

The Hero Struggle

It seems as if the development of mediumship is something that is instigated from outside of our own personal awareness. In other words it normally begins with some sort of paranormal or other worldly experience and this experience can come at any age, but normally occurs after or during periods of trauma. This paranormal experience can be a vision of someone that we love who has died, hearing a voice which seems to have no physical origin, an experience of astral projection (feeling like you are outside your body looking down on it), a premonition of some kind, or even something as simple as what Jung called synchronicity, those periods in our lives where everything seems to come together in some sort of way and we wonder if a higher power is conducting the events in our lives and that this power has our best interest at heart.

Whatever form this experience may take will be very personal and unique, which is why sometimes it is so difficult to explain, we become at a loss for words or feel that no one will understand. It is as if we have been invited to begin this search, sometimes this invitation seems to come from our higher selves, at others from a discarnate source and to others the invitation seems to come from the ultimate power that created the universe. This actually is not just the normal experience of those setting out to develop mediumship but for anyone who, as an adult, has a conversion experience whether they be Christian Muslim or anything else, with many, not just spiritualists claiming such experiences have happened to them. The phenomena of spiritualism not

being unique to spiritualism, it has been seen throughout history in every religion and has been experienced by people from every walk of life.

Once we realise that something or someone is inviting us, to explore what they mean and find out who we are, we begin to question whatever has happened. One of the first questions that we ask ourselves is are we mad? Is it our imagination? The answer to both those questions is yes, any mediumship comes through the unconscious mind and it has to utilise imagination to be brought to life or reality. That leads us to question whether our imaginations are real, as if some sort of imaginary experience is something other than real and of course it is not as our imaginations help us tune into another sort of reality and it is one that artists, play writers, authors, storytellers and mediums have been tapping into since the beginning of time. These people seem to walk on the edge of society, and at times display symptoms that many would class as signs of madness, hearing discarnate voices for instance, which, up until very recently, would have been classed as a sign of mental disorder.

Henri Ellenberger (1905-1993), who is considered by many to be the father of psychiatry, in his 1970 book *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, described artists play writers and storytellers as having what he called a creative illness and I believe that this is a wonderful way to describe mediums who no doubt should be included in this category. He described this creative illness as a period of intense preoccupation with an idea and a search for a certain truth. He went onto say that this creative illness was a condition which at times could manifest as neurosis, psychosomatic ailments or depression. He said that these people are not mad as they never lose the thread of their dominating preoccupation. This fact has been taken on board by many psychiatrists now who, when dealing with someone who presents themselves to them hearing

voices, look for the origin of those voices, they investigate them to find out if they are useful, coherent and lucid before they make a diagnoses.

It is widely recognised that those who have this creative madness have in some way helped the World move forward. Their gift seems to put them on the edge of society, but who can fail to be awestruck when looking at a painting by Michelangelo, or a sculptor by Bernini, or a symphony by Mozart. Those displaying this creative madness seem to be expressing their sole (Soul) purpose for living and they seem to go through all sorts of difficulties and struggles to create their work, to bring their art, their story, their vision to life. Indeed if you spoke to someone about any of these things no doubt they would say that the art, the vision, the story seemed to have a life of its own and all they were doing was allowing it to pass through them, in other words whatever they are working on comes through their unconscious mind. They are all employing something similar to the process that mediums work with when they connect to the spirit world, it is mediumship albeit expressed in a different way.

One thing that must be said of this creative illness is that it can be marked by great tragedy, trauma and difficulty, but those that have it are unable to ignore whatever drives them on as it is part of them. This leads us of course to the questions as to whether mediums are born or made. The great mediums were born to be so, Gordon Higginson's mediumship was predicted long before he was born. Of course he benefitted from the fact that his mother was a medium too and she drove him to be the best medium that he could be even getting him to start sitting in circles for his development from the age of two. Gordon took his first public demonstration at the age of twelve, taking the demonstration was a birthday present from his mother, how many twelve year

olds would be happy with such a gift today? There was nothing else that Gordon could be, mediumship being his calling and his soul purpose. Of course each of us has the latent ability to be a medium just like each of us has the ability to draw or paint but some seem to be able to do so effortlessly and in a way that helps them walk on the pinnacle of their profession and for others even a great deal of effort and application does not yield the same results.

It is precisely because mediumship is on the edge of society that society has been suspicious of it. It is only after a period of time, as a mediums develops that it begins to prove itself and of course for the family and friends of someone who begins to display signs of mediumistic ability all of a sudden, it can be quite unsettling. Sometimes in a misguided attempt to help they can do great damage to the fledgling medium who becomes very sensitive when they are starting out on the road and learning to use their gift. The beginning of someone's development is therefore a critical period and one, where those developing, need to surround themselves with the right voices and make sure they have the best teachers and mentors who are not afraid to challenge them every step of the way. We will talk about that in a later article so I will leave that topic to one side for the time being.

I have long believed that those gifted mediums, who have ability to do so, should be working with the mental health professionals to help someone presenting themselves who are hearing voices or seeing visions. Firstly so that they can assess what is happening, whether someone is being influenced by the spirit world or not and then to help this process develop in the right way. The care of mental health has come a long way in recent years with new developments and understandings reached frequently. Thankfully the days are gone when anyone who displayed anything unusual or which did not meet

what was considered normal were thrown into a mental asylum and I wonder how many mediums were left languishing in such places due to the lack of understanding, or complete rejection of, phenomena which are natural to the human condition albeit heightened in certain individuals who have this mediumistic faculty.

If someone has mediumistic ability it will present itself during their lives with such force that it cannot be ignored. This is of course because it is part of who someone is, part of their life purpose and whilst the spirit world are very respectful of someone's wishes, the call of the soul is too strong to be ignored. Then, the would be medium has to make a conscious choice to investigate what these experiences mean and then begins their hero struggle, developing mediumship properly can be a long and bumpy road and there is a struggle to bring such gifts to life even if they hare there naturally.

Joseph Campbell (1904-1907) who was a student of Jung's, writing in his 1949 book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, believed that this struggle was what was behind the mythological narratives found in every culture and religion and even seen in classic tales of fiction which so often portrayed this struggle and that these stories shared a common structure. It was this structure that Campbell called the Hero's adventure and he describes this adventure in the introduction to the book in the following way:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.

Campbell describes a number of stages on this adventure, the adventurer must depart from the *ordinary world*, when he receives a *call to adventure*. With the help of a *mentor*, the hero will cross a *guarded threshold*, leading him to a supernatural world, where familiar laws and order do not apply. There, the hero will embark on a *road of trials*, where he is tested along the way. As the hero faces the *ordeal*, he encounters the greatest challenge of the journey. Upon rising to the challenge, the hero will receive a reward, an ability won through the course of their journey, in our case mediumistic ability, and this then is shared with the ordinary world.

Campbell's work has been used in the modern world by such authors as J.K Rowling in the Harry Potter trilogy and by George Lucas in the Star Wars films and by many others. They are all classic stories of good against evil, with the hero defeating evil against all the odds and helping the world become a better place. Whilst the hero adventure is apt for the mediumistic journey it is also something common to the spiritual journey which each and every one of us is on. The purpose of our lives is to learn what is good and what is evil and to choose the good and we shall look at that next week.

Leonard Tatt