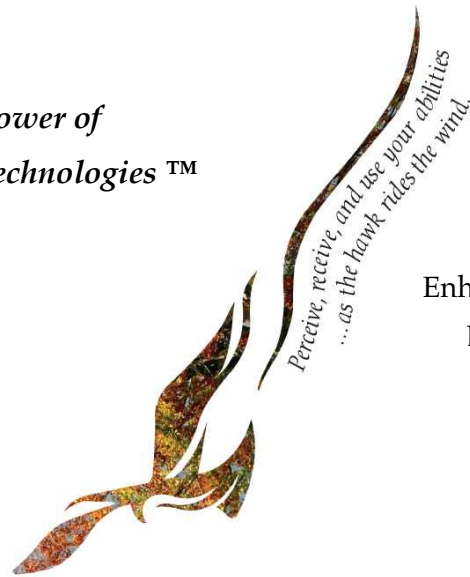


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Edited and published by Joel P. Bowman and
Debra Basham for SCS Matters, LLC
May 2013

Welcome...

Here is your *Beyond Mastery Newsletter* for May 2013. This newsletter may be duplicated and distributed to those who share an interest in Energy Medicine, neurolinguistics—especially Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP)—and spirituality.

Additional copies of this newsletter may be downloaded at the following link:
www.scs-matters.com/beyondmastery/Newsletter-May13.pdf

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This month the featured articles are “What’s Next 2?” by Debra; and “At the Movies,” by Joel.

What’s Next 2?

While being in the present moment is for sure the best way to enjoy peace of mind, humans are also capable of planning for the future and thinking about what is next. Sometimes we are able to enjoy what we planned for—such as the birth of a baby or a favorite vacation—but at other times the best we can do is allow the future to unfold.

I have been watching my own inner process over the past few months as I interact with others around questions about life and death. Do we really plan our time of death? Are we able to choose? What are the limits to our ability to “co-create” our experiences? While we may not be able to definitively answer these questions, it seems to be meaningful to ask.

I have been enjoying an online poem-of-the-day, shared with me by a friend, and am often touched deeply by what I read, such as this quotation from an essay by Kristin George Bagdanov:

Few things in life are as deeply satisfying as the moment when I set down my pen and feel content with a poem. I am proud when a poem is published or praised, but this pride does not penetrate. No—what endures is the incredible fullness of doing something well, of coming so close to truth that it burns. Of course, this heat fades as self-criticism and reproach take back their rightful hold on my perspective (rightful because they do, for the most part, urge me to continue working toward my greatest potential), and I am left again with a yearning to live inside that brief moment of truth-fullness.

You also have experienced this fullness. The upwelling of joy shared between loved ones after a sickness is cured. The deep inhale when you reach the summit. The tenderness shared between lovers. The purity of grief. There are moments when our souls crest with fullness, when we glimpse life's deepness and know its pull. This exact fullness is both the pursuit and (hoped for) result of poetry.

This sense of when “our souls crest with fullness,” and that glimpse of life’s depth is what I hunger for. Years ago, Joel and I created a miniworkshop based on a writing titled, *Seeing the Divine in Everyday Life: 7 Keys to Joyful Living*. The experience was divided into three sections: “Forming Foundations,” “Building Bridges,” and “Directions.” It tied into information from energy medicine (chakras) and drew from great works of literature. We explored the difference, observed and written about by Gabriel Marcel, between the world of the problematical (physical existence) and the world of ontological mystery:

Joy is subtler in expression than happiness. Joy is the result of a larger perspective, an appreciation of what is—regardless of what is in any given moment. Joy results from an appreciation of the *process* of Life regardless of the *content* at any given moment. French philosopher Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973) said, “I am not my life.” According to Marcel, “I am” comes before “I live.” He sees reality as consisting of two levels, which he calls the world of the problematical (physical existence) and the world of ontological mystery—in shamanic terms, the ordinary and the nonordinary.

The problematical world is the domain of science, reason, and technology. Ordinary reality is defined by what the mind can formulate as a problem, solve, and define. It is the sum total of its parts. People are objects, statistics, and cases. They are defined by their biological and social functions—biological machines. The world of the ontological mystery transforms perceptions, relationships, and life experiences. The individual being transcends the self. Marcel recognized that there was more to his reality than his life, the totality of his experiences because he was the “I” who could observe his life. (Based on Marcel’s essay, “Concrete Approaches to Investigating the Ontological Mystery.”)

When we focus on the *content* of our lives, we are concentrating on the *problematical* world. When we focus on the *process* of our lives, we are concentrating on the *ontological mystery*. While focusing on the ontological mystery does not eliminate the problematical world, it puts it in a different perspective. *Content* is limited in both space and time, whereas *process* is infinite and eternal.

