

# Pathwork™ Steps

## Conflict Between Conscious and Unconscious Desires

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 45

Full text of this plus all other lectures may be downloaded from [www.pathwork.org](http://www.pathwork.org)

**Week 1: Life is a manifestation of our own beliefs**

**Week 2: The Power of Thoughts, Emotions, and Habits**

**Week 3: Uncovering Unconscious Desires**

**Week 4: The Power of Mass Images**

**Week 1: Life is a manifestation of our own beliefs**

Misconceptions can be quite conscious, but you do not necessarily know that they are misconceptions. Therefore your conscious beliefs must also be tested and investigated. Misconceptions can be vaguely conscious in a nebulous way; when your actions and reactions testify to the fact that you are governed by misconceptions, [you must concisely specify what these are and what their consequences are]. Or misconceptions can be unconscious. In that case, the Pathwork must deal with making them conscious. This can only be done by examining the life manifestation.

**One's life does not lie. It expresses exactly what you really, inwardly believe.**

[Resume of Basic Principles of the Pathwork](#) PL 193

For those who are at the beginning of the path (or those who still defend against fully assuming responsibility for their life and are therefore blocked), the existing image can be infallibly deduced by looking at your life. **Your life reveals what your underlying beliefs and attitudes must be.** It cannot be otherwise.

[Demagnetizing Negative Force Fields](#) PL 201

QUESTION: For the longest time, I had difficulties with meditation. Now that I have overcome some difficulties, the results have been nothing short of miraculous. I would like to ask the question what this miracle is?

ANSWER: The miracle is a law of life, a law that you just discovered. This law is that whatever concept you hold must manifest in your life. The truth of life, the reality of life, is unlimited good. To the extent you can embrace this possibility, to that extent this truth must unfold itself to you. This then appears miraculous to the person who has hitherto only embraced negative possibilities and therefore could not experience or see beyond these negative possibilities.

[Illusory Fear of Self](#) PL 136

**The Law of Affinity** is what spiritual law as a whole amounts to -- the law of cause and effect and all universal and psychological happenings. For instance, look at the images. When an image exists and brings a person into certain situations in life -- certain people are drawn into his life -- this is based on the law of affinity because the forms of thoughts, feelings, desires, etc. attract that which corresponds. The whole concept of images can only be understood when one realizes the validity of the Law of Affinity.

*Q&A Section PL 45*

## Using Daily Review to Find Your Desires

There is no other reason and no other purpose in life than development and purification. You cannot purify unless you know yourself. And although self-knowledge is not always identical to purification, to a large extent you purify already by the mere fact that you recognize yourself fully and thoroughly.

The ability to do so without resistance, without subterfuge, makes it essential and necessary to have humility, the humility to accept yourself as you are now. Therefore, the struggle to acknowledge a part of your lower self (that you may have ignored in its full significance until now) is already purification even long before you are capable of changing your emotions.

Change is not something that can be commanded. You cannot change your feelings and emotional reactions by an act of will. You can use your will to do the necessary and often tedious work of searching for a clear-cut meaning of your confused emotions; you can certainly use your will in order to decide fully for this path.

But the emotions can only change after you have had the humility to repeatedly recognize their lower nature. Recognize again and again whatever is wrong in your inner reactions, and thus you cultivate that very change you wish to accomplish. To know yourself, my friends, to find the real you, the part of you that you have been unaware of so far, is always the aim and the question.

The first and most important step in that direction is to find out your desires, my friends. When I speak of desires, I do not mean the important aims and goals in your life or the big issues. No, I mean that any small and apparently insignificant reaction on your part contains a desire of one sort or another. Think of any unimportant incident happening to you throughout the day when you feel disharmonious, angry, irritated, or, for that matter, joyful and optimistic. **In these reactions lies a desire.**

If you wish to find out who you are, you have to ascertain first what these desires are in each of your daily reactions. That is not as difficult as you may think on the one hand, and on the other hand, it is not as easy either. It means a certain technique, a certain training, a certain habit-forming on your part.

