

Pathwork Guide Lecture No. 191
1996 Edition
April 23, 1971

INNER AND OUTER EXPERIENCE

Greetings. Blessings and love are pouring forth for everyone here, wherever you need them most on your journey through life.

Many philosophies agree on the importance of experience. They postulate that the true meaning of life is experiencing it in all its facets and variations, in its full depth and breadth. A being who enters this sphere of life, the material earth, is drawn into it because of his or her limited state of consciousness, in which true reality is blurred to a large extent. The only way the consciousness can be expanded is by experiencing life to its fullest and from all its facets. This requires that the being enter material life again and again, until all the blocks against experiencing life are eliminated and he or she has savored, tasted, and assimilated all of life.

Usually, when humans hear the word "experience," they think of outer experience. This, however, is not the meaning of the word. The real meaning is the inner experience. You know that you may experience all things outwardly, but if the inner experience is inhibited, the outer experience will mean little. You can travel all over the world. You can be in many different situations and experiment with every conceivable "experience" under the sun. You can approach life in all its different facets: art, nature, science. You can do all things, learn everything your brain can master, but if your capacity for inner experience is dead, all outer experiences will add little, if anything, to your conscious life. Often a full outer experience without the inner experience even increases despair, because one does not understand the causes of the experience, and that is very disquieting. Having everything they ever wanted, people still cannot remove a nagging dissatisfaction. The faster they run, the more they grab, the more elusive life seems, because the capacity for inner experience has not been cultivated or, worse, it has been inadvertently eliminated.

Inner experience is possible only when you can feel. If feelings are blocked, no inner experience is possible. Lack of feelings deadens all of life and makes it impossible for you to fulfill yours. You will have to come back, over and over, until you learn to savor experience to whatever degree this is possible at your particular stage of consciousness. To savor life in its fullest, you must eliminate your defenses against feelings. You must go through your fear of unpleasurable, painful feelings. That which is feared must be accepted, experienced as it is at this moment. The way it is at this moment may well be the result of feelings from the past that have not been fully experienced and thus lie stagnant, forming a block in your system. When you fear a feeling, you block the experience. You anesthetize yourself. Numbing and denying often seems the only protection against unbearable pain and suffering. And yet, as many of you on the path have begun to find out, it is the fight against what you fear that creates your real suffering. No matter what is inflicted upon you from the outside when you are helpless and defenseless, it cannot become a detriment in your life, it cannot cripple you when you learn to receive it in the right and healthy way. This is the only

way you can truly eliminate what is undesirable. When you dare experience inwardly what comes to you, it will cease to be a threat.

In this lecture I shall point out further the ramifications and the significance of inner emotional experience, and what happens to the human entity when such experience and feelings are blocked. As I have often said, fear is the most destructive emotion imaginable. Fear that is not met and therefore transcended becomes poisonous, toxic energy. Fear that is not even conscious and therefore appears indirectly is that much more debilitating. The fear of feelings is perhaps the most insidious of all, for if you fear a real danger, it is something you can overcome. Even exaggerated fear of an outer occurrence would not be so harmful, except that such an unrealistic phobia must be an expression of unrecognized and unexperienced feelings. Anything outside of you can be dealt with on the level of outer action. Feelings can be dealt with only as they are being experienced, not when they are denied.

When you are afraid of pain, loneliness, or of a hurt to your pride or a rejection, or frustration of your will or desires -- in all these cases, your primary feeling is fear. Only when you experience what you fear -- say, rejection -- will you experience the pain of it. So we are dealing basically with the fear of pain. When you go into the fear, you can experience the pain. Only then will the pain genuinely dissolve, and you will have mastered a slice of life that you no longer need to avoid.

