

The Abyss of Illusion

The Path to the Real Self Chapter 20 & Pathwork Lecture 60 Study Guide for August 2014 Weekly Meetings

Week 1: Fear's power = the illusion of danger

Week 2: The abyss of illusion

Week 3: Freedom without responsibility; the illusion of the child

Week 4: Utopia; the illusion of compromise between infant and adult

Week 5: The soul's search for true spiritual freedom.

Spiritual justice and the power of grace

Week 1: Fear's power = the illusion of danger

Quotes from PRS 20:

Man's outer world is not the final, ultimate reality, out of which psychological symbols are poetic imaginations, or analogies. **The outer world is a reproduction and incomplete mirroring of the real, inner, spiritual world, which has infinitely more substance than this outer world man is aware of.**

Let us assume you fear a certain matter, of which you know, in your intellect, perfectly well that there is no real danger involved. Yet, your emotions react as though it was a real danger. At this moment, the symbolic abyss offers the vista of a chasm, in which you fear you would fall if you go through with what you fear. You anticipate, and react, as though you would actually find yourself in mortal danger, crashing in the precipice, hence you stem away from the danger area (the precipice, i.e. the feared matter), clinging to the edge. Many people never go through with the feared action, because they are only half aware of their fear and do not realize that they have built an imaginary abyss, with an equally imaginary precipice.

There are certain kinds of fear which cannot be gotten rid of, which cannot be discovered as unreal, unless the abyss is tested and one jumps right into the imaginary precipice. Only then will it be discovered that there was never any dangerous cliff or abyss, no precipice or chasm, and instead of being crashed, one floats in ease.

This is the moment when the fear turns out to be imaginary. Going through the act seems, at first, to require some courage. PRS20

Quotes from PL 60:

You all know, my friends, that thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and convictions create forms -- forms that are just as real as your earth matter. The deeper and stronger a conviction is, the more lasting and substantial are these forms. These forms exist in your soul, and they exist at the same time in the world of the spirit. If you harbor attitudes, opinions, convictions, and emotions of truth and reality, these forms will exist in a world of light, and they will, in your own soul, create and bring you happiness, harmony, and what you may call luck.

Soul forms of truth are made of "material" that lasts permanently. They will never dissolve, they can never be destroyed.

Convictions and emotions of untruth or unreality have the opposite effect. They may last a while, but their durability is limited to the length of time that these attitudes in the personality prevail. The stronger they are -- these convictions and attitudes, thoughts and emotions -- the greater is their impact, the more substantial their form.

The more unconscious such attitudes, convictions, and erroneous conclusions are, the more powerful they are. Your subconscious affects the subconscious of another person. According to the level you give out, you affect that particular level of the other person. What comes out of your true inner being, your real self, will affect the real self of the other person. What comes out of any layer of your mask self will affect the similar or corresponding mask self or defense mechanism of the other person.

Now I should like to discuss one common soul form that, to some degree, exists in every human being. I will call this the "**abyss of illusion.**" This abyss is utterly unreal, and yet it seems very real as long as you have not taken the necessary steps to discover its illusory character.

If your fear of life and the inadequacy of others is not to some degree eliminated after such findings, you have not even scratched the surface. PL 60

Questions on the illusions of fear

1. Notice how you express fear. After you acknowledge it (I'm concerned, afraid, anxious...) do you experience any pleasure about the feelings? Does fear make you feel safe, responsible, caring? Does it make you feel camaraderie with others? If you enjoy the feelings of fear, that might explain why they are often present. **Scrupulous honesty** is needed to find the truth.

2. See if you can finish your sentences about fear fully. Notice every conceivable negative outcome you can imagine. Most fears lead to a logical absurdity, and by seeing how silly they are we can dissolve them. Some fears have a grain of truth, but we would rather exaggerate the alternatives than give up the fear -- because we like having a rationale that holds us back from taking any risks (and getting any rewards!)