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### Exercise 1: Daily Review <http://www.janrigsby.org/files/PDF/028-DailyReview-Suggestions.pdf>

-- **Ask yourself *why you felt these reactions***, no matter how obvious the reason may be as far as other people and outer circumstances are concerned. (Instead of merely acknowledging to yourself "*I felt angry or hopeful or unhappy or joyous on such and such an occasion*")

-- **Ask yourself: *what the desire behind your reaction might be.***

-- **Ask yourself: "*What do I really want in connection with this or that situation that makes me angry or fearful now? I am angry because I would want something different. What is it really that I want?*"** Or "*I am joyful because apparently a desire of mine has been fulfilled. What was and is this desire?*" And "*If I am hopeful, it is because the chances seem greater now that a certain desire will be fulfilled. What is this desire, in clear-cut, simple words?*"

-- **Try to make a habit of such self-questioning** in this respect, my friends. Take all your reactions every day, and examine them from this point of view. "*What is the desire?*" It will help you to understand yourself much better; and it will also help you to understand why you became as you are now and had these desires.

-- **Learn first to establish a concise consciousness**, an articulate awareness of your desires. Then we will go into the reason for their existence.

-- The next step will be to find out why you have these desires.

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## Week 2: The Power of Thoughts, Emotions, and Habits

Your conscious desires may often deviate from your unconscious ones. This is one of the main reasons for your conflicts and un-fulfillments in life. But what often creates equal conflicts and un-fulfillments is a circumstance most of you ignore in its full significance. And that is the fact that your conscious desires and aims (according to which you perform your actions) are indeed in concordance with the goals of your higher self, while lower and selfish aims are also present in your motivations. **These lower aims find an outlet in the higher aims, which lend themselves very well to hide their existence.**

While your deeds and acts are worthy and good as such, while the high and noble motives truly exist in you, all this loses its splendor if you cannot see the lower motives coexisting with the higher ones, both finding one and the same goal or aim.

Even long before you can purify to such an extent that these selfish, proud, vain, and fearful motives cease to exist in you, **the fact that you simply recognize their existence purifies you already** to quite a degree, and therefore also purifies the right action and the pure desire within yourself.

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Pain is the Result of Conflict. When two opposite directions exist in a personality, pain comes into being. It is not the disturbance itself that creates the pain, but it is the opposite direction which brings imbalance and a special sort of tension. There will always be another part of the psyche which violently objects to the negative desire, so that pain must result.

*[Negative Pleasure: Conflict as the Source of Pain](#)* PL 140

**Exercise 2a:** Where you experience pain in your life, your conscious and unconscious desires may oppose each other. By definition, unconscious desires aren't consciously felt or thought, so are difficult to verbalize. Creativity and imagination can help here.

-- Exaggerate the positive aspects of your desires. Use humor, examples from popular movies or news articles, or children's stories. Make up a story!

-- What would the opposite desire be? If your desire is that of the Hero/Heroine, what would a Villain or arch-enemy be trying to accomplish?

-- Notice if any 'grains of truth' in your Villain's story that resonate with you.

-- Use your Daily Review to notice if this 'grain of truth' resonates in other situations.

### Distinguishing Between Thought Currents and Emotional Currents

Try to realize that the difference of thoughts and emotions lies only in the difference of degree in intensity and vibration. We can see very often that man holds on stubbornly to an opinion merely because this was his opinion for quite a while -- in spite of the fact that deep down in his heart he knows or feels that the new outlook he is presented with one day makes good sense. So changing even superficial opinions requires effort and humility on your part. To change thoughts without emotional impact needs certain assets not always easy to muster, at least for a number of people.

How much more difficult is it then, how much more patience and wisdom is needed to change an outlook, a trend, or an attitude where your most subjective and personal ideas are involved, in your deep-rooted emotions! Even changing mere thought-opinions, free of emotional context, cannot be done by force.

**No one else can force you to think differently, not even your own self.** You can only change an opinion if you think about it, deliberate and weigh, discriminate and select. Due to this process, a new opinion may evolve, or you may maintain the old one because this seems right, based on conscious and mature deliberations.

Humanity makes a definite distinction between feelings and thoughts. You know that in spirit both are concrete forms of subtle matter. In reality, feelings are exactly the same in principle as thoughts, the way we see it. **The only difference is that an emotion is more potent and more intense than any thought you can harbor.**

Convictions, opinions, and views not fortified by emotions are weak, and the forms can dissolve much faster than those where emotions are contained in these opinions and views. This applies in the positive as well as in the negative sense, of course.

