

Pathwork Guide Lecture No. 145
1996 Edition
September 9, 1966

RESPONDING TO THE CALL OF LIFE

Greetings, my dearest friends. The blessings given are strength and power coming from the sincere wishes and the love of all involved in this venture -- both those in the body and those outside it.

At the beginning of this new working year I should like to set up a sort of blueprint that will also constitute a reformulation of our work and its purpose. People always need a clarification of their motives and concepts: where they are going and why.

As long as you identify exclusively with your ego-self and as long as you ignore the other part of yourself, you will remain trapped in a painful struggle that tears you apart and for which you see no solution. This often causes unbearable tension and anxiety. This basic mental insecurity, with all its byproducts, can be overshadowed by all sorts of pursuits. But although these aims in themselves may be worthy, they cannot relieve the basic fear or the sense of meaninglessness and waste. Only when you find and activate your center, deep within yourself, can you fulfill your destiny, your reason for existing. Whatever else you accomplish serves only, if you so choose, to make you more aware of your real self and therefore of the reality of being. Then, and only then, will you find a genuine security and peace coming from within. In order to find it, you must relinquish your hold on the outer ego. That is, you have to give up trusting the ego exclusively, and use it as a tool to activate the universal self slumbering within.

Now, my friends, many people know this and pay it lip service frequently. But to understand this theoretically and to live it are two entirely different things. The work on this path is destined to help you accomplish the awakening of a new self you have not consciously experienced before. This path gives you the means to actually bring this about.

Life issues a call; it makes a demand on every living individual. Most people do not sense this call. Only as you become aware of your own illusions can you simultaneously become more aware of the truth within yourself, and therefore in life. Consequently, you will understand in each moment what the call of life wants to convey to you. How do you respond to it? Do you respond with your total being? Or do you respond half-heartedly? Or do you resist responding at all and make yourself deaf to it? That is the big question, my friends.

What I say here, simple as it sounds, can become very important in helping you honestly question yourself: Do you truly wish to understand the call of life? What does it require of you? And are you wholeheartedly responsive?

The call of life is a dynamic movement that can be also felt as a stream. This stream of life manifests differently to each individual. It is at once universal and intensely personal. It is universal

in the sense that it aims exclusively at awakening the real self, absolute reality. It goes about this in a totally unsentimental way. It disregards personal attachments, social considerations, and any other peripheral values, including personal pain or pleasure.

If awakening the real self requires what temporarily seems like destruction, this destruction will turn out to be rather the groundwork of the real inner life, the preparation needed to awaken the inner center. If the awakening brings what also happens to be most joyful to you, the very experience of joy proves that you are more attuned to your real self than you realize.

Moralistic self-defeating attitudes often induce you to reject whatever may lead you to your destiny and self-fulfillment just because it brings joy, since you have the mistaken idea that self-realization must automatically mean deprivation and self-sacrifice. If your life-conditions will not, sooner or later, promote your coming into your real self, they will inevitably be destroyed. Conditions that promote the awakening of the real self bring peace, joy, well-being, and intense pleasure. Such is the stream of life, which is often blocked by humanity's stubborn resistance to see it.

The call of life is universal. The attitude necessary to awaken the inner center follows universal values. Truth, love, and beauty are universal aspects of the real life stream. The isolated ego-existence is also a general state affecting all people, but how the ego blocks the real self is a personal question; what is universal is the fact that transformation of one's character is necessary to permit the life stream to flow freely. We shall return to the subject of transformation a little later.

These universal principles can be intellectually recognized, but they are not necessarily felt and experienced. This can happen only when the personal experience of the life stream is recognized and responded to. Therefore, any path leading to genuine self-realization must be intensely personal and has to deal with intensely personal problems. Those who believe that imbibing general truth and collecting more truthful beliefs can accomplish the goal delude themselves. They do so because they do not want to look at the truth of who they are at the moment; they prefer an idealized notion of themselves. Their very evasion alienates them more from the goal than the honest admission that they do not want to look at themselves, and do not want to permit themselves to experience emotions they fear or disapprove of, and above all, do not wish to transform their character defects. The actual -- not theoretical -- activation of the real self with its vibrating life, limitless abundance, infinite possibilities for good, and its supreme wisdom and joy happens to the exact degree that you dare take a look at the temporary truth of yourself. This means feeling what you feel; having the courage to transform yourself into a better human being for no other reason than a desire to contribute to life, rather than to make an impression and grasp for approval. When the immediate barriers to transformation for its own sake are overcome, then the real self with all its treasures will clearly manifest.

