

The Creative Use of Pain, Crisis and Failure

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1. Introduction

Pain, crisis and failure can be preludes to, and most certainly are messengers for, ecstasy, harmony and triumph. Like the I Ching hexagrams 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.

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 un-growth.

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 any more, may disappear, or become unimportant or even become our friend. When seen in this light pain is an

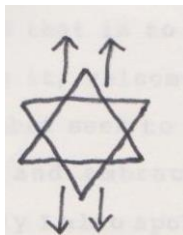
opportunity to grow. It is our Self trying to tell us something in a loud voice, the greater the pain the louder the voice. If we listen and hear the message and take appropriate action then the pain may no longer be necessary.

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 at a time.

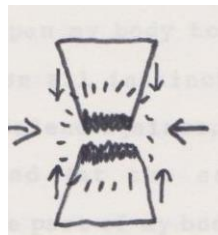
It has the purpose of making matter respond to Spirit, sending out the call to further growth again and again; a stimulus to action like spurs to a horse. Strictly speaking there is no need for pain if growth continued in the right direction without undue delay. However it is unlikely we would know the 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
without
pain



Resistance
at form level



Friction/
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) belief that pain has purpose and 2) a non-judgmental 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.

2. Physical Pain

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 it all being focused on and borne by the actual point of impact with the whole body mobilised to attempt 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. This is a bad pain by any standards. 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 body 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, making its home in me.

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 crystalised 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.

3. Emotional Pain

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 over containment 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 constant and long lived experience of emotional pain I have had was 10 years married to, and loving, a man who did not love me. 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 the 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 defense 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.

4. Mental Pain

This, as one might expect, involves the head, the Ajna chakra, and is preluded by such remarks as "No! I can't believe it!" Anything one cannot believe, yet has to, causes mental pain. Mental pain is brought about by rigidity being exposed — locked thinking, inflexible thinking, non-adaptability of mental processes, compartmentalisation, packaged and labelled, recurring and repeating opinions, thoughts, philosophies, in other words "fossilised" mental apparatus, or crystalised intellect. All these are asking for a shock, and when they are shaken we feel mental pain. When our belief system is shaken we experience our foundations moving — a terrifying state of affairs.

I think it is true to say that the experience of mental pain always involves fear, incredulity and the word "Why?" We need to **understand**. We feel, if only we **understood**, the pain and confusion would go.

The difficulty with mental pain as I have experienced it is that the concrete mind being rigid by definition (concrete!) in the area of pain stands a good chance of breaking. It is the immovable object and the irresistible force equation. Again our protective responses come forth to defend our "form", the structure by which we define ourselves and we try not to see what we have seen, try not to know. But the old form must break down so that a new form can manifest.

The harder we hold on the greater the pain. Fear envelopes us, fear of losing control, fear of not being recognisable to ourselves, fear of no longer being 'me'. The mind desperately tries to consolidate the old structure and hold it together, keep the status quo, wildly rationalising and re-interpreting. **The mind does not understand what is happening.**

At this point there is a choice: 1) Breakdown 2) Breakthrough. In order to take the second path we have to be **willing not to understand** whilst the destruction/destructuralization of the old structure is carried out and the new concepts manifest themselves. In order to experience the new form we must **surrender our mental structure**; in order for change to take place we have to **let go of what we believe** so that out of the resulting chaos/void new mental concepts can be born. We have to be prepared to lose our identity for a while in order to be able to form a new and better one; lose ourselves in order to find ourselves; and this involves going into the unknown for a while whilst the unknown becomes known. The mind can then come back again after the rebuilding process and understand in retrospect and assess the illusions that have been broken down.

An example of mental pain follows where, because my mind did not flip, I was able to use it as a tool in creative resolution. However, when the mind actually breaks, possibly the only way out is to ride it and call for help from the transpersonal level, which may come in the form of outside aid or inner guidance.

