

Good evening and welcome to our Full Moon meeting in the sign of Scorpio. And good evening to everyone who is linking up with us via the Internet. Scorpio is a sign of tests and trials, of suffering and eventual triumph, of pain and sensitivity, and we will be exploring some of these themes tonight.

Many of us are probably familiar with the sudden pain from a tooth that is sensitive to heat or cold. It may be the most common example of the experience of pain being linked with the idea of sensitivity. But as we read in *The Light of the Soul*, in general terms, the greater the refinement of the human vehicle, the greater the response of the nervous system to the pairs of opposites, pain and pleasure. This is especially true in the case of aspirants and disciples and is not only to do with physical sensitivity, but extends to the sense of values. The capacity for both physical and emotional pain is greatly increased, and because the response to outer contacts is accelerated, this drives disciples onward in their spiritual search. It is interesting, therefore, to note, that sensory processing sensitivity, a high measure of which defines a highly sensitive person, has only recently been recognised as a psychological phenomenon. Defined in the mid-1990s by psychologists Elaine Aron and her husband Arthur Aron, the trait is measured via a questionnaire, and has been identified in both humans and other species. Elaine Aron's 1996 book *The Highly Sensitive Person* defined a population of people having "increased sensitivity to stimulation" and who "are more aware of subtleties and process information in a deeper, more reflective way." In 1997 Elaine and Arthur Aron formally identified sensory processing sensitivity (SPS), the scientific term for highly sensitive or hypersensitivity, as the defining trait of highly sensitive persons. They note that *sensory processing* here refers not to the sense organs as such, but to what occurs as sensory information is transmitted to or processed in the brain. The trait has been described as "neither flaw nor gift, ... an amplifier of an environment's effects."

Aron's professional journal articles and self-help publications have focused on distinguishing high SPS from socially reticent behavior and disorders with which high SPS can be confused; overcoming the social unacceptability that can cause low self-esteem; and emphasizing the advantages of high SPS to balance the disadvantages emphasized by others. In 2015, the first International Scientific Conference on High Sensitivity or Sensory Processing Sensitivity was held in Belgium. By some estimates, around 20% of the population can be classified as highly sensitive.

Viewed from the esoteric angle, does this mean that 20% of the population are aspirants or disciples? It would certainly be nice to think so, although the figure is likely to be somewhat lower. Still, it is intriguing that this phenomenon is being openly acknowledged by science at a time when the Ageless Wisdom predicts there will be more and more people stepping on to the path of discipleship, and also predicts the emergence of such abilities as etheric vision. In fact, the Tibetan talks of the emergence of this power in terms which suggest that it occurs through a process of purification. He says:

"The dense physical forms are an illusion because they are due to the reaction of the eye to those forces about which we have been speaking. Etheric vision, or the power to see energy-substance, is true vision for the human being, just as the etheric is the true form. But until the race is further evolved, the eye is aware of, and responds to the heavier vibration only. Gradually it will shake itself free from the lower and coarser reactions, and become an organ of true vision. It might be of interest here to remember the occult fact that as the atoms in the physical body of the human being pursue their evolution, they pass on and on to ever better forms, and eventually find their place within the eye, first of animals and then of man. This is the highest dense form into which they are built, and marks the consummation of the atom of *dense matter*." (*A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* pp.1096-7)

Let's pause for a short silence, and then we will say together the Affirmation of the Disciple:

I am a point of light within a greater Light.
I am a strand of loving energy within the stream of Love divine.
I am a point of sacrificial Fire, focused within the fiery Will of God.
And thus I stand.

I am a way by which men may achieve.
I am a source of strength, enabling them to stand.
I am a beam of light, shining upon their way.
And thus I stand.

And standing thus, revolve
And tread this way the ways of men,
And know the ways of God.
And thus I stand.

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So we might well ask if there is a deeper reason why progress along the path of discipleship leads to the experience of pain through heightened sensitivity. Part of the answer lies in a mystery which involves Mars, the planet which is both the personality and the soul ruler of Scorpio; and not just Mars, but also the Earth, and the great third ray planet, Saturn. When I was preparing this talk, I was checking the rulers for Scorpio in the table in *Esoteric Astrology*, and I noticed that not just in Scorpio, but also in the next two signs and the preceding sign, there are a number of instances of Saturn and Mars as rulers. Whether this is connected with the mystery is certainly an intriguing question – but I'll stop being mysterious now and tell you what the mystery is! In *A Treatise on the Seven Rays* Vol.II, we learn that, "Saturn, Mars and our Earth constitute, in a curious esoteric manner, the personality of a stupendous ray Life, Whose energy is that of the third Ray." (pp.98-9). The Tibetan states that:

