

Pathwork Guide Lecture No. 166
1996 Edition
October 11, 1968

PERCEIVING, REACTING, EXPRESSING

Greetings, my friends. The universal love and power are part of you and you are part of them. May you be able to mobilize more of them than usually, in this hour, so as to truly benefit from these words, so as to make this evening a blessing for your future path on earth.

This lecture is an attempt to continue the current sequence for my friends who are actively engaged in this particular pathwork, and also to reach the many new friends who have found their way here. Hopefully, you can follow and benefit, even though much of the material may be out of context for you.

Every living creature's aim is to free the eternal spirit. This aim may be unconscious in many, but that does not alter the fact. The burden of the encrustations is heavy, and everyone feels the heaviness. All of you long for the brightness and lightness of the spirit that dwells deep within the encrustations, and long to come truly into your birthright. The Pathwork is actively concerned with fulfilling this longing. After all the labor and search my friends have been doing, some of them are about to approach two fundamental points of self-awareness. The causal connection between these two points can be detected when you understand, feel, and experience what I say here. Then you will indeed know that you are at a vital threshold.

The living spirit you are, which is perpetually waiting to unfold itself in creative and joyful living and well-being, is contained and held back by condensed emotions -- by powerful feelings you do not wish to experience. It is not the nature of those feelings themselves that creates the heavy condensed crust, but the fact that you deny their temporary reality in you. This heavy mass is the burden you carry around. It imprisons you to the exact degree that you fear letting out this mass and letting it unfold. Only then can it dissolve. This fear must be overcome.

No human being born into this limited environment and into the conditions prevailing in this sphere of existence is free from a conglomerate of strong negative feelings. There is hopeless agony, there is violent rage, there is the feeling of absolute helplessness -- first toward the world that seems to cause the agony and thus the rage, then toward the self because the ego does not know how to cope with these feelings. The way out of this predicament seems to be to deny the existence of the feelings. This seems the only alternative. But the more these feelings are denied, the greater their power becomes. Because there is no way of letting in the fresh air of truth, all these threatening feelings become more and more aggrandized, exaggerated and misunderstood. Then it seems indeed as though one's feelings were leading one into a bottomless pit.

For anyone who is new on this path, this may sound incredible because he or she has not yet encountered the violence of the feelings I speak about. But a number of my friends who are actively engaged in this work have recently become acutely aware of such feelings. Some of the new

approaches have begun to have their very beneficial results, so that even those who were most cut off -- perhaps even after years of hard work -- are suddenly approaching the threshold of this feared area in themselves. This is indeed great and significant progress without which no genuine experience of the universal self is possible. Some of you may not be conscious of these feelings yet, but at least you begin to sense and suspect, and be apprehensive about, the existence of these feelings. Some of you may not yet have mustered the courage to let them out as others have done.

Just as the result of letting the feelings out is an experience and a surge of new spiritual life, so is the result of avoiding the feared area disastrous; it paralyzes your best faculties. If you avoid these feelings, you cannot really live in the true unfoldment of the eternal, living, breathing spirit that you are, from which unlimited good flows into your whole being, into your entire life. Your spirit-self has all the power. The spirit-self cannot manifest when any part of the inner organism is feared, denied expression, and tightly held together. Thus living becomes a poor imitation of what it could be, and should be. Most human beings sense that; somehow they know that what they experience cannot be all there is to life, but few have the courage to admit it to themselves and do something about it.

When you approach the threshold where you meet the apparently uncontrollable agony, pain, hopelessness and violent anger -- and where you also meet your fear of not being able to ever exhaust these negative feelings, nor being able to handle them -- then you have to make a vital decision: to bring your reason to bear on the entire question of whether to deny the existence of these emotions or to meet and experience them -- to let them out into the open with the constructive view of learning how to handle them from here on. This also requires a modicum of trust in the world, of which you are a part, that there is no "bad" as such. If this is at all true, it must also hold true of distorted, destructive emotions. And since it is true, you can only experience it only as a reality when you give yourself the chance to do so.