I came home from work one day just before Christmas, some years ago, and made myself a cup of

coffee. I sat down on the floor and drank it and then found I could not get up. It was quite amazing — I was willing yet physically unable to get up! — there was no response from any muscle below my waist. I was physically, emotionally and mentally tired, I knew, and put it down to exhaustion and, although very surprised, I was not too alarmed. Gratefully remembering the antics of a paraplegic friend of mine I put some of his tricks to use and got myself upstairs to bed and sleep.

However when I awoke I was still paralysed and then the work began. First I went into disbelief, which soon turned into acceptance when I fell out of bed — try getting out of bed the normal way without using your legs! This was followed by panic, fear, anger and self-pity. Why? Why this to me, now of all times, just before Christmas? Why me?

My husband came home and took my daughter to stay with her Granny, and his sister came to see what she could do to help, so all practicalities were quickly taken care of and I was left free to do battle with my psyche. It got worse and for an hour or two I was unable to move from the neck down. Part of me still felt sleep was the answer and that night I slept well with no dreams but in the morning, though I had good use back in my arms and chest, my legs and lower back were still gone and I could no longer hang onto exhaustion as the answer. Something much deeper was going on.

As I lay there I reflected that my legs had full feeling, there was no numbness at all. I was also aware that once or twice that morning for a few seconds at a time I had felt perfectly able to walk, but before I could try it out, the feeling had gone. On the basis of this I decided to try will power. I lay marshalling my will for several minutes until my body, feelings and mind were strong as an army collected for battle. With absolute determination and no hurry I proceeded to 'make' my body get out of bed and take me downstairs, upright. My heart was beating at an incredible rate with the effort, breathing laboured, sweat pouring off, lowering my body down the stairs mostly by the bannisters. I risked my life — I would do it if it killed me, and it nearly did.

I cannot remember how I got back only that every ounce of my being was concentrating on keeping my will at full strength. I regained the bed, white, panting, bathed in sweat and totally, but totally, exhausted. I had proved the strength of my will, not the use of my legs. The answer lay not there. At this point I abandoned all hope and at the end of this the second day I resolved to hand the whole thing over to the doctor on Monday morning, and slept contentedly in the knowledge that I would be saved by an outer authority.

But with Sunday morning came the question "What makes you think the doctor can know more about this than you? You have caused this — only you have the key — only you can undo it." My husband carried me and put me into the bath and because the water was too cool, poured in a kettle of boiling water. Unfortunately/ fortunately it poured onto my big toe. My leg shot back! But would not move a second time! Reflexes proved OK. I did an inner exercise, called up a symbol for my body and asked it what was wrong with my legs. The body turned its back on me saying "It's nothing to do with me. I'm working perfectly. It's your problem, not mine."

I called my mind to work.

Legs go somewhere. Hands and arms do things. I was willing to do things but not go somewhere. Where was I not prepared to go? **ON**. I was not prepared to go on, I could not go on. If I became paralysed my life would change.

Here Intuition came in very strongly and urgently stating that the whole thing must be resolved by the end of Sunday or I would lose my chance and have to wait a cycle of 10 years before the opportunity of resolution would return. My choice — be prepared to go on the way my life was or spend 10 years in a

wheelchair. The way my life was at that time was in equal balance with 10 years in a wheelchair. I honestly preferred the wheelchair. But which was I called to do? Which way did my evolution lie? Without doubt in going on.

I had been tested to my limit and was now being asked to endure beyond my limits. Time was running short, it was already Sunday evening. Jesus Christ how could I be tested so? How can You ask this of me? I was in my Gethsemane, holding the most precious and agonising gift mankind possesses — Free Will.

A year or so previously I had made my vows — now I was being asked to carry them out. I lay on my stomach on the floor in the sitting room, my husband supporting me silently by being there, yet I was totally alone — no-one could help me. I had to choose and the choice had to come from the very depths of my being.