Happiness is the result of external rewards in the content of our lives. Sadness is the result of the absence of such rewards. Joy and its opposite, sorrow, are on a separate continuum. Joy is the result of surrender to and affiliation with that Marcel called the “ontological mystery.” Sorrow is the result of separation from and denial of that mystery. One can be sad and still be joyful, just as one can be

happy and joyful at the same time. Even when we are steeped in the ontological mystery, the loss of external connections—whether to people, pets, or things—can still result in sadness. In being joyful and sad at the same time, we are able to recognize the loss of connection as both temporary and illusory. It is simply a part of our process.

(Seeing the Divine in Everyday Life: 7 Keys to Joyful Living, Bowman and Basham, p. 37-38.)

It is poignant to look back at the dreams we had when we wrote that material. Each step we took was taken with the goal of reaching out to the world to share from our core. If I could go back, I would possibly have less expectation of the future, and more appreciation of the present. Of course, we cannot go back, for the only true direction is forward. We can however, *reflect back*—meaning that you can look back at a period of your history (distant or near), or a specific event (personal or collective). You can glean from the way you hold in the past the seeds of what is next.

While I was wintering in South Florida, I came to realize that writing is central to my being. Sharing ideas with others is the content, but somehow the reflection and focus and willingness to be visible in the world is the process that gives me a glimpse of life's depth. Writing with meaning can be done in an email, an article, a poem, a blog, or a book. It is something that flows naturally when you understand in your heart that what is next for all of us is the eternal outplaying of our souls. While I can plan for the future, my plans are insignificant compared to The Plan. From *Seeing the Divine in Everyday Life*, p. 45:

- What occurs to you when you think about the times in your life when you have already seen the Divine in everyday life?
- How will you use what you have learned to ensure that you have more of those moments in the future?
- When you stop, now, to witness the ways in which you have changed as a result of witnessing the witness, how will you know that these changes, once begun, will continue to amplify every day the rest of your life?
- How would you complete the following statements:
I am ... aware ... of...
I am ... aware ... that...

At the Movies

Roger Ebert was the smartest kid in Professor Robert Stone's class in expository writing at the University of Illinois. The year must have been 1963 or '64. I was a junior. Roger was a senior. To say that I was "in awe" of his intellect would be too much, but I was certainly impressed. He seemed to know everything about what was going on in Southeast Asia before I had even heard the word, "Vietnam."

I didn't know him well in college, but I knew him well enough to start following his movie reviews. In the process of following, I discovered that I agreed with his opinion most of the time. When I thought I had missed something in a film, I turned to Roger's

review to fill in the pieces. When I wanted to see whether a movie would be worth viewing, I checked Roger's review.

I watched as his struggle with cancer started making the Internet news. Although I wished him well, I had the sense that the end was near with the announcement that his cancer had "returned." I did not, however, expect the end to be as near as it was. After his death, I saw his article about not fearing death. The article is well worth reading: <http://bit.ly/pXw8oh>. As is always the case, Roger's writing is clear, crisp, and meaningful. If you haven't already done so, take a couple of minutes to read it.

The one film on Roger's list of "best ever" that I haven't seen is "*Aguirre, the Wrath of God*." Something about the title and the promotional material for the movie turned me away, and other movies were, of course, available for my movie-watching time. I will now attempt to find and watch it. Surely with 500 cable channels, including almost a dozen movie channels, I will be able to find it some time soon.

In both his article on not fearing death and his movie reviews, Roger encouraged his readers to extract meaning from life, including their mundane daily encounters with the artifacts of life. There's no reason, for example, that watching TV (or spending time watching a movie) should be "wasted" time. What can you learn by paying attention? Communication—including conversations, TV shows, TV commercials, movies, music, dance, video games, and add what occurs to you here—includes both *text* and *subtext*.

You know from your own inner life that you don't always tell others what lies beneath the surface words of your spoken language. Our definitions of things say less than the things actually are. The labels and descriptions we use for other people are the extreme example of this. No one is "just" a "this or that." We need to remember to ask, "And what else." The most important meanings are often in the subtext, that which remains unspoken.

Ebert consistently challenged us to look for the meaning beneath the surface, even if it means reading a book or watching a film more than once to ensure that you "see" the nuances you may have missed the first time. The same is true when you communicate with another. What are you missing? You may, for example, filter out the most important details because the other is a different race, a different sex, a different sexual orientation, a different age, different educational background, different height or weight, or whatever *seems* different to you at the time. And what else?

A long time ago, Debra and I became curious about the concept of spiritual partnership made popular by Gary Zukav and Linda Francis (see <http://bit.ly/gBSP6i> for more information). We started asking the question, "What if everyone were your spiritual partner?" What if everyone you meet, and even those you see on TV and in the movies, were your spiritual partner? What if the message were telling or showing you what you needed to do (or stop doing) for your spiritual growth?

This looking beneath the surface for what's really important may be the most important thing we can learn from Roger Ebert and being "at the movies."

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