

the coffee table

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Newsletter layout by Susan Lien Whigham, aka libertygrl

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The Perpetual Wound Book Review by Alex Williams

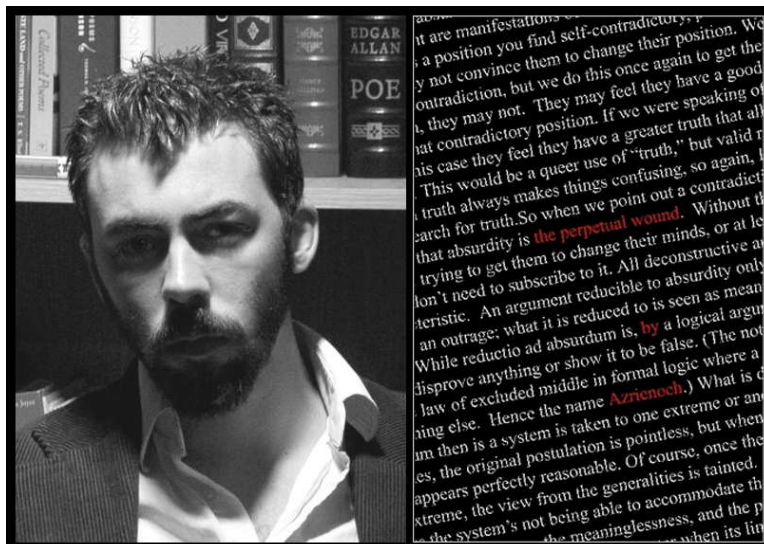
In 'The Perpetual Wound', Azriench makes a clear and powerful attack on the project of traditional philosophy. This project has been the historical attempt to explain reality through the language of reason.

Azriench takes us through the ideas of Descartes and Wittgenstein, Derrida and Camus, to leave us in the only place that he feels we can legitimately philosophize at a fundamental level; this is in his own theory of 'acceptism'. Acceptism is a post-absurdist position which owes much to Camus and Wittgenstein but takes a step further in reconciling us to a world which has not fitted with our metaphysical explanations.

Putting together Wittgenstein's notion that language can never explain the world because it can never refer to it, and Camus' morality of patient rebellion in the face of a nihilistic reality, Azriench leaves us with individual acceptance of our intellectual predicament as the only reasonable outcome, and this is, as I see it, the core idea of acceptism.

I won't try to restate the author's arguments here; suffice to say that Azriench makes a strong case in a variety of ways, and his writing is literary and enjoyable. With a combination of philosophical prose, poetry, and narrative form, a picture of our intellectual predicament is built up which it is hard to disagree with. Maybe we just have to accept it.

Alex Williams



*Photo left: Azriench,
The Perpetual Wound*

The Perpetual Wound is \$13.99 USD,
available for purchase at Lulu.com:
<http://www.lulu.com/content/403949>

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The Role of Metaphor in Recovery from Trauma

By Susan Lien Whigham, aka libertygrl

Chances are good that you or someone you know has experienced some serious trauma. The PTSD Alliance estimates that 70% of adult Americans have experienced at least one traumatic event in their lifetimes, and of these, 20% will go on to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD “can occur following the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or violent personal assaults like rape” (2006).

PTSD manifests by a variety of symptoms, which may include panic attacks, nightmares, insomnia, flashbacks, hallucinations, hypervigilance, avoidance and more (Jaffe & Segal, 2005). It may take days, weeks, months or years for an individual to develop symptoms of PTSD following the traumatic event (NCPTSD, 2006). Brant (2005) mentions the difficulty that many war veterans have in acknowledging their PTSD symptoms due to the stigmas attached to mental health problems and their own fears of appearing weak.

Nonetheless, communication is an important key to recovery. Butler (1997) reports that “Research suggests that trauma survivors can head off long-lasting symptoms by letting friends know what they're going through and by confronting traumatic memories early on”. “Talk to a lot of other people,” says Edna Foa, a PTSD expert (Butler, 1997). Another trauma researcher, Rachel Yehuda, also stresses the importance of communicating to others and not withdrawing. She states that the “really devastating effect of trauma comes about when you damage your ability to relate to your social support system” (Butler, 1997).

The Role of Metaphor

A metaphor is an expression in which one thing is likened to something else with similar characteristics. For example, in Shakespeare’s famous play “Romeo & Juliet”, Romeo exclaims that “Juliet is the sun!” Romeo uses a metaphor to liken the brightness, warmth and power of the sun to how he feels about Juliet. As the audience, we understand intuitively that Romeo does not believe that Juliet is literally the sun.

It’s common for traumatized individuals to use metaphors to express the memories of traumatic events (Amendiola, 1998). As one might imagine, some difficulty may arise when it’s not properly understood that an individual is speaking metaphorically. Additionally, due to the highly sensitive nature of the subject matter, a traumatized individual who is using metaphors is not likely to be able to acknowledge that this is what he or she is doing. For example, imagine that a trauma victim expresses to a loved one that “Lois Lane” was in distress but that “Superman” didn’t come to save her. To try to immediately translate the metaphors into what they may represent will likely prove highly upsetting to the narrator, considering that they were chosen to begin with because they were less emotionally-threatening to discuss. Furthermore, to disregard what she’s trying to express as being false, or delusional, acts as an obstacle to communication and thus impedes her ability to recover.

