

The Way of the Wound: A Spirituality of Trauma and Transformation

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Traumatic events expose victims to aspects of life that most would prefer to ignore. Trauma creates confrontations with the lack of security and certitude that underlie all human endeavors. Trauma has the power to throw into question or obliterate any organization of self, God and humanity that victims have been able to create.

The implications of traumatic events assault things once considered sacred and beyond reproach. Trauma brutally demonstrates that rational and logical consciousness cannot manage certain painful dimensions of life.

Many trauma victims feel lost, disoriented and powerless when former ways of making sense are damaged or destroyed. Many lose their bearings, become unsure of whom they are and have great difficulty moving forward.

Many wander indefinitely until new and more comprehensive ways of taking up life are created. Without support, guidance and reflection it is almost impossible to develop frames of reference capable of incorporating the truths generated by traumatic experiences.

Eating from the Fruit Of Knowledge

Many do not understand that they have eaten from the “fruit of knowledge.” They have made contact with things outside of personal and collective frames. The innocence of the “taken for granted” is often lost forever. Old forms are exposed as inadequate. Ignoring the powerful shifts occurring within consciousness is not without cost. Wounds, along with the implications they have for future living, must be integrated into new and more comprehensive approaches to life. Failure to do so condemn victims to a host of problems related to post traumatic stress.

Support and Accompaniment

Victims of trauma are by definition “overwhelmed and rendered helpless.” They are unable to weather the shock and impact of their injuries. They need support and guidance. Trauma exposes aspects of reality that have been previously unacknowledged. Trauma initiates deep spiritual questions and demands that victims take in more of reality than was previously possible. The Spirit demands expansion and is intolerant of partial solutions.

The meaning of life is frequently questioned. Old answers no longer suffice. Priorities are reordered. Concerns about identity, the value of suffering, the importance of justice and the appropriateness of forgiveness proliferate. Recognizing the impermanence and cruelty in the world, along with the impact these realities have for images of God and the value of human relationships demands some form of resolution.

Conclusion

Trauma, in spite of its brutality and destructiveness, has the power to open victims to issues of profound existential and spiritual significance. The displacement of rational and egocentric consciousness forces confrontations with deeper levels of self and reality.

Trauma throws victims onto a path that spiritual seekers have been walking for thousands of years. The difference is that victims of trauma must work this territory or be overcome by it. Non-traumatized seekers have the luxury of

getting off the path voluntarily: for theirs is not a life or death struggle.

Trauma forces victims to confront realms of Being that exist outside of ego and collective consciousness. The soul, along with various existential/spiritual vulnerabilities, demands recognition. In displacing the ego trauma demonstrates that no individual is entirely sufficient or a god unto himself. If health is to be restored then the help of the Spirit and others are required. Acknowledging this fundamental dependency is a critical achievement on the healing path.

Unfortunately many victims of trauma are misdiagnosed and socially abandoned. Many are unable to find healers who recognize that trauma is a modern form of spiritual initiation. The profound struggles of victims are typically spiritualized or psychologised by mental-health professionals. Victims need safe and supportive spaces which allow them to walk amidst the ashes of their former organizations of self, reality and God, while dialoguing with transformations that are taking place on every level of their being. Eventually, personal identity must be seen to have been grounded in collective values and features (which are not the most foundational dimensions of being human). Relationship to the "Deeper Self" must be fostered and developed. In essence, traumatic experiences are one of the few things powerful enough to get the ego to release its tyrannical control over consciousness. In displacing the ego trauma creates access to the spiritual core of victims.

In receiving appropriate care, compassion and direction victims are often able to overcome the destructive impact of trauma, break through restrictive approaches to life, and become more soulful and compassionate beings in the process. Traumatic injuries, when accompanied by love and understanding, do not become places of deadness, denial, and disease. Rather they become bridges of compassion that connect victims to all sentient beings. Survivors accept that they can be broken, overwhelmed and rendered powerless. These realizations are not considered shameful (as they were at the beginning of the journey) but are now recognized as the common ground that connects victims to all forms of life. Becoming comfortable with one's inherent capacity to be rendered powerlessness enables survivors to encounter the brokenness and wounds of others without fear.

Survivors typically want to do everything possible to decrease the gulf of disconnection that separates victims from others. Simultaneously they want to help victims realize that the loss of their former ways of being in the world, despite the tremendous pain involved, is an opportunity to discover the Spirit living at the core of their being.

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