When you blindly avoid your fear of pain until you no longer know that you fear a specific pain and are not aware why you feel numbed and deadened, you create a magnetic energy block within your psychic system. This magnetic block is a powerful force that inevitably draws to you the very experience you wanted to avoid. The pain you avoid must come to you from outside, again and again, until you can no longer avoid it. This is a law of life. If you come into this life with such a fear, your life circumstances will bring forth the very condition that you avoided previously. I have said this many a time. When life circumstances in your early childhood again inflict pain and deprivation upon you, and you again protect yourself by denying the pain rather than experiencing it to its fullest, later life circumstances will replicate those early conditions until you open up to what you fear and let the experience be in you, so that it can dissolve. When you fully savor the painful experience, then you are truly overcoming it. Then the energy of the magnetic block dissolves, entering into the general flow of life within you, and the previously feared experience will no longer come to you.

You may temporarily avoid the feared experience because your inner defenses shut off life so successfully that nothing touches you. And your willpower may build an eventful outer life that fills your inner void to a degree, as long as you do not hold still. However, this is but temporary peace before the storm. Crisis must come to you eventually to give you another opportunity to overcome your fear. The more you run from what you fear, the more energy you invest into blocking off the feared feeling, the more potent the magnetic energy block becomes, and the more certainly you attract the crisis that could be the healing agent whenever you choose to change the direction of your focus to inner living.

Only a fearless soul can experience bliss, pleasure, joy, and peace. You can fulfill your potential for creativity and expansion of your spiritual being only when you are fearless and relaxed. If no part of your inner being has anything to cover up, defend, or protect, then the full potential of your creativity and capacity for pleasure can manifest in your personality. But if you guard against

one expression of life in you, against one type of inner experience, it is logical that all other types must be equally hindered. This should be easy to see.

In protecting yourself against your fear of pain, or any other undesirable experience, you put yourself in a state of tension. Guardedness is tension. Pleasure and creativity can thrive only in a state of relaxation. You cannot express yourself when you hold tight against a movement in your inner life. You separate yourself from a vital part in yourself. No wonder that you lose touch with yourself and no longer know who you are or what you are doing! You live in a constant state of guardedness -- unbeknownst to your conscious mind. Therefore, the first task on your path is to explore yourself deeply, so that you become conscious of your defenses. Only then can you explore the next question: What is it precisely that you guard against? In the last analysis it is always a pain you have suffered.

You cannot, of course, go further back than this lifetime. But this lifetime is all you need. Your early pains in this life are essentially those you have suffered in previous lives. Your accumulated residual energy block not only attracts the same events over again, but also makes you incapable of meeting new feeling experiences in a free and spiritually hygienic way. The new feeling that cannot live in you is added to your residual reservoir. On the other hand, once your residual reservoir is emptied and you have fully experienced the past accumulations, the flow of your being will deal with new pains in a very different way.

First of all, you will remain open and vulnerable, experiencing the pain softly, gently, without inner fight, and fully knowing why you are in pain. This integration of your experience will make the wave of pain pass slowly or quickly, according to the nature of the experience, and the pain will dissolve into the stream of life within you. This open, relaxed state also makes available inspiration and resources that are otherwise inaccessible. You will be guided from within to find new ways of action that will be effective in your life and your environment. A new, ever-increasing vibrancy will fill your being when you live in this way. You will be filled with the joyousness of knowing that all is well in the universe.

When you use your will to avoid feared feelings and try forcefully to produce the joy that you cannot have unless you live in an unguarded state, your will must again and again be smashed by life, which cannot be manipulated by the fearful, small, controlling mind. When you substitute a forcing current -- "I must not experience that and I must experience this" -- for a relaxed stream of consciousness, a flowing soul substance, you bring on crisis and more pain.

The duality that characterizes human consciousness results primarily from fear that is not fully lived through and therefore dissolved. By saying, in effect, "This I must not experience," you create a duality. Your fear creates both a Yes current and a No current, and that split current is the entire basis of the painful state of duality. Such duality can thrive only in a state of avoidance, a state of being closed to one thing, which creates a tense, urgent grabbing movement in the opposite direction, which in turn prohibits the real flow of life.

When strong inner denial exists, rage and violence follow. Rage dissolves when the fear of pain is given up and the pain fully experienced. The pain dissolves into its original nature, the blissful, peaceful vibrancy of the river of life that flows through you and of which you are a part.