Your reason will also tell you, once you think about it, that what exists in you is by no means annulled simply because you look away from it, because you act as though it did not exist and thus live a life of strenuous pretense at the expense of all the vital energy and life force. Without this energy the depth of experience you long for cannot ever be yours -- no matter what you pin your hopes on. You may flock to this or that supposed panacea, this or that new spiritual approach, always in the vague hope that it will open the gates to life -- the full and vital life you somehow know you miss out on. All of these must let you down in the end, for they are evasions, born in the hope that you will not have to dissolve the hard mass of tightly packed feelings of violence and pain.

The bottomlessness of the emotions you fear so much will prove to be an error only when you emerge from the experience of them. Such an experience is threatening only before you enter into it. Once you overcome the hesitation and reluctance and let yourself into this experience, no matter what you feel, it will not at all be what you feared. You will find that you can control the flood of feelings, just because you voluntarily choose to let them out. However, if they explode out of you because they have been artificially denied and held back for too long, then you cannot control them because their expression is involuntary. So, you need to express, to let out your feelings by choice when and how long you desire, in the knowledge that this unburdening is your salvation. Doing so will leave you refreshed and strengthened, more yourself than you ever were.

This threshold is essential on anyone's path of evolution. It proves to be a turning point in your inner life, where you go from a limited existence of robotlike make-believe to real living, in which you are increasingly in the full possession of the vital energy and creative wisdom of your innermost being. As long as you lack the courage of experiencing all that is in you, whether or not you wish to own up to it, you do not permit yourself the luxury of finding out your inner wealth and resourcefulness, your inborn strength and richness of feeling. By owning up I do not mean merely an intellectual admission, but the actual emotional experience and volitional expression of it. For if you do not meet that in you which freezes and paralyzes the living spirit, it is impossible to be moved and lived by the living spirit. Its life is squeezed out if you have to hold yourself back in any form. I want to emphasize once again that this does not imply that you act out destructiveness any which way. Choose in what manner to express it so that no one, including yourself, will be hurt by the effect -- all the while knowing, without self-justification, the irrational and destructive nature of what is flowing out.

Do not go away from that point where you say "I am afraid of these feelings." Rather remain there until you gain the strength to let them come to the surface. This is so much better than denying and going away again from this point of awareness where you know that you fear yourself. For if you fear yourself and do not know it, it is infinitely worse than if you fear yourself and know it. Fearing yourself and not knowing it makes you dead, makes you miss out on life. It makes you attach this very fear of yourself to any number of other, outer facets which have nothing to do with the fear itself as it exists in its original state.

When you have the courage to experience the pain, agony, anger, violence and helplessness, you will truly come to see that it is not bottomless or endless, and that this is not all there is to your inner life of feelings. You will see that there is an end. The end is when the living energy of all those feelings you wish to avoid becomes a vital, living feeling of love, joy, and pleasure.

There is, however, the second point of awareness I mentioned, which must also be faced in order to become completely capable of the courage necessary to plunge into those frightening feelings. Without this second point of awareness it can, at best, be only a half-hearted attempt. Some of my friends have lately begun to recognize, at least occasionally, this second point. However, such awareness habitually slips back into the unconscious, from whence it must be retrieved again and again. This second point is that, as a result of all the haplessness and agony, in the rage that develops as a consequence, you have decided, deep inside of you, to turn away from life, love, and the desire to contribute positively to life.

It is this kind of negativity that makes the courage to experience the destructive feelings so perilous. For as long as it is a fact that you do not want to love -- to give the best of yourself, to forgive and forget what harm life seems to have inflicted on you -- that you do not want to generously risk giving of yourself on the deepest possible level where no deception can exist, there can be no safety in anything you do. It will be as unsafe to hide from yourself as it will be to express what is in you. The key to safety, security, and all the other resources of life is love. As long as you refuse to forgive and wish to be resentful with life -- and therefore with people and events that come to pass both from within yourself and also from outside -- you will close yourself to all the good that wants to flow from you into the world and from the world into you.