One of those barriers is shame of what you are now. This shame makes you set up a wall of secrecy that makes you lonely. The loneliness may be denied or rationalized; other circumstances may be blamed. In reality, it is your wish to hide yourself from yourself and others that separates you from them. In the deep recesses of your mind you fear that you are different from others, that you are worse, and the shame of your difference cannot be exposed. This very secret conviction traps you in the particular illusion of your separateness, depriving you of the benefit of discovering your universality that offers its healing climate for your psyche. Again, this cannot be accomplished

by theoretical understanding, but only by actually experiencing those areas where you still hide yourself. These are precisely the main barriers separating you from the life stream. The solitude of inner secretiveness cannot be relieved, no matter how favorable your outer circumstances. Such loneliness can be relieved only when you overcome the pride hidden by your shame. The intensely personal work of overcoming your pride leads to the realization of the universal values which alone can give you the courage to go with the life stream.

The universal self often contradicts outer rules which come from humanity's ego self. Hence, no matter how much people rebel against conformity and social laws, they still find themselves confined within the ego-self, deeply immersed in its dualistic struggle between conformity and the submission it requires, versus rebellion and defiance. True emancipation from the ego's outer rules requires neither conformity nor rebellion. It acts on inner values that may or may not coincide with the dictates of society. In neither case will the person using inner values be damaged. He or she will become more whole, even in a temporary upheaval.

The key is not as hidden as it may seem. Only ask whether you are motivated by love and truth and have totally committed yourself to a course of honesty and integrity in this particular issue, regardless of public opinion. Do you let go the fear, the pride, the selfwill of your ego and strive toward the voice of the divine within you, again, regardless of appearances? This way is always open, and whenever you choose it, it will emancipate you from the ego-struggle. Its solutions will bring you less pain and anxiety. Answers will inevitably follow that reconcile your conflict and bring peace.

The call of life disregards the superficial morality most people ardently adhere to, or equally ardently fight against. This morality is based on the fear of disapproval. People may fight it because in their minds goodness is equated with deprivation. The call of life disregards outer appearances and shortsighted sentimentality. It surges toward bringing all individuals into their birthright, since it is based entirely on universal values. Everything that matters is contained within it.

Why does humanity put up such a struggle against fulfilling its destiny, when such destiny brings nothing but good? Why do you resist hearing the call of your life stream when it brings you all that is safe, good, productive, and joyful? This is the tragic battle of humanity. On the one hand, you are very disturbed by the insecurity of your existence. You sense the waste of your life as long as you pay exclusive allegiance to the outer self, and therefore to outer values. On the other hand, you do everything in your power to maintain your unhappy state. In fact, you seek more and more means to reinforce your ego-identification: more outer ways, outer activities, outer beliefs, and outer escapes. At times you may succeed only in making yourself deaf to the voice from deep within. At other times, you feel the deep unrest, but you refuse to understand it.

Only those who consciously and deliberately make the decision and commit themselves once and for all to living their life for the primary purpose of activating the real self can find the deep inner peace that exists even while inner errors still prevent total self-realization.

Let every one of you who read these words question why you are on this path. What is your aim in life? Do you live just to make do as best you can? Do you work on this path because there are certain symptoms you wish removed which you feel interfere unpleasantly with your life? Certainly, you are free to do so. But realize the deeper meaning of this. For as long as you aim

solely to remove certain effects of identifying with your ego because you ignore or fear the activation of the real self, other symptoms of this principal disease will appear. Total well-being cannot be accomplished, even if you succeed in removing temporary states of pain and deprivation. There is a vast difference between these two goals. As long as you fail to orient yourself completely toward activating the inner center of your real self, you cannot know real safety, peace, and well-being. Nor can you use the storehouse of potential within yourself, or experience your freedom to use the unlimited resources of the universe for your benefit. Not being able to do any of this, not being able to be what you can be, is an endless pain that you need to allow yourself to experience consciously in order to have the incentive to do something about it.

By contrast, the pursuits of the ego, no matter how great your accomplishments, will never give you peace and security, nor the sense of being the best you can be. The ego-drive may appear to give you power over others, but it cannot ever give you autonomy and independence, so that, sooner or later, the illusion of power over others is exposed as fake.

I advise all those who seek help, as well as those who are helpers, very clearly to define your aim. What is your aim? How far do you wish to go? Do you commit yourself completely? Then visualize the specific symptoms you wish to remove. Any disturbance is merely a symptom of the basic ill of exclusive ego-identification, no matter what name you give it: neurosis, sickness, distortion, unhappiness. You are free merely to remove symptoms. Consider what the removal of the symptoms alone means for your future. What can you envisage afterwards? Can you envisage that more is possible? What is this more? How would your life be with this more? Or do you commit yourself totally to finding who you really are, what is possible for you?