I wrestled there for I don't know how long — 1 hour? 2 hours? I was reminded of diving from the edge of a swimming pool — how many times I nearly took the plunge and my mind would balk with yet another appreciation of the total impossibility of going on in sanity. I had to be prepared to go on, sane, upright, without faith, without trust that it would end, but in the acceptance that my mental torture was to be without end, yet still choose to go on.

My consciousness weaved its patterns and I felt the different currents of my mind flowing, ever changing, alone in my personality with the existential choice to ally myself with my Self, whilst my Self stood apart and let me fight it out. In one supreme moment of clarity of purpose — the currents parted for a split second — I passed through the gap, holding firm my choice to go on, got up from the floor and walked for the first time in two and a half long days.

Having regained the ability to walk I was now nervous about doing anything else! I paced backwards and forwards in the sitting room and around the house for some time. My back from the base of my spine to my waist began to feel hot and this heat and tenderness increased, travelling up my spine as far as my shoulder blades, until I felt as if my spine was burning hot and absolutely raw. I thought perhaps this was the life force, or Chi, that had been imprisoned in my legs, beginning to circulate again.

By now it was late. Part of me was concerned about going to bed. What if I retracted my decision to go on, in sleep, and awoke paralysed again? It had been hard work getting this far, I didn't want it taken away again. Could I trust myself asleep? Commonsense said I had to sleep sometime so I may as well test it now; there was little point in replacing the paralysis with a phobia! So I went to bed and slept well.

In the morning, beauty of beauties, I was saved from my fears by an exquisite circumstance that couldn't have been more perfectly designed for me. I was awoken by the telephone ringing. I had been a secretary, conscientious and efficient, for many years and was conditioned to answer the phone immediately — not for me the "Oh, let it ring" attitude; to me the telephone demanded immediate attention. For a split second I sweated at the possibility of not being able to move. Then that old familiar part of me gained the upper hand and said in a loud voice "Don't just lie there — **answer** it!" and I leapt out of bed and ran down the stairs and answered the phone.

Within three weeks of this episode my life was changed in a way I could not possibly have anticipated that took my torture from me. I had proved myself and outgrown my pain.

5. Past Painful History

Painful experiences that have not been worked through, be they physical, emotional or mental, can remain imprisoned in the psyche. Because they are painful and we do not want to evoke pain, we push

the surrounding memories down into the lower unconscious. Here they stay, often seemingly to our conscious minds never to have existed in the first place, so effective is our selective amnesia.

However, these memories have not been removed, only repressed, and holding their pain still in pristine condition, they resonate throughout our lives subtly/grossly altering our perceptions of life, conditioning our view of the world and thence colouring and distorting our personal relationships. Repression of pain contained in memories can take place at any age, but childhood (from conception on) when we are at our most vulnerable is when it seems to happen most, and it happens automatically and unconsciously as a natural defence mechanism. Only later, when we are physically and mentally strong enough to bear this pain, can it be invited out and worked through. This can also happen spontaneously like a psychic vomit, or sometimes it happens through dreams — we can cathart whilst asleep.

The expression of repressed pain in this way is called catharsis or abreaction and is somewhat like lancing a boil — all the emotional poison and pain from a previous time is spewed out and this has a very healing and integrating effect on the personality as a whole. Attitudes to life can be fundamentally changed for the better and become more real when such a release of old pain takes place. There is a re-evaluation each time such a pain filter is removed from our consciousness and life is responded to in a more integrated and holistic way thereafter.

Here is a description of a spontaneous rebirthing experience I went through. I was born suddenly, one month premature, and the words convey as best I can the state of my consciousness at that time as I remembered/relived it:

"It is a good and safe place I am slipping from. I am falling away from my world, what is happening? I want to stay and I am slipping away, there is nothing here to hold me, nothing wants to keep me here. I am so afraid, I did not know this would happen, why was I not prepared? I did not expect this, I want to get back and know it is going to happen first, then I could take it. I am not ready for this. What is happening? Hold me till I am ready, want me to stay so that I can stay, hold me to stay longer till I am ready. Frantically my consciousness clings to my world, desperate to re-awaken its need to hold me. But it does not want to hold me anymore and I, terrified and surprised, fused with the pain of unpreparedness, slip down the tunnel. Then, worse than what I had already endured, was sheer horror. Physical horror, light, noise, and cold and wetness, pain, pain. My whole Being has been betrayed — I was not ready. I needed my world to hold/need me longer."