- "1. The mental body expresses itself through the medium of the planet Saturn.
2. The astral body expresses itself through the planet Mars.
3. The physical body expresses itself through the planet Earth." (*op. cit.* p.99)

And here is the key point: "Only three planetary schemes are aware of pain and sorrow as we understand those terms; none of them know it so well or feel it so much as does our planetary Logos." (*op. cit.* p.99) He goes on to say: "Pain and sorrow are the result of rebellion, and of divine discontent. The instinct to betterment, based on discontent, has necessarily involved the planetary temperament or attitude which recognises the dualities." (*op. cit.* p.99) Earlier on, the Tibetan notes that "The great stream of living energy which is manifesting itself in our Earth scheme of evolution is conditioned by a temperament, an attitude and an orientation that is that of a 'Divine Rebel.' **It is only rebellion that produces pain and sorrow**, but this rebellion is inherent and innate in the Deity of our planet Himself, the 'One in Whom we live and move and have our being.' It is, therefore, a tendency greater than the individual unit." (*op. cit.* pp.97-8 **emph. added**)

So pain is unavoidable for all conscious beings on our planet, although the lower kingdoms experience it differently than humanity. And the potential to suffer pain intensifies as one progresses...until a certain point, which we will get to later on. What, one might rightly ask, is the purpose of this suffering? Again, the answer is a mystery – it is said that, "the contribution of these three great planetary Lives, as They embody pre-eminently the Law of Sacrifice, through pain and rebellion, is a major contribution to the whole, and greatly enriches the sum total. The units of divine life and the atoms of electrical energy who pass through these three planetary schemes are subject to them **in order to acquire that psychic sensitivity which would otherwise be impossible.**" (*op. cit.* pp.100-101, **emph. added**) So again, the ideas of pain and sensitivity are intertwined, and in a very profound manner.

The extension of this sensitivity to pain beyond the little self, to the compassionate recognition of others' suffering, and the desire to alleviate it, is one of the hallmarks of the discipleship path. As the Tibetan notes, the Hierarchy are looking for "dedication to the needs of humanity in these days of human agony; this involves a sensitivity to world pain as it demonstrates from day to day in world affairs; it requires also a 'divine indifference' to outer events in the life of the little self and a sense of proportion which enables the disciple to see his little personal affairs—physical, emotional and mental—in terms of the whole." (*Discipleship in the New Age* Vol.I, pp.737-8)

In *Discipleship in the New Age* Vol.II, the Tibetan discusses this with one of His group: "I would remind you that pain, when it is lived out mentally for others, is the worst kind of pain... But I would remind you that the capacity so to do and so to identify yourself with pain that is not specifically your own is something that all disciples have to master, because it is one of the first steps towards shouldering world pain and the agony of the human family, thus becoming a participant in the 'fellowship of Christ's sufferings' and a lifter of world burdens... [Disciples] must wait for understanding until they can no longer be hurt or limited by the pain of others. This follows when we have learnt to handle our own pain. Then and only then can [disciples] begin to lift the burden of humanity as a whole and do their responsible share in lightening it." (*Discipleship in the New Age* Vol.II, p.650)

The process of transcending pain and pleasure is one that is gradually accomplished. The Tibetan explains that some temporary measure of freedom is found by mystics and initiates when any feeling is carried forward to the point of sublimation: at which point "...the mechanism of suffering and the ability to register sensuous perception is transcended, and momentarily the [disciple] escapes on to the plane of unity. Here there is no pain, no sorrow, no rebellion and no suffering. When the living, vibrating [antahkarana] or bridge is built, this 'way of escape' becomes the normal path of life. Escape from pain is then automatic, for the centre of consciousness is elsewhere... where the [antahkarana] is not a consummated, established fact, the tiny thread of the partially constructed 'way of escape', under tremendous pressure and excitation, shoots forward like a quivering band of light, and momentarily touches the light that is the Self... But it does not last, and cannot be *consciously* recovered until the third initiation has been taken. After that the 'way of escape' becomes the 'way of daily livingness'.... Then pain is steadily transcended, and the pairs of opposites—pleasure and pain—have no longer any hold over the disciple." (*A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* p.102-3)

Another dimension of the increasing psychic sensitivity of the disciple is a deepening recognition of the truth as it is revealed in the Plan, and an understanding, through the creative imagination, of what may happen if the Plan does not work out as it should. We can regard some of the dystopic visions of science fiction as examples of this. For example, in the recent movie *Bladerunner 2049*, we see an Earth on life support, with human sustenance only made possible by blanketing the land with technologically enhanced agriculture, and using humanoid robots as slave labour. The climate also appears to be deeply dysfunctional. Such an intensified alienation between the lower kingdoms and humanity is clearly at variance with humanity's appointed role within the Plan of creating right relations between the higher and lower kingdoms. Such bleak visions have their place as a warning; but disciples must also strive to use their expanding sensitivity to the Plan to find creative ways to present compelling positive alternatives.

