

took place over a six month period was sad, but somehow I felt that for both of us what had been learned, never to be forgotten, was that true communication is communion **with** and not **about** and that within communion with another lies the secret of our own existence.

POSTSCRIPT. *It is now three years since I have seen Sean but I have enquired after him and know that my friend is still actively engaged in the battle of becoming.*

He can now read and although he can't write because of a fine motor co-ordination problem he will soon learn to type. He has more people in his world or perhaps I should say persons as he still chooses carefully those who he allows to populate his personal space. He still likes being an ant or a bee but is less afraid to be a person and with his new-found ability to read his ladybird fantasies can truly take flight.

Sue Patman

THE CREATIVE USE OF PAIN, CRISIS AND FAILURE

Introduction

Pain, crisis and failure can be preludes to, and most certainly are messengers for, ecstasy, harmony and triumph. Like the I Ching hexagram of the Book of Changes, the extreme Yang of pain and crisis can quite naturally turn into the Yin of ecstasy and harmony whilst the Yin of failure can equally naturally turn into the Yang of triumph or victory, or as Jung pointed out: follow anything far enough and it will turn into its opposite. Just as the extreme of grief and crying flips into hysterical laughter, so we can laugh until we cry or have tears of happiness. This follows the natural law of balance. In pain is the existence and potential birth of ecstasy; in crisis is the seed and promise of harmony; in failure is the blueprint for triumph. I believe the above to be true - but the switchover is not inevitable. It is here that, as always, we have free will and it is the lack or presence

of the vital bridging by attitude of mind and heart that decides whether our consciousness thrusts forward creatively into expanded awareness; or advances and retreats like someone daring to jump a ravine; or crystallises on one side into bitterness, resignation etc. And it is this bridge made of subtle psychological matter that interests me. I want to understand how to co-operate with the natural growth from pain to ecstasy; crisis to harmony; failure to triumph; and thus to be able **consciously** to co-operate **fully** in facilitating this metamorphosis both in myself and my clients.

Before going into possible ways of outgrowing pain I want first to describe what I think pain is. Pain is not good or bad, pain **just is** - a neutral occurrence which we can choose to qualify, but do not need to. Life is growth and pain is ungrowth. Pain is a message and the interesting thing is - What is it trying to communicate? It has something to tell us and is trying to tell us it in its own language. We can listen and ask and find out and when we understand the message with heart and mind then the pain may not be necessary anymore, may disappear, or become unimportant or even become our friend. When seen in this light pain is an opportunity to grow. It is our Self trying to tell us something in a loud voice, the greater the pain the louder the voice. If we listen and hear the message and take appropriate action, then the pain may no longer be necessary.

Pain comes from many levels, both past and present: 1. Physical 2. Emotional 3. Mental 4. Past painful history 5. Spiritual, and is usually a mixture of more than one level/time. It has the purpose of making matter respond to Spirit, sending out the call to further growth again and again; a stimulus to action like spurs to a horse. Strictly speaking there is no need for pain if growth continued in the right direction without undue delay. However it is unlikely we would know the right way without at least some pain as a guide that we were off course. Continued pain is the indication that we are resisting our growth. Matter resisting Spirit creates pain. Resistance increases pain. Acceptance reduces it. If there were no resistance there would probably be no pain.

GROWTH AND

SYNTHESIS

FORM

PAIN

WITHOUT

RESISTANCE

PAIN

Thus pain occurs when we come up against our growing edge and resist change and further growth. However, creative co-operation with this energy necessitates: 1. Knowledge that pain has purpose and 2. A non-judgemental attitude to it (i.e. acceptance). If we choose our pain in this way we can use it creatively for the good of the whole.

One way to deal with pain I think is to feel it. It is a guide and, as with a verbal guide we have to listen, so with pain as a guide we have to give ourselves to it and feel it, absorb it, take it into us, allow it to suffuse us and if it is given its freedom in this way, it will purge a clean channel through our blocked consciousness and we will find a way out.