Example: I'm concerned because it might rain, and I haven't got my umbrella, and I might get wet, and then I would look foolish walking down the street, and then I would have to explain to others why I got wet, and then they might think poorly of my judgement, and then I might get fired / divorced / abandoned / cast out of society, and then I might die of hunger... *(by imagining the 'worst case' scenario, we may be able to laugh off our concerns).*

Example: I'm anxious about my performance review, because I don't know how to handle criticism or not getting a raise that I want / deserve. *(by expressing precisely what you are anxious about, you may realize what preparations might be valuable to take (like practicing receiving and rebutting criticism) or what research might strengthen your position).*

3. Practice moving through fear as if it were fog. Can you notice the feelings dissolving? When there is a grain of truth in fear, is it easier to find and address the part that is true when it is freed from exaggeration and emotion?

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Week 2: The abyss of illusion

Quotes from PL 60:

Now I should like to discuss one common soul form which, to some degree, exists in every human being. I will call this the "abyss of illusion." There is an abyss in each one of you. This abyss is utterly unreal, and yet it seems very real as long as you have not taken the necessary steps to discover its illusory character.

When you cannot let go of your self-will (this does not mean that you necessarily want something bad or harmful), when you cannot accept the imperfection of this world, when you cannot have life and people according to your very own way, even if yours may be the right way, it seems to you that you have fallen into an abyss.

The abyss can only disappear if you let yourself sink into it. Then and then only will you learn that you do not crash and perish, but that you float beautifully. You will then see that what made you tense with fear and anxiety was as illusory as this abyss.

This is a good part of the reason why you reject self-responsibility. By making independent decisions, you are bound to make mistakes. The child in you, clinging to the world of utopia, believes you must never make a mistake. Making a mistake means falling into the abyss. This is another instance of jumping in and finding yourself afloat. You then see it is no tragedy to have made a mistake, while the infant thinks you must perish if you do. Therefore no independent decisions must be made for which one is responsible. It should be noted that this may manifest only in a very hidden and subtle way.

Quotes from PRS 20:

As long as this act of testing the abyss is not committed, one takes the fear seriously, regardless of how much reason knows differently. The fearful emotions win out over reason, in honoring the matter of the fear, in acting as though the abyss exists, in refusing to step from the edge. The more one hides from the fact that he, indeed, takes the fear seriously by refusing the act, the more do the fears grow -- or, the deeper the abyss becomes in imagination, in the built up form. One may rationalize it all one wants, trying to convince himself that there are other reasons why not testing the fears, the fact remains: deep in the psyche, the fear is taken as real; the abyss grows in depth and it becomes more difficult to "jump into it," so as to then discover its unreality and find oneself floating. By going through the fear, it is inactivated. The imaginary abyss dissolves its form.

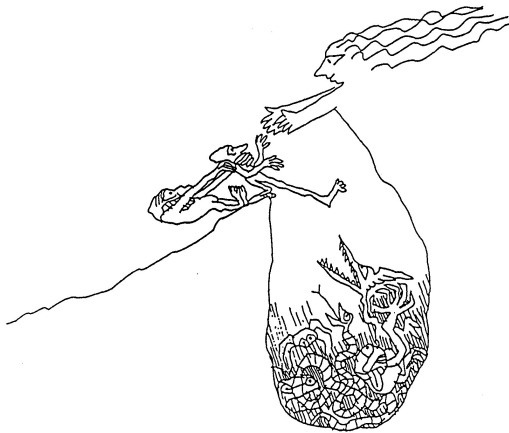
Many feared matters will dissolve even before the act of going through is necessary, because the moment of facing this imaginary abyss shows the illusion. Other fears can only be discovered as unreal after they are gone through. This strengthens the personality to an

unbelievable degree. Soon all obviously unreal fears cease and the individual copes better and better with the few instances of so-called real fears, going through them in the most constructive and growth producing manner. One then discovers that, even in the worst case, one is never as damaged as one feared. Nothing, no actual event, can ever be quite as bad as the fear before. The more the spirit matures, the more it is verified that this applies to all issues of life -- and death. Even the most real fear of all -- the fear of death -- turns out to be illusion, when it is faced and gone through.

