

The Defense

The Path to the Real Self Chapter 19 & Pathwork Lecture 101
Study Guide for July 2014 Online Meetings

“The goal of this path is to free the individual from encrustations, prohibiting the manifestation of his real self. These encrustations consist of unrealistic concepts, with their resulting fears. Fear creates tension and distrust. Tension and distrust produce a hardening wall, standing between man's consciousness and his real self, as well as between him and others. He cannot relate to others, he cannot perceive and respond adequately, if his entire inner being is cramped, which is the case in a state of fear.”

PRS19

Week 1: What being in defense looks and feels like.

Week 2: What do you fear will happen if your defense is found to be false?

Week 3: The physical, emotional, and spiritual price of our addiction to defense.

Week 4: Living in a unitive state on a dualistic plane

Week 1: What being in defense looks and feels like.

1. Notice your body during interactions with others throughout the week. When are you relaxed? When do you tense up? If you exaggerate your impulses, what do they look like – reaching out for connection? Warding off blows? Pretending not to feel anything? Looking for a way to escape?

2. Keep a daily review for a week. At the end of each day, try to remember each occasion where you felt yourself take a defensive posture or attitude during the day. Write a short note about each occasion -- just 2-3 words each -- listing

a) the circumstance b) feelings / reactions and c) thoughts / judgments.

Examples:

a) dog barked b) scared nervous c) someone ought to do something

a) friend sighed b) it's my fault c) I don't want to be blamed

At the end of a week, notice if there is any pattern or similarity in the types of events that trigger your defenses.

“In your daily review, and other occasions of self-observations, it should become so that you are instantly conscious when the old automatic reflex defense is at work. This awareness must weaken it and, each time you ascertain its existence, affords you the opportunity to probe deeper and understand more of the misconception behind it, which instituted it in the first place. This eventually frees you from it, so that you truly experience liberation from a useless shackle. You will know the bliss of inner freedom, of well functioning, adequate faculties, of deep serenity, of alertness without anxiety.”

PRS 19

“I think you all begin to see how predominant this defensiveness is. It may be subtle and not easy to detect, but once you are on the right track, you become more acutely aware of its permanent existence. You defend not only against hurt as a supposed

mortal danger. You defend also against frustration of your will, against anything that does not go according to your wishes. All this represents, unconsciously, a threat to your safety, while in reality it is not so. It may be undesirable, but something undesirable is by no means necessarily dangerous. Yet, a defense mechanism, by its very nature, is a process of warding off danger.” PL101

“The moments of real danger in a life are comparatively few.” PRS19

[In a healthy mind/body state:] “all his muscles -- physical, mental and emotional ones -- must be in a state of relaxation, in order to have all his faculties ready to deal adequately with life, as it unfolds for him. Then he can be alert and "tune in" on the happenings around him. This alert, relaxed state permits him to think clearly, to judge and evaluate reasonably, to feel so deeply that his individuality will be enriched by everything that life offers. He can then automatically find the right balance between giving out and drawing in; between action and reaction; between giving in and reaching out in self-assertion. This process must be as automatic in the healthy, integrated, balanced person, as the heart beat or the working of the respiratory system, which function effortlessly and perfectly in the healthy body. They are not willed to function.” PRS19

[The fear state:] “When man finds himself in danger, all his faculties withdraw from other matters, having nothing to do with the danger area. All his muscles -- emotional and mental ones as well as the physical muscles -- flex and harden in the intense preoccupation with the danger. The entire organism undergoes a change for the singular purpose of dealing with the emergency situation. This happens automatically, due to the fact that, as danger is perceived, the glandular system releases a certain substance which shoots through the nervous system, speeding up blood pressure and accelerating the pulse beat. This substance contains a poison, which has a strong stimulating effect for the purpose of heightening perception and focusing attention on the danger, to the exclusion of all other preoccupation and attention. Man's normal reflexes do not respond quickly enough to deal with a threatening situation. In order to make a quick decision, he needs a special stimulant, which is built into his system and is released automatically when needed. Hence, he can protect and defend himself with greater strength, more undivided attention, increased and quickened resourcefulness, better judgment -- all in a split second. Under ordinary circumstances, it is not only possible, but advisable, to take one's time about decisions, to ponder and weigh, to wait and see. In dangerous situations, such maneuvers may be fatal. The built-in poison substance, called adrenalin, works like a drug, temporarily beneficial for certain purposes, but harmful when habitually used.” PRS19

“When you are on the defensive, you are frightened, you feel threatened, endangered. In order to deal with an urgent issue at the moment, you need all your faculties focused on that one point. ... In order to do that, your entire system goes through a change for the singular purpose of dealing with the emergency situation.” PL101

Questions and Answers at the end of Pathwork Lecture 101:

QUESTION: You mean, we should just listen to someone if he criticizes?