The strongest conscious conviction or thought is nothing in comparison to an utterly unconscious emotional current. From the spiritual viewpoint of absolute truth, the difference of thoughts and feelings is only in the strength and intensity, not in the characteristic or type.

By making your emotions conscious, you turn them into thoughts, and then you turn, if you wish, these thoughts into actions. Thus you live in a higher degree of consciousness than when you perform your actions without knowing or understanding why, merely rationalizing them in the best way you know how but still being controlled by your unconscious thoughts (or emotions).

With emotions, which are stronger and more potent compared to thought, force is even less successful and very treacherous indeed. It should not dismay you that your unpurified emotions cannot change merely because you have finally recognized their unpurified nature. Adjust yourself to the necessity that for a while you will observe their existence -- and learn further from the ability to do so!

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### **Side-Effects of Forcing Your Feelings**

**Beware of the error** that the truth of a good motive excludes the truth of the bad motive coexisting with the good one, although hidden so far.

**Do not ever try to force your feelings.** It cannot be done. You do so with the best of intentions; you know certain reactions are not good or loving, and you do not like to be that way. It would seem possible to you to annul the existence of such trends by simply forcing them away. **In reality you only cover them up, whereby they gain much greater power than by recognizing their existence.**

**In addition, this leads to self-deception** because you believe you are purer than you are. You believe yourself free of lower motives while they merely ferment in your unconscious.

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**Exercise 2b:** Notice differences between thought currents and emotional currents

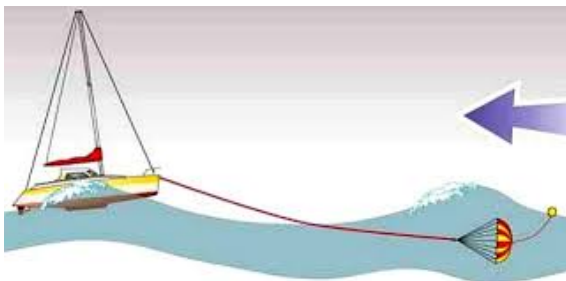
1. Make a list of 5-10 opinions you hold where you have a sense of confidence in your position (vs. certainty or righteousness) and feel relaxed about (vs. vulnerable or defended).
2. Make a list of 5-10 topics that that can trigger feelings of anger, sadness, or discomfort. Everyone has at least one 'hot button' topic! Include topics that you never discuss with anyone.
3. Alternating between the two lists, notice your feelings as you consider changing your mind, giving up your goal, or abandoning the underlying values that each item represents.
4. If you don't notice any differences, your conscious mind may be unwilling to cooperate! Use your Daily Review to find new items for both lists, and to notice reactions to similar topics.

**The Power of Conflicting Desires**

You are often puzzled because you find out that you want something pure and good and yet it brings you disharmony. The reason is that you ignore the different motives existing within yourself in relation to your noble desire. The conscious noble motive makes you convinced that there is nothing wrong with your aim -- and yet there is something wrong, and that is the fact that you do not know the other part that coexists in the very same desire-current. You are so used to an exclusive attitude; you think the truth of one motive excludes the truth of another, often quite contrary one. It will take quite a bit of self-realization on your part to truly understand that this is not so.

Purification does not merely mean that you change desires; it means that you separate the good motives from the wrong ones -- by observing them, to begin with.

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea\\_anchor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_anchor)

*A sea anchor can hold a vessel in place in deep water. The power of the wind (i.e., a positive or conscious desire) can be overcome by a bucket tied to a rope (i.e., a conflicting negative or unconscious desire) that neutralizes any forward motion. Once we realize what is causing the resistance, we can bring it onboard (make it conscious and address the issues that created it).*

**Exercise 2c:** Try to become capable of saying:

*"Here my desire is this or that. The conscious desire is good. But I recognize that this or that particular selfish motive also plays a role. I will continue to perform the good act, but I will not deceive myself that I am utterly free of selfishness, vanity, or whatever other trend may be involved. I can only pray and hope that these unruly currents will weaken with time. I cannot help feeling that way now, but I hope to become free of it."*

By observing yourself in that way, again and again, the lower currents will indeed weaken until they will eventually disappear. In this way, you accomplish infinitely more towards your purification than by trying to force feelings away.

