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The raw soul

60 million people are fleeing today. They have experienced horrors, which pose huge challenges as traumata. When one encounters a wounded soul, the natural way of acting is often not helpful. What should one know, what can one do?

Great artists often have traumatic backgrounds. So began trauma for Pablo Picasso already on his first day of life. He was born close to death. His mother was distraught, his father not there. His uncle came into the birth room to comfort his sister—and did, what today would be unthinkable, bowed with burning cigar in his mouth to his sister to kiss her on the forehead. While doing so, the embers touched the lifeless Pablo, who then began to scream. Pablo was already a celebrated artist at just 16 years old. He founded his very own style but not before his friend with whom he shared an atelier took his own life. His adrift friend followed a piece of advice from Pablo, which brought him into a desperate state and drove him to suicide. Picasso was able to process his deep sorrow by beginning his blue and rose periods. For seven years, he transformed his pain artistically. What we today call the “world of Picasso”, its origins are traumatic experiences. When such beneficial processes are not present, such experiences can cause illness. Here not only art rescues people, but also the surroundings: One imagines Salvatore Dali, who could not have enjoyed life in art. In this way a traumatic experience can, when coped with, relax the constitution and extraordinary artistic or social abilities break forth. In this way, what in some appears as a sickness, in others, promotes existing talent and with favourable conditions allows an ability to be expressed. Therefore it never stops being our obligation to build up protection factors.

The traumatic wave

If one can dissolve the torpor in which the soul enters, then the soul makes a wave movement. The pain frees itself. There is crying. There are cultures where it is expected that a widow, after the death of her husband, screams and spreads ashes over her skin. The neighbours come during this act and join in on her sorrow. This is wise, because one can express pain this way. We live in a culture in which we hardly appreciate someone expressing their pain at all. I accompanied a married couple as a doctor. The 80-year old man suffered from an incurable tumour. One day I was called, it had come so far. At the bed knelt his crying wife. She knew it was the end, but now the grief broke out. The daughter in law searched around in her bag for a tablet. “What do you want to give your mother?” I asked. „An anti-depressive, don’t you see that she is crying!“ This is how it is in our culture! We try to rationalise pain or suppress it with tablets or alcohol. The truth is: The less pain is expressed, the more it drags on.

Then coping continues with a quieter phase. Especially children tend to act as if nothing has happened. The parents are separated and the child still covers for the father and places gifts for him under the tree. Then the child notices, that this does not benefit the mother, because she tries to continue on without the partner. Then the child suppresses his needs, the symptoms cannot be expressed, and again the trauma drags on. A phase follows in which triggers can out of the blue reactivate the pain.

An example: A child experienced violence from someone who was wearing a red sweatshirt at the time of the attack. Now he encounters someone wearing the same colour: the situation is as before. But instead of freezing like before, he can now defend himself. Now he is free, that is great! For his surroundings it seems of course very unusual and for the person with the red sweatshirt very strange. His milieu experiences this as aversive behaviour. And again we tend to suppress this outburst. These are behavioural patterns by which the destructive prevails.

The king’s son under the bear skin

A fourth phase follows in which the child can start to reorient himself, take up friendships again, and is perhaps able to ask his parents why they separated. The mother though, who was able to more quickly process the pain, probably doesn’t want to reopen old wounds. This causes the mother to seem annoyed and she does not show interest. This avoidance in turn once again delays healing. The spontaneous instinctive reactions from adults towards the traumatised child are mostly inverted. Here it is a matter of the traumatised child being allowed and able to express himself. Because many are not able to do this verbally, they express themselves with aversive behaviour. But exactly for this kind of expression we have very little understanding.

In this instance that counts, what in trauma pedagogy infinitely important is: In the Brother Grimm fairy-tale snow white and rose red a bear appears which the children are afraid of. But the bear gets stuck with his fur on thorns, he tears open and the children witness how a king’s son emerges. This is the image, which shouldn’t be forgotten. What encounters us as aversive behaviour, which one finds to be abnormal, incorrect, and brash, that is the bear skin which hides the king’s son. As soon as we as trauma pedagogues forget this, we

have lost. We work with the king's son, we want to nourish him, because the more powerful he becomes, the less he needs his bear skin.

The Bremen Town Musicians

In order to sketch the anthropology of trauma, it is apt to invoke the Bremen Town Musicians. It is about four animals who at the beginning of the fairy-tale are in a sorry state. The donkey is supposed to be removed from feed, the dog beaten, the cat drowned, and the rooster should land in the soup.

During the course of the fairy-tale they get to know each other and find their order towards each other. Together they become creative and "healthy" again.

The donkey carries the load, the sack of wheat from the farmer. Like in the physical body of humans, here stability is important. Bones, muscles, and boundaries defined by skin are tools involved in thousands of processes. Like as described in the swarm theory, these individual processes pull together in one direction in order to make performance output capacity possible.

