

Pathwork Guide Lecture No. 68
1996 Edition
June 24, 1960

SUPPRESSION OF POSITIVE AND CREATIVE TENDENCIES -- THOUGHT PROCESSES

Greetings, my dearest friends. I bring you divine blessings. Blessed is this hour.

I promised that tonight's discussion would approach the human personality from a slightly different angle, and this is only fitting for the last lecture of the season. Let us consider tonight's talk not only as the end of the past term, but also as a preface to the work to be done in the new working season.

In the past, I discussed first certain general facts about the universe, the creation, and the part played in it by the human entity. This brought out the importance of personal development and purification. The second phase of my lectures dealt with the obstructions in the human soul due to conscious or unconscious misconceptions, wrong conclusions, deviations -- in short, the images which cause conflict and unhappiness. We focused on the healing of the sick part of the human soul. Such healing occurs when the personality learns to face errors, faults, and selfishness -- which are for the most part suppressed. Only when these flaws come to the surface and you understand that they are based on erroneous assumptions, can the truthful concepts be gradually implanted in the psyche. Therefore our work until now dealt mainly with facing the repressed negative aspects of the human personality.

But this phase is by no means all that is necessary to unfold and develop the personality to its maximum capacity. The human being suppresses not only negative aspects, but positive and creative tendencies in the soul as well. Our aim is not only to heal the sick part of the soul, but also to encourage the growth and unfoldment of that in you which is striving for fulfillment, which ought to be expressed but is not allowed to be. It is evident that destructive tendencies, based on wrong conclusions in the unconscious, prohibit the unfolding of constructive and creative tendencies in you. Therefore, we shall certainly go on treating the deviations in you as we have done so far. The introduction of a new approach does not mean that the past approach will now be discarded. Quite the contrary, it will often be necessary to continue searching and finding these destructive images in all their aspects and variations. I do not think any of you believe that this part of the work is over. We will, however, add a new approach in searching for the suppression of positive and creative tendencies as they clamor for the expression of your individuality in a manner that does not necessarily correspond to the ideas of your environment.

You may think it makes no sense to suppress positive aspects since only the negative is unpleasant to face and therefore only that needs to be suppressed. But this is not so. Just as frequently as you suppress the more unpleasant, you also suppress the most creative, the most constructive aspects in you, those that would lead you to personal growth as befits your individual personality.

You will come to see how often you discourage the best in you, not only due to wrong motivations, but also because it is, or seems to be, discouraged by your environment. The last lecture about the shame of the higher self is a very general and universal introduction to this subject. We gradually prepared you for the phase to come with that lecture. But apart from such universal conditions, there are many very personal, individual suppressions that have nothing to do with good or bad, right or wrong. What may be wrong for another person, may be the very thing for you. But you do not know it. You think you have to do, think, feel, act and express in a way generally prescribed by your environment.

One of the most common diseases of humanity is a tendency to generalize and standardize, which has more far-reaching effects than you realize. It also affects your own psyche by suppressing your personal unfoldment, creativity, and expression. This may manifest in leading a particular way of life not of your choice, because your environment seems to disapprove of your way. In reality, there is not only nothing wrong with your way, but it may be just what your soul needs most to attain its maximum growth. In your present way of life you may be suppressing the talent or activity that would afford your soul the maximum development. This may apply to a seemingly unimportant detail, but what is apparently insignificant may be the most important for you. For your whole personality is influenced by many seemingly unimportant details. By now, you may no longer be aware of what it is that you do not dare to want or to do. By freeing yourself of your deviations with all their negative motives, you will be able to bring the suppressed positive tendencies to the surface and view them in the proper light, just as you have learned to do with the suppressed negative traits.

