

sister who's perspective

Sister Who's Perspective, Issue 217, July 2017, copyright

Overview

As often as I have commented that life is primarily concerned with the growth of the soul, a parallel way of describing this might be that life is a process of learning to see far more than just what is visible to one's eyes.

It remains disturbing that even seeing is not enough to persuade some to act, but perception is a necessary first step for those who will be the ones to grow--after, that is, one begins to understand what is there.

The Duplicity of Having Dreams

I have often said that duplicity is very difficult for autistics--that is, the task of sustaining awareness and understanding of simultaneous and usually contrasting realities. Indeed, I suspect that much of my daily activity as an adult with autism is aimed at creating synchronicity and perhaps even symbiosis between the world I experience outwardly and the one in which I believe and to which I aspire inwardly. It has been said that every beautiful reality began as an idea, but I would hasten to add that not every such idea was equally and expertly nurtured.

As difficult as such duplicity may be, avoiding any and every aspect of it would impoverish both individuals and surrounding communities. Just as every human life is absolutely dependent upon a woman's willingness to endure the pain of child-birth, every artistically creative work requires acts of service that may never be appropriately rewarded. The infinite possibility thereby given life, however, needs no justification.

In discussing the process of "becoming real" with the Velveteen Rabbit within the book of the same name, the Skin Horse relates that "it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or who have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept." It is specifically because the Velveteen Rabbit

held onto the dream of becoming real throughout all of the scars and abrasiveness life heaped upon him, that the dream was finally realized. It was in fact at the moment of greatest sorrow, that the most miraculous and radical shift of the process occurred.

The convenience of the story, of course, is that this shift lasted only a moment or two--rather than weeks, months, or years, as is more often the case in life. In virtually all cases, the stories are only told after such times have ended. Although one never knows how long the "dark night of the soul" will last, a new sunrise cannot follow unless such darkness is endured.

In an honest attempt to avoid arrogance and presumption, I sometimes ask what it could be that makes me so special that I should not expect the same fate as those whose sunrise never came. Yet it is not the fate or destination of any particular life which is wisely its best measure. If I have learned anything through more than two and a half decades of being a twenty-first century nun and interfaith minister, it is that my focus must be always resolutely fixed upon serving the work rather than judging or controlling it.

My conclusion (at least at this point) is that only from a perspective of being the servant of the work rather than its master, can the more or less endless struggle of serving highest wisdom and greatest love be legitimately and truthfully justified. Whether or not this is true for anyone else, it remains true for me. That being said, I am sad and disappointed whenever I must witness those entrusted with justice being negligent or even abusive in the execution of their duties.

In refusing to serve the duplicity inherent within reaching for transcendence, they reduce humanity to its lowest common denominator, rather than raising it to its greatest wholeness (and holiness).

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

The Singularity of Having Hope

By arriving early for an orchestral performance, one sees a fascinating transition: the cacophony of individual instruments being tuned, then a moment of silence, and finally harmonious music. From a certain point of view, it is also a shift from narcissism to community. In order to tune an instrument, the musician must ignore all other sounds and attend to the precise pitch of one's own instrument alone.

Having accomplished the adjustments, the musician then embraces selflessness, joining all other musicians present in waiting and watching for the conductor's raised baton. By responding with precision and in unison to singular movements of their leader, harmony begins to fill the room with beauty--inspiring awe within both audience and performers, none of whom could produce the combined sound without the participation of every other person. Without hope, however, no such attempt would even be made.

Within the nature of all live performance, is the inescapable possibility that everything will not go as planned. Only the skill and wisdom of the performers can ultimately weave all of the contributions together in ways that prevent or hide whatever mistakes might otherwise occur. Be that as it may, it is the hope of achieving a most exceptional excellence that drives the work forward.

What is often overlooked, however, are the ways in which having a singular hope brings so many other details into sharpest focus. As a student at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City so many years ago, I learned that if one has sufficiently researched and studied the character one is to portray onstage, an intuitive understanding develops such that one can authoritatively say how the specific character would or would not respond. As much as the character's singular hope may shift from one scene to the next, knowing what that hope is throughout each moment of the play, provides exceptional guidance.

It is within the absence of any specific hope, that the actor or actress loses focus, the performance loses depth, and confusion

and chaos follow. I was taught to envision a specific person in the audience to whom to direct my words, the unstated hope being that I want desperately to be understood and perhaps even respected by that person. If the director and text decided that my hope was to be disappointed, it was nonetheless essential to have hope anyway, in order to bring life to the role entrusted to me.

In a similar way, failing to see the central hope of any moment of life, leaves one with a conspicuous absence of depth, focus, and purpose, that renders all subsequent beauty and empowerment much more difficult to accomplish. Like the orchestra, however, this singular hope is equally a communal effort striving for greatest harmony. It is not within competing to be the best individual performer that the greatest accomplishments can be found, but rather within successfully collaborating in the creation of something greater than any could accomplish alone.

Yet a singularity of having hopes is not synonymous with having only one hope, but rather with having a harmoniously oriented succession of hopes--supplying new and ever-better possibilities as quickly as current hopes are either beautifully satisfied or sadly disappointed. It may be that a loss should be appropriately mourned, but never in ways that prevent an ongoing unfolding of beauty within the larger work. As much as I would like my work to be valued and supported, I have no wish to be the last inspiring example within any creative or spiritual category.

A heaviness shouldered by perhaps every artist and minister, however, is that such persons may, in truth, be serving generations of humanity who have not yet been born. A singular hope to which I thus hold, is that I will leave behind a body of work capable of outliving me. Indeed, judging by responses received, I know that if my life were to end tomorrow, I have already succeeded in making a positive difference.