### Week 3: Uncovering Unconscious Desires

For you, each emotional reaction, each thought, each opinion and tendency, and every minute facet of your personality are invisible ray-threads belonging to you and you alone. On the other hand, there are fixed, yet constantly vibrating spiritual laws, holding together in a net of rays, infinite possibilities, and modifications of outer and inner reactions.

When therefore man's personal rays match with those held in the net of rays of the spiritual laws, then he fulfills his life and thus is in harmony and happiness. Where they deviate, he is in disharmony and consequently encounters difficulties which you often, mistakenly, call fateful events. **The more man is removed from the roots of such difficulties by covering up and pushing into the unconscious, the harder it will be to recognize the connections and dissolve or dig out the faulty roots.**

If you want to be happy, you have to find these faulty roots within. This digging for faulty roots is the path of perfection or purification or healing of the soul, whatever you may call it. The outer help should render possible the inner help (help must first be given by impressing the outer senses in order to rouse the inner senses to independent action). Not that this outer help is sufficient, and let it not be so. It is only the push, and it is the seed which has to be embedded in the soul and take roots through your own work to bear fruit. The essential part is that you break through to your inner self. A human being never just accepts, even if it stands to reason, what somebody else tells him, especially not when an interplay of personal, inner, unconscious resistances is involved.

*Decide! Asking for Help and Helping Others PL 7*

### Changing Habits Requires Time, Work, and Patience

Only after you have found the answers to all these currents -- and the understanding of your inner and heretofore unconscious confusion -- will you be able to have one clear desire going steadfastly in one direction. You will then become mature enough in your soul so that you will realize within that the price has to be paid.

By this work, you will not only understand your life, your problems, and your conflicts, you will understand your images and how they have formed. **In order to find these images, you have to work from two sides: examine first your childhood and your reactions then; and then your present reactions and desires in connection with the daily happenings. Then both will form one whole picture.**

You know that even thoughts, without personal emotional involvement, cannot be changed very quickly. How much longer does it take for emotions to alter! How much more difficult is it then to revise and change an opinion or an attitude where personal psychological factors are involved! -- or, in other words, your emotions. **How habit-bound the human soul is, how great the fight to overcome the temptation of sluggishness and pride!**

**It also requires a certain humility to change one's views.** This humility means to live in a healthy state of truth even though a truth may not be flattering at this moment. So make your soul healthy by this procedure of self-acknowledgment. In that way, slowly, slowly, step by step, you will experience a change of consciousness, a change of inner concepts when your emotions will

really begin to be different. And that will be the greatest victory for you, that will be such relief. But it cannot come in one sweep.

When you search for your desires now, you will understand why some are stronger than others, some are broken by countercurrents, others claim rigidly in one direction, being made up by several layers of your personality, by good and bad motives as well. You will understand why you felt it necessary to hide their existence from your conscious being.

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### **What if we don't know what we want?**

It may also happen to some of you, at least in some areas of your inner life, **that you do not know what you want.**

This is puzzling and often very upsetting. There is so much confusion in your soul, due to suppression of conflicting or unwanted desires, that everything is in a muddle, and it will take a bit of doing on your part to untangle these knots. At first, it may be quite frightening to find out that you actually do not know what you want, for consciously and outwardly your life appears so very aimed and well directed. And yet, within, you are in a turmoil. You do not really know what you want. **And because of that, you first try to escape into subterfuge-desires.**

In order to pull the curtain apart and look behind these subterfuge-desires, you must take all the various strings of the big knot, one by one, pulling into different directions, and trace their aims. That is, each of these little strings in the knot represents a little desire. Each has a different motive in back of it.

Of course you could not afford (so you thought unconsciously) to become aware of this, knowing that you are an intelligent person, a highly developed person in many respects. How could you admit to yourself that you have several desires that are completely contradictory, one canceling out the other?

Yet this is what the child in you desires: two impossibilities, and often more. By hiding this state of affairs, you thought that you would rid yourself of this conflict; but in reality this hidden nucleus is the very nature of your disharmonies, disappointments, conflicts, and unfulfillments, my friends.

Therefore, the only way for you is to have the courage and patience to take each string and to ask yourself what you desire in each and every one of your daily reactions.