Apart from these individual and very personal suppressions of your most creative forces, there are others which are universal, such as outlined in the lecture about the shame of the higher self. Another of these, to be found in every soul, is the suppression of spiritual unfoldment. This may no longer apply to you outwardly, but you may still find aspects of it within the depths of your being. If you deny yourself the expression of your spiritual nature, you damage yourself just as much as when you suppress any other manifestation of the life force. Although you may now give yourself the right to express your spiritual nature, you may certainly not have done so in the past; it will be important to learn why. It will also be important to find how much defiance and rebellion you needed to do that for which you should not need either defiance or rebellion; how much fear and shame still lingers in you about this facet of your personality, especially toward certain people. You may already surmise that the connection between the suppression of the negative and the positive aspects is often quite strong. Your dependency on public opinion and approval applies, therefore, not only to your faults, your selfishness, and your destructiveness, which causes you to form images in your unconscious mind, but it also causes you to forfeit the best part of your nature. And the latter makes you suffer just as much as the former.

When I speak of the urge for the expression of your spiritual nature, organized religion is seldom the answer, especially not in your time. But even in former times, organized religion could accomplish but little. Like most human institutions, it was affected by the human tendency to generalize and standardize, to make rules and dogmas supposed to be valid for all beings. Although general rules do hold true for certain crass modes of conduct relating to crime and the upholding of social laws for the good of the community, one's personal spirituality is an eminently private affair. The maximum growth of one human being may be based on entirely different spiritual factors and

ways of life and expression than the maximum growth of another person. Organized religion does not take this into account. Nor do the various modern substitutes for religion. The only way a human being can learn to express this important side of his or her nature is by such work as we are doing, in the course of which you recognize what causes you to suppress your individuality with all its manifestations.

The expression of your own divine nature cannot be fitted into standard rules, regulations, and dogmas, no matter how ethical they may be. They can only show right outer conduct, and never right inner conduct. In former times, the human being's spiritual nature was often hindered by the general rules of a creed. In modern times, this spiritual nature is hindered by new dogmas, such as the materialistic philosophy of life. Whenever the individual bends to the rules of society at the cost of suppressing his or her individual spiritual unfoldment, the soul begins to suffer and lose direction.

When you are born into life, you carry within yourself your individual life plan. In order to fulfill it, your psyche clamors demandingly that you proceed in a certain direction. When you deny the inner call, be it for the reason of deviations, images, wrong conclusions, or because you believe the right thing to do is what is proclaimed by your environment, the consequences are that the maximum growth of your personality is gravely thwarted.

Just as people often ignore the difference between love and sentimental weakness, love and masochistic dependency -- and thus distance themselves from real love -- so do they ignore the difference between true, individual spirituality and the escape into a pseudo-religion out of weak motivations. This lack of discrimination has serious consequences for the human personality.

The lack of awareness as to where your innermost self wants to lead you, and why your outer self does not listen to its voice, is just as much cause for personality disturbances as the suppression of the negative aspects. In the work ahead we will approach this facet of your personality. This additional approach is of supreme importance. It will also be more joyful, because it is not always pleasant to face your faults, your childish selfishness, and your various misconceptions. The work becomes a liberation only after full understanding, but until such time, your unconscious resistances often impair your joy in your self-work. You may experience a certain sadness when discovering that you did not heed the inner voice that would have brought you the fulfillment you did not consider right, but it is also true that despite your wanting the right goal and having pure motives, your negative tendencies played a role in your not listening to the voice of the innermost self. A certain amount of such resistance might also persist in this phase of the work. But on the whole, it will certainly be easier to search for suppressed positive tendencies which you now know deserve full right of expression. You will find that what you vaguely felt was wrong and had to be concealed is part of the best in you, or it will bring you to your best: your individual fulfillment in the highest spiritual and emotional sense. You will be able to embrace in joyful recognition even what you may have felt guilty about. It will lead you a step closer to being the person you are meant to be.

To unfold the human personality in its entirety it is also necessary to approach its development from yet another angle. For a long time we were preoccupied with the emotional side of your nature. Again I say, the introduction of a new approach does not mean lessening of one's efforts in the old direction. You are all fully aware by now of the importance of the discovery of your unconscious emotions. However, we shall now begin also to pay attention to the thought

process, as an additional help yielding other benefits for the unfoldment of the personality. Although there is no clear-cut borderline between these two aspects of the human personality, which often interplay, a difference actually does exist.