Whatever good I thus do in the future, will only make the final work even better yet--no matter how dark the current time may be.

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

The Fusion of Having Faith

Sometimes I persevere not because I don't understand, but rather because I do. In knowing more than merely the appearance of whatever is before me, I thus have a firm grasp of why persevering is so essential to all life that follows. What I can't always explain, is from whence the knowing comes.

It's as if I am just the most recent visitor through an unfamiliar landscape within which all virtues and empowering dynamics are both interwoven and forever fluctuating. To learn all that this landscape has to teach, requires an ability to appreciate what winds whisper, what sunbeams illuminate, and what seeds are nurtured by the soil. Yet without humility and openness, these secrets remain unseen, unknown, and unintegrated.

Without sufficient self-discipline, one is unable to walk softly enough to hear with the heart, to see with the mind, and to know with the spirit. Stomping about in arrogance drives all of life's empowering subtleties away, leaving one weak and predisposed to compensating with violence. To avoid such brutish ways, however, one must begin by embracing the truth of one's pain.

Yet it is also essential to understand that in embracing pain, it is with love for the one suffering and not with vulgar and shallow forcefulness--not so much pressing one's nose to the grindstone but rather inviting a dialogue with mystery. Within the greatest darkness, long-hidden stars can sometimes finally be seen. Within the lowest seasons of life, can sometimes be found the trails that lead to previously unimagined summits.

"Specifically because the world is literally composed of symbiotic relationships, a continuous yet wise practice of unconditional love is the only thing that makes any sense."

-- Sister Who

These are places of enormous potential, dependent upon not only one's own response, but also that of the surrounding community. In weaving together individuals and communities, whatever victories that follow are in truth shared accomplishments concerned not with exclusively one or the other, but rather with a fusion of both. Within such fusions, is what one might call the Holy Grail of mountain-moving faith by which every subsequent individual and community defies previous notions of impossibility.

It is not that one independently creates an isolated spark of faith within one's self, but rather that faith becomes another word for the symbiotic relationship one has with that which lies beyond one's self. Life is thus not a possession, but rather an experience that goes on and on and on--in ways that are sometimes obvious and sometimes hidden. I only hope that I remember sufficient details to return to specific moments when the strength contained therein is later essential.

Many speakers and authors have urged a preoccupation with present moments that often confuses me, because I find myself living multiple times within each experience--fusing strength from the past and hope from the future into a present perseverance to keep going no matter what. It is this faith in the multidimensional reality of life that justifies the struggles while simultaneously inspiring further forward movement. Perhaps time itself is experienced more diversely than self-appointed pedagogues have detected.

The nemesis of having such faith, is the temptation to be small enough to fit within exclusively the present moment and forget all others. In saturating one's world and one's life with unconditional love in whatever ways one is able, spirit expands and the miraculous becomes not only possible but also probable--which may sometimes require waiting for minds to catch up. Suffering is not essential, but as both a burden and a blessing, testifies to being in-process (in some way unfinished) and also to being in-process (not frozen but alive and moving).

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

The Miracle of Having Love

Simultaneously both the most logical and illogical dynamic, highly improbable yet also absolutely essential, love permeates every relational solution and is conspicuously absent within every tragedy. As much as one may long for its presence, especially during times of serious need, love must be given freely by another in order to infuse its greatest power into circumstances oriented in opposite ways. It is always an opportunity to rediscover more of each other, which may be embraced or ignored by those present.

Love is miraculous specifically because of the transformations that become probable by its presence, which otherwise remain out of reach. Yet its all-consuming power is curiously the reason it is sometimes feared and avoided. It seems that controlling one's circumstances (which is an illusion at best) is more important to an enormous number of people than any mental and/or emotional healing and empowerment that may otherwise come within reach.

Considering the cynicism, narcissism, skepticism, and pessimism which have enveloped the world within which we all live, it is perhaps even illogical that love is not already as gone forever as the Dodo bird. In spite of all such negative internal and interpersonal dynamics, however, amazing examples of self-sacrificing behavior persist and give life freely to others, each and every day. Considering the extent to which life remains dependent upon this fact, the wisest among humanity must concede, encourage, and support proliferation of love in all forms, regardless of any extent to which a particular expression is traditional or innovative.

To do otherwise would in fact be suicidal and self-sabotaging. By embracing this ability, conversely, divine creativity rests once again within human hands. By living within love's light, infinite possibilities for better future days remain a reasonable (if also invisible) justification for never giving up.

As obvious as this may be to those who truly see, frequent reminders are wise.

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

On a Personal Note

I continue to experience painful isolation and a conspicuous absence of persons willing to not only make encouraging offers but also follow through in ways that allow creative collaboration to manifest. Am I to be the missed opportunity that many may in future days regret ignoring? I suppose if Godde really thinks it's necessary and even ultimately helpful to someone's growth and development, then I am willing to serve that purpose, but my preference is definitely for a more industrious characterization of life.

Perhaps this is why imprisonment and solitary confinement are so very painful to a human spirit--to have a vision but also no way of immediately pursuing manifestation. I don't seem to have any difficulty envisioning solutions to problems, but persuading others to collaborate in ways that are ultimately very empowering seems less within my aptitude.

In later reflecting upon what was gained by any particular experience, however, the metaphorical light bulbs begin to go on and real shifts of growth can be seen. As much as I wish for spending my days within an interfaith center serving others and as perfectly appropriate as this seems to be for me, manifestation of this continues to lag. I am nonetheless thankful to at last have a video production schedule designed to finish by mid-September. Yet I wish to do more.

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

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