

Pathways

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CONTENTS

A perspective on whining.....	1
A perspective on time	2
A perspective on perspectives.....	3
A perspective on Gorillas.....	4

**“...prize and cultivate[]
[the] ability to simulta-
neously view things
from two or more per-
spectives”**

Steven Sample.

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A Perspective on Whining

Years ago, I learned a valuable lesson about seeing what you look for.

I was doing some geological field work in southern Spain and collecting fossils. One of our guides was a specialist in the area and had been collecting fossils from this particular group of rocks for years.

I would spend my time scouring the rocks looking for fossils to no avail and then our guide would come over and pick up a fossil from right at my feet. They were everywhere. I just couldn't see them.

As the days went by, my eyes became attuned to seeing what I was looking for and I began to see more of the fossils just lying at my feet. I still missed bunches of them, but I was, at least, learning to see.

As I said, this was a valuable lesson. Actually it was a series of lessons.

1. We see what we look for.
2. We often don't see something that is right in front of us, because we're not attuned to looking for it.
3. We see only through the filters of our experience.

So let's pick up on the last article from last month and chat a little bit about whining and complaining. I suspect that if you are anything like me, you can use some work in this area of living. Yes?

It's easy to whine and complain about all manner of things: Our jobs, our relationships, our health, our wealth. The problem of course, is that once we start seeing things from a particular perspective, the perspective becomes the filter through which we see our world.

Suppose for instance, that I am having

a problem in one of my relationships and start seeing all the negative things in the person with whom I am having difficulty. I will tend to see those things accentuated in all my dealings with this person. I will see those things as I watch that person deal with other people. Soon the negative things will cloud all my dealings and the relationship will probably get worse.

Now, suppose I change my perspective. Suppose I recognize that the things that annoy me about someone else are probably things that I don't like about myself. What then? Suppose further, that I deliberately make an effort to look for things that I admire. What then?

Do you see what I'm driving at here?

I have two choices: Choice 1: I can look at a situation or person and whine about what's not right and expect the situation or person to change. Choice 2: I can look within myself and change my perspective.

It is my choice to whine and complain, and it is equally my choice to look for the positive and the benefits.

In either case you will get more of what you are looking for, precisely because your filters are preventing you from seeing anything else.

If I see someone as angry all the time, then that's what I will see. I will be blind to the times I see them as being anything other than angry, unless I deliberately change my perspective.

There were fossils all around me at my feet, all I had to do was change the way I was seeing the rocks.

So what does that tell you?

☺

A perspective on time

We have talked a lot about living in the moment, planning for the future and dwelling in the past, but I would like to take the liberty of traveling the road one more time.

Several years ago I took a personal coaching course during which, my coach quite often said something that has been on my mind for a while recently. The phrase that has been going through my mind a lot recently is: 'When is Now a good time?'

If you look at your life at this moment, it is the exact result of every event that you have ever experienced, colored by the interpretations you placed upon those events. If we acquiesce to the standard dualistic view of things, some of those events were 'good' some were, from your perspective of your life undoubtedly 'bad'. Some of the events we interpreted through the lens of negativity and others we interpreted through the lens of positivism. Such is the mosaic of each of our lives.

We can always look back over our lives and see what we have done with them.

In the deepest corners of our hearts, however, we know whether our lives are worthy of us, or whether we did not live up to the potential of our highest self. If we are honest, we probably all know that we could have done better.

That's not important. What is important is whether we allow our past to become a baggage train that

hurtles ahead of us into the future, fueled by the energy that we give it.

If I can see that who I am at this very moment is the result of millions of seemingly insignificant choices along with some seemingly massive choices that I made, then I can also be clear that the path ahead is full of choices that are, as yet, unmade.

I have options. I do not have to be limited by my past choices.

For sure, I can be ruled by who and what I have been. But I can also determine to do better and reach for my potential. I can choose a set of values and codes and live by them to the best of my ability, or I can compromise them at will.

If you've ever read Jane Austin or Charlotte Bronte, you see the same things. The characters in those novels are faced with choices and either prove themselves to be people of character or not. They are novels about honor.

So let's go back to my coaching course question: When is 'Now' a good time?

When do I begin to live as though yesterday does not limit me?