As long as this negativity exists, the courage to face, experience, and express the destructive feelings cannot be completely mustered. Therefore, these two points of self-awareness must be alternately, and at times simultaneously, worked through. The causal connection between these two points must be clearly understood. As you become aware of and can acknowledge this resentful negation in yourself, you will comprehend more deeply the causal connection between the two points. You do not want to give anything of yourself on this deep and secret level of your inner existence. Outwardly this may well be concealed by apparently quite opposite patterns. But the false submission cannot ever be a substitute for real inner giving of self. In fact, real giving knows no self-deprecation, no martyrdom, no unjust treatment from the world. I would even suggest that such a pattern points the way to a crass lack of giving when it comes to real feelings. Oh, you may, in principle, be willing to give something, but only when everything is exactly according to your specifications. These specifications are often based on stark ignorance of the lawfulness involved in human interchange, on ignorance of the existing conditions produced by yourself that make such expectations of perfect relationships logically impossible. However, quite apart from such ignorance, this tentative bargaining and petty, distrustful withholding of all the generous spontaneous moves of the soul close the very door you hate to see closed.

Since you do not wish to give to life, how can life give to you? So you run around in circles, and it becomes a vicious circle, because the less life gives you as a result of your not giving to it, the more resentful you become, the more you refuse to give of yourself, the more drawn into yourself you become, and the more violent your anger grows from this uninterrupted frustration. Then this anger frightens you, so that you hold it back, and on and on it goes -- until the circle is broken.

In such a negative cycle, the vital glow of your energy and feelings becomes a tightly packed, hardened mass behind which your spirit seems to wither. Of course it does not really do so. It cannot, ever, since it is an eternal living force. But it cannot manifest to you, and you must remain separated from it, as long as the negating attitude remains. You can connect with your spirit only when you see the negation and become honest and humble enough to give voice to it as it truly exists in you: "I do not want to give anything of myself. Whenever I feel threatened by rejection, criticism, frustration of my immediate desires, I at once withdraw from life my vital energies, my goodwill, my positive spirit of participation. I want to remain separated, keeping my anger and resentment." When you can acknowledge this, you will instantly know that it is this attitude that makes the facing of the rage and the agony perilous.

Rage and agony must indeed seem endless as long as you are unwilling to give up this negative attitude toward life, in which you hug resentments and use dishonest games of suffering as weapons against others in order to put the blame on them. But the moment you are truly willing to give the best of yourself, if at first perhaps only in principle, even before being able to actually do so, the Supreme Spirit will help you make it a reality and there will be no question of fearing bottomless negativity and destructiveness.

This is possibly one of the reasons why on a path such as this no danger can ever exist, because you learn, as you face the negative temporary truth, to also call upon the forces of the infinite cosmic spirit in you. And you learn with its help to become giving and positive; to risk investing yourself; to become generous and let yourself feel, even if you do not have a guarantee that it will come out all right. For that is the only way your strength and resiliency can grow, so that nothing can ever faze you.

The combination of these two points of awareness, my friends, is a key. Those of you who are near this point, or have already made some recognitions in this respect, can now proceed. As you meditate, say into yourself: "I invest the best I have into my life. I will not withhold anything of myself. I want to contribute to the cosmic unfoldment and plan of evolution with all the faculties I have -- those already manifest, but perhaps not used in this way, and those that are still dormant in me. I want to contribute, and only as a thoroughly fulfilled and happy person can I do so -- not ever as a suffering one.

Your negativity is a defense, my friends. It arises out of the tragic misunderstanding of duality, the dichotomy that is rampant on this earth sphere, where it is so often a question of either/or. In this case, you believe it to be a question of your happiness versus the happiness of the other. You secretly feel that by giving to others you will be impoverished, put to some sort of disadvantage, while by grabbing for what you want and by withholding yourself you add to your advantage. This belief is always there, underneath, half-conscious or completely unconscious. It creates a terrible conflict.