After re-experiencing my birth I understood many things about myself, and the reasons for some of my attitudes to life became obvious. For instance I saw how all through my life the pattern of having to prepare for the unexpected repeated itself again and again even to the extent of my having, quite predictably, acute hearing and very long sight! After this experience my life became much easier because I no longer had unconsciously to prepare continually for every unlikely catastrophic possibility and I had much more energy available to me for creative use as a result. I also discharged a considerable amount of organic fear and, along with various other insights, my psyche was enabled to take an integrative leap forward and I have been ever after a 'wholer' and 'more real' person than before.

6. Spiritual Pain

In my mind spiritual pain is to do with global pain, pain on a large scale, pain that is not personal. I remember when in my teens crying for the world, crying for humanity's suffering, — some cry for the sufferings of animals or children; many cry for the suffering of the planet through pollution — I still cry for the mass emotional suffering of people. This sort of pain is never outgrown by feeling it. It is not on a personal level therefore cannot forge a clear channel in a person through which to flow away. It is the pain of this earth and as long as there is pain on this earth then it will be felt. Our choice here is: 1)

wallow in it or freak out, 2) do something about the situation.

Here acceptance on a large scale is required because the evolution of the planet works in ages of thousands of years at a time and we have perhaps only 20 to offer! It is this ridiculous appreciation of our smallness that stops us in our tracks at this point, possibly for several years out of the 20!

How can anything I do make any difference to the whole world? The large/small paradox is faced, and resolved in the concept of the hologram, as in the microcosm so in the macrocosm, and the instinct to serve is awakened. From seeing the pain and wanting to remove the pain, we move through the "impossibility of the task" barrier to feeling the pain afresh and being ready to offer our contribution, however small, with heart and mind for the healing of the world. This pain never ends but is mitigated in service, and forms, as pain so often does, the underlying rhythm of our existence, the theme song for fulfilling our destiny. Whilst personality pain we work through in order to leave behind, spiritual pain ever beckons us on to new levels of being, wider dimensions of consciousness, fuller expression of our Godhead.

7. Crisis

Most often this is a situation where the personal warnings of pain have been ignored for so long that a larger manifestation of pain is precipitated into the outer environment; pain has been left to breed and multiply until it explodes spatially into a crisis. If we cannot heed the voice of pain, then crisis will shout! Pain is a warning, crisis is the manifestation (physical, emotional, mental) of what that warning was about. Had the warnings of pain been heeded, crisis perhaps would not have been necessary. Crisis often functions to break down illusions (mental) or distortions (emotional) and is a natural extension/expansion of an unresolved or un-faced mental or emotional or physical pain.

By the time crisis emerges, continued resistance to pain has made the structure due for change quite rigid and that is why crises are often so devastating and "shattering" – the hardened shell of protection against pain has to be broken if not by the tap of pain then by the mallet of crisis.

This is a death and rebirth set up again but more obvious and dramatic because there has been, in crisis, much more entrenchment into rigid form and the giving up or shattering of that is therefore proportionately greater. The dissonance between what is and what could be, always precipitates some level of change. Old form must break down when it has been outgrown and become obsolete so that the new may emerge. The old energy held back in the old form is then freed up for the use of the superconscious in the forming of the new pattern of consciousness one step clearer to the Self.

Some crises cannot be worked out, they have to be experienced and lived out. Sometimes time is the only thing necessary for a crisis to resolve itself or be dealt with or be completed, "time heals".

Though we cannot always change the outer circumstances of crisis, we can always change the inner response i.e. our attitude to the situation; the value we give it; whether or not we are prepared to utilise it, find purpose etc.

