

Me and Other Me

Koan:

Two people roll up the blinds in exactly the same way. The teacher says, "one wins, one loses."

Questions:

1. The imaginary person you compare yourself to, what are they like? Describe their strengths and weaknesses. Are they better than you? Worse?
2. Is there a person in real life who you're in some way in competition with? What would happen if they disappeared into thin air? Would some part of you disappear too?
3. What has been surprising about this koan, is there something you noticed that you hadn't seen before?

Poem

Could Have by Wislawa Szymborska

(from *View With a Grain of Sand*, trans. Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh)

It could have happened.
It had to happen.
It happened earlier. Later.
Nearer. Farther off.
It happened, but not to you.
You were saved because you were the first.
You were saved because you were the last.
Alone. With others.
On the right. The left.
Because it was raining. Because of the shade.
Because the day was sunny.
You were in luck -- there was a forest.
You were in luck -- there were no trees.
You were in luck -- a rake, a hook, a beam, a brake,
A jamb, a turn, a quarter-inch, an instant . . .
So you're here? Still dizzy from
another dodge, close shave, reprieve?
One hole in the net and you slipped through?
I couldn't be more shocked or
speechless.
Listen,
how your heart pounds inside me.

