

I'm in Pain: Where is God Now?

An essay on the Pathwork Process by Jan Rigsby

Faith is difficult to hold when we are hurt, grieving angry or frightened. Yet that is when we need faith the most.

To respond to someone's sorrow or hurt feelings with statements like 'the law of karma dictates that you must have deserved this' or 'the plan is perfect, just figure it out' is simply cruel. Promoting truth as a solution trivialises our journey.

The spiritual intention of the higher self of every human being on the planet is to more fully understand his/her spiritual distortions and misconceptions. We empower these misconceptions and false beliefs, creating realities that reflect them as if we were playwrights who are also acting the main part, in order to fully understand how limiting and negative they are. Seeing the effects on ourselves and others allows us to then transform and purify, fully and completely releasing our attachments to selfish distortions. As Emmanuel so gently tells us, we have come here to bring ourselves to our own knees, to break our own hearts. No matter what it looks like from the outside, negativity and distortion will manifest as pain on some level.

The Pathwork lectures were not meant to explain away hunger, poverty, pain, abuse or any other grievous human situation. They are intended to help us in our understanding. Following the Path is an expression of willingness to undergo this process with increasing consciousness. It is not the best way or the only way. Yet there is truth to the quote "Pain makes man think, thought makes man wise, and wisdom makes life endurable" (*Teahouse of the August Moon by John Patrick*).

The title of Lecture 127 outlines Four Stages of Evolution: Automatic Reflexes, Awareness, Understanding, and Knowing. We start our lives in automatic reflex, reacting and interacting based upon our instinct for survival. Like physical reflexes, our minds and emotions reach for survival - to get and retain love, approval, acceptance, freedom for the expression of our hopes and dreams, and independence to be the best we can be (*see pgs 85/86 on the powerful emotional forces of survival and procreation*). We come into awareness slowly, in some areas before others. Our work is usually focusing around the transition from awareness into understanding. Knowing may come much later in life, or even after our lives end and our spirits are freed.

It is the stage of awareness which we can feel most vulnerable. Here, we feel pain without understanding what, where, how or why. Without understanding, we feel powerless and helpless. One 'solution' is to revert to automatic reflexes, fighting back blindly, submitting without protest, or becoming unconscious and withdrawing from our feelings. Another 'solution' is to invent a cause and effect dynamic that will

explain our predicament and allow us to feel righteous. In blaming others, we justify our powerlessness – yet at the same time assuring that we remain forever helpless, since the answer is outside our control (and possibly malevolent in its intentions).

The Pathwork Lectures propose that the real solution lies in a deeper understanding. Yet this is precisely where the individual's spiritual journey needs to be held with deep respect and without judgement. There may be a temporary need to retreat, to go unconscious when faced with energies and feelings that seem unbearable. There may be a willingness to feel the pain of awareness -- yet this may lead us into becoming oversensitive or aggressive if the discomfort last too long. Respecting an individual's journey does not excuse us from exercising kindness, generosity, or in taking action according to our own ethics and principles. It is especially important to extend loving support to ourselves.

When I was a kid and didn't want to eat my oatmeal, my mother would tell me to eat it because 'children are starving in China'. I wasn't clever enough (or perhaps brave enough) to tell her to mail it to them, but I always wondered how eating when I wasn't hungry helped those children. There were actually many spiritual truths in what she said. It does help others if you accept your share while staying conscious that others may need some assistance in finding and accepting theirs. We are all one; neglecting myself doesn't help my spiritual brothers and sisters, while keeping myself healthy and strong can enable me to complete both my worldly and spiritual tasks. I had no awareness of a larger reality and simply did not understand how complex truths can interlace with each other without interference, like galaxies drifting through each other. I just ducked my head (an automatic reflex to the authority of my mother) and ate the oatmeal. At that age, there weren't many realistic options. I was not bad for not speaking up or for not being properly spiritual towards cold oatmeal. I just didn't understand. But I was at least aware that something didn't feel right, and that awareness stayed with me. My mother's call for me to help others may well have manifested in my Helpership, in part by triggering my awareness of the needs of others long before I could understand or take any action.

This is just a tiny, comical example of the hundreds of thousands of incidents throughout my life where I felt baffled, frustrated, helpless, unworthy and irritated. The lectures say that I manifested these pinpricks (and later the more dramatic slings and arrows) in order to awaken my real self, to play out my distortions around selfishness and self-centeredness until I was fully ready and able to let them go.

Shakespeare says in *As You Like It*, "*All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances, Each one in his time plays many parts.*"

The Pathwork Lectures suggest that our lives are like plays written by our Real Selves, with the specific intent of bringing us into insight. As the playwright, we have set up a stage - our planet with its physical laws, our humanity with its complexities and contradictions. We choose a setting in terms of our native culture, our place within human history. We detail the set with place and time of birth, astrological clues carefully selected to augment and focus our efforts. We cast the principal players: mother and father, existing siblings, and dress ourselves for our own part physically and emotionally, knowing pretty well what the initial interactions will produce when we come onto the scene. These basic elements - time and place, genetics, initial emotional setup of family and our own personality - launch a strong dynamic that we will not understand for decades. We literally 'cast' ourselves into a vortex created beyond human understanding.

The glory of great works of art - sculpture, painting, theatre or literature - is to draw us into an experiential knowing on all levels of our being - physical/visceral, emotional/feeling, mental/intellectual, will/ego acceptance, and spiritual/divine will. This is how art imitates life, by bringing us into connection with the divine. A knowing experienced on each of these levels simultaneously is an epiphany, an intuitive realisation of divine truth. This is the knowing that transforms.

The greatest compliments I hear about the Pathwork Lectures are “I was finally reading what I have always known!” Truth sings to us from the spirit world, reminding us of home while we are away at work. It comes in many forms. Sometimes it is inside the pain, waiting to be freed. It is up to each of us to extract only the truth. In that moment of knowing, we can find peace within chaos, struggle, or anguish, and the strength to release negativity and live in love.

It's not easy. It's not meant to be easy. Our tasks are the stuff of legends, the essence of mythology. That's why the cherished stories of civilisation resonate so strongly with us. We are all heroes on a quest.

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