Understanding the thought process leads to mastery over your self, just as the psychological work does, from another side. If you are governed by your emotions, conscious or unconscious, you lose control over your self and over your life. The same applies to your thought process. If you become master over your thoughts, you become master over your mind, and so you have mastery of your life. By mastery, I certainly do not mean a discipline that suppresses anything, negative or positive, in you. This concept is, unfortunately, often misunderstood and mistakenly practiced. We will have to be careful not to fall into the same error. Thought control can be mastered without rigidity and suppression. On the contrary, properly done it will bring into awareness what needs to come to the surface. Many current movements teach thought-control by suppression. As I have often said, this is not necessary and is actually very damaging. Your emotions must be allowed to come to the fore so that you can observe and evaluate them.

The understanding and control of the thought process is a very important aspect of personality growth. Without it, full expression of your very best is impossible. I shall attempt to teach this to you in detail next season. In the meantime I will give you something to think about, so that you can prepare yourself during the summer.

The first step, as always, is the recognition of what is amiss. Recognize your uncontrolled thoughts, their power over you, their significance, as well as their lack of significance.

Thought process also occurs on different levels. Broadly speaking, we can distinguish between foreground thoughts and background thoughts. Both have many subdivisions and many layers. By proper observation and concentration, you will gradually learn to become aware of these various layers -- and this will be very beneficial for you in more ways than one.

Foreground thought is voluntary, background thought is involuntary. What I now tell you, you will experience as being true, if you learn proper self-observation. Foreground, that is, voluntary thought, is always clear-cut and concise as long as it remains in the foreground and does not slide unnoticed into background thought. If you want to think something -- whether constructive or unconstructive -- as long as you follow it through, it is foreground thought. When you become calm and observe your thought process, you will soon begin to notice the importance of background thoughts. Background thought comes unbidden; it is disorganized and mainly unconstructive.

You will also notice that background thought material consists mainly of the following:

(1) Symptoms of disturbed emotions and inner conflicts that never express the conflict itself. They might bring the nucleus of the conflict to the fore, if the symptoms are analyzed and properly understood. In order to do that, the vague, unvolitional background thoughts have to be made into foreground thoughts.

(2) You reexperience events, conversations, or impressions in snatches and fragments. If these do not belong in the first category, they are completely without significance. Your mind has registered certain impressions and it repeats them automatically like the rolling of wheels. As long as

these thoughts remain in the background and you harbor them without full awareness, you cannot distinguish what is important in them and what is utter waste. Repetition of impressions may not only be important because it is indicative of a symptom of conflict; it may also be important because a constructive impression may add something to your life, to your person, to your inner self. Only when these impressions and thoughts are consciously observed can you derive such a benefit. In other words, you must make foreground thoughts out of background thoughts. The stereotyped repetitious thoughts that go on in your mind so much of the time are really waste matter to be eliminated.

(3) Wishful thinking. There are a few subdivisions in this category. You may reexperience a conversation, going over how it might have been, how it should have been, what you should have said instead of what you did say, or you build a daydream of what you wish to happen in the future, which is vague, unrealistic, elusive and unconnected to your real desires, and doesn't take account of the obstacles within your soul. Such thoughts are entirely wasteful, if they are not made into foreground thoughts and evaluated.

Such wishful thinking, as well as fragments of impressions and automatic repetitions make up, in the main, the material of the unbidden background thoughts. Coming and going, they are not consecutive. They interrupt your voluntary thoughts and are unconstructive as long as they overpower your volition and keep you from taking the reins into your hands through learning to control your thought-world. Thought control increases awareness and raises consciousness. Instead of forbidding yourself to think, do the opposite: transfer background thought material into conscious foreground thought. First learn to evaluate the content of the vague background thoughts, and if you find that they are insignificant, learn to discard them. This process will bring forth additional material about your unconscious conflicts and teach you to control your mind in a healthy and constructive way.