The person you are at this moment is not who you ARE, it is merely a product of who you WERE, which at its best, is a subset of your potential.

For those of us who sometimes dwell in the past, that subset is full of our mistakes and our failures and it is difficult for us to see who

we might be, because the errors and failures seem to loom so large.

For those of us who see the opportunity present in every moment, we see the lessons of our past and the potential of our future and are grateful for this particular moment in which to make a course correction if necessary or to reaffirm our current course in life.

Each of us has a choice every moment of every day. Each of us can be bound to our past and drag it around with us, or we can project it into the future to lie in wait for us, or we can let it go and move forward with a light heart and freedom of choice.

Even if we have had a past that is by all accounts and memories a thing of great good, it is still a shadow of our greatest potential. Compared to what we might become, our past is limiting. It is a difficult thing to accept.

It is much easier to say that what you are is all you are and that's that. It is much harder to accept the possibility that you might actually have a lot more potential than you have ever imagined.

So I invite you to take a journey and think about what limits you. Think about the limits you have placed upon yourself. Then begin to think about how to throw off those limitations and then ask yourself the all important question: When is 'Now' a good time?

☺

When is now a good time?

Tom Shields

A perspective on well...perspective

I have talked several times in this newsletter about the ability to stand outside of yourself and to watch yourself perform martial arts.

In moments when you can do this...stand outside of yourself and see yourself perform as an observer rather than a participant, all manner of possibilities reveal themselves.

It is not the event which defines us, it is our perspective on the event. Let me see if I can explain.

Suppose for a moment that I 'feel' sad. I can look at what is happening around me and to me and become the emotion, I can create sadness all around me. Alternatively I can see myself as someone experiencing a decision tree that results in a feeling of sadness and observe the result. I have a choice.

If I can step outside of my decision making process, I can open up the possibility of creating a different set of decisions. The reason for this is simple. In one situation I am my decision making process, in the other, I am able to separate 'me' from my decisions. So the net result becomes an ability to look at events that happen around us and to change their apparent trajectory.

I was reading an article recently about recovery from depression. In the article it was suggested that people who saw the depression as

something that they could overcome were more likely to recover than those who saw the depression as being a character state to which they were predisposed.

It all comes back to standing outside of the problem and looking at it as an observer, rather than thrashing around inside the problem...often, only making matters worse.

In moments of martial arts beauty, I simply watch myself perform rather than try to produce a particular result. To me, this is the essence of Judo. In my most sublime moments of training, Judo reveals itself through me, I am merely a conduit for the art. I get 'me' out of the way. Rather than place my pre-conceived perceptions upon what is supposed to happen, I can allow the natural flow of events to unfold and in such moments something quite beautiful can emerge.

When I force my perspective upon a situation, whether it is in Judo or in another area of my life, it invariably does not help the ultimate outcome. My perspectives are flawed, incomplete things that present to my mind only a shadow of what is possible. When I listen to other people's perspectives and separate my 'needs' from the potential outcome, I am often able to see an outcome to a situation that was not possible in my more re-

stricted state.

Stepping outside of my own perspective allows me to see from your perspective.

This is not an easy thing to do and often takes a lot of effort and discipline. It takes practice.

I think that had I not trained in the martial arts, and Judo specifically, that this would not have occurred for me. In truth, however, any endeavor which allows you to transcend 'doing' and allows you to step outside of the process for a moment, brings with it the possibility of a new perspective. It doesn't matter whether it is ballet, or piano playing, or art, or mountain climbing...the delivery mechanism is completely irrelevant. The only thing that really matters here is that at some point in the process of doing, you step outside of doing and see yourself as an impartial observer.

Of course, once you've seen yourself as an observer of your own actions, rather than from the participant's perspective, you will want more of it. The world can never be the same again. By default, you have just created a new perspective from which to view to world.

☺

..there are only two or three human stories, and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if they had never happened before.

Willa Cather

A perspective on Gorillas

I cannot take credit for this article. It comes from a very dear friend who offered me an insight that made me laugh. Actually, I came up with analogy, but my friend colored in the lines and gave it clarity and depth that went way beyond what I had imagined.

I am often amused by people who show me a side of myself I hadn't quite seen from the perspective that is offered. The insights offered are quite frequently refreshing, if we allow them to be so.