### **The child in you wants an impossibility**

Because it persists in wanting that, this nucleus of conflicting desires is covered up by reasonable surface-desires, but all this ferments underneath. And since your desires, feelings, and thoughts are things, potent, magnetic fields, your life brings circumstances towards you, corresponding to these inner conflicts. And you never know that what is within yourself, in all these conflicting desires, is responsible for your outer conflicts, miseries, and unfulfillments. Perhaps you harbor one desire regarding a fulfillment of a certain kind. Yet, you desire at the same time the advantages of the opposite desire.

This latter may not be so flattering for you, due to the motives; therefore you keep the second, conflicting desire under lock and key. Due to the fact that the more unconscious an emotion or a desire is, the more effect it has in your life. **You get exactly what you do not consciously desire but what you unconsciously also want** -- only without strings attached, without the disadvantages. And then you do not understand.

So, in finding yourself, at first, that you do not know what you really desire. This is due to many conflicting emotions that you did not dare to become aware of. In this case, before you can find out what you really want, you first have to examine and analyze all these various desires -- in what direction they go, why you are afraid to acknowledge them, why you are afraid of the outcome on one hand and desirous on the other.

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**Exercise 3a: Consider that you do not actually know what you want.**

Simply register it, to begin with. Refrain from judgment and evaluations: *"but this is silly, this is impossible, this is unworthy of me,"* etc. Such an approach would only make it more difficult for you to untie the knot, and it would perhaps render this task impossible altogether.

Know that these hidden emotions have nothing to do with your outer common sense! Know that the part in you that could not mature because you kept it suppressed due to your images wants just that: two or more desires canceling each other out.

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**The Four Stages of Spiritual Evolution:  
Automatic Reflex, Awareness, Understanding, Knowing** PL 127  
<http://www.janrigsby.org/files/PDF/127ws%204StagesStudyGuide.pdf>

**1. Automatism / blind reflex**

- Responses based upon deeply imprinted wrong conclusions and generalizations
- Blind reflexes rationalized and explained to prove they are based on choice vs. compulsion
- Cannot surrender or trust, because we are disconnected from our own inner knowing

**2. Awareness** "The transition from automatism to awareness is one of the most difficult that man passes through."

- Starts with becoming aware of the blind reflex mechanism
- Becoming conscious of error, deviation from truth
- Realization that we are / have been driven by false ideas

**3. Understanding**

- Seeing the cause and effect of negative, destructive emotions, false ideas
- Requires deep experience of the spiritual reality (felt, rather than learning a lesson by heart)

**4. Knowing**

- Experiencing the truth
- Knowing right conclusions from wrong ones, intuitively and instinctively
- Connects us with a greater spiritual principle

**Exercise 3b: Verbalizing Awareness**

Looking through the past few days of your Daily Review, see if you can identify at least one desire for each disharmony that you have listed.

What were you trying to do?

What did you want to happen, or get?

What did you want to stop, or avoid?

What feelings come up when you try to identify a desire?

What do you fear will happen if you are honest about your desires?



## Week 4: The Power of Mass Images

Not only personal and individual images exist, but also mass-images, race-images, national images, historical images exist in each time and civilization. A personal image of yours may coincide and be strengthened by one of those mass-images.

If you do not have a personal image of a certain type, the mass-image may not affect you, at least not half as much as it does if you happen to have an individual image that fits in some way to the mass-image of your time. Everyone is affected to some extent by the mass-images; they affect you more or less, according to the nature of your own images. You will then see how the respective mass-image strengthens your personal one.

**Examples:** There is a mass-image concerning the whole of humanity about the duration of life. Due to these improvements in medicine, science, and living conditions, the mass-image changed. Due to the slow dissolution of this particular mass-image, the improvements could be realized. It works both ways. One is not thinkable without the other. If humanity would not have improved psychologically and spiritually enough to be ready to let go of the old image or illusion, no technical improvement would have extended life. Another mass-image is that from a certain age on one becomes weak and sick. All humanity is affected by it.

Mass-images exist on every conceivable subject. You will discover more and more how many mass-images or illusions exist that affect you so deeply in your personal life and doubly so where a similar or related personal image is involved.

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### Mass Images: Chapter 11 of The Path to the Real Self / PRS 11

Society consists of individuals. Therefore, the same principles apply to humanity as a whole as to the individual. The same laws govern both, the same psychological processes exist.

As an individual forms an image, due to a misunderstanding and generalization of a painful occurrence or situation, so does society. We then speak of mass images. Every culture, every civilization, every era, has its special mass images. Some of them are exclusively connected with a certain historical period, being a result of conditions within this period. They change as outer circumstances change, and to the degree that society matures sufficiently to shed these specific mass images. Other mass images persist and are carried over from one culture to another, until sufficient individuals free themselves and, thereby, influence their society. Then the mass image dissolves, making room for truthful concepts.

As the child forms an image because it misunderstands an occurrence it has difficulty to accept and come to terms with, so does society. When the latter's needs cannot be fulfilled on its own, as yet childish, terms, this void gives rise to misconception, distorted vision -- and therefore fixed imprints result, according to which it is henceforth compelled to act.

When society cannot come to terms with a frustration of a need, and cannot find its way to fulfillment of this need in a realistic, constructive way, it substitutes the rules and regulations of a mass image. It is the identical process as with the individual. The psychic processes of an individual are a reflection of the psychic processes of mankind as a whole, and vice versa.

**However, no individual can be affected by a mass image if he does not have corresponding inner tendencies, concepts, problems;** if a similar, or complementing, personal image does not exist. Where the psyche is free of distortion, a mass image will have no effect, no matter how prevalent it may be. Mass images fortify personal, and personal images fortify mass images.

*Mass Images* The Path to the Real Self Chapter 11 / PRS11  
<http://www.janrigsby.org/files/PDF/PRS11-MassImagesStudyGuide.pdf>

It is a natural phenomenon when you work on this particular path that many of your hidden emotions come to the surface. The more conscious your heretofore hidden emotions become, the more responsible you are to be considerate of your fellow human beings. As long as you are under the grip and tyranny of your unconscious, you often cannot help acting in ways that may often be unpleasant to others. You may not even be fully aware of this. When one likes to avoid this self-knowledge, one shrinks away from such observations because they might lead one to the very recognition the psyche wishes to avoid. But when you have decided for this path, you are obligated to think a little bit of the effect you have on others. Recognize yourself, analyze your emotions, but do not let them out on others.

The more you grow aware of yourself, the more unselfish you must become, at least with regard to your effect on your surroundings.

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### **Useful Concepts for Exploring Images:**

**Research:** The way to start searching for the image is by thinking back in your life and finding all the problems. Write them down. Include problems of all sorts. You cannot do it unless you take the trouble to put it down black on white, concisely. For if you merely think about it, you will not have the overall view necessary for comparison. This written work is essential. It is certainly not too much to ask. You do not have to do it in one day. Take your time even if it takes a few months.

**Look for the Common Denominator:** Then when you think of all the big and small troubles, even the most nonsensical, the most insignificant ones, start to look for the common denominator, sometimes even more than one. All unpleasant experiences are probably due to your image and connected with it at least in some remote way

**Resistance:** The common denominator may not be easy to find. In self-will, something says in you: *'I do not want the risk of life; I do not want the pain of life; therefore I draw this conclusion which seems to me to be a safeguard against it.'*

That is not a safeguard, for it will bring you in fact infinitely more trouble, the very trouble you are trying to escape from, for life cannot be cheated. This is the merciful law of God. How merciful you have no way of knowing yet. For otherwise you could never come out of the misery of the lower planes with their darkness.

**Pattern:** An image always forms a pattern in one way or another -- a pattern of behavior, or reaction on certain occasions, and also of outer happenings that seem to come to the person without his doing anything to call it forth. In fact, consciously the person may fervently wish something that is the very opposite of the image. But this conscious desire is the weaker of the two **since the unconscious is always stronger.** *Images* PL 38

**Paradox:** *a statement that seems to contradict, but may still be true.* "The silence rang in my ears", or 'a deafening silence' describes the contrast between perception and physical reality.

**Paradigm:** "a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them." *American Heritage Online Dictionary* <https://ahdictionary.com/>

**Exercise 4:** See if you can identify any mass images that you and others hold, or any fixed beliefs that cause you to support rules and regulations.

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