Moreover, this practice will release a great deal of strength in you which was formerly used up by background thoughts. You have no idea how much mental and emotional -- and eventually physical -- strength they consume.

Some exercise and concentration is necessary to learn first the observation and, later, the control of your thought process. The exercises need not be strenuous, nor will they have to take up much time. Some regular effort is necessary, however.

To become master over your thought process by learning to make foreground thoughts from background thoughts and to ascertain their importance, you will not only release a great inner strength, but you will raise your consciousness and increase your awareness in a general way. You will become more and more aware of yourself -- the inner situation, as well as your entire person and life -- and more aware and observant of others around you; of life, of nature, of things. You will be capable of concentrating on those thoughts and occupations that you elect to, undisturbed by the wasteful, fluctuating thought material that has no importance, and serves only to decrease your awareness of self and to interfere with your concentrated attention on your task.

Unvolitional background thoughts make you the governed instead of the governor. Not only do your emotional and psychic disturbances cause lack of control over your life, but you are prey to

your unvolitional background thoughts. There is, of course, a connection between the two, which we shall examine later.

Unvolitional background thoughts constantly disturb and interrupt you. Even if they have significance, you derive no benefit from them as long as you do not learn to transform them into foreground thoughts, as long as you are not actually aware of them. They overpower you whenever you are not deeply interested in an activity. Background thoughts are weak, insofar as you are unaware of them. But they are strong in that they are often much more powerful than the apparently stronger foreground thoughts. By learning to observe your thought process, you will discover how often these "weaker" background thoughts take hold of you on the sly, so to speak. At first you are utterly unaware that you were drawn away from thinking what you wanted to think about. All of a sudden you find yourself involved in background thought material that you can only now begin to evaluate. When you say that your mind is wandering, you hardly realize the significance of this statement and the effect such "wanderings" have.

The background thoughts are what makes concentration so hard and thus are responsible for your difficulty in focusing your attention on one particular thing. It is due to them that so much time, strength, and effort is wasted. If your time, strength, and effort are not utilized in constructive thoughts or occupation, your mind should be allowed to relax. The best form of relaxation is attained when the mind is given a chance to be quite calm. Background thought material makes this impossible. It disperses the mind in many directions and therefore exhausts it without your knowing it.

This disorder and disorganization is universal but for a few exceptions. And, unfortunately, in these exceptions people have learned to control their thought process at the expense of emotional awareness, so that the benefit is cancelled out. It will be our aim to combine the two factors, so that one is helped by the other rather than hindered.

The aim of the pathwork is not only to make the sick part of human nature strong, free, and healthy; we are interested in the unfoldment and development of the entire personality. Thus, in the coming season we will be concerned with three major approaches:

- (1) Continuation of finding and dissolving your images, wrong conclusions, and deviations.
- (2) Finding your suppressed creative forces, directions, and activities and unfolding your nature as it was meant to function in your own particular way.
- (3) Understanding of, and gradually learning to control the thought process.

These three approaches will interact and overlap in many respects. To find how they link up and connect is part of the work and is of utmost importance.

I should like to suggest an exercise for you to start with this summer in preparation for our later work together. Sit down twice a day for five minutes, not more, any time you wish. Choose a time and a place when and where you know you will be undisturbed and do not have to fear interruptions. Sit down comfortably. Do not lie down. Become very calm. Relax completely, without trying to exert any force, strain, or pressure. Begin to follow the abdominal movements of

