

A Primer on Pain

By Thaddeus S. Golas

Functional agreement in proximity is pleasure.

Functional difference in proximity is pain.

This rule of agreement applies in all relations, in all systems, however functions are defined, regardless of metaphysical assumptions.

For this reason, and because I think this rule is more important than anything I have ever written or will write, I am putting aside my own favorite theories as an unnecessary distraction. In doing so, I must also leave aside the supporting reasons for some statements, and I ask the reader's indulgence. For now, I want to pass along this rule and its implications as simply as possible, so that its usefulness and extension by others will not be delayed.

All feelings have two factors: function and distance.

We come close to others for the reward of pleasure, but at that short distance the pain of any functional difference is greater also. We experience the greatest pain in relating to those we love the most. How can pain be minimized?

The general rule is: Be agreeable or go away.

Since increasing distance reduces stress and pain, I am irresistibly tempted to suggest at the start that all family arguments should be conducted at a distance of twenty paces.

At the very least, the shouting will seem reasonable rather than hostile! In the course of our lives, we will always encounter pain and unpleasant emotions.

In the light of the rule of agreement, we can do much to avoid pain or make it as brief as possible.

Perfect functional agreement is not possible between human beings, and we should not expect the impossible from each other. No one person alone is responsible for the pain of a relation.

The pain is in the difference in the behavior of two people, not in the behavior of either one alone.

Knowing this, we can leave off actions that amplify the pain, and address what is really happening, and what can be done.

There is a specific feeling that goes with every specific functional relation.

No feeling can be other than it is while you are functioning in a given way, in relation to others who are functioning in a particular way.

Feelings cannot be governed by concepts.

Ideas and beliefs have no effect on feelings at all, though of course the expression or reception of ideas is a function. We may choose to behave in a certain way on the basis of ideas or information, but it is our function in relation to the functions of others that dictates what we feel.

By the same reasoning, feelings are never evidence that an idea is true or false.

All concepts are emotionally neutral, as is consciousness itself.

Ideas and intentions may be accurate about functional relations or inaccurate – just as we may be conscious of what we are doing or do it mindlessly – without affecting what we will feel in a given relation.

Functions always have priority in determining what we are conscious of at any given time. If there is a strong feeling running, consciousness will be dominated by it. Concepts are a luxury and can be indulged in only when functional relations are sufficiently stable or calm. Strong emotions drive out the free play of thoughts. Therefore, if we wish to govern our experience of life, we will not do so by tinkering with consciousness, but by learning how to manage our functions and feelings.

All agreements are equally pleasurable. In this respect, there is nothing to choose between realities or states of consciousness. We can be happy anywhere in the universe or unhappy anywhere. It all depends on what we find agreeable. The laws of our relations are simple and fair: all functions demonstrate them. There is no such thing as an unlawful function or feeling: the laws cannot be contradicted. Pain is an aspect of those laws. Pain insures that you need never remain near any entity whose functions are different from yours, not in any reality you disagree with. Pain is a signal to agree or go somewhere else. Feelings never lie. Emotions always tell you exactly what your functions are in relation to the functions of other people. If you dismiss your feelings because you prefer your ideas about what is happening or what you think should be happening, to that extent you will behave unrealistically and probably encounter more pain.

Perception is the experience of differences in function. The more you perceive, the less pleasure you feel. The more intense the perception, the more painful it is. Agreements can be felt and known, but cannot be perceived. Perfect functional agreement is invisible. Good feelings grow with agreement: the better you feel and the more you know, the less you perceive. "Love is blind."

Even our tragicomic earthly existence is bathed in pleasures that can be known and felt, but that are invisible to all perceivers and means of perception.

Interestingly, much of science is based on identification and measurement of differences, the proofs of repeatable perceptions, and coherent concepts. What we feel and know is "unreliable" as evidence: it can never be proved by perception. Nevertheless, science does at least recognize that functions are lawful, though presently it cannot acknowledge the greater part of reality. (Personally, I do wish that physicists would stop referring to particles as being "annihilated" when the little buggers are probably just having a wonderful time.)

Pain is much more likely to be experienced because of small functional differences than large ones. The reason is that entities with large differences do not stay in proximity: separating movement is rapid, and any pain is brief.

In order to change your feelings, it is a good idea to see what small changes might be made in what you yourself are doing. It is true that others can change, but you have no control over that. You can try giving them information that you hope will convince them to change, but that can lead to the habit of nagging and warning and complaining – and you will usually be waiting for others to act. Far better to focus on that aspect of your relations that you do control: your own functions.

In general, the more energetic a person is, the more likely it is that he or she will experience frequent or persistent aches and pains. Fashions, fads, and styles – both in apparel and ideas – are extremely significant to energetic souls: it is actually painful for them to differ from a behavioral pattern. As against this, both highbrows and lowbrows are generally indifferent to patterns: their behavior is likely to be constant and unvarying. But there is much more to say about human relations than can be presented here.

Yet certain common human interactions readily come to mind:

Endurance contests: who will give in first?

Cycles of fighting and forgiveness.

The arts of compromise.

The usefulness of go-betweens and arbitrators.

Brainwashing: inflicting so much pain that the victim will agree with anything that is happening when the pain stops.

The emotional relief of absolute agreement with a “superior”, real or imagined.

Revulsion towards those outside a group agreement.

The excitement, transitional pain and anxiety of changing from one agreement to another.

And so forth.

I have not mentioned sickness and physical pain because our most immediate concern is what we can willfully change for ourselves.

And one of the peculiarities of organic life is that we are obliged to perceive disorders in our bodies that we cannot directly control.

As we understand and use the rule of agreement to invoke less emotional pain, it is possible that we will also have fewer occasions of bad health.

The rules may be simple, but life is complicated. No doubt many of us have experienced the shock of learning that we cannot be simultaneously agreeable to everybody.

It is in fact false to assume that you or any being can love all others at all distances all the time.

Love is not a blanket approval from a distance, it is a relation in proximity. Love is a feeling of pleasure, a functional agreement with someone close to you. The reason you can find a lot of love anywhere in any reality is that there are a lot of others like you everywhere. Even in paradise the rule of agreement applies, so we might as well learn how it works now – we might even find that our present reality is much more pleasant than we thought. Recall that all agreements are equally pleasurable: there is no specific person, being, group of people, or way of behaving or believing that owns the pleasure of agreement. You are free to become what you will – you always move to the company of those who are functioning the way you are. If you are hurting now, make a change: be agreeable or move on to where you do feel good.

Repeat it: be agreeable or go away.

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