Listen deeply into yourself, request guidance and inspiration from the creative forces within. Then you will keenly feel, for example, *"here is an issue I have to go through, even though I know the fear to be imaginary, but my emotions do not,"*

Or the realization will come *"here is a fear that I cannot control. If it is inevitable, I must learn to accept it. I trust that I have the resources to go through it, as millions of others do. I wish to come out stronger and better, wiser and more loving. I ask the creative intelligence and power within myself to help me carry it through, if it is truly inevitable, and to avoid it, if this is the better way -- without evasion. If the abyss is inevitable, I let myself go into its inevitableness."*

The floating experience, subsequent to this inner act of letting go, is beautiful and full of security. It is a new freedom, the freedom of lightly following the life stream, in its eternal course toward ever greater expansion and happiness. **True spiritual security** lies in the ability to float because fear of letting go no longer exists. It also lies in an inner, instinctive knowing when to let go, and when not. Or, to put it differently, when letting go would be a misunderstanding, a distortion and would really be nothing but destructive resignation and negativity. Again, there are no hard and fast rules to determine when is it the one and when the other. Only this deep contact with the inner self reveals this knowledge.



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Week 3: Freedom without responsibility; the illusion of the child

Quotes from PRS 20:

There is a connection between the point of relinquishing and the letting oneself go into the abyss of illusion. Illusory fears, the frantic refusal not to give up selfwill, are obviously interdependent. They both stem from the child -- the unreasonable, greedy demanding child which continues to dwell within, until it is taught and given a chance to grow up. This child wants utopia. It wants all the advantages, without paying any price. One of its fundamental, unjustified demands is absolute freedom -- meaning to irresponsibly do what it pleases, regardless of the consequences, regardless of others. At the same time, it wants no self-responsibility. These are two mutually exclusive desires.

Man, often unconsciously, clings to the utopia of these mutually exclusive desires because he falsely thinks that self-responsibility is too difficult a chore. He thinks it means no mistake can be made, all decisions must be perfect and changing one's mind is strictly forbidden. Since he is not up to these supposed demands, which are truly impossible, he refuses to stand on his own feet. This may manifest in very hidden ways -- not necessarily outwardly or materially. In fact, the more of a show a person makes regarding his independence and the more he is in conflict with and rebellion against authority people, the more safely it can be assumed that, on an unconscious level, he rejects self-responsibility, fears it and needs an authority who takes over.

Quotes from PL 60:

You wish **freedom without self-responsibility**. Thus you wish a pampering, indulgent god, like a parent who spoils his child. If this god cannot be found -- and of course he cannot -- he becomes a monster in your eyes, and you turn away from God altogether. The same expectations you have of this god, you often also project onto human beings, either to a specific one or a group of human beings or to a philosophy, to a creed, to a teacher. It does not matter who or what. It is of great importance that you find in yourself the part where you desire just that: freedom without self-responsibility.

You cannot be free and at the same time have no responsibility. In the measure that you shift responsibility from yourself, in that measure do you curtail your own freedom. You put yourself in slavery. It is as simple as that.

Even in the animal world, you will observe the same law at work. A pet has no freedom, but it is not responsible in obtaining its own food and shelter. A wild animal is free, or freer. But it has the responsibility of looking out for itself. This must apply much more to humanity. Wherever you look, you will see that it cannot be otherwise: the more freedom, the more responsibility. If you do not desire responsibility to the degree of your capacity, you have to forfeit freedom.

Self responsibility includes:

- awareness of the dimension of energy
- understanding wrong concepts that have been unconscious
- challenging previously unchallenged ideas
- weakening and dissolving wrong concepts
- creating imperishable (yet changeable) forms based upon truth

Utopia = hope that freedom can exist without self-responsibility.

“All diseases of the soul are based on just that: evasion in payment of the rightful price, desire and insistence on having it both ways, the easy way.”

Fear is the heavy price you must pay for insisting on your world of utopia.

When you discover your own contribution, no matter how subtle, to an unwelcome experience, you will cease being afraid of the world.

