, censored kindness, smothered smiles, and examples of callous disregard--not all of which were even conscious or intentional in any way. It is rather amazing, actually, how little of their own lives most people are able to recall. As with this story, however, the past has a great deal to say,

*"You cannot make my life meaningless;
you can only make
the present moment meaningless
to you."*

-- Sister Who

which has the power to dramatically alter the present and future--if one is willing to listen.

So from a certain perspective, the first thing one should do within any relational situation, is to listen carefully, in order to have the most completely informed view of the particular challenge that one can. If one conversely makes a decision without having complete information, the risk of making a decision one will later regret, is significantly higher. If the only reason such information was not received is that one was not fully listening, one's regret is further multiplied.

The last thing one should do within any relational situation, is thus likewise to listen carefully to all that has been said. Any point that has been ignored, overlooked, or neglected, will resurface just as surely as leaving even a fraction of bindweed root within one's garden or flowerbed, will allow for a re-infestation that is absolutely capable of overrunning everything else that lives there. An unmet need is synonymous with an opportunity for a future challenge, which could otherwise be avoided.

It is not that the need in and of itself is bad, but rather that the action of ignoring a need is what creates opportunity for future problems of unanticipated severity and unexpected characteristics. This is why so many counselors recommend having a sort of internal dialogue with one's challenges rather than completely ignoring them.

I have enough challenges already, without creating or allowing opportunity for even more--but prevention of such never happens by accident. More directly, for any unfinished business to become finished, intention and conscious effort are absolutely required. This is yet another form of the witticism I penned years ago that "whoever wants the muscles, has to lift the weights."

Going through life without any such muscles, suggests that one will never accomplish any of those things for which such muscles are required. From the moment of birth all the way through, the one who is unwilling to struggle, therefore, is unlikely at best, to ever truly live.

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

Being In-process

All too often when introducing myself to a new person or social/societal context, I want very much to present a perfect and complete image of myself. What is more reasonable, is to interpret the initial details as "a place where we will begin." It's as if one could add, "Come back tomorrow and you'll not only learn more, but also hopefully find that I'm even a little bit better than I am today."

Overlooking and forgiving the mistakes of others is common enough advice throughout most of current human society, but this needs to be equally extended toward one's self. The burden of needing to be perfect on the very first try, is perhaps more than any human being can honestly bear, yet it does seem to be something which most expect of themselves. Within the ongoing effort to hide one's short-comings, however, what is often equally overlooked, are the ways these deficiencies create opportunities for growth.

Going one step further, it is also not only one's own mental, emotional, spiritual, social, or professional growth that has a chance to increase, but equally the growth of one's relationships and of how one is seen by others. I don't mean to sound even the least bit condescending and I think those who understand autism would interpret it as a comment which intends to be objective, but I find that in practice, *most* of the people whom I meet underestimate my creative and intellectual abilities. This is why I often try to explain that appearing in ritual garb actually has the ability to reveal more of who I truly am, rather than being any sort of attempt to hide my true self from others.

Yet, as a creature of time, I am forever in the process of becoming even more than I have thus far been and improvements are thus also ongoing and subject to continuous redesign and rearrangement. In considering that I am equally a spiritual being as well as a physical one, the possible dimensions in which this growth can happen, are all the more numerous, magical, and miraculous.

Why not embrace the journey together?

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

On a Personal Note

The fundraising effort located online at www.GoFundMe.com/Autistic-Needs-Home continues growing slowly toward its goal with each passing week, and I continue to make the best of my current circumstances in whatever ways I can, trying not to be too discouraged by current geographical and financial limitations.

The video production studio has now been re-assembled within my living room and a special entitled, "Sister Who's Winter Reflections," was recorded there on the last Saturday before Christmas, with the help of my good friend, John Nelson. Responses from viewers were received within the first hour after uploading was complete and have been very positive and encouraging.

The Tarot of Sister Who is now available at www.thegamecrafter.com/games/the-tarot-of-sister-who, on the Internet. All personal proceeds from purchases of this deck, currently go to the GoFundMe activity identified at the top of this column.

Public access television within the city of Denver, Colorado, where my show has been cablecast since 1992, has been reassigned to new administration. Initial conversations with managers have nonetheless been quite encouraging, so I plan to transfer numerous recordings to them within the immediate future. Shows nonetheless remain available at www.YouTube.com/DenverNeVaar.

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

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