

Howell Creek Radio – Jan 30th, 2010

One day last fall
I was looking over some photos of Trixie & me in Chicago,
from a November afternoon a few years ago;
& it occurred to me
that only now
can I really begin to see
the distance
that may exist
between the souls of two people
– by default! –
even people who have a lot in common.

Trixie and I were mere nice-to-meet-you's then,
and so
as regards each other
were no closer or further apart
than any other of dozens of humans one sees in a given day;
but it is since our spirits have become
close
that I have really gotten an idea
of how far apart
we were
when we started,
how far apart everyone is
when they start.

Two people can be sitting
next to each other
on the same concrete planter,
having just missed the same train
and laughing at the same joke,
and still in their hearts be only like ships passing in the night,
hardly recognizing each other.

As for *real* strangers
of the complete kind,
they must be light years apart from us
in what I may call 'spirit distance'
– their bodily presence a mere signal
from another hemisphere
that a soul exists there.
The immense gaps
that exist between the members of our race
are very nearly beyond closing,

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& we have gotten quite used to them
– used to signaling at people from afar
with candles &
little customary flags,
and yet keeping a whole ocean
to ourselves in which to circle.

You do not really see it,
cannot really see it,
until you have begun to be really close to someone.
Not merely to close the distance between their ship and yours.
There are other vessels
constantly moving about in constellations about yours,
some a bit closer than others;
all quite very far away;
but after sailing only just within view
for months,
to gradually realize
this one in particular
is getting closer;
suddenly to pull right up alongside each other;
to row precariously over
and be given a hand up on deck;
to be invited below to the kitchen table,
to supper,
a game of cards
a good book.
Then you look back to the beginning,
to the oceanic gap that sat between you then;
and the thoughtful among us don't take much longer
to see
that that is how everyone starts
with each other. We generally are not sailing
in the same formation; we generally are not merely adjacent
& then happen to become tight-knit by an accidental fusion;
– generally, we are all at polar ends of the galaxy from one another,
and
gradually
come to have tea by the same fire,
and to really sit together
on the same couch.

– Joel Dueck