

Living in the Balance

March 2012

He sat across from me in my counseling office, turning the hall pass over and over, rolling it up and then smoothing it against his jeans. "A couple of my teachers told me their fathers had died recently, too, and they told me they knew just how I felt. Yeah, right. How old were their fathers.....like a hundred? My teachers are older than my mom, so their dads were ancient! My dad was 42, and he dropped dead. He wasn't some old, old guy! They don't know how I feel! And my mom and my brother think they know how I feel. They don't either. They are always telling me what my dad would say. Oh, he'd say, 'Don't be sad. Be tough. Be brave.' No one gets it. I just wish they'd all SHUT UP!" And there it was.....his raw truth. His story.

I used to teach my students perception exercises. In one exercise, it was possible to see either a duck or a rabbit. In another, an old hag or a young woman. They struggled to "see" the rabbit if they first saw the duck. Or to see the young woman if they first saw the hag. And some students became very annoyed or indignant if their partner could not "see" the other image.

I've done the same. I'm as guilty of peddling my perspective as the next person.

My perspective focuses my lens. All my experiences have formed and colored my worldview since the day I popped into the planet. They provide me with my own views and eyes to the universe. And these experiences do not shape just my perspective; they mold the story that is my life. And from my life story comes my truth.....a truth that is my authentic life lens, capturing who I am and what I believe and know in my heart, my soul, and my intellect.

My young student's lens was deep grief. Instead of standing witness to his pain, others tried to thrust their stories and their truth on him. What they saw as comforting and consoling was, to him, dismissive and hurtful. But everyone plowed on with their version of his story, trampling his truth in the process.

I've had plenty of people who enjoyed telling my story and usually at my expense. Some recounted events that happened forty years ago and have little resemblance to my reality. Even when I told the yarn spinners to stop, they yapped on trying to get everyone, including me, to see the duck rather than the rabbit. Even our shared experiences rarely match each other. Best when we stick to telling our own stories and letting others do the same.

It is hard to tell my story, my truth, when I think the response will be negative. How much easier to say what I believe to someone who shares my rabbit view of the world. And how much harder when I think your reality springs from a duck. It's a risk. The cost of speaking my truth....my worldview.....can come at a high price. My truth telling to individuals or institutions has ended more than one dinner conversation and relationship.....and sometimes not on good terms. But when I said my say, I was standing on my own ground even if I stood alone.

And my student stood, too, hurling his indignation and his hurt. His story. His truth. He needed a witness, not a cajoler, consoler, or coddler. He longed to scream out *his* anguish, *his* wrenching loneliness, *his* rage.

Yes, I have my stories of grief, but not the story of a fourteen-year-old boy robbed of his father. I've lived my grief stories and those lines are written into the pages of my life. But this young man had just begun to scrawl his pain with his own pen and to live into the messy, amazing life given to him. We are the witnesses, not the writers, of others' lives. May we have the courage and the freedom to be the daring authors of our own lines and offer others a blank page on which to pen theirs.

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*We do not see
things as they
are.....*

*We see things
as we are.*

Anaïs Nin



Calendar considerations.....

Lenten Quiet Morning of Centering Prayer

Saturday, March 3, 9:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.

Markley Chapel, Christ Church Episcopal, Greenville

For more information contact Judy Lineback at judylineback@charter.net

Lenten Reflections with Rev. Barbara Crafton

Saturday, March 10, 9:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.

Grace Episcopal Church, 1315 Lyttleton Street, Camden, SC

For more information contact Tina Lockhart at tinalockhart@me.com

Interfaith Forum Spring Events

Winter Film and Discussion – *For the Next 7 Generations*

Thursday evening, March 1, at 7:00 p.m. at the Kroc Center in Greenville

Living out your Faith in Community – Panel in partnership with the Lilly Center at Furman

Speakers Tony McDade of GAIHN and Deb Richardson-Moore from Triune Mercy Center

Tuesday, March 27 at 7:00 in Johns Hall at Furman University, Greenville

Anderson School of Theology for Laypersons

Lillian Daniel – Sunday, March 11, at 3:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church, Anderson, SC