your breath when you breathe very quietly: up and down, up and down. Or, if you prefer, imagine a point between your eyes -- whichever is easier for you. Be prepared for your mind soon to be disturbed by unvolitional background thoughts. Expect them, observe them quietly. If they are not of pressing importance for you now -- indicating a disturbance in your psyche -- discard them quietly, without getting impatient with yourself. Resume the task of following the abdominal movements of your breath or of concentrating on the imaginary point between your eyes, all the time aware of what the background thoughts really are when they do come. It suffices to observe them as they appear in order to become conscious of the mechanism of thought process. You will then become aware that you are the victim of these thoughts. This awareness will bring you nearer to the goal. At the beginning it will seem impossible to think of nothing but your breath movements. Uninvited thought fragments will constantly rush in. Most of the time, they will be so powerful as to make you unaware that you do indulge in them. You will notice them only after a while. Whenever you do, try to recollect what your thoughts made you think of. Say to yourself: "I was thinking of this or that," whatever it may have been. This in itself is a means to become more aware of yourself. You may then either go on with your concentration and defer to analyze the thought materials until after, or you may do so right away, if you feel the urge, and resume the concentration exercise another time.

If you faithfully persevere, you will eventually get to the point when you will become a watcher of your thoughts. You will stand guard, so to speak, at the threshold of your thinking process. You will begin to sense what calmness really means. Your thoughts and emotions will stand still, be it only for a moment. As you go on, you will learn to extend this moment. The longer you can do it, the more you will feel rested after such periods. Many other benefits will befall you. You will also get accustomed to watching your background thoughts during the day, during certain activities which do not demand your entire attention. More and more self-awareness will come to you on all levels.

When you do this exercise, approach it in a very relaxed frame of mind, and at the same time try to use your calm inner will. Most important of all is not to feel frustrated when you do not succeed, when you find yourself involved in unbidden background thoughts. Rather, use the experience as a means to understand what I am trying to explain. Such an approach will be most beneficial. It will open vistas to you and will get you eventually to what we are after. If at one time or another you find it impossible to concentrate in this manner because your thoughts always come back to something particular, that is a sign that this something ought to be investigated, that it contains a seed of one of your conflicts. If such is the case, you will not be able to become calm until you have found some clarification. Remember, calmness is indispensable for this exercise!

Even minor success in this exercise will bring marked improvement in many ways. In addition to the benefits I outlined before, in addition to the power to discriminate between your foreground and background thoughts, you will derive further benefits, such as a general power of discrimination; increased inner and outer vitality; better memory; clearer and stronger thoughts; and, last but not least, the increased ability to make your inner will function. Your inner will is necessary to follow through and learn what we are discussing here. In turn, your inner will is bound to function better to the extent you learn concentration. You will learn the ability to direct your thought process and attain calmness of mind as the background thoughts decrease.

Awareness and control of background thoughts, the understanding of the whole thinking procedure with its various levels, is much more important than you now realize. It is a mistake to separate this approach from the conflicts of your psyche. They are intimately connected, which becomes apparent when both approaches are followed through properly.

Background thought material appears to us in the spirit world in a very specific form. It is fluid substance, but fluid in a negative sense. A kind of thick, hazy, stubborn mass, it is very difficult to dissolve. It is sometimes easier to dissolve an outright rigidity because a rigidity can be grasped. A negative fluidity is slippery like a gelatinous substance or mercury.

When you progress a little in this exercise and succeed in being a watcher, visualize a compass needle. The compass needle represents your thought movements. Watch the needle sway back and forth. The more background thoughts come, dispersing your attention in all directions because you do not control them, the more the needle will sway from one direction to the other. The more you succeed in becoming calm inwardly and focusing your thoughts on what you desire, the more will this needle remain still, poised, restful and controlled -- not controlled by any strenuous discipline or outer willpower, but by your relaxed summoning of your calm inner will. The more detachedly you observe the involuntary thought process, the more you will succeed in staying above it.