When you examine dispassionately the irrationality of your negation, of your destructive insistence on remaining separate and ungiving, you will indeed come to see that this unrealistic dichotomy is present in your attitude. When you bring it out you will be able to correct it. Little by little, you will recondition your perceptions, your emotional reactions, your deep inner knowing of the way life is. You will then know that the happier you are, the more you contribute to others.

In the process of removing unhealthy conditions that are a result of false beliefs in the deep psyche, you will see that your fulfillment can never really infringe upon those of others -- even if at first it may appear that way. When you go to the root of all things, there is no conflict between your fulfillment and those of others -- quite the contrary. So you will not need to be ungiving, nor will you need to feel guilty for wanting your own fulfillment and joy. With that understanding all negativity must vanish -- even in the deepest regions and the most secret areas of your psyche. Then the unfoldment can become complete, for you will be more and more freely and fearlessly yourself, and you will expand into life, opening up to receiving life's gifts.

Very much related to what I said here is an important aspect of relationship. Relationship is the very essence of life. No one is capable of living productively without warmth and love, without sharing and mutual understanding. It is truly in the scheme of things of the universal creative spirit. There are certain very basic aspects of relationship that are important to understand. A threefold principle exists that applies to all elements of any kind of relationship and determines its nature. It is: perceiving, reacting, and expressing. When this threefold principle operates in health, truth, harmony and reality, then relationship must be fruitful and joyful. When these three aspects of relationship operate in a distorted, unrealistic, disharmonious way, relationship cannot possibly be fruitful or joyful.

As I said to you many times, you cannot possibly have a good relationship with others unless you first have a good relationship with yourself. Therefore these threefold aspects must first be applied to yourself. How do you perceive yourself? How do you react to what you perceive in yourself? And how do you express that which you perceive in yourself? If you are not at war with yourself, your perception will be clear. If you are at war with yourself by demanding to be other

than you are now, you cannot perceive yourself correctly. For example, if you are unwilling, and therefore apparently incapable of, shedding your idealized self-image, if you insist on living up to its unreasonable demands, then your perception of yourself must be faulty and limited. If your perception of yourself is faulty and limited, your reaction to what you are must be very disturbing.

Anyone of you who is now so close to the threshold of your inner destructiveness -- to the fear and pain and rage, and also to the deliberate, although possibly unconscious, mean refusal to give of yourself to life and others -- will have a negative reaction to all this only because your self-perception has been faulty. You may also resist reconsidering this self-perception. You still battle what is and insist on being the way you are not. Thus you do not perceive in truth, so that your reaction to it when it indirectly manifests must be disharmonious and disturbing. You will go on denying what tries to make itself known to you, and you will create more inner dissent and warfare. One side, the spirit side, makes an attempt to reveal your unacceptable truth, the other side battles it. In that battle your reaction becomes even more painful: greater dissension with yourself and even more rage toward the world follow.

A great part of the rage, anger, and pain are not so much a question of the helpless conditions of childhood, although those may have set it off in this life. Much of the painful reaction is produced because you battle yourself as you are and do not succeed in becoming what you want to be. Thus, what you perceive makes you more angry and pained. This is vastly responsible for the apparently bottomless despair and rage we were talking about.

When you perceive yourself in the wrong way, and consequently react to what you perceive in the wrong way, your expression of it must be equally distorted and destructive. You cannot express the truth of what you perceive in yourself since you do not know it -- do not wish to know it. In such confusion, helplessness increases, the thus mounting inner tension seeks an outlet. To look for scapegoats who can be blamed for these unpleasant feelings and reactions is a very frequent way out. Scapegoats can always be found if you look hard enough. Sometimes one does not even have to look very hard, for the imperfection of the world lends itself well to attracting enraged and threatened feelings. Thus the expression becomes one of hostility and rejection.