ANSWER: Calmly listen and evaluate. Could there be some truth in the criticism? Observe your inner reactions of fright. You will soon discover that your fright is unjustified even if the criticism be wrong. Nothing can happen to you, you are not in danger.

QUESTION: But what if we get annoyed at being unjustly criticized?

ANSWER: The very feeling of annoyance is the proof and expression of your defensiveness. Without defense, you would not be annoyed. How could you be? You would evaluate and either find that in it there may be some truth, little truth, or none at all. What can this criticism do to you that causes annoyance? Have you ever analyzed it from this point of view? Justified or unjustified criticism cannot really harm you unless you think you cannot be loved and respected if something to be criticized is found.

QUESTION: What if it is a lie, if it is untrue?

ANSWER: I said that before. It cannot harm you by looking at it calmly. Your defense against it is the harm. The lie itself, or the erroneous judgment, could never harm you. And the less defensive you are, the more adequate will you be to straighten out an outright lie or misunderstanding.

QUESTION: If the accusation covers a betrayal, and you have a natural anger against it, your anger may cover self-defense. But it also is a natural reaction against someone who has made promises, and you have fulfilled your part, and then you find that you are betrayed, and the thing that you were promised and you have hoped for does not come true. Is not this a natural anger?

ANSWER: Before we deal with the term of what is "natural" and "unnatural," I would like to say again that I did not imply that people should take any injustice or betrayal without doing whatever is necessary, constructive, and productive. When it is healthy and when not, cannot be determined in a general rule. It is too subtle and can only be found in truthful self-examination. Now as to what is "natural," this can be so misleading. It is certainly "natural" to have immature, unproductive reactions because everyone else has them too. But that does not mean they are really natural or that it is not possible to grow out of them -- not forcefully, not by superimposition, not by feeling guilty that childish reactions still exist, but in the way that I always advocate.

PL101

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Week 2: What do you fear will happen if your defense is found to be false?

“The primary result on this path is the understanding of your own cause and effect and of the sense of strength, independence, self-reliance, and justice that this gives to an individual.” PL100

Fear loves unfinished sentences and confusion. It thrives on rumors, misunderstanding, and exaggeration. Take several examples where you have noticed you go into defense easily, and answer the questions from PRS 19:

What is it you fear?

Against what do you believe you need to defend yourself?

What does this defense exactly consist of?

How does it affect others?

Where does the truth of the matter lie?

You will probably be surprised at how little the fears and the protection against the fears make sense. The less this is so, the more preposterous it all is, the more you are on the right track, for these defenses are irrational, senseless, unrealistic -- and therefore damaging.

When defending against real dangers, the specific danger is the truth of the moment. When defending against unreal dangers, the issue is appearance, not what is. The weight is always on "am I right?", or "are others wrong?", and not "is it right? To what degree, how, and in what respect? Where does the truth of the matter lie?" It is this limited "I versus the other person" which befogs the issue and appears to require defensiveness. The real issue is so often hedged by shifting it on a level where the self can be proven "right."

In reality, it can be easily observed that pretense never engenders acceptance and respect. People have a keen intuition for what is genuine and what is not and invariably respond accordingly, whether or not they are aware of their reason for responding as they do. Actual rejection is always due to the defense against being one's real self. He who finds it unnecessary to defend himself against what he really is, who can be himself, admitting naturally and undramatically his human limitations, without being defensive about it, is not ever rejected. This proves the fact that it is rarely the shortcomings one is rejected for, but one's attitude to them. The destructive attitude is being defensive about one's human limitations.

Defensiveness is often instituted against invalidating the pretense of the idealized self image. PRS19

Quotes from Pathwork Lecture 101:

When you feel accused of something true, half true, or untrue, you feel in mortal danger. If you translate your emotional reactions to such criticism, you will readily see that your feelings say, "I am in danger."