Visualize yourself as ‘free without fear’, knowing that ‘everything that comes your way is self-produced.’ PL60

No Freedom and No Responsibility	No Freedom and Responsibility	Freedom and No Responsibility	Freedom and Responsibility
Pets	Service animals	Wild Animals	Actual adults
Infants	Slaves	Superficial disconnection between cause & effect	Spiritual adults
Prisoners		‘No skin in the game’ = no consequences	

The Abyss of Illusion PL 60

Worksheet questions by Elizabeth Mylonas, from How to Find God and Have Fun Doing It

1. Complete the phrase “I will die if...” over and over. What do you notice?
2. In what areas of your life do you desire freedom without responsibility?
3. How is this acted out?
4. Where in your life do you / have you specifically violated the law of paying the price by wanting something for nothing?
5. What is / has been the effect of this on your self-esteem and fulfillment?

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Week 4: Utopia; the illusion of compromise between infant and adult

Quotes from PL 60:

There is a connection between the point of relinquishing and the letting oneself go into the abyss of illusion. Illusory fears, the frantic refusal not to give up selfwill, are obviously interdependent. They both stem from the child -- the **unreasonable, greedy demanding child** which continues to dwell within, until it is taught and given a chance to grow up. This child wants utopia. It wants all the advantages, without paying any price. One of its fundamental, **unjustified demands** is absolute freedom -- meaning to irresponsibly do what it pleases, regardless of the consequences, regardless of others. At the same time, it wants no self-responsibility. These are two mutually exclusive desires.

Man, often unconsciously, **clings to the utopia of these mutually exclusive desires** because he falsely thinks that self-responsibility is too difficult a chore. He thinks it means no mistake can be made, all decisions must be perfect and changing one's mind is strictly forbidden. Since he is not up to these supposed demands, which are truly impossible, he refuses to stand on his own feet. This may manifest in very hidden ways -- not necessarily outwardly or materially. In fact, the more of a show a person makes regarding his independence and the more he is in conflict with and rebellion against authority people, the more safely it can be assumed that, on an unconscious level, he rejects self-responsibility, fears it and needs an authority who takes over.

The infant in you does not see this and does not want to see it. It wants it both ways. What it wants does not exist; it is illusion or utopia. The price for illusion is extremely high. The more you want to evade paying the natural and fair price -- in this case self-responsibility for freedom -- the heavier the toll becomes. This, too, is unalterable law. The more you understand about the human soul, the more clearly will you observe this. All diseases of the soul are based on just that: evasion in payment of the rightful price, desire and insistence on having it both ways, the easy way. The price you pay is so heavy, so steep, my friends. You are not aware of this yet, but you will be if you follow this particular road. A part of this price is the constant effort you waste in trying to force life into the mold of your illusion in this respect. If you could but see all this inner, emotional effort, you would shudder because all this strength could be used quite differently. To let go of this illusion, to assume full self-responsibility seems to you so hard that it becomes a good part of the abyss. You seem to think that you will fall right in if you really assume self-responsibility. Therefore you constantly strain away from it, stemming against it. And this consumes strength.
PL60

Quotes from PRS 20:

At the same time, his spirit strains toward the great freedom of spiritual maturity and away from the confinements of childish dependency. Thus, once again, he strives into two directions, tearing

him apart. On the one hand, **he wants freedom, self-government, self-determination, accountability** for his actions toward himself and his conscience. On the other hand, he fears all this, partly by dint of perfectionistic standards, partly by dint of general resistance to growth, to action, to movement. The abused static principle just wants to vegetate. Selfhood means independent action. **Thus, man tries to compromise -- he wants a utopia** in trying to have both: **no self-responsibility and the freedom of self-government.** The more he strives toward the impossible goal of two mutually exclusive aims, the harder self-responsibility seems.

The full meaning of self-responsibility can truly be discovered only when the blind, erroneous struggle is given up. In the true sense, self-responsibility means being in possession of all the creative forces and knowing how to use them. They are destined to bring forever greater possibilities of happiness, of unfoldment, of power, of pleasure and of peace. This power is immediately available if he does not refuse the government of his life.

Many fears seem to deal with the power others seem to have over the self. What about other's mistakes that influence one's own life? Whenever man is worried about that, it is a sure sign that, deep within his psyche, **he denies full responsibility** in an area where he need not be dependent on others. Full acceptance of self-responsibility, on all levels of one's being, reveals the truth that, in the last analysis and in reality, harm cannot ever come from others. It only appears to be so as long as one's vision is still limited by dint of limited self-knowledge. What greater freedom is imaginable than the realization that man is truly the master of his fate.