Your fear of feelings therefore not only blocks bliss and the expression of creative life through you, but also splits you into a state of disunity. You can achieve a higher unified state of consciousness only by going through what you fear, never by avoiding it.

When fear of your feelings induces you to block off your capacity to feel, the impoverishment creates the need for a substitution. The mind then becomes this substitution. In order not to feel your deadness, the impoverishment of your inner being, and to have a sense of existing, you use your outer mind much more than is natural. If you cannot exist through your flowing, feeling being, your intellect and will take almost exclusive charge of your deadened feeling part. They temporarily give you the illusion of being alive. But the aliveness is precarious. It is, in the long run, not even convincing, because consciousness without feeling lacks the spark of the spirit that puts a glow on life. Such incompleteness is dry and sterile. You may arrive at the most brilliant formulations with your mind, but if your mind is not unified with your inner feeling experience, you will, in secret moments, doubt your aliveness, the reality of your being. In this stage of evolution, in this civilization, humans frequently find themselves with highly developed minds, but unable to live fully. What is usually called an identity crisis is the condition of being split off from the feeling self, which in turn exists only when feelings are avoided and repressed. A person can never know who she or he is when the mind substitutes its so-called "life" for the inner, feeling self.

Let us now look at what happens to specific feelings when they are denied. Let us take sadness. When something in you says, "I must not be sad, I should not be sad," you rebel against a feeling that exists in you. This rebellious attitude soon creates the misconception in you that being sad is catastrophic and that, if this catastrophe befalls you, you must perish. This unspoken, unarticulated assumption creates fear, and often, as the assumption becomes exaggerated, fear turns into terror. The terror of sadness creates a compulsive urge to avoid sadness. If life finally forces you to feel your sadness through the circumstances you inevitably attract, your terror, arising from your conviction that you must perish, produces such strong inner turmoil that you may indeed break down. You may be utterly unaware of the rebellious anger in you that fuels your terror and of the misconception that makes you struggle so arduously and painfully against the sadness. When you then experience sadness in this mental and emotional state, the experience is indeed unbearable -- but not because straight sadness cannot be borne.

Any straight, clean feeling can easily be borne, no matter what it is and why it exists. What is unbearably painful, frightening, and hopeless is the inner struggle that the misconception creates. This is the real meaning of the scriptural saying, "According to thy belief it shall be done unto thee." It does not mean there are magical intercessions from heaven, reward for faith and punishment for doubt. It simply describes the dynamics I discuss here. The overactive mind -- not necessarily conscious -- produces the image, "I will perish if I have to be sad." You build mental concepts that sustain the belief that sadness is unbearable and even dangerous, and thus you justify your refusal to feel sad. You may do this by building cases against people who make you sad. Your mind attempts to justify why you should not have to endure this feeling. Thus you build illusions. And it always seems most difficult to abandon one's cherished illusions.

Whenever an original experience -- say, of sadness and pain -- is denied, it becomes displaced. It will be reexperienced in subsequent situations. Displaced and denied sadness becomes self-pity, hopelessness, depression. These emotions are indeed debilitating and destructive, whereas the direct, original feeling of sadness, if fully experienced and consciously connected to its origin in this

life, will dissipate. When you let it happen to you, without manipulating it by exaggerating or denying it, it will run its natural course. This is extremely important to remember and to practice. If the original, clean experience of sadness is denied in any way and thus becomes distorted, it will form part of a vicious circle, from which it is always difficult to extricate oneself. Another part of the vicious circle is the denied anger and rage for being made sad by life and by others.

Now let us consider the feeling of anger. If it is cleanly experienced when someone perhaps damages or hurts you, it will resolve itself. Other people's denial of their inner truth, their real feelings, inflicts pain on you just as much as you inflict pain on others by not allowing yourself to experience what is -- whether or not you intend to do so. This pain can be inflicted every bit as much by omission as by commission. The climate of omission in a child's life is indeed often more difficult to cope with because there is no actual occurrence to which one can connect the pain, so that it is harder to acknowledge and feel and thus eliminate it from your psychic system. Your initial reaction to pain with anger is totally normal and healthy. If you can understand that such a reaction does not require you to act destructively against others, you will accept the anger without judging or justifying yourself or others. If you let yourself feel it and follow it through to the pain, it will dissolve, it will liberate you. If you deny it, it will turn into cruelty and hostility, which in turn, as you well know, need to be covered up to conform with society's standards. Thus you become further alienated from what you really feel, and the original feeling becomes more distorted.