I believe that those who really think about it and properly grasp the whole meaning of this important question, clearly questioning themselves without delusions, will respond to life with their total being. Let us discuss this commitment to the real self.

You have all experienced to some degree through certain meditations that the universe contains unlimited good, available to you if you open yourself to it. There are times when you vividly experience this truth and you know, without the shadow of a doubt, that your experience is not coincidence nor illusion; you know it to be a fact. When this is so, your entire attitude is clear, free, and relaxed. You are deeply convinced of your truth and trust it; you feel deserving and hence do not cringe away from fulfillment; hence it comes. Your whole being resonates with a positive, constructive vibration without any conflict. You do not feel selfish for wishing to experience beauty, nor do you withhold the best of yourself.

But then there are also those occasions when things do not work that way. Even though in certain areas of your life you have already experienced such positive manifestations, in other areas you cannot break through. Trying to attain this undifferentiated good with your ego-self does not work. Where your real self is not activated, the doors to the benign universe are closed. This is not because some forbidding authority decided that you are not worthy of this or that particular fulfillment; it is simply because something within you bars the way, and this something has to be found so you can eliminate it.

Whatever the obstruction is, it makes you afraid of letting go of the ego, so you remain centered in, and oriented to, the outer ego. This outer ego is incompatible with the unified world of

all good since it is split off from it in duality. It can be open only to partial good to which there exists -- as always in dualities -- another, undesirable, side. This undesirable side may weaken the wish for the good -- entirely unconsciously. Also, whatever stands in the way of letting go of the ego is always, when fully exposed and understood, something that impairs one's integrity and deforms the character structure. Hence, the deep inner conscience feels undeserving of all good and cringes from it. That very character defect makes the personality unable to cope with the good even where it exists.

Only the total self can relate to and unite with total good. You can test this right now. Take any problem you are working on, be it an outer problem you wish changed, or an inner condition you wish to overcome. Meditate, expand yourself, and reach for the total goal. Claim this total goal. How often does it happen that you feel it is impossible to do so! Test it right now.

Although you really want to claim your goal, you still feel it is impossible. There is some wall that does not let you get through. This wall must never, under any circumstances, be disregarded or glossed over. You must never use pressure from your will to overcome the "no" of this wall. Such forcing will remove you further from your real self within and hence from the reality of the life where all good is available. Instead, you have to interpret the meaning of the wall. Translate it into clear words. Whether you doubt that you can have your goal or feel guilty about getting it, or have a sense of not deserving it, or are afraid of life's demands when you do have it, these still do not add up to the final answer. The reservation within yourself must be linked with a character defect you have not really faced, nor do you wish to, because you do not want to abandon it.

Character transformation is an absolute necessity in order to shed the ego identification. When I say "shed," I do not mean it in the sense of giving the ego up but of using it as a tool to find the inner being, and then allowing the ego to integrate with it. It should be clearly understood that such integration is possible only when certain character defects have been already transformed or when the person is truly willing to transform them in all sincerity and without subterfuge. There must be a total commitment, without pretense or playacting. When this is your total response to life, the life stream will become discernible and its wise guidance and meaningfulness will become a powerful presence in your life.

For the longest time we have concentrated on finding the errors, misconceptions, and defects which are, of course, interdependent. In fact, we were always careful to point out that you must not judge or moralize with yourself, because such self-moralizing was a hindrance, not a help. The time has now come when the difference between moralizing and the desire to transform yourself should be clearly recognized. I believe that most of you are now in a position to understand with your heart this difference -- and this understanding is what really counts.

Judging, moralizing, and perfectionism occur when values are based on outer standards. Such behavior aims to please or impress others, to conform with outer standards. Moralizing always tends to show to others how right, good, or superior one is. When you moralize, you always need to prove something. To whatever extent moralizing exists, it exists only for the sake of appearances, and not because the individual is really concerned with a moral issue as such. You may pay lip service to the feelings and rights of others or to the liberation of the real self or the self of others, but deep inside this is not the motive. The motive is to appear right or good -- to prove something.