The universal principles, laws and forces in the macrocosm and in the microcosm are created in utter perfection -- with a love so transcending that it surpasses all understanding. This love manifests through the fact that, no matter how much man stems against these benign, blissful laws and principles, in the end, he is bound to come into them. When he then decides to go with the laws, he ceases to be a slave to them and the universe. He then truly becomes their master. The same principle exists in all levels. On the physical level it is easy to observe. For example, as long as man fights against electricity, it will be his enemy, it might even kill him. When he accepts the laws of electricity, he will master it and derive immense benefit from it. There is no iota of difference between such physical laws and mental, spiritual or cosmic laws. PRS20

Quotes from PL 136, The Illusory Fear of Self:

A further chain reaction of self-alienation, due to the fear of meeting the self, is losing oneself in the illusion that one cannot determine what goes on in the self. It is the frequent phenomenon of **believing oneself helpless in the grip of one's feelings**, emotions, attitudes, and even thoughts or actions. When you fear that your negative emotions are going to control you, you lose sight of the fact **that you have something to say about it.** Your passivity and obliviousness to the fact that no act or thought can exist without your readiness and will for either one is the illusion of lack of self-government. How often do you exclaim, *"But I feel thus and thus," as though this were all there is to it.* Your prevailing feeling makes any way out impossible! PL136

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The Path to the Real Self Chapter 20 & Pathwork Lecture 60

Study Guide for August 2014 Weekly Meetings

Week 5: The soul's search for true spiritual freedom: Spiritual justice and the power of grace

Quotes from PL 60:

When man fights against the adult state, desiring to maintain the advantages of infancy, he stems against nature, against the processes of eternal growth and universal movement. If he simultaneously wants the advantages, he can perceive as such, of adulthood, he wants something impossible. When he becomes aware of this and, therefore, gives up wanting the advantages of both infancy and adulthood, pulling him in two directions, he eliminates a specific tension. This also eliminates anxiety -- and a defensiveness in this respect. This sets him sufficiently free to follow the law of growth in its wonderfully purposeful, organic way and the day will come when he is inwardly ready to assume a state of mind and being, suited to him. Along the way he has to learn what appears to him, at this moment, to relinquish, to jump into his private abyss, in order to find out that he gave up nothing of value and that there is no abyss and no precipice. What he has given up is really a burden.

The soul has finally learned to live without impossible demands, based on faulty understanding; to assume its rightful role, which no longer seems a hardship; to relinquish blind needs, imaginary "necessities," which reduce self-respect and security. Joy, pleasure, safety, expansion, increase in the measure useless defenses are given up and false fears relinquished. He who follows life in an open state of psychic relaxation must be convinced that life is benign, that, following it, rather than guarding and defending against it, brings man all he needs.

There is a very important general misconception about life. It is the idea that you can come to harm through the arbitrariness of the god of your image, of life, or fate, or through the cruelty, the ignorance, and the selfishness of others. This fear is as illusory as the abyss. This fear can exist only because you deny your self-responsibility. Therefore others have to be responsible. You are helpless because you make yourself that way by trying to shift responsibility from yourself. So you see that fear is the heavy price you must pay for insisting on your world of utopia.

In truth and reality, you cannot possibly come to harm by any shortcomings or wrong actions of another person, no matter how much it may seem that way at first glance. In this particular respect, many of you refuse to let go of judging on the surface because you still hope that the world of utopia can be a reality. Therefore you have to fear other people, their judgment, their wrongdoings. In this part of your being, you like to consider yourself a victim for the very reason I stated previously. This trend in itself is a sign of refusal to accept self-responsibility.