It would be very beneficial, my friends, if during the summer months you tried to prepare yourselves a little for the coming phases in our work together. Try to follow my advice and do this exercise. Also try to think about your past desires from the point of view I introduced tonight, whether or not it was something important or an apparently insignificant detail about your way of life. Did you desist at the time from following through with a positive, creative impulse because, as you are now seriously convinced, it was wrong for you? If it was not, did you desist out of fear or out of dependency on others' approval? Or was the wish based on unhealthy motives in the first place? Was there underneath the unhealthy motives a very healthy one you could not see because of your vague awareness and your guilt about the existence of the unhealthy motives? Would you have had the courage to follow through with your desire if the unhealthy motives had been absent? Would you then have stood your ground and been true to your personality? Can you discover that the original desire disappears or weakens with the absence of the unhealthy motives? You can try to formulate and answer these and similar questions. As always, the most difficult part is the beginning. What you have to find first need not be an apparent, important part of your life, such as choice of profession or main activity. It may be something "small" and subtle, not easily discovered because of its apparent insignificance, but just as important to find, since it is invariably a part of the whole. Its discovery must lead to something vital in your inner and outer life.

Doing this, and trying to feel the difference between volitional and unvolitional thought processes, you can very well prepare for our work in the fall.

Now, are there any questions?

QUESTION: In my work so far, I discovered that one of my wishes was not followed through due to fear. I have resigned myself to this. But if I now approach the same question with the new viewpoint, I cannot imagine this as a joyous experience. It will be painful all over again.

ANSWER: Not necessarily. As I said before, often the inner motives overlap and interplay. You will have to establish first whether you desired this goal because of unhealthy motives, or whether the unhealthy motives merely covered the form of self-expression best fitted for your individual personality. In either case, working this through need not be painful if the approach is right. Even if you should find that the fulfillment of this goal would have been right for you, it is still the negative aspect of your soul that stood in the way. Hence, in this respect, nothing changes from the approach we have used so far. It will be more or less painful. On the other hand, a discovery of suppression of healthy outlets -- which is always based on fear and dependency anyway -- may show you a new road which might be extremely satisfactory and fulfilling.

In many instances, what one wants is not what one really wants but what one thinks one wants. When this is the case, it is always due to unhealthy tendencies and reactions.

When you face your lower nature, your deviations and the phantom world of your illusions, so that you can change it all into true concepts, it feels certainly more painful than facing something you have suppressed because you thought erroneously that you must be guilty and ashamed of it. That you did suppress it so is, of course, due to negative motivations. However, you will experience a great joy and liberation now in releasing something vitally creative in you, leading you to the fulfillment of your individual personality.

My dearest friends, let me give you very special blessings tonight. A very wonderful divine strength is around you. Open your heart and your soul and your inner will so that you can receive it. Let it envelop you, let it penetrate you, let it work for you and with you so that this strength may help you to unfold the best, the most creative that you, as an individual, can be. Thus you will make the best of your personality and of all that still lies covered, dormant, but is waiting to be let out. Let this divine strength help you to remove the obstacles in you so that your divine spirit may truly unfold and manifest.

With this, my dearest friends, I withdraw, but I will always be near you. Go on your way in divine peace, in the joy that all of you are divine creatures and contain within yourselves so much that is truly wonderful and that is clamoring for manifestation. Be in peace, my dearest ones, be in God!

Edited by Judith and John Saly

For information to find and participate in Pathwork activities world wide, please write:

The Pathwork® Foundation
PO Box 6010
Charlottesville, VA 22906-6010, USA
Call: 1-800-PATHWORK, or
Visit: www.pathwork.org

The following notices are for your guidance in the use of the Pathwork® name and this lecture material.

Trademark/Service Mark

Pathwork® is a registered service mark owned by The Pathwork Foundation, and may not be used without the express written permission of the Foundation. The Foundation may, in its sole discretion, authorize use of the Pathwork® mark by other organizations or persons, such as affiliate organizations and chapters.

Copyright

The copyright of the Pathwork Guide material is the sole property of The Pathwork Foundation. This lecture may be reproduced, in compliance with the Foundation Trademark, Service Mark and Copyright Policy, but the text may not be altered or abbreviated in any way, nor may the copyright, trademark, service mark, or any other notices be removed. Recipients may be charged the cost of reproduction and distribution only.

Any person or organization using The Pathwork Foundation service mark or copyrighted material is deemed to have agreed to comply with the Foundation Trademark, Service Mark and Copyright Policy. To obtain information or a copy of this policy, please contact the Foundation.