A person who genuinely desires to transform character defects is not in the least concerned with outer appearances or with what others think, but exclusively with the transformation itself, whether others see and admire it or not. False, damaging, tortured moralizing and self-accusation always hides a deep inner insistence not to change. Hence, moralizing is a tortured inner movement; recognizing the fault in question is unbearably painful only because the person refuses to give it up. Since the moralizer refuses to give up his or her negative trend, moralizing brings more negativity in its wake, even though it seems to convey an honest intent to see the fault and observe high standards of morality because one is so unhappy about the defect.

The genuine desire to transform defects is never burdened by an unpleasant admission of a fault, no matter what it may be, precisely because the wish to change is so genuine. In this desire you express your love for the universe because you wish to contribute to life by your very being. Such resolution lightens the heart, even if one may not be capable of the transformation right away, because there are still missing links which have to be understood. Let this be a measure for you, my friends, in the continuation of your pathwork. When the distortion you discover cuts deeply into your soul and makes you hopeless about yourself or despair about your ability to transform the defect, know that on a deeper level of your being you do not wish to give up this very trend. Then go ahead and find out why not.

When your personality is geared to a positive soul movement, there will be no obstruction to transforming a character defect, and consequently no obstruction to the unlimited abundance of good available in the universe for every single individual. Try to perform this inner movement by letting yourself stream forth in complete affirmation instead of the old negation. When this inner movement can take place, when you move toward the world with a relaxed attitude of being equally ready to give and receive, transformation will not seem hazardous. It will seem like a wonderful venture.

So when you find yourself stuck in your desire to reach unlimited good and creative power within yourself, find a key not only to where you are negative in expressing your desire, but also where you are connected with a persisting negativity. There must be a corresponding character defect that is equally difficult to give up. For as long as it is not seen, the negativity must remain. This negativity excludes unfoldment, self-expression, and fulfillment, as well as the creative powers within you. This thought could be a key for many of you.

For a long time we had to be primarily concerned with uncovering your defects and illusions, your negativity or destructiveness, which you deny and negate. This was very important. Now a second major phase of the work can be envisaged: the phase in which you practice extending yourself into the universe.

Wherever you succeed because you are inwardly free you will see new manifestations in your life as never before. Where you still feel yourself blocked, unable to believe, unable to follow through, you will find deeper aspects of yourself that you could not bring out before and which you will now recognize as deformations of your character structure without incurring the past danger of closing the door through your damaging moralizing. Your freedom in this respect will set the stage for the decision for transformation which can again be tested for its inner sincerity by your meditation.

How deeply do you want this transformation? Why do you still refuse to transform these defects? The moment you are truly ready to transform them, you will find the door no longer closed. You will feel it swing into the unlimited universe. You will be able to extend yourself into the universe and consequently feel worthy and capable of receiving from it. Then no good you desire needs to have a shadow side.

At that time you will also understand the real values and will do away with all false morality. The more you are willing to truly transform defects, the less necessary the outer, superimposed values become. They are often senseless, especially from the point of view of life's call, which requires your total response and commitment.

Now, why are you so afraid of this total commitment to life? Of relinquishing ego-identification? Of the positive manifestations that can enrich you? Why do you resist the good and battle to maintain painful struggle and insoluble conflict? Why do you fear the good that liberates you? And why do you put your faith in the imprisoning ego of the little outer self and the little outer values? There are several answers to these questions, depending on the angle. Let us first choose the following approach.

When you doubt a larger reality and do not take a chance on it, you stay in a world of duality. As you know, this dualistic world is characterized by the following conflict: "If I am unselfish, I must suffer. I do not want to suffer. But if I am selfish, I will be rejected, despised, not loved, left alone. And that is suffering too." In this struggle you go back and forth, seeking a solution. The more you believe in the inevitable "truth" of these two alternatives, the more you are bound to experience life according to them. You do not dare to be unselfish; you cannot wholly want to be unselfish since it means giving up what you believe is personal fulfillment and happiness. Nor can you fully commit yourself to a life of selfishness -- partly due to the ever-present existence of your real self, partly because you fear the world's opinion. This is the tragedy of this senseless struggle. You cannot extricate yourself from its meshes as long as you identify with and entrust yourself to the values, rules, and concepts of ego logic.

When you want to be transformed, you must want to give up selfishness and the desire to cheat life, yourself, and others, in whatever form. You cannot wholly risk this when it spells the sacrifice of all you want. But the most painful state is indecision, and this holds true on all levels. It is your fate as long as you have not transcended the ego level of reality. You cannot reconcile fulfillment and unselfishness, so you remain undecided; you continue to vacillate between two camps. If many people were capable of totally committing themselves to a life of selfishness, they would soon come out of it because they would recognize that it leads nowhere, that it does not lead to the salvation they half-heartedly seek in both camps.