John Selby Spong – Saturday, August 4, at 3:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

James Carroll – Sunday, September 30, at 3:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

For more information www.astlonline.org

Sacred Listening: Group Spiritual Direction

March 11 – 14

Montreat Retreat Center www.montreat.org

Tumbling Downwards, Fumbling Upwards: Embracing Grief and Loss

Friday, March 16

Begin the New Year with Practices that Support Opening the Heart

Friday, May 4

Valle Crucis Conference Center, Valle Crucis, NC www.highsouth.com/vallecrucis

Caring for Creation Conference at Lake Junaluska

March 13 – 15 For complete details go to www.lakejunaluska.com

Dr. Bill McKibben will be the featured speaker. Caring for Creation is a faith based eco justice event exploring ways individuals and faith communities can become more environmentally conscious.

Major Exhibit of Tibetan Mandalas

Michael Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta, GA

Showing now through April 15

www.carlos.emory.edu





Calendar considerations.....

Franciscan Mysticism: Why is it Unique

Webcast with Fr. Richard Rohr

April 21

www.cac.org

Spirituality and Practice

On-demand courses available with Cynthia Bourgeault, James Hollis, Sr. Joan Chittister, Rabbi Rami, Thomas Moore, and Sylvia Boorstein.

You'll find a variety of faith traditions represented.

Courses include Centering Prayer, The Essence of the Qur'an, Rumi and Living a Spiritual Life, Lectio Divina and The Wisdom of Muhammad.

www.spiritualityandpractice.com

Abbey of the Arts offering a variety of on-line courses

"Way of the Monk, Path of the Artist," and "Eyes of the Heart....photography as a contemplative practice."

For information see www.abbeyofthearts.com

The Sophia Institute

The Art of Creating a Beautiful Mind by David Whyte – March 2 and 3

Perseverance, Igniting the Heart in the Midst of Uncertainty by Margaret Wheatley – March 23 –25

Charleston, South Carolina

Check www.thesophiainstitute.org for other offerings

Machu Picchu and Peru's Sacred Valley – A Pilgrimage

August 8 – 20, 2012

Offered by Jerry Wright, Jungian analyst, and Diana McKendree, Jungian psychotherapist.

The pilgrimage will include Peruvian teachers and guides.

For more information, contact Jerry Wright at jwright@morrisbb.net or call 770-656-3818

Summer Dream Conference – God's Forgotten Language

May 27 – June 1, 2012

Offered by the Haden Institute

Held at the Kanuga Conference Center, Hendersonville, NC

www.hadeninstitute.com

Southern Dharma Retreat Center in Hot Springs, North Carolina

Check their website for programs for 2012

For more information www.southerndharma.org

Jung and Neuroscience

June 28

Offered by the Asheville Jung Center and the International Association for the Study of Dreams (IASD). For more information <http://ashevillejungcenter.org>





About Spiritual Direction —

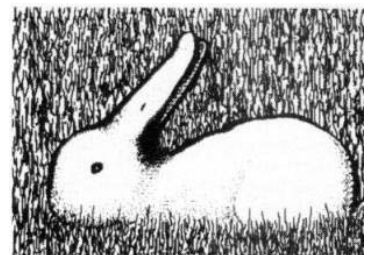
- Offers a space and time for you to explore, reflect upon, and deepen your relationship with God.
- Provides a haven from the daily busyness of the outer world and opens a time to be still and to reflect on your inner journey.
- Is a companioning relationship grounded in dialogue and discernment.
- Explores ways you may integrate spirituality into your daily life.
- Is not limited to any one spiritual practice or tradition.
- May involve one or two meetings or multiple meetings over time.

You may wish to consider spiritual companioning if you are —

- Longing for a deeper relationship with the Divine
- Looking for a place to dialogue about spiritual questions
- Seeking ways to connect with the Spirit in a more intentional way
- Discerning ways to live in a more integrated and whole way
- Standing at a crossroads in your life
- Exploring new or fresh ways to be in relationship with God

For more information about Spiritual Direction, please feel free to contact me by phone
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None of this month's illustrations are my work. These are some of the hundreds of perception examples I found. It's all in how we look at things.