Is it not often the case that the criticism against which you strenuously defend yourself threatens to expose something that you do not wish to face? You may not wish to face it because it is uncomfortable to change, or because you believe that if the truth comes out, you will not be loved and accepted as worthy of respect. Thus if it is seen in its true light, your defense is often against truth even though this truth may come from outside, from people who are, in their own way, as imperfect as you are. The supposed mortal danger you have to ward off is often truth itself, my friends. And you defend against it by pointing out the truth in the other person which he does not want to see. . Thus two sides point out truths about the other -- and each may be correct to a degree -- while not wanting to see the truth in himself.

In defensiveness, you do not perceive, experience, and think thoughts of truth and reason. You do not feel feelings of warmth, affection, and understanding. Therefore you are not in reality, and you cannot communicate. Your system is focused on one small point, namely that of defending yourself against imaginary danger. In this way, so much else that is part of life, part of your reality, is left out of consideration.

You no longer reach out into the world; you no longer try to bridge the gap between yourself and others. You are not concerned with eliminating the separation between yourself and others, with communication and union. In moments of actual danger, such feelings would actually be a detriment.

When you are more or less permanently defensive due to the erroneous belief that any hurt or frustration, any criticism, any rejection is a danger you must guard against, you limit the range of your feelings, the potentials of your creativity, the ability to reach out into life and communicate with others, to love and to understand, to feel and to express yourself. In short, your spiritual life is gravely impaired.

The liberation you experience when you discover the illusion of the need to defend yourself, and therefore no longer do so, is impossible to convey. You simply have to live it to know this joy. Let go, and receive whatever comes to you. Look at it quietly with the dominant aim not to ward off, but to seek and see truth. In this attitude, your reactions will change

There is no greater hardship, no greater prison than illusion. There is nothing more destructive on this earth than people unnecessarily defending themselves. There is nothing that creates more disharmony, more untruth, more hostility, more friction, in personal as well as in public life, than defensiveness.

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Week 3: The physical, emotional, and spiritual price of our addiction to defense.

Quotes from PRS 19:

How does this apply to the imaginary danger of the false imprints, the misunderstood, hurtful childhood occurrences, which created the images? When the personality is frightened, it releases the poison, whether the fright is based on reality or not. This means that the system is swamped with poison, created by constant, unrealistic and, therefore, unnecessary anxiety. This poison first affects the mental and emotional levels, but after continuously living in anxiety, it finally also affects the physical system.

Apart from the impairment to physical health, how can the personality adequately meet, concentrate on, respond to, experience, tune in on, be sensitive and alert to, the manifold situations requiring attention in a full life? All faculties are consumed by a non-existent danger and the entire organism lives in a state of emergency.

Gradually, other faculties begin to atrophy. No matter how intelligent the individual is, his intelligence must be impaired after an extended period of one-sided emphasis of the entire system. Creative faculties cannot manifest in a climate of fear. How can love, with all its aspects, flower, when everything is geared to protection and defense? The same applies to intuition. It is as though the person's scope of perception were two-dimensional -- danger or no danger. He hardly knows anything else. This must create an inner imbalance, with all its consequences.

By constantly using the defense system for unrealistic purposes, it gradually loses its effectiveness for realistic issues requiring self-protection. It is as though the entire inner organization were confused and no longer knows which issue needs defense, and which does not. This is why it can be observed, again and again, that people who suffer from unrealistic anxieties are ill-equipped to defend themselves, and cope with, actual dangers. It is currently believed that this manifestation is predominantly self-destructiveness, in a sense that the personality unconsciously wants to cause itself damage. It is much more frequently the case that this inner confusion is responsible for inadequate defense where it is necessary. All because the entire energy is used up in order to ward off imaginary danger, stemming from the individual's specific images.

Defending against unrealistic dangers often means defending against truth. When observing this inner defense, when and how it acts, it will be noticed that innumerable times it is present when one fears a justified criticism. Hence, the supposed danger one is unwilling to accept is truth. If it were not feared to be the truth, if the criticism proved to be unjustified, what harm can that accusation do? Is the opinion of the accuser truly of such importance that one inwardly reacts as though finding oneself in mortal danger?

Disarming Our Defenses

“In the emotional side of your nature, faced with actual danger, you hardly have time or room for feelings other than fright and anger.” PL 101

Consider a situation where you felt or knew you were in defense. Can you feel into the truth of this statement, even in part? Can you feel how you were not open to other solutions than ‘fight or flight’? After such an incident passed, did you then become aware of other options, other factors, and perhaps wonder why you did not perceive them during the incident?

