

Reconciliation: to restore to harmony

At the retreat I attended earlier this month, one of the many subjects initiated and carried through the week was the idea of reconciliation. Having the luck to be in the presence of some brilliant thinkers and sincere explorers, I figured we could delve in a bit deeper than usual, bypass theoretical philosophy and superficial play-acting, and go for the real thing. So, I came into the event well prepared, intending to head directly toward the couple of crucial relationships we all have where reconciliation is most difficult to come by: time and space.

Everyone seemed to grasp their distrust of time easily enough, identifying key issues that are tough to accept: achievement and recognition take too long; inspiration in romantic love or elsewhere diminishes too quickly; "my turn" comes too late and is finished too soon; speed limits on roads of all kinds are oppressive; satisfaction and joy arrive late and depart early; and life itself is too short, although the wretched parts are too long.

Regarding space, this was more difficult to bring home (proving the point, as everyone wants to be somewhere else almost all the time). It took awhile to recognize just how many struggles and conflicts involve our sense of space: the career, house, weather, lifestyle, sex partner, or other desire we'd much rather have; permanent emotional or physical states we imagine, but can't find; obligations and impositions that constantly crowd us; and all types of numbers that we know exist somewhere, but are not here—money, applauding fans, loving admirers, all those great options that the chosen few have. It's like they're out there, but in the wrong place; the space between us and them is too much.

We each identified a primary disharmony, or unhappy obligatory tolerance, for some of the structural elements of life itself. As if life as it is conceived (by God, Nature, random colliding particles, or whatever) wasn't designed taking our preferences into consideration. Most or all of this could be reduced to time and space as we experience them.

Getting to the reconciliation part required at least a casual tour through the interior universe, including all its obstacles to reconciliation: resentment and rage; passive confusion and inertia while waiting for life to end; rigid obstinacy and self-righteousness; the unspoken belief that life has no meaning, or if it does, the meaning is that we're all screwed, so take whatever we can however we can before it's too late; addictive

superficialization in an attempt to ignore the misery; pseudo-reconciliation through totally irrational fantasies; hopelessness, distrust, skepticism and terror; and all types of believing that, “If I was God, I could have done a better job of designing things right.”

Now, I’ve bitten off more than I can chew here, and having neither enough time or space to resolve these issues in a single newsletter, all I can do is to present two principles that seemed to work in addressing all this. But first, I’d like to return to our original theme of the newsletter itself, true passionate curiosity. Why? Because without that, we’re not going to engage the principles in the time and space they require to actually function and cause some sense of reconciliation. So, for those of you still with me (“Get to the point, Darrell, I have somewhere else to be”), if you could please consider the following with whatever residual curiosity that may remain within you...

Okay, the two principles. (1) Faith. (2) Accept, then engage. I consider these to be separate principles, mainly because if one doesn’t get the faith down, accept and engage won’t be real. But also because if one has faith, but doesn’t accept and engage, nothing changes.

Faith is a mysterious thing. I’m not referring to *belief*, which is reactive mental manipulation to compensate for emotional fear and hopelessness. Faith is something much more intuitive, extending directly from one’s core love of life. It’s a difficult thing to find once one has lost it, as it requires removing the obstacles addressed in our casual tour through the interior universe, and that does take time. And none of those can be removed without the real intention to do so, the spirit of reconciliation. One has to pause, sit down with time and space and have a real chat. And that chat has to be one in which time and space get to explain their positions and why things are the way they are. That is, one has to shut up and listen to them, really listen, with true passionate curiosity.

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Having had that conversation (no doubt someday, somewhere after having taken care of everything else), one can then begin to consider the implications of principle #2. It goes something like this, especially emotionally, “Hey, this is the way things are; if I’m going to change anything, I need to know what it is I’m working with.” That’s part one, simply perceiving and accepting things exactly as they are right now and here. Nothing added or ignored, just things as they are.

Which gives us the freedom and power for the gesture that follows...utilize as much inspired creative brilliance as possible within the existing frame. Finally, we get to play. But, as time and space decree, only after the faith and acceptance are authentic. At that moment and place, one begins to experience time and space, and everything within them, completely differently. Once we get the feel for this, the technique is easy to transpose to simpler relationships, like with spouses, enemies and mothers-in-law.

With some practice, one can actually compress these principles into a single gesture. Now and then we can witness such perfect beauty, though it’s rare to find in humans.

Which is why it's always an excellent idea to take a good look around at nature, as this kind of sequential alchemy, mastery of time and space, is pretty common amongst animals, plants, rocks, rainbows and waterfalls. The faith, acceptance, engagement gesture is pure and seamless. The result is spontaneous reconciliation with everything in proximity. The individual sensation accompanying that is one of being in the right place at the right time, a certain state of grace. And harmony is restored.

Concerning the recent retreat in which we took on this project, my gratitude to those of you reading here who came into that event and engaged it exactly as described above. Deeply impressive, and a continuing source of my own faith.

Darrell Calkins
October 2005

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Comments

Thank you for your comments about the September issue of CobaltSaffron. Excerpts from a few responses we received:

“I didn't expect to read Darrell's letter in French! It seems so strange to have the translation right there before my eyes...It's wonderful! It clarifies Darrell's thoughts and eliminates errors of interpretation. I'll be able to share it more easily with friends for whom English was a barrier. Thank you to the whole team!”

I.B., Belgium.

“I read the newsletter because it's directly inspiring to me, and always seems applicable to whatever is currently confronting me in my life. I suppose I can just tell you that I don't receive a lot of newsletters nor read a lot of magazine articles, but I love reading this one and find it's really in it's own unique category. I think you're doing a great, and very valuable, job of reminding people—no, scratch that—of reminding me to open my eyes and keep looking at what really matters.”

C. A., California.

“I read French more easily than English. Thank you for having translated [the newsletter]. The story is a mirror and I live it regularly. Not by approaching attractive unknown women with the goal of a date, but in many everyday situations. So, thanks to a new awareness, which this story will continue to reinforce, I see now that I’m the one who tells myself NO well before anyone else does. Thank you for having portrayed it so clearly. But the story goes even deeper, I believe. It’s not only in situations that involve another person. I notice it just as often in situations where I am up against myself. Okay, also in situations with another person, it’s still between me and myself.”
L.D., Belgium.

“I loved the story.”
S.S., California.

“Wanted to say how much I enjoyed the last issue of CobaltSaffron. I’ve heard the outline of the story before, but not the behind-the-scenes process. Even though I intellectually know it’s not true, you often come across as a finished product, someone whose fearlessness came effortlessly, as if from birth. Hearing your struggle—not with the challenge so much as the journey through the challenge—is really great. Yeah, that’s what the fear is like. Yeah, that’s how to engage it.”
S.C., Alaska.

Upcoming event:
Enduring Essentials for Living Well (in an unwell world)
December 3 & 4 2005, Brussels - Belgium

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