You are all in this struggle, every one of you. All your problems are an expression and direct outcome of this duality. Look at your problems, go deeply enough into them, and you will see that this is so. You fear the impulses of the larger, wiser self, but cannot want wholeheartedly to commit yourself to it as long as you believe that some disadvantage will result from your decision.

That you are capable of reaching for and receiving the good of the universe only when your defects are being overcome may, at first glance, appear like the concept of reward and punishment. I might say that this concept is a distortion of the process I have explained. Reward and

punishment suppose an outer authority who hands out the just deserts of the individual's actions and attitudes. Reward or punishment are often supposed to take place only in a hereafter.

What I explain, however, is a mechanism taking place within the personality. The innermost self is aware of the incongruity of reaching for the best while refusing to give the best. Moreover, obtaining the best is a burden one fears when one is not willing to also give the best. Conversely, giving one's best is impossible when one associates it with sacrifice and disadvantage. The very existence of a belief in punishment and reward covers up the deep despair that unselfishness brings deprivation, so one is forced to hold back the total desire to love and to give. Rewards and punishments, in whatever forms they exist, are compensations for the unbearable reality perceived in duality.

When the real self is activated, this conflict no longer exists. It is possible to activate the real self when this particular conflict in you is brought out of hiding. Inside the reality of the inner center, the split no longer exists. You will find that it is equally possible to give of yourself wholeheartedly, to love, to be unselfish, to be humble, to relinquish the egocentricity of the frightened child, to allow others to be free no matter what this means for you, and yet not be a loser. Soon the feeling of not necessarily having to be a loser will change into a conviction that being a winner is possible. First, you will understand that being a winner is possible; later, that it is inextricably connected with decency. This will be so because you are free enough to want both.

When you take on the transformation of your defects, you will like yourself sufficiently to open yourself to all the good that wants to come to you. When you begin to succeed in this transformation you will be strong enough to stand happiness. You can claim the best when you are in the process of transforming whatever makes you dislike yourself, whether or not you are aware of this self-dislike, whether or not you are still projecting your self-hate onto others. Then you will realize the truth of absolute reality and of your real self: which is that there is no limit to expansion. Through this unfoldment your intuition will become strong and reliable. You will then heed the demand of your personal life stream. You will have the courage to go with it whether or not it seems to conform with outer expectations, rules, and values. As long as you are very determined to follow the inner values, the outer values will cease to be important, either in your own mind or in the outer manifestation of your life. You will therefore no longer fear when your life does not conform to convention. Soon outer life will follow suit and no friction will accrue. The world will fall into step with you.

There are two important keys for you in this lecture, which may be the very points you seek in order to come out of a momentary bottleneck. I recapitulate them briefly:

(1) What is your aim in life? What is your aim on this path? How far do you wish to go? Do you want to remove only a few symptoms? Or do you wish total self-realization, the activation of an inner center in which all good, salvation from anxiety, insecurity, and confusion exist? If so, are you willing to pay the price of perseverance, of total commitment? The total commitment brings out your total possibilities. The unlimited potentials of your innermost being enable you to realize unlimited good.

(2) Find the exact point where your positive wishes are blocked, and then question what particular character defect does not permit you to abandon a self-destructive, self-denying attitude?

State clearly that you wish to find it. Once you see it, there is still time to decide whether or not you want to give it up. If you do not, find out why not. The insistence upon holding onto something that violates your integrity and your decency holds back the best you have to offer and the best you can be. This impairs your self-respect. It may not be a crass outer manifestation; it may be a hidden little deviation that does not seem to harm anyone, but it always does, whether or not you are aware of it.

The progress that is vividly experienced by quite a few of you is in exact proportion to your willingness and openness. There is no mystery about what brings the progress, for this path must work when willingness and openness exist. Those of you who are not satisfied with your progress should question themselves deeply and sincerely: "Where have I held back? Where did I not want to go all the way? Where have I lost the clarity of the aim? And where have I disconnected the aim from where I am at this moment because I do not want to expose myself?" You avoid seeing that you hold back in fear and shame; they are unnecessary obstacles you use to barricade the doors to liberation.

Those of you who have progressed and sense the excitement of a new life to come have much more to look forward to, for you will now fortify your own powers. You will be able to activate them more and more to remove the obstacles of your remaining illusions and to orient yourself to what is eternal within yourself, what is never conflicted or tortured. You will learn to experience it as a living reality.

Be blessed. Receive the strength and the love that stream forth. Be in peace. Be in God!

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.