Physical Pain

A symbol is a sign which stands for an object, an action, a situation, a concept, an idea; it has significance beyond its formal aspects." (SPITZ)

I have a trick that works for a very painful physical event such as falling upstairs and barking my shins, or stubbing my toe, and that is to instantly open my body to the pain and receive it, welcome it, reverse all instinctual body reactions that seek to close off, defend against, keep out the pain, and embrace it instead (at the same time incidentally I also apologise to the part of my body that is hurt, for my negligence). This does not reduce the totality of pain received but it appears as though it does because the whole body receives and bears the pain, instead

of all being borne by and focussed on the actual point of impact with the whole body mobilised to keep the pain physically off the skin - an impossible task anyway! When received and welcomed in this way without resistance the pain is like an electrical burst of energy or a blinding flash shooting through the whole body and out again the other side and is gone quickly and completely, with less after effects and incidentally I have found with less bruising. This technique I was forced to develop in order to stay sane when I had a kidney stone some years ago. That is a bad pain by any standard. As I was constantly vomiting, oral pain killers were useless, they never stayed down long enough to work! This meant an injected pain killer had to be administered. The doctor felt he could not leave me a syringe and the drug to do it myself, he was a very busy man out on his rounds and could only fix me up twice a day. I therefore had hours of intense unremitting pain and vomiting that reduced my consciousness to a single point, my body rigid and shuddering. There had to be a way out, a way to cope with this for since death showed no signs of relieving me, I knew madness was the only other alternative. In the periods that the pain was away I reflected on its manifestation and my attitude to it. My attitude was "go away", "do not come near me", I had tried to keep it out of my body, at least tried to locate it on the surface of my skin instead of deep inside my being where I knew it really lay. This attitude had proved pretty unhelpful and if I was to stay sane, another approach had to be made. So I began to experiment with the opposite attitude. No resistance. I allowed it in. At first it hurt even more. I sweated the bed wet and had to have my clothes off and be wrapped in towels. I relaxed as much as I could, allowing it in. It settled into me and breathed in me. It was part of me, I felt it grow and expand. It was getting bigger. I did not know what to expect, but I had nothing to lose; so as it expanded, I tried loving it and welcoming it and accepting it, telling it to do what it needed as I was fighting it no more and merely wanted to co-operate. I realised then that although it was getting bigger in the sense that it covered more of my body, its intensity was not greater, just more diffuse. With this realisation I abandoned myself to it and opened the whole of my body to feeling some part of this animal pain. The effect was astonishing; I became pain!! It was a new form of existence

- I existed in pain like fish exist in water and we exist in air. I was crystallised pain, pain manifest, the air I breathed was pain, the saliva I swallowed was pain, the bed I lay on was pain, the furniture was pain, my whole room was constructed of pain and my agony entered a new dimension that was not only tolerable but included joy and victory. I had conquered pain by acceptance, love, fusion and union. I never expanded my pain outside the bedroom, however it may technically be possible to dissipate it infinitely out into space. Certainly the experienced pain reduced in proportion to the extent that it grew spatially. I no longer feared the doctor would be unable to come immediately he was called; I knew I could cope; I was learning to live in another dimension. A couple of days after this the pain went and although I was booked into hospital and in fact presented myself there, no further treatment was necessary or was carried out.

Emotional Pain

"Growth is a stormy, painful affair, which is not to deny that we want it more than anything else in life. No love relation, however fulfilling, can outweigh the joy of a new found self, nor can a love relationship compensate entirely for the self development it may hinder . . . the basic need of the individual is not pleasure but more life, to make more and more of the underlying energy accessible for integration, to go with the life process instead of fighting it, to find and use one's own capacity for relationships and for creativity, however slight." (TAFT)

This is conflict involving both the solar plexus and heart chakras. In order to be resolved the energy of the conflict needs to be raised from the solar plexus up to **and through** the heart, resulting in a psychological death/rebirth, phoenix sequence and effect. Personality pain is felt in the solar plexus - when bad news is received the solar plexus violently retracts and we feel as though we have been kicked in the stomach; with good news it flashes in responsive excitement. Heart level pain is largely caused by lack of expression resulting in an overcontainment of energy in the heart area, congestion there and tightness in the chest

like emotional constipation, chest pain, palpitations and general overstimulation. The energy keeps pushing into the heart but has inadequate outlet and then we have to bear extremely high levels of unreleased energy being held in the heart area. This is when hearts can 'break' if the person chooses not to transmute this energy.