“Do not blame the other person for the unpleasant sensation of this poison, registered as anxiety. It is your defensiveness that creates it. Once you clearly see this, you will relax and meet what comes to you in a constructive way, allowing you to grow from it.” PRS 19

Take some time to recall an incident when you defended yourself strongly and there was not a truly necessary reason to do so.

We tend to remember those types of unwarranted responses one of three ways- by seeing the humor and making it into a joke, by continuing to defend by making it an ongoing ‘sore point’, or by being embarrassed and ashamed of the memory.

Allow yourself to notice where one of these residual feelings or attitudes exists. Allow yourself to open to the possibility that your behavior in the original situation may have been out of reality- that you may have been reliving another emotional incident and superimposing the past upon the present.

Be kind to yourself if you find that you still feel defensive. This process is not about whether you were or are ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. It is about feeling and appreciating the areas in yourself which are not in congruency or integrity with your Higher Self. To be able to perceive an aspect of immaturity or weakness in yourself is a critical first step to your own healing.

“You defend not only against hurt as a supposed mortal danger. You defend also against frustration of your will, against anything that does not go according to your wishes. All this represents, unconsciously, a threat to your safety, while in reality it is not so. It may be undesirable, but something undesirable is by no means necessarily dangerous.” PL 101

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Week 4: Living in a unitive state on a dualistic plane

Living in Duality / Separation:

If you are constantly on the defensive, the predominant feelings are fright and anger. At this point, I need hardly discuss how damaging this is for yourself and for your surroundings. Whenever you are hurt, this hurt is erroneously believed to be an attack on you. Erroneously, it represents a danger to your safety. Thus you immediately repress the hurt -- your primary reaction -- and remain aware of anger and hostility as a substitute for the original reaction.

You begin to let your defense mechanisms, whatever your private pseudosolutions are, go to work. Needless to say, you are no longer in truth, not only because the hurt you experienced, unpleasant as it may have been, is no danger and does not call for elaborate defenses which are infinitely more damaging than the original hurt could ever be, but also because you, yourself, are no longer aware of the original feeling -- the hurt -- but only of the secondary reaction -- the anger. This institutes a process of self-alienation, of psychological self-estrangement. PL101

Living in the Unitive / Connection:

The liberation one experiences when discovering the illusion of the danger and the hardship of the defense against this illusion, is impossible to convey in words. Anyone pursuing this path must eventually experience the great wonder that reality does not require a perpetual armor which shuts out life itself.

This liberation produces joy and security. There is no greater hardship than illusory danger and defensiveness against it. Nothing creates more disharmony, separation, fear, hate, untruthfulness, guilt, friction, anxiety, hostility and loneliness. Conversely, being free from false defenses produces harmony, unity, security, love, truth, communication, understanding, emotional comfort. PRS 19

Opening to What IS:

How a BBC Financial Reporter Ended Up Bankrupt and Homeless

Former journalist Ed Mitchell describes his roller-coaster life story. The 5 minute film was a top ten pick at Sundance London's short film competition. It illustrates the attitude shift that is possible once we are able and willing to accept what IS instead of what we expected, desired, or imagined might be. 4 mins 40 sec.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/361438/how-a-bbc-financial-reporter-ended-up-bankrupt-and-homeless/>

Evolution's Four Stages:

Automatic Reflexes, Awareness, Understanding, Knowing
Quotes from Pathwork Guide Lecture No.127

The lowest phase of human consciousness is automation. Man responds according to automatic reflexes -- emotional reactions which are based on deeply imprinted wrong conclusions and generalizations. Blind automatism is always the result of material that man is unwilling to face. This applies to all people.

The next phase on this scale of evolution is awareness. When this takes place, he is aware of the automatism -- hence the automatism no longer exists. The transition from automatism to awareness is one of the most difficult that man passes through. The moment he knows he is driven by false ideas, man is no longer in blind automatism. This requires courage and the cultivation of the inner will.

After a certain degree of awareness has been gained and, proportionately, blind reflexes have ceased, the next stage is understanding.

The highest phase of this particular scale is knowing. When you deeply know the truthful concept, the particular truth behind the particular error that you begin to understand, something begins to happen within and around the sphere of your being. The only way that knowing divine principles can come about is through a highly personal experience of the untruth that blurred the way, so far, to that particular truth

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