

Discovery or Emergence?

By Mel Schwartz

I've always had an affinity for the word discovery. It evoked an image of enlightenment and a sense of spirituality for me. I used it often in my writing and spoken word.. More recently, I've become quite drawn to the word emergence. I've begun to consider the vastly different meanings and implications of either word and so I'd like to share my thoughts on this with you.

Discovery evokes a finding of what had previously been unknown or unseen. Running the gamut from Columbus's discovery to finding hidden treasure to discovering a great new investment, they all are simply finding what already existed. To discover is to unearth or to reveal that which was hidden from one's view. This can be a process replete with vitality and wonder, no doubt. Yet, there are discoveries which trouble us, as well. Discovering your partner's infidelity or a critical medical condition obviously causes upset. Yet, in either circumstance discovery is somewhat reductive, in that one is now aware of what had previously existed. Discovery isn't so much creating as it is finding. Yet, on a more subtle level when we discover we are at the same time altering the present through a new awareness.

Emergence, on the other hand, speaks of a more direct creativity and a sense of evolving. To emerge is to fully engage one's unfolding. As a seed is planted and the tree emerges, or a new thought is contemplated and evolves into a powerful new insight. Emergence speaks both spiritually and psychologically to our soul's purpose. The old worldview of the universe was of a mechanistic model with separate and discrete parts, in which all things are simply disconnected parts of the whole. They are causally connected, yet separate. The new, emerging worldview sees everything as interpenetrating everything else and all parts are merely differing aspects of the same whole. In this paradigm, the entire cosmos is participating in its own emergence and the universe is both purposeful and replete with meaning.

The manner in which our worldview shapes our lives and our relationships appears to be most fundamental to how we not only see but literally create our reality. Let's take a look at how these differing views impact our relationships.

The early stages of our intimate relationships are very much devoted to the phenomenon of discovery. As we eagerly learn all we can about one another, we tend to be more present and engaged. Yet, there comes a time not much later that we may come to feel we fully know each other. Our thoughts wander off before the other concludes their sentence, as we lose our gift of presence and think that we've heard it all before. And perhaps we have. If two individuals don't engage in their own evolution and emergence, the discovery comes to a screeching halt, for there may be very little left to discover. That's the point at which the relationship begins to stagnate. Once the sense of newness and discovery evaporates, the relationship may begin to close down as there is no longer a desire to be fully present. With the diminishment of being present, we can also anticipate the decline of passion.

Conversely, a relationship in which both individuals are committed to their own growth and emergence is one which appears alive and evolving. Not only do the two people participate fully in their own unfolding, the relationship itself becomes alive and dynamic. With emergence, there is again a sense of discovery to look forward to. Without emergence, discovery runs dry and lives and relationships regrettably wither. A life with meaning and purpose makes emergence its central theme.

* * *

Mel Schwartz is a visionary psychotherapist, thinker and author who earned his graduate degree from Columbia University. He has been a keynote speaker at Yale University. Mel is the author of *The Art of Intimacy*, *The Pleasure of Passion* and is currently writing, *Emergent Thinking*®. He is the founder of the *Emergent Thinking*® Process. He is in private practice in Westport, CT. and Mt. Kisco, NY. Visit his web site at www.MelSchwartz.com.