The most consistent and long lived experience of emotional pain I have had was 10 years married to, and loving, a man who did not love me in the way I wanted. This involved a continual affirmation of my commitment to reality and truth. I loved him; that was a reality and a truth. He did not love me; that was a reality and a truth. These two facts resulted in emotional pain that ebbed and flowed but was never absent from my life. My task, as I saw it, was to stay psychologically alive. I had the choice to shut my eyes and pretend it was OK, go emotionally dead and not feel the pain or become resigned or bitter.

*Wishes are ghosts
and they're gathering round quite thickly now
gaining their strength from broken hopes.
Ghosts are dreams
and they're getting stronger now
the wider the gap gets between what was going to be
and what is.
Dreams seem reality
if they're held long enough
with eyes tight shut enough.
And time is slipping by so fast -
My eyes are so heavy,
I could let them close and deliberately forget.
I could play "let's pretend"
till the end.
Don't let me think the dreams are real,
I'd live avoiding truth.
And great indeed would be burden be
of he who dare show me the truth.*

Yet somehow these choices involved a death of my reality, a denial of truth to which I was not prepared to be an accomplice.

And so I hurt and I hurt and I hurt until life became an endurance. Towards the end, every night and sometimes during the day too, I would mentally put all my suffering on a beautiful silver platter and offer it up to Life/God with such words as "*Lord, I do not know why I am called on to suffer like this, but I do it for you, willingly, if that is your wish. Here is my offering of suffering, the greatest and only gift I can give.*" I think it was this continual, dogged, perseverance that resulted in a major psychological breakthrough one evening when I was 'cosmically' Christened, received Grace and carried out my Confirmation. The outer situation had not changed yet from that point on I was transformed and lived my life from a different level, my burden had been taken from me and I was able to begin to co-operate in my evolution. I had no doubt I had earned my new position. I had no doubt it was worth the suffering involved.

I do not mean to imply that emotional pain always takes 10 years to work out creatively! I am just giving an extreme example. However what I am saying is that for emotional pain to have a creative result it must be felt (and endured to a certain extent). As with physical pain, our instincts are to close off and defend against it - yet for creation these instinctual personality responses must be denied and reversed by an act of will, in order to serve the growth of the Soul. I am reminded here of the laws of gravity. A tree, to grow at all, needs to defy the laws of gravity, the laws of matter, that would hold it back as a seed, and follow the laws of life, the laws of spirit that would have it evolve and grow upwards. The following poem describes physical and mental pain to a certain extent as pain involves all levels, but is an example of emotional pain being kept at bay by consciously used defence mechanisms - one cannot help but feel this is a losing battle:-

*The Pain, the Pain,
It's coming again
Sweet Jesus ward it off.
It's like an animal
in for the kill.
I can feel it coming
over the hill,
large, and charging fast.
How Long can I last?*

*STOP IT.
DIVERT IT.
Too late,
It has me
and I crucify.
Entrails torn,
muscles in spasm,
blood in confusion
not knowing which way to flow,
teeth clenched,
fear of them crumbling
under the compression.
Every cell washed in agony.
My total being
wracked by anguish.*

ANGST, ANGST, ANGST.

*Engulfed, I cry "GOD - HELP ME."
How long will it last?
Sometimes I can divert it.
Get up and do something quickly.
Mobilise my Will to force the mind away.
Shut mental doors and will concentration on something mundane.
It stops its charge and retreats back over the hill.
I feel pleased.
I feel smug that I won that round.
I give it two fingers and smile.
But it prowls.
It has plenty of time.
It bides its time
and paces with glowing eyes,
waiting its chance
to take me by surprise.*

"This is part of a paper given to the Psychosynthesis & Education Trust in 1980."