

SISTER WHO'S PERSPECTIVE

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Overview

I once commented to another patron within a Hindu-oriented restaurant that I couldn't live with nothing existing beyond what can be heard and seen. My life experiences have been compelling since the beginning, insisting that reality transcends mere physical senses and observable matter.

Obviously others cannot have the same experiences I've had, but they can have their own--especially if they are open to them.

Remembering Importance

I remember once telling a group of adults interested in understanding autism better that one must "remember the complexity while addressing the focus." Responding to the title of this essay, the first thought that occurs to me is that importance is virtually impossible to separate from perception. If one can shift one's perception, therefore, that which is most important shifts also.

That being said, I do not encourage being less honest about challenging details or distracting one's self from the full reality of an experience by thinking, in the words of Mary Poppins, that "a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down." What I find more compelling, is reaching for the greater and more holistic truth that is genuinely most empowering. In some cases, that may be the limitations of a current negative or in some way painful experience, while in other instances it may be a realization of how the moment can be transformed or redefined by an unexpected positive side-effect.

The current point, however, is recalling that the particular current unpleasantness is not meaningless, but rather is being used to purchase a greater accomplishment. I'm not sure who said it first, but the oft-repeated witticism that "Courage is not the absence of

fear, but rather the awareness of something more important than the fear," can be paraphrased in a myriad of other ways. In innumerable such ways, courage means stepping beyond one's self and embracing whatever one considers more important.

It is not that the self is neglected, but rather that the self is expanded beyond the current experience, into a larger constellation of relationship. It is equally not that the self is in any way coerced into embodying the expectations or values of others, but rather that its individually unique qualities are at last integrated and constructively utilized. By thus becoming the bridge or vehicle by which positive shifts and perhaps even miracles enter daily life experience, the particular suffering loses importance while the holistic reality of life significantly gains.

Losing importance--in any way and on any level--involves becoming smaller rather than growing into greater dynamics, forms, and expressions. This truth, however, is rarely employed as wisely as it could be. Yet determination of importance is shared, relational, and perhaps even communal.

Thus, the additional consideration when deciding importance, is to be certain to ask, "Important to whom?" A common mantra of late is that "Everyone matters," but all too often the speakers of these words fail to live thereafter as if these words were actually true. Importance is validated by one's own choices and actions, thus giving each person the ability to be a co-creator of the universe within which the life of humanity unfolds.

Communal relationships remain important also, however, because the universe remains now and always, a shared space and an extremely interconnected and interdependent work. As important as it is to make the best contribution one can, it is equally essential to truly support the best contributions of others.

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

Remembering Essentialness

Modern commercial advertising delights in insisting that whatever it is selling, is in some way essential to holistic happiness--which would be true, I suppose, if one's happiness were grounded within the products and services advertisers are selling, instead of within one's relational self. Within embracing such distractions, is the potential to confuse the non-essential and the truly essential.

Discovering what is truly essential may nevertheless be an ongoing life activity, due to constantly fluctuating circumstances. I do not remember the original author, but recall reading the words many years ago that "The problem with life is that it's so daily." What I interpreted this to mean, is that each person is challenged daily by circumstances and events, toward thoughts, perceptions, and experiences that in various ways call that particular individual to become more than s/he was the previous day. More concisely, each new day invites every individual to grow.

Another thoughtful voice has said that "Life is a journey; not a destination." I would only expand this to include, "much less a series of destinations." If one views each accomplishment as a temporary step or plateau from which one reaches for still greater possibilities, this resonates with a poster I read during my teenage years: "Only those who will risk going to far, will ever find out just how far they can go."

Inherent within this, is the essential inner quality of being willing to try; to make an effort; and to do the work necessary to make one's experience of life more than it currently is. As much as I understand being tired--especially during the past five years of very intense struggle--I know that life depends upon me (to varying degrees) to make dreams come true. One could perhaps even say that what is ultimately most essential to life, is each one of us.

Every life that is created or encountered, is a complex package of resources and possibilities that--in most cases--is never fully discovered or realized. Rather than become discouraged and settle for less, however, one can instead take on the larger proportions

essential to fully living within a larger and more multi-dimensional universe. Yet sometimes it is a universe that is as much within as around one's self.

The oracle at Delphi exhorted, "Know thyself!" and Socrates was of the opinion that "The unexamined life is not worth living"--perhaps understanding from his own relatively brief life experience just how much struggle is involved. I confess I was always a bit resistant to certain individuals I met within metaphysical fair contexts, who were of the opinion that struggle was somehow bad or wrong and that growth meant moving in the opposite direction. Conversely, every physical birth requires some sort of struggle.

The more conversations I've had, the more convinced I've become that life is more or less saturated with moments of making an effort. Even breathing involves effort that should never be taken for granted and that is equally dependent upon being where the air is indeed adequately safe to breathe. That being said, I have lived through an enormous number of moments and environments that were far from perfect; I don't need to stop every time something is not.

Instead, I need to remember that even imperfection has created countless instances of beauty and empowerment. If life truly is a journey, then each day is not so much a question of "setting the bar" higher than one can reach, but rather of measuring the ways in which one's reach has increased--and finding ways to further extend that reach. I suppose one could even state this idea most concisely as "What is essential throughout all of life, is to live."

As much as "live" is a four-letter word that can be either an adjective or a verb, using one or another pronunciation, it will not happen at all without a mind and heart that are open, active, and willing to engage with the surrounding worlds--both the seen and the unseen. Ideally, an ever-increasing number of people will discover and begin to understand why being their unique and most authentic selves and thereafter acting in collaborative ways, is truly most essential.