In crisis a creative act of will is required — an active search for the best way to utilise the situation, find purpose etc. First one must bless the obstacle (this is the affirmation of one's commitment to finding the inherent purpose and meaning in the situation, and is an expression of faith and trust), then accept it, and then adventure into the situation and extract the latent creativity within it. Once the heart is open to a crisis the transformation is very swift, acceptance starts a chain reaction of change, and when head and heart work in unison on a crisis it doesn't stand a chance, it cannot hold out against that — transformation can manifest in seconds.

Whatever you are identified with you have essentially outgrown, so giving up and letting go of the old is a very important part of crisis resolution. Use of the will is necessary here too. Through an act of will you can let go and allow things to happen, you can set your concrete mind aside and agree to co-operate with the cosmos. One of the biggest obstacles in a crisis is the concrete mind because that always wants to maintain the status quo and hang on to the old. The concrete mind is no help to start with, but invaluable later when a course of action has been intuited.

In crisis there is often plenty of awareness — that is what crisis is all about, forcing us to be aware! but a trap one can fall into is using the crisis to define oneself and making it a *raison d'être* for one's existence or the reason for one's position in life, a creator of oneself. One can be created by one's crisis in this way and define oneself by that crisis and be perpetually in the role of 'person in crisis'. In a sense here one needs the crisis to continue to give purpose to one's life; the endless struggle with this crisis is why I am alive (drugs, war, too much work etc.). Crisis in this sense gives us identity and meaning so our will must be used here to let go of the definition of oneself that has come essentially to include the concept of crisis.

The carrying out of this act of will in letting go of the necessity for crisis in one's life immediately increases the pain since one must then take responsibility for oneself rather than submit to fate, must own one's own power and learn a new way of relating to life. But this new pain is a creative pain, one to be welcomed with joy, it is the pain of growth rather than the pain of resistance and rigidity, it is the progressive, positive pain of movement forward into a new dimension of living. It is when this pain is felt and accepted that we can experience crisis and yet learn at the same time to observe it from a higher, detached perspective and perhaps come to perceive the dynamics and deep structure of it.

Once the will is employed in these ways we become **cause** in the crisis, not just effect, we can be creator and find value and meaning in the crisis, rather than just be the victim. We have chosen to accept the crisis, made the choice to own the crisis as "my crisis", "my creation", made the choice to have the crisis and in it become the creator, drawing full value and meaning from it and renouncing the seductive yet stifling victim energy. Then and only then can crisis show its other side — harmony.

8. Failure

This is the final step in the journey of pain. It is when we are so deaf that even crisis is not heard and the shout of crisis turns into the whimper of failure. The invitation of pain then crisis has been stoutly resisted to the bitter end and the determined refusal to budge from our entrenched position results in failure.

To utilise this situation is somewhat different because prior to failure we always had the chance to redeem the outer and inner situation to a greater or lesser degree, however redemption as such is no longer possible once failure has manifested so all we can do now is learn from our mistakes and that is no bad thing. We can learn that the source of true self nourishment is inside us, not outside. We can learn that life does not do to us but we do life; that things do not happen to us but we happen things! Out of failure at least we can understand that we **could have** been the creator, not the victim, we **could have** been the cause, not effect. In fact one can learn sometimes more of the dynamics from seeing pain right through once to the ultimate failure than we could by narrowly averting crisis at the eleventh hour, time and time again.

So even in failure there is the positive element, just as much creative potential to be drawn out. In pain and crisis the view point is forward, with failure it is from acceptance, consolidation and reflection on the past that we extract the vital creative element. Having done this we still move forward from the new position.

So it is never too late. We can always align ourselves with the creative element, it just depends on how drawn out we care to make our growth/healing — the more resistant we are the longer and more painful it will be, but a creative outcome is ever available for us to choose to bring about. And if, after all the resisting, we find and take into ourselves the creation within failure – well that is indeed victory.