Let us now see what happens when the original feelings of despair and loneliness are denied, when the inner person says, "I should not have to feel this ever; I should be spared this experience of despair." By this denial you turn your feeling of despair into bitterness, isolation, faithlessness -- the apprehension that there is no way out for you. If the original despair is experienced directly, without conclusions and mental concepts, the feeling will dissolve relatively quickly. If you allow yourself to feel it, without making something more of it, and are attuned to what is happening in you, you will come out of yet another tunnel into the light of the life stream. When I speak of the clean experience of momentary despair, I do not mean the subtly forced hopelessness that results from a forcing current. The forcing current is a manipulative process that expresses into life and toward everybody whom one substitutes for those who caused the original hurt in childhood: "You must now give me all I ask for, and you must protect me from all unpleasurable feelings. My hopelessness will convince you that this is what you must do for me." When such irrational messages of the hidden self can be deciphered and admitted, the manipulative, artificial hopelessness -- which is always unbearable -- will give way to a new insight which will lead back to the clean, original feeling one has avoided.

If you can so discern your hidden messages, you will make a great step toward self-awareness, which then will enable you to experience original feelings and go through their tunnel, at whose end you will find the realistic good tidings of spiritual reality -- that life is ultimately benign. And when I say "ultimately," I do not mean in a faraway beyond; I mean that whenever you have the courage and the faith to truly feel and explore what is in you; when you let happen what is in you; when the hardened armor plate of your defense against unpleasant feelings is loosened up and you feel and you cry, you tremble and you writhe, and you experience directly and cleanly the original feeling, then all residual feelings will dissolve. The new experience of everyday living will be a wave of life as it comes to you. You will not live behind a wall through which nothing can come to you and nothing can come out of you. That state is the true isolation of the disunified, fearful being, who

issues a forcing current into the world saying, "I must not feel this, I say no to it," and is therefore in a state of tight denial and defense.

Let us now take the feeling of fear. When you deny it, it becomes vague anxiety that is infinitely more disturbing because you have nothing to focus on and cope with. By facing the fear directly, you proceed into other feelings, such as pain, despair, anger, and so on. Thus the way out becomes possible. Anxiety is displaced fear and, as such, offers no way out.

If you feel vaguely disturbed or irritated, without really knowing what has happened to you, do not gloss over it. That will create further layers of disunity and disorientation. Focus on your sensations, trust in the fact that something more tangible, something that you can deal with, waits for you to take it out of hiding. This will lead you to a fuller experiencing of your present and past feelings. And when you empty out the past accumulations, the present will truly be the present, rather than the illusion that you react to the present when you really react over and over to the past you keep avoiding.

Anyone of you who truly decides to go into the nucleus of your being can do so at any time. It requires your decision to look, feel, and experience, to no longer project what is in you. When you can let a feeling -- pain, fear, disappointment -- happen to you and go to its very end, its energy current transforms itself into its original life flow. Thus, when you no longer fear a feeling, then that feeling can no longer come to you.

You must understand, my dearest friends, that anything undesirable that happens to you comes to you only because you say, "No, I must not experience that, and what can I do to avoid it?" Indeed, most people are motivated to start spiritual work like this because what they really seek are better ways to avoid the undesirable feelings. When it finally dawns on them that exactly the opposite direction must be taken, many leave the path, unwilling to accept the truth that avoidance is futile. They insist on their illusion.

It is therefore of utmost importance that you ask yourself to what degree you are afraid of a feeling in you. What feeling is it? For nothing outward can in itself be so frightening -- only what it will do to you, what unpleasurable feelings it will elicit in you. By going into the undesirable feeling, you will see the miracle happen as a stark reality, not as a principle you hear expounded: that the acceptance of pain makes the pain pleasure. The less you block pain, the more and the sooner will pain turn into pleasure. Thus you witness the process of unifying duality.

