demand to be perfect, authentic, engaged, inspirited, and righteous. Being human is impossible in the face of the need to be the "perfect" Angel. There is little room to just *be* human. There is little freedom to participate in the experience of life with all its opportunities to be frail and imperfect.

We become like disengaged fire hydrants, dependent on the perception of others for our value. We would do better without *having* to be anything at all because then we have the possibility of becoming more of what we might be. When we can accept failure side by side with success, and when doing springs from being, then we have the foundation for a life of creative participation.

So how might we view this 9/11 Angel differently? Perhaps we can start by not seeing her as an Angel at all, but simply another fascinating fire hydrant who, having tired of waiting for the fire and the fireman, sadly played by society's rules. She may be a blessing, an insight into the fearful world of personal dissatisfaction and the public demand for heroes. She is a reminder that our perceptual equipment has been so biased in the direction of perfection/imperfection that we have little room for the fullness of who we actually are. With some effort, we might become conscious of the possibility of living each day without fear of our lives being unfulfilled because of what we do or don't do to meet society's expectations. Then we might experience the joy of celebrating whatever unique and living fire hydrant leprechaun we happen to be.

Now you realise that 'eternal vigilance is the price of liberty' and you undertake the difficult but beautiful path to freedom. On this journey, you begin to see how the sides of your heart that seemed awkward, contradictory and uneven are the places where the treasure lies hidden. You begin to become true to yourself.

The journey shows you that from this inner dedication you can reconstruct your own values and action. You develop from your own self-compassion a great compassion for others. You are no longer caught in the false game of judgement, comparison and assumption. More naked now than ever, you begin to feel truly alive. You begin to trust the music of your own soul; you have inherited treasure that no one will ever be able to take from you. At the deepest level, this adventure of growth is in fact a transfigurative conversation with your own death. And when the time comes for you to leave, the view from your death bed will show a life of growth that gladdens the heart and takes away all fear.

~John O'Donohue