The dog is always friendly, always full of expectation. He is the only family member who is always happy to see you when you come home. Whether seeing eye dog or avalanche rescue dog: dogs want humans to be well. "Life without a dog is possible, but senseless", remarked the comic Lorient.

It is the "dog" in people, who after an exhausting day can summon up new energy at night, like the dog fetches the stick. It is an entity, which comparable to the watch dog is named "immune system", which holds the organs together like a shepherd dog the sheep.

The cat prowls around at night and hunts, from mice to squirrels, all the cute little animals. She hunts not out of hunger but out of her aggressive nature. What later lies purring on the armchair, prowls around at night with a desire to kill. In fairy-tales she also lies on warm ovens. The cat reminds us of the entity in humans, which is not there at night: the human soul, when the conscious lapses into sleep. If the consciousness is awake, one tends to perceive the world and to evaluate every perception as pleasant or unpleasant. From this results actions, either we run to or from, turn ourselves towards or away.

The rooster stands on the summit of the four animals. He sees the light in the robbers' house and leads the group. After arriving, he looks into the window and suggests stacking on top of one another and charging in at his

command to frighten away the robbers. It is the rooster, who predicts the weather, who can see beyond the day and does not only react immediately to perception – an image of the human ego.

In the moment of shock

From a spiritual perspective is therefore the donkey the image of the body which provides for stability and orientation in place and time through memory. It is the dog, who as image of liveliness defines the adaptability, integrity, and attention of the soul. Concentration and sentience characterise the life of the soul. That is the cat. The rooster determines ultimately the biography's goal direction, what lends one's own life identity. A traumatic experience disturbs now these four systems. The Bremen Town Musicians sway. At the beginning of a trauma there is the shock, the rigor. With wide -open eyes, one stares at the incomprehensible which floods over the soul. The soul is motionless in high stress: blood pressure and stroke volume rise, breathing becomes deeper, pulse rate quickens. Fat reserves are mobilised as the brain and muscles are supplied with sugar. But this maximal strength, which the body now mobilises for flight and fight, cannot be turned outward during shock rigor but rather travels inward with consequences for the whole biography. "Bio"-graphy here alludes to the development of the body. It makes an ascending development until 30 years old, in order to then slowly lose strength and vitality. This differs from the soul development. It separates from physical development; we win little by little autonomy from physical processes.

In childhood and adolescence strength of body, soul, and mind are coherent. Healthy physical and intellectual development are requirements for spiritual development. Synergy forces affect. In adulthood the soul begins to separate from the body. If this process does not occur correctly, psychosomatic illnesses result. The body reacts to spiritual need. This is very often the case with traumatised people. At an age, when physical functions decline we can endure it, then follow degradation of soul and mind. Or one seizes the chance to achieve a renunciation, and can then experience a leap in spiritual development. What happens now, if a traumatic experience occurs in childhood? Development continues, but provinces of the soul stay frozen in the childish stage.

The sun shines for me

A child naturally thinks that his own parents exist for him. He cannot imagine that they have their own biographies. "Subject centred" is what we call this perspective. When this thinking remains and one at advanced age stills has this belief and therefore experiences a part of the world as subject centred, they may experience anxiety and fear. Because being an anxious person means taking on the misfortune of the world. At the same time it is the nature of the artist! He has implemented this ego-centred potential creatively. Picasso was nevertheless an anxious person and we admire in his works this childish perspective. A part of the soul stays behind after a traumatic experience, which must then later mature.

The brain regions responsible for memory now also experience the shock and the earlier this happens, the greater brain growth can be stagnated. A reduction in brain matter of up to 20 percent has been measured. This affects in the image of the Bremen Town Musicians the donkey, who is responsible for memory abilities in the body. The dog is also affected: attention can constrict, in children growth, digestion, and sleep, the life processes, can be disturbed. Also language formation and emotional life – the cat in us – are compromised. The ability to contextualise the experiences and to integrate them for our self image is minimized. All of these disorders threaten now to stay with us. Anyone who has ever slipped in the mountains knows the phenomenon of reacting unconsciously to danger. Controlled action decreases and the "amygdala" in the brain takes over decision making. If this control switch stays on, a pattern of action threatens to emerge. "Fire together – wire together" is what this memorisation is called in neurology. At every instance, the neuronal structures fire anew like during the shock event and cause a reflexive action pattern. Here is pedagogy called for, because the soul can no longer integrate its powers on its own. The biography's central theme rips apart. Since the memories cannot be contextualised, they live as shreds of memory in the soul. Whereas in healthy memory life the events weave themselves into a rug, after a trauma stand smells, words, and images isolated in the inner landscape and arise suddenly as flashbacks – a scream, flowing blood. On the intellectual level, isolation, depression, or identity disorders result and escape in the form of addiction. The ego experiences deep helplessness. Before I was this person, but that is broken. Who am I then now? Deep identity crisis. To experience oneself as