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Remembering Beauty

If one knows only the ugliness of selfish narcissism and isolation, it would be merely logical if one's expressions took on a very limited sort of tone and scope. This would be analogous to a butterfly's chrysalis evolving toward an unbreakable shell rather than a protective coating that is inherently designed and equipped to release new life into the world. Such negative development would suffocate rather than empower the life that is finding shape and form within its embrace.

It was within recognizing such inclination, that I left the last home I have ever known, in Berlin, New Hampshire. The state motto of "Live free or die," had proven to be a lie and the character of its administrators was similarly identified as obsessed with power and control rather than love and service. I was often reminded of the words attributed to the musician Jimi Hendrix, that "When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace."

In times of imaginative contemplation, I have invited silent conversations with that house--and I remain committed to saving it, if I can--but the response I consistently receive is that the house was most concerned that I escape the threat of tyranny that town had chosen to embody. If I were to reimmerse myself in that environment, it would trivialize the self-sacrificing love the house expressed during the brief time we were together. So I said "thank you" to each room and space and honored the intuitive guidance to leave when I did, by doing so--praying also that I would be blessed with the ability to return.

I do not know whether or how that prayer to again sleep within that bedroom, work

within that office, and create within that video production studio will be answered. Yet I try to have faith that the love and hard work I invested will be divinely remembered and rewarded. Even in its unfinished form, however, I remember the space as I left it, to have dramatically increased in beauty.

It was not a superficial beauty, but one that recognized the reconfiguration as truly empowering and nurturing. It was the realization that I had succeeded in creating a space that actively affirmed expansive life rather than limitation. The challenge that remains is whether that space could be reclaimed and even relocated to a similarly life-affirming environment.

What little research I have done, insists that this is absolutely possible, but depends upon other sorts of contextual empowerment that--at least for now--is beyond the reach of my resources and abilities. I have work to which I must remain committed in the meantime, but this in no way requires that I abandon all hope for this and other specific developments. Nonetheless, remembering the beauty of that space grants a sort of strength to believe that similar sorts of transformations are absolutely possible.

This is, after all, the most fundamental and essential empowerment: to believe that specific and good transformations are indeed possible. Without that, every person and perhaps especially every individual with an alleged "disability," will be defined by their limitations rather than by their creativity and willingness to do whatever is necessary, to make dreams come true. In words attributed to the so-called "Elephant Man," Joseph Merrick, "I think the reason my head is so big, is because it's so filled with dreams."

Indeed, a transcendent awareness of beauty can often create spiritual dimensions incapable of easily fitting within one's physical or social form. In the words of the skin horse within the timeless classic, "The Velveteen Rabbit," one becomes real in such a way that one can "never be unreal again--except to people who don't understand." Within the limited time that is life, being real matters.

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

"It is not that negative things should not be named, but rather that they should be named in ways that reveal the truth of their limitations."

-- Sister Who

Remembering Integrity

Perhaps among the most fascinating aspects of being human is that limitations are virtually always temporary. That being said, experience alters perception. The pain and struggle resulting from limitations that have not yet passed, seem to linger on and on; in contrast, the pain and struggle resulting from limitations that are no longer present, seem to quickly diminish in intensity.

Specifically because all that one is, is more than any single moment encompasses and integrity involves remaining committed to and consistent with the entirety of one's being, a sort of strength to endure is often found within remembrance of that greater reality. Conversely, narcissism limits one's awareness and perception and encourages--at least momentarily--forgetfulness of all that one is. Curiously, it is within remembrance of all that one is, that strength is typically found to connect with vast transcendent spiritual realities and dynamics.

Every practice of integrity is thus to some degree a matter of relationship to both true self and that which is outside or in some way beyond the self. Such awareness and its corresponding expression, dramatically increase in importance within times of crisis and difficulty. Without them, one stops being who one truly is--granting opportunity to tyrants, despots, bullies, and manipulators of every description.

Once again, Martin Luther King's words ring true: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil, is for good to do nothing." A single response or action may seem small and its time upon the stage brief, but the ways in which it can inconspicuously turn the direction of the larger surrounding story are sometimes quite amazing indeed. Realizing this potential and utilizing it, opens the door to virtually infinite positive possibilities.

Regardless, integrity has the ability to be eternal; suffering does not. Standing too close to a moment of struggle and pain, it is far too easy to be distracted and forget this.

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

On a Personal Note

The complete process of moving to a new home in Idaho Springs, Colorado, is far from complete, but from the very first moment was like the shift from stormy weather to the sun shining brightly in the sky again. The faculty mentor of my doctoral program was thrilled to see me smiling again within our video-chat sessions and the dogs remain ecstatic about having a backyard in which to play. For me, there is nonetheless still a great amount of work to do, organizing and equipping the space to be as supportive and nurturing as its potential clearly indicates is possible.

Nonetheless, I can see positive progress within each passing day. I've been proactive since the day I was born, but such efforts are far more rewarded here than within previous environments within which I have lived. This by no means that frustrations are gone, but somehow they are no longer definitive.

It may be redundant and trite to say that this remains a time of transition, but I am striving to remain open and contemplative in response to various elements of breaking down and rebuilding that unfold within each day. Tomorrow cannot be like yesterday or today and I must not expect it to be. Each new day begs for creative freedom, which I do my best to consistently grant.

Within remembrance are the seeds of renewal and a sort of becoming that is potentially very, very good--if one allows it.

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

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