From this point, we shall go more and more into the deepest, most direct experiences of your residual feelings, alternating with your present feelings. By learning to give up the fight against them, you will, for the first time, lose fear. I will help and guide you, as usual. Start now -- all who listen tonight and all who read these words. What are the feelings you fear? Really face that. And then try to open yourself to the feared feelings and to let happen what you thought would be unbearable.

You will see that many of the concepts I have discussed over the years are not mere faraway philosophies. They have a concrete and immediate meaning you can verify if you truly follow through. Quite a number of you have done this already and have found that what appears first as a black, frightening abyss turns out to be a tunnel at whose other end you come into light. Everyone

can experience this. It is never a bottomless abyss, for the true nature of life is not darkness -- it is light. It is not destruction -- it is construction.

The evil, destructive, and demonic forces of life are rooted in the fear of experiencing what is in you, your feelings. Out of that fear, you build your destructive defenses. That is the only reason why any destructiveness sets in. The fear of feelings, of painful experiences, makes you arrogant and isolated, cruel and greedy, selfish and life-denying. It makes you untruthful on the inner and most vital level of your being. For if you deny what you feel, you are not in truth with yourself. All of this is evil, if you wish to use this word. Destructiveness lies exclusively in the walls you build against experiencing what is in you. You thus convert constructive energy into destructive energy. The inner lie of denying experience of the feeling self creates a falsification of your real self. It falsifies you until you no longer know who you really are. It creates the false hope that you can eliminate any undesirable feelings by avoiding them, and it creates the false hopelessness that the tunnel of painful feelings is a bottomless pit of horror and annihilation. Thus you waste your life energies by stemming against the truth and so create unnecessary pain.

The negation of your original pain in this life leads to greedy, insatiable demands, such as to be spared all frustration, to never be criticized, to be always loved and loved your way. Until you recognize and abandon these demands and go through the original pain, you will be caught in the see-saw of submission and rebellion, which is another vicious circle. You submit to another's equally insatiable, unreasonable demands and join in a power struggle for control so that you can finally have the other do your bidding. You rebel because you are ashamed of and hate yourself for your submission, and believe you must prove your "independence." In both instances you violate the interests of your real self. In neither are you aware of the blind drives that lead you into submission and rebellion. You can truly be independent only when you cease making the demands. This will happen when you are willing to experience whatever comes to you, knowing that you have produced it and that it exists within you.

Current psychology often says that a child is incapable of reacting differently to pain than by building its numbing defenses. This is true only when in previous lives residual pain was not experienced fully and thus eliminated. To the degree that a human being has done this, even in childhood the severest of circumstances will be experienced in an undefended way. The pain will be endured and gone through until it naturally ceases, without leaving a mark, just because it was fully felt. Feeling pain directly and fully strengthens resilience and the ability to live fruitfully and productively, and it certainly increases the capacity for experiencing pleasure and deep feelings. It is the living principle of "Do not resist evil." It requires blindness not to see that children actually have this capacity to a great degree. They can cry bitterly in one minute and laugh genuinely in the next, just because the pain has taken its natural course. It is only where pain has not been experienced that defensive numbness occurs -- and hence neurosis, destructiveness, deadness. It is false to generalize that no child can help but react in this self-numbing way to all traumatic and difficult situations.

May the power that is within your own inner being be allowed to fill your whole substance, your whole organism -- your spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical being. The full experience of your feeling self is spiritual hygiene and prevents the stagnation of your soul. It is the metabolism of your total organism. Just as the accumulation of physical waste that is not expelled and eliminated creates disease in the body, so does unassimilated, unexperienced feeling matter cause disease of the

soul. Your full commitment to everything you can possibly feel; your observation of feelings you fear and the events that bring forth those feelings; and your commitment at last to try to face and experience them constitute the healing process that will unify your entire being. This will make your life the fullest experience possible and will permeate you with the realization that you are using your life to its fullest and best, with its deepest meaning.

A lot of love is pouring forth for all of you. May you be able to feel it!

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.