a victim means one's identity develops not through self-determination but through external determination. This is especially the case with sexual traumata. Here the entire sense of ego has been created by another person; the identity is totally shaken or even destroyed. In a human identity belong positive as well as negative sides of one's personality, and when one loves, one can connect these polar sides with other people. "A tree whose crown towers into the sky, he must root himself in hell" said Nietzsche. Goethe's formulation: "Noble is the man, helpful and good", brings to mind a tree crown without roots. A quote from C.G. Jung is on the other hand redeeming: "I would rather be whole than good." This means, that it is a part of soul life to be able to deal with opposing emotions, here to be able to hold the scale. If due to a trauma destructive emotions now outweigh in the soul, then the ego cannot feel at home in the soul, because the soul reacts reflexively negatively. We stand next to it and cannot intervene, are estranged from the soul.

The safe place

The refugees must now conform and adapt to a new culture, but the trauma has greatly damaged their ability to adapt. How much more attention and help do they need therefore than guest workers in the past? This is not done with a water bottle as welcome gift at the train station. It takes years. Now they will be crammed into tent cities, where traumatised people pull each other down.

Rudolf Steiner was asked after a medical lecture, what he understood shock to be. He named a surprising example. A nine year old child comes back to school after a longer illness "too early" with still weakened life forces and now encounters a grumpy teacher, who looks for a chair or notebook instead of being happy that the child is back. He is too small to pardon the gruff behaviour of the teacher and can therefore suffer a shock from it. The wave of a traumatic experience can therefore lie extremely deep.

A trauma can also be experienced unconsciously. A patient of mine had aborted her child after it was determined that a twin was on the way. The child took on all the stress hormones of the mother. It had experienced the lost of a sibling before birth. It suffered from asthmatic effects. Traumata in the first septennial can often lead to chronic infectious bowel disease, traumata in the second septennial to rheumatic. The trauma mustn't necessarily go into the soul; it can also

grip the body. In any case, the relationship between the self and the world is disordered. Something like a curtain to the world is built.

What should help now look like? First: protect and stabilise. Producing a safe location is infinitely important. On the Philippines this is perhaps only a sun protection, a tree. It is a matter of housing oneself again, finding a home and also learning to feel well again in the soul and ultimately to be able to find oneself in one's personality. To feel one's own body again playfully. Perhaps one does an embrocation, sees to new clothes. In a traumatic situation it is important to experience the body as our best friend again.

We must therefore ensure that we come back to normal life as quickly as possible. This is why crisis interventionists do not talk with affect persons about the event. Rather they talk about soccer or the weather in order to recreate a connection with the old world. We try to build up positive feelings. Here stories are an extraordinary aid, less so dramatic stories. When talking about a castle, then we paint its powerful walls, tell about the drawbridges which are only let down for guests. One can paint the castle, build it from clay. Then this castle becomes an inner, imaginary place. For this reason we work at our emergency pedagogy missions together with „Tellers without Borders“. They help pedagogues on location in finding the right stories. All of this serves the message you are not perverse, but rather what you experienced is perverse. In the area of time, rhythm is the safe place. Rhythm plays a important roll in Waldorf pedagogy for a good reason. A subject like Eurhythmy serves to develop rhythmic competences. Stress and even more toxic stress are, like light, rhythmic impulse givers. Therefore experiencing stress brings chaos to the rhythmic organisation and this in turn leads to exhaustion. Therefore routine sleep and

meals, and rhythmically designed surroundings are very important in trauma therapy. He who finds "his" rhythm on a bicycling trip wins enormous power. Rhythm is an adaptive power which characteristically connects opposites. That is what really matters: Bringing opposites into balance.

We don't address terrible experiences, rather we wait until they come up by itself. Erich Maria Remarque described in „All Quiet on the Western Front“, how he avoided places where people asked him „what was it like on the front? “ He feared the telling could again continue in the soul. But we confront wrong behaviour and good experiences. If we pick up the habit of taking a pretty leaf home from every walk and laying out in the home, than we can be reminded on the next day of the pretty walk. Good experiences are not over and done, but rather further lived out. For this we need memorials. Everything that makes experiencing autonomy, self determination, and self efficacy possible is good. Anthropologist Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt made of good observation in a people far away from our civilisation. A boy had pita bread and his sister didn't have any, but he doesn't want to give it up. What would happen in our society? The mother would tear it apart and give each child one half. But here it is different: The mother tore the bread in half but gave both halves back to the boy. The boy hesitated, then beamed across his whole face and gave his sister a half. This allowed for an experience of self-efficacy. That is it: As little as necessary, but as much as possible to help.

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