The question then arises of how to respond to a traumatized individual who is speaking metaphorically. David Grove, a PTSD expert from New Zealand, developed a special methodology which would allow therapists to explore a topic with their clients while preserving the metaphors chosen by their clients to represent traumatic events. He calls this methodology “Clean Language” (also known as “Groviaan Metaphor Therapy”). With “Clean Language”, the therapist responds to the metaphor with questions that continue to respect the client’s chosen mode of expression. For example, if a client expresses that she is a bird who is trapped inside a hole, the therapist may respond by asking questions such as, “And what kind of bird is it?”, or, “And what kind of hole is it?”, or, “And then what happens?” (*continued on page 3*)

(continued from page 2)

Note that when using “Clean Language”, each response is prefaced with the conjunction “And”. This particular phrasing effectively serves to perpetuate the flow of communication. Again, to insist that the client is not a bird or that there is no hole would act as an obstacle to communication and thereby impede recovery.

There is a certain old-fashioned school of thought which dictates that any person expressing “false” perceptions should be “corrected” and forcibly made aware that his perspective differs from the norm. The reality is that it

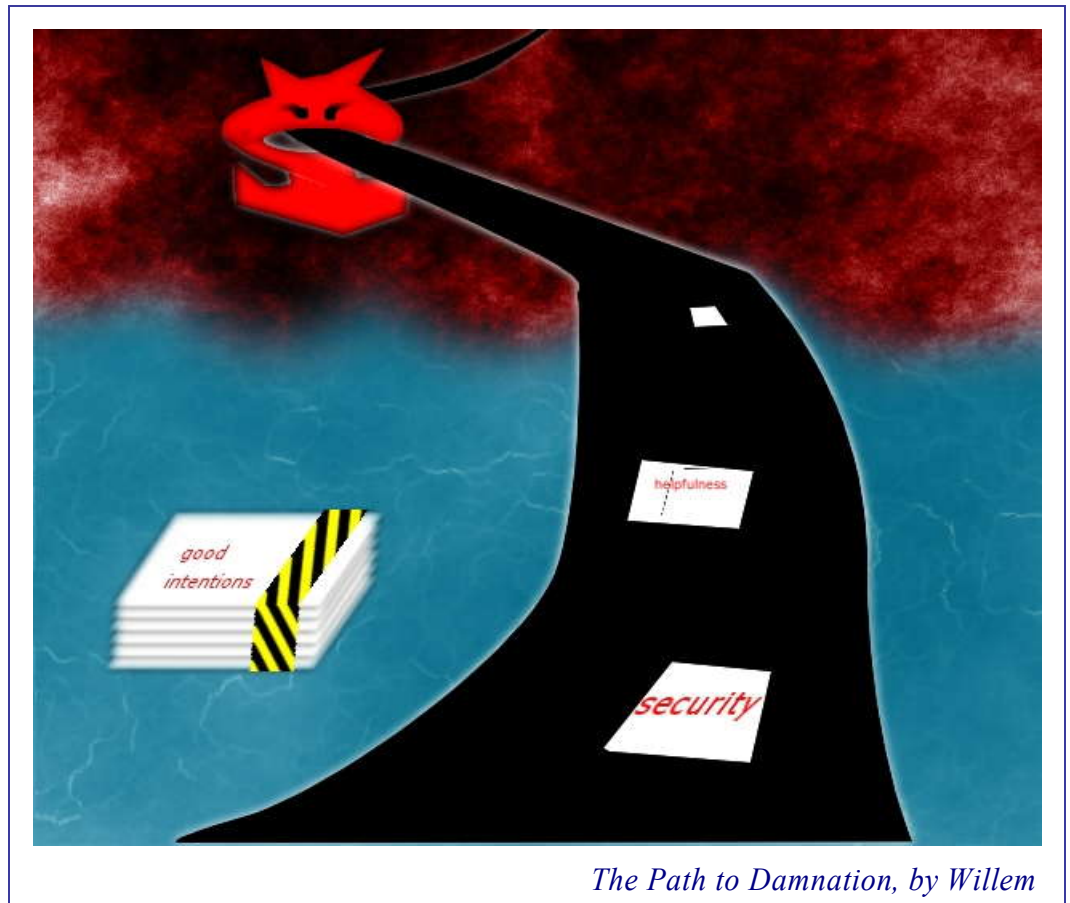
may be more helpful to him to attempt to understand what he is trying to communicate than it will be to insist that he is wrong. This does not mean that one is being dishonest by agreeing to use his choice of metaphor. If a person says that he is a fish, it does not mean that *you* have to perceive him to be a fish. It is only suggested that we try to understand why he perceives *himself* that way. Asking questions such as “What kind of fish?” will reveal more about his train of thought and thus serve to perpetuate communication along with healing.

Conclusion

Trauma makes a tremendous impact on the human psyche, the effects of which may last for years. Even though PTSD sufferers may benefit from professional counseling, we as friends and loved ones can also make a powerful difference by simply listening and making an effort to understand what the traumatized individual has suffered. The fact that trauma victims often use metaphorical language means that sometimes we have to put in a little more effort in order to interpret what is being communicated. This effort goes a long way.

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The Path to Damnation, by Willem