In *The Labours of Hercules*, the labour for Scorpio is the destruction of the Lernean Hydra. This nine-headed monster dwelt amidst the poisonous miasmas of the Lernean bog or swamp. Metaphorically speaking, a bog, which is a turbid mix of stagnant or slow-moving water, earth, and air can be interpreted as symbolising the three aspects of an impure personality, vibrating at a low frequency. From another angle, a bog is a place of uncertain footing, where every step can lead to injury or, perhaps even worse, becoming immobilised in a quagmire. And the mixing of earth and stagnant water and rotting vegetation can lead to fumes poisoning even the air or the mental plane. This swamp gas has been identified as the cause of the deceptive will-o'-the-wisp, a ghostly light that seems to recede as a traveller approaches, thus potentially luring them from the safe path. In literature, will-o'-the-wisp sometimes has a metaphorical meaning, describing a hope or goal that leads one on but is impossible to reach, or something one finds sinister and confounding. The idea of a spurious vision of greatness that leads one onto uncertain and shifting ground, where facts cannot be trusted, has an unfortunately familiar ring in our current political climate. Also, the multiplication of the Hydra's heads **when it is attacked on its own level** is queasily reminiscent of the multiplication of excuses and mis-directions and outright fabrications that can flow from untrustworthy sources. What society needs is a firm foundation from which to work – truth on the physical plane – believable facts. This is why the integrity and independence of the press is a matter of great and growing importance. And perhaps this is one of the elements behind the symbolism that when Hercules defeated the Hydra, he buried its immortal head beneath a rock.

So how does the disciple find his way out of the bog? As mentioned earlier, Scorpio is a sign of testing, and there are three tests for each of the planes of the personality, in which faults are exposed and finally

transcended. For each plane there are three faults or points of weakness, that must be re-made into strengths. For the physical plane, these are sex, comfort and money. Certainly, we can see how an unregulated desire for any of these aspects of existence is a problem, for seeking only pleasure will inevitably produce only pain. Balancing between the pairs of opposites, and finding ways to re-direct these energies in service, is the way forward. In the case of sex, for example, the well-known re-direction that must take place is from the sacral centre to the throat centre, transforming the power to create physical forms into the power to create, at will, forms that can embody the Divine Ideas of the Plan. The terrible consequences of the mis-direction of sexual energy, in combination with financial power, have become increasingly obvious of late, with the revelations about Harvey Weinstein and other powerful figures. And the use of excess money to manufacture objects and experiences of increasingly decadent luxury is likewise all too evident.

The challenges of the astral plane involve fear, hatred, and desire for power (ambition, in other words). Again, it is as if a dark mirror is being held up to our current times. As the disciple learns to elevate consciousness, like Hercules elevating the Hydra, into the light of the soul, all the phantom fears that concern the personality are dissipated, hatreds are transformed into a repudiation of the unreal and the untrue, and ambition is transfigured into spiritual ambition on behalf of the Whole.

Finally, there are the challenges of the mental plane, involving pride, cruelty and separateness. It is interesting to note that yet another sign of the times is that of a public protest that involves kneeling, which implies the deeply spiritual attitude of humility, the opposite of pride. It also links Scorpio with Capricorn, since Scorpio is the sign in which Hercules kneels to conquer by elevating the Hydra; and Capricorn is the sign which symbolically governs the knees, for it is said that it is only when one can kneel in all humility to offer one's heart and life to the soul and to human service that one can pass through the door of initiation. This brings us back to the Earth-Mars-Saturn connection, for Saturn is the personality and soul ruler of Capricorn, just as Mars performs the same double role for Scorpio.

So the disciple, and the discipleship group, is charged with the hard tests and trials of a deeply sensitive response to the sufferings of humanity, and through surmounting these trials, grows steadily closer to the point where pain and pleasure themselves are transcended. This is the triumph of the initiatory process. Let's now turn to our part in accelerating this process through our sensitive response to the energy of ideas contacted in meditation. Our seed thought tonight is "Warrior I am and from the battle I emerge triumphant."