

Pathways

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“Dare to go forward”

Rothschild

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Life as a Transformative Process

Seems obvious, no?

We all seem to get the notion that the only constant in the universe is change. Just look in the mirror, or, if you have them, watch your children for a few years and you'll get that one. What I want to know, however, is: How much do we fully, actively, whole-heartedly embrace the notion of transformation as a natural and inevitable function of living?

Witness our feelings of nostalgia for the way things were. How often do we meet life from a place where we want things to remain the way they were (if we enjoyed them) and we want things to change (if we didn't)?

So from my current vantage point in life, it seems that transformation is about embracing the unknown and also letting go of the known.

But what exactly *is* a life of transformation?

From a molecular and energetic level I am in a constant state of transformation. All the cells of my body die and new ones are generated...every moment of every day. During that process, all the atoms in my body are replaced on an ongoing basis, but completely out of my awareness. Curiously though, **I** (as an aging human) remain, my thoughts, my memories, hopes and dreams, the energies with which I resonate...they all remain, even as I am chemically rebuilt in every second of my existence, one

atom and one cell at a time.

In a very real sense then, I am not the person I was this time last year. So how is it that the things that make me, me, don't change so quickly? How is it that the essential things that you would recognize as my personality remain predominately unaltered through this chemical transformation? And, from a biological perspective, if I am in a constant state of being re-made, repaired and rebuilt at a molecular and cellular level...why do I age? O.K., let's leave that one alone and focus on the notion of personal change.

What is it that provides the continuity of being, in the face of an ongoing process of growing and aging? What is truly interesting to me here is the question of what is it that allows me to transform, and embrace new vistas of awareness and personal growth in life?

How is it, for instance, that any of us can choose to do something totally novel, something for which we have no previous preparation and something that can even challenge some of our deepest core beliefs about ourselves?

What is it that causes a stimulus in one person to be greeted by a flexibility and willingness to embrace the unknown and in another person is met by a debilitating fear of the unknown that results in an inflexibility to try

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something new at any cost? And how much are each of us a bit of both?

Then of course, if we think about last month's article about pain and pleasure (which for me, as I write, was just a couple of days ago)...How much is change either painful, pleasurable or just blah? Again, it can be any of that for all of us, depending upon the exact circumstances of the change and our perspective of the change.

Wow...that was a long intro.

So let's take the notion that life is about continually learning, growing and a reinvention of self. What effect does that have on our perspectives of reality and time?

For me, at least, the first thing that enters my mind is that no matter how wonderful or traumatic a past event might have been, it is in fact that...a past event. I have been changed by the event and it is now, no longer here, except insofar as I cling to it and carry it with me. But just as surely, every event in my life has created change and given me an opportunity to learn something new about living and being.

So here's the interesting thing. What I think about something that happened in the past, will most definitely affect how I *enter* my future. Perhaps

in some ways, the present is where I process the past in preparation for the future.

What this means in very real terms is that I contextualize and therefore set intention about my future events before I ever get there. Put another way, I have made a judgment about you before we ever meet, purely because I have filters that impact how I will perceive you (and vice versa) when we do actually meet.

So if I perceive some event or person in my past as deeply traumatic, I will tend to either avoid similar types of events or people, or build defense mechanisms to protect me from them if they happen again. Perhaps I will develop a fear, perhaps I will avoid looking at the past events and repress the memories, perhaps I will feel wronged and get angry, or repress my anger and let it distill into a deeper more intractable rage. Conversely, I might view the trauma as an opportunity to learn something about the nature of the world, my perceptions of it and my place within it. Perhaps I will develop a deeper sense of personal awareness, higher states of empathy and compassion for those in similar situations. As Nietzsche suggests, if we are not consumed by an event we are made

more resilient by it.

Perhaps then, the trauma was not what I thought it was in the moment of experience, perhaps it was a gift of potential transformation. Perhaps it was an opportunity to step into a greater sense of personal awareness.

On the other side of the issue, we can look at moments of great joy in exactly the same way. Instead of clinging to them, we can create a position of deep gratitude and let them go. I find that in these sorts of environments, I move into a position of profound awe for the universe in which I move and am a part.

But I digress...a little.

Where the rubber hits the road though, is right here, right now, in this moment...the only moment I truly know that is mine.

The past is a series of memories that are influenced by my perceptions and interpretive stories about them. The future is either a repetition of those stories, or an opportunity to embrace something new.

So what I can **choose** to do here and now, will only be influenced by my past to the extent that I am aware of that influence. If I choose a path of awareness, then the future truly become *terra incognita* and I can enter it without the baggage of my past

“Hope is brightest, when it dawns from fear.”

Sir Walter Scott

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influencing how I might choose to be when I get there.

That's not to say that I ignore my memories, I simply choose not to give them the power to limit my choices as I step through the present into a field of new experiences.

In a lot of ways this all speaks to intentionality. Do I enter the future from a position of awareness about my intentions or do I not?

On one path I am in a constant state of learning and growing, on the other I will perpetuate and relive my previous experiences.

If I can live in this moment, aware that I am prejudiced by my previous experiences of life and my perceptions about those experiences, then I can also choose to do something different. The moment that I become aware that my entire existence to this point has created a set of complex filters that influence the ways in which I enter the future, I enable myself with a wholly new set of tools.

The new tool set includes things like:

- Curiosity
- Discovery
- Unbiased Enquiry
- Expectation
- Hope
- Faith
- Generosity

• Selflessness

My whole world is changed. Of course, I am also talking about mindful awareness again. I'm talking about seeing the past for what it is and not what we think it was. I'm talking about setting a different sort of intention for living in the present, and I'm talking about truly entering the future as a courageous explorer and pioneer.

You see, my point is simply this:

If you/I/we keep reliving your/my/our past by perpetuating you/my/our perceptions of past events and replaying those same filters over and over, then we are not moving forward or learning something new. We are not, in fact, learning and growing. Rather, we are living a circuitous existence, dictated by our commitment to the way things have been in the past.

If, however, I could truly embrace a line from every investment notice I have ever been sent about my retirement plan funds for a moment: "Past performance is no indication of future behavior in the market."

Except of course, that if I'm interested in building a retirement for my future, and my investments grew by 10% last year, then I'm betting that they will do the same thing this year...and that they will behave according to the laws of economics, compound interest and market place cyclicality.

If none of the rules applied to my investments, why would I ever invest? If I couldn't predict with at least some sense of comfort that my investments will earn interest over time, then perhaps there would be no incentive to save.

So doesn't this fly in the face of everything that I've just been saying?

No, not really.

Remember that I am rebuilding myself every moment of every day...so there is some sort of template that defines how the product emerges, moment-to-moment. Equally though, there is a degree of uncertainty built into the system: I don't know *exactly* what the product will be in the next moment.

All I am capable of doing is setting an intention about what I want that product to be and taking action accordingly. I can then either set my intention as something that comes from my awareness of a desire to engage in some level of pattern change, or I can enter the future completely unaware that the past is controlling what my patterns will look like in the next moment.

The inner landscape of your life will affect how you engage the outer landscape of your experience. What do you know about your own geography? What do you want to do about that?

☺

***"Nothing splendid has ever been achieved
except by those who dared believe
that something inside them was superior to circumstance."***

Bruce Barton

What's the point of Coaching?

Coaching is about learning from the experiences of yesterday, planning for our successful tomorrows, playing the game of life, full-out, with passion, and living fully present, in a larger, more vibrant NOW!



For a 10% discount on a three-month coaching package
contact Chris at:
662 769 5522
or send an e-mail to: chris@thirdpathway.com