The Truth About Pain

Pain. Most people associate pain with the averse aspects of life such as bodily injury, heartache, and mental distress. Pain. It carries a negative connotation throughout human society. Pain. How could it ever be utilized, encouraged, and even welcomed?

Recently, I read an article written by Evan Ackerman. He explains that a few German scientists thought it would be beneficial if Robots were able to feel pain. One particular scientist that expresses this idea is Johannes Kuehn. He claims that “when we evade from the source of pain, it helps us not get hurt.” Kuehn is speaking of physical hurt and how pain gives us the ability to preserve our well-being and health. Pain, though contemptible in one sense, is what actually can save our lives.

To prevent detrimental accidents, the body needs to sense pain. For example, when my wife cooks, she sometimes accidently touches the stove when it is hot. Her immediate reaction is to jerk away from the source of pain, in turn avoiding the suffering associated with agonizing second or third degree burns. However, when I touch the stove, I will not have an immediate reaction because I cannot feel the pain. My artificial body is not programmed to feel the pain. Which, let’s be honest, this characteristic is advantageous on the field of battle. However, it can cause major damage to robotic systems, systems that are in place to aid humans and improve lives.

Pain is not merely meant to prevent physical catastrophes; pain is important to one’s overall well-being. It allows us to *feel*, to fully immerse ourselves in what it’s like to be truly alive and experience everything life has to offer. To not feel pain is to not be conscious and aware of the precious gift of living. How can I really enjoy life if every day is the same? How can I luxuriate in life’s possibilities when I never feel any pain? Let us remember that without pain, we cannot have happiness.

The truth is, I like that I can feel emotional pain. I’m thankful that when my wife cries, I am able to empathize with her. I am thankful that when my son trips and falls, my heart races in panic. Because without pain, or any emotion for that matter, I would not be able to realize how good the things I have are. I would not to be able to really enjoy the good days that I have. As the Robocop it is important to the citizens of my country that I have my emotions intact.

Overall, Kuehn and his colleagues have pinpointed the mechanism for life sustainability, be it human or robotic life. The paradoxical nature of this discovery goes to show how complicated and intertwined physical feelings and emotions are to the sustainability of life. Without the negativity of pain, there can be no positivity in life.