So let's say that I have a character weakness (say not so!) that can be seen, by way of analogy, as a Gorilla. Let us further say that Gorillas are generally peaceful creatures who enjoy being left alone to eat their own bananas and do not take kindly to being fussed with. Let's say also, that when I grab hold of my own particular Gorilla (or any one of them for that matter), it will tend to beat the ever-living fool out me, before leaving me for 'road kill' and going back about its business.

And the lesson?

The more I try to identify with any one of my personal Gorillas, the more likely I am to get the fool pounded out of me. (Apparently there is a lot of 'fool' to pound out, or a large number of Gorillas, or both!)

To paraphrase the words of Brian Tracy: "What you dwell upon, grows in your life." The more I think about any one of my personal Gorillas, the bigger they get and the more they beat me up. Hmmm! You'd think that this would be an easy enough lesson to learn, but is it?

Why is it that we spend so much of time beating ourselves up with guilt, shame, fear or any one of a number of things that we carry around with us?

Why is it that we have such a difficult job of letting the Gorilla alone? Why do we feel so compelled to fuss with the thing?

I sometimes think that it has some-

thing to do with the notion that if I come away with a good beating, then I have been to war and deserve some sort of medal for taking on something so much larger than me. I deserve respect for giving battle against insurmountable odds.

From another perspective, did I really need to go to war in the first place? Did the Gorilla invade my territory? Or did I invade his? Am I dragging the Gorilla along for the ride?

Suppose one of my Gorillas is guilty for some past wrong. I can spend my entire life getting battle wounds for fighting with a Gorilla who should have died of old age decades ago. Where's the sense in that?

All of us have Gorillas of one sort or another. How many of them could you leave alone? How many of them would simply die of old age and neglect if we allowed them to do so?

Better yet, what could I accomplish with the time and energy expended upon my personal war with virtual Gorillas?

Suppose that I ignore the Gorilla and get on with my life, putting my Gorillas in the mist of the past and leaving them there to munch on their bananas. It is just conceivable that my life might be a good deal more productive, more peaceful and I might be able to spend more of my time doing useful things rather than lying in triage waiting for my latest set of battle wounds to get dressed.

So...how are you doing with your Gorillas?

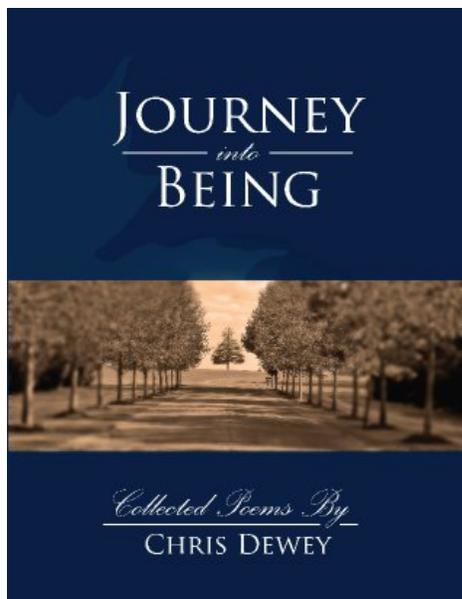
I hope that this article made you smile. When my friend colored in the analogy for me I laughed myself silly. Truth can do that. Sometimes I think that truth should do that. It should make us laugh at ourselves and be happy to be doing so.



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- ◆ **WAKUSHAI, COLUMBUS JUDO TOURNAMENT, COLUMBUS, MS JUNE 30TH, 2007**
- ◆ **AKAYAMA JU JITSU, SUMMER CAMP. JACKSONVILLE UNIVERSITY, JACKSONVILLE, AL, JULY 20ST-21ND, 2007**
- ◆ **LOUISIANA STATE JUDO CHAMPIONSHIPS, XXXX, LA, SEPTEMBER 22ND, 2007.**
- ◆ **T'AI CHI CHUH WEEKEND RETREAT, PLYMOUTH BLUFF, COLUMBUS, MS, OCTOBER 6 & 7TH, 2007.**
- ◆ **AKAYAMA JU JITSU, FALL CLINIC, SMAA, STARKVILLE, MS, OCTOBER, 2007**



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