To recapitulate briefly: Wrong perception of self leads to wrong, destructive reaction and, further, to destructive expression out into the world. This, in turn, must affect all relationships. This is so self-evident, it hardly needs further elaboration. Since you blame others, they must respond in kind. Since you are unwilling to be positive and giving, and do not wish to admit this in order to protect your self-image, others will reflect this negativity. Your reaction to that reflection must also be faulty, since you choose not to admit your negativity, which makes you feel unjustly treated. How then can what you express to others be anything but negative and destructive? Moreover, how can your perception of others be accurate when your self-perception closes its vision to what is in you and seeks others as scapegoats? How can your perception of anything be accurate if you are unwilling to perceive yourself correctly?

The triad of perception, reaction, expression works quite differently in truth and creative living. If perception is truthful the entire picture changes. You do not have to already be a perfect specimen if you use this in a positive way. Your truthful perception of what is far from perfect in you will make you capable of acknowledging this without losing balance within yourself, without losing sight of the fact that you are a divine spirit with all its faculties intact. As you perceive

yourself accurately, your reaction automatically becomes favorable. For then you will want to get rid of the negativity and will seek the fruitful way that does not deny what is, but bases all further steps on clear perception of the Now. In that spirit, what expresses itself must be infinitely positive. In that attitude, you see everything as it is and where it really belongs. You see the good and the bad in yourself. You see the truth in yourself and you accept it. Therefore your expression will be a truthful one. This will make the unfoldment of highly creative feelings, currents, and knowledge more and more possible.

With such a unified relationship toward the self, rather than a divided one, relationship to others must become equally positive and fruitful. It cannot help being so. I repeat once more, my friends: Whenever you find yourself in strife, there is something in your relationship to yourself that is not according to the positive aspect of this threefold principle. My advice is to acknowledge this fact and let go, then ask for the truth within you. It will come to you. The answers always come if you are sincere in wanting to know and thus properly receptive.

Then, and then only, will you be able to develop the same threefold principle toward the divine spirit within yourself. You will perceive it more and more. You will react to it, but not with the old fear. For as long as you fear the indwelling negativity, you must also fear the indwelling power for positive experience and unfoldment. You will no longer react with fear to the greatest power in the universe, which is right in you. You will be receptive to it. You will then express this power, for you are a living part of it and become more and more so.

I recapitulate the gist of all this: The necessity to reach the point of recognition that there is a bottomless fear in you of violent, uncontrollable emotions which you do not wish to deal with; and the necessity to reach the point of awareness that you wish -- at least in certain areas -- to remain negative toward life and others. As you give up the wish to remain negative and exchange it for a wish to be outgoing, positive and giving, the fear of self will vanish. Then the threefold principle governing relationships will change from the negative to the positive. You will perceive yourself correctly, you will react productively to what you perceive, and you will express it in a meaningful way.

Little by little, this will change your entire life. Wherever life is now disharmonious, limited, frustrating and withholding, it will open up gradually and in its unfolding will give to you richly. Needless to say, this is not an easy formula to apply. Although its truth is simple enough, to put it into practice requires the maximum of investment and commitment on your part to the truth within, to the truth of your life, to the living spirit of perpetual growth. It demands time, perseverance and wise, mature insight into the dynamics of growth. It requires a continuous groping for the right balance of letting the destructive, ignorant, irrational child in you express itself, without falling into the trap of believing its truth is the truth, so that an intelligent dialogue can be established with the life-resisting part of your personality.

May these words lift you in hope, courage and renewed stamina to proceed further on this path, so that you can break through the wall of your fear of self. You must emerge triumphantly, cleansed, stronger and better, for the life of the spirit in its undifferentiated goodness and fulfillment will become more and more a reality of your life. Be blessed, be in peace, be what you really truly are -- the living spirit, the Universal Living Spirit!

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.