Giving up the world of utopia represents the abyss. Utopia includes, among others things, the hope that freedom can exist without self-responsibility. To give up his world of utopia seems to you the greatest danger in all its aspects. You stem against it with all the might of your spiritual muscles. You lean away from the abyss and thus lose valuable strength for nothing. It seems to you that to give up your world of utopia is dire misery. The world becomes bleak and hopeless with no chance for happiness. Your concept of happiness, in this part of your unconscious mind, means utter perfection in all ways. But this is not true. To give up utopia does not make for a bleak world. You need not despair of letting go a desire and to go into what often seems fearsome to you.

The only way you can discover the illusion of this fear, or this abyss, and its phantom quality is first to visualize, feel, and experience its existence in you in the various manifestations and reactions of your daily life and then to jump into it. Otherwise it cannot dissolve.

Once you realize your fear of giving up utopia in all its ramifications, you will have taken a tremendous step towards real freedom and true independence.

This will free you of your basic fear of life. It will release heretofore wasted forces for constructive purposes, and it will bring forth in you a creativity you never dreamed possible. Once you realize what I say here, once it is your own and not superimposed knowledge, you will go through life with a completely new attitude, as a free being without fear. You will know, with that deep conviction that no word and no teaching can ever give you better than your own realization, that nothing can come your way that is not self-produced. PL 60

Quotes from 60a (Question and Answer Session): On outer influences

QUESTION: In the last lecture you stated that the imperfections of another person cannot harm us. How about the imperfections of a teaching, a doctrine, a wrong method being practiced by, let us say, a physician or an analyst

ANSWER: No outer influence can ever make you more distorted. This is one of the most flagrant illusions on the earth plane. An outer influence may temporarily fortify a wrong concept, just as other influences in life constantly seem to do. In other words, the more people tend to run away from themselves, the more will they be drawn to influences which apparently foster tendencies of escape. Or they will pick out especially those aspects of the influence which encourage turning away from the root of the problems, while other parts of the very same teaching, which may help them to turn into the right direction, will be overlooked.

If it were true that any outer influence can really harm you, life would be impossible. That would be such a hazard, so arbitrary and such an injustice that you would consequently have to believe in a chaotic and godless world. You would be constantly prone to injuries you cannot do anything about. If you think things through to the very end, it is inconceivable to believe in a Creator of love and justice and at the same time assume that ignorance and imperfection on the part of other people can harm you. I know that it is not easy for most of you to truly understand how you are not harmed by the influence of others. But if your spirit and your soul are to become really healthy and free, the understanding of this truth is essential for you. Without this understanding you stand nowhere, and God will never be a reality for you.

This principle applies also to the physical aspect of your question, although you may find my answer even more difficult to understand. Let me say only this: if you truly want to get well, to recuperate from an illness, you will find the physician who can help you, or you will choose to accept part of the advice of one physician and reject another part. You will interpret the advice in the right way. Lack of intellectual understanding and inability to weigh, judge and discriminate are the very result of a desire to escape from and to deceive oneself.

Quotes from 60a (Question and Answer Session): On grace

QUESTION: What exactly is grace?

ANSWER: It may make it easier if I briefly mention first what grace is not, but what is often taken to mean grace. It is often thought that when grace is extended, a person does not have to encounter difficulties he or she ordinarily would have to go through. In other words, the law of cause and

effect is thereby broken. People think if God extends grace, He eliminates trouble for you. Of course, this is an entirely wrong concept. In reality grace is the Plan of Salvation with everything therein to enable the fallen spirits to return. If divine law would not operate in such a way as to make evil defeat itself, the fallen spirits could never return. This is the basic grace. The help of the spirits who did not fall, or of those who have evolved, is further grace. Without this constant help, the return would be so much harder and longer, but this does not mean that the law of cause and effect is broken.

Grace is the coming of Jesus Christ. One Being has taken upon Himself such a tremendous task and such hardship He did not have to endure in order to open the doors, to show the way, to help accelerate development for all, by an act of supreme love as has never been witnessed on this earth before or since. If you reread the lecture I gave on this subject, this will become clearer to you. Divine grace constantly happens where the spreading of light penetrates confusion and darkness in order to hasten the realization of the divine world. Grace may take many forms. It can happen through the incarnation of a few strong and highly developed people who do not have to take on certain tasks, but who do so in love and brotherhood, to help.

By the same token, each one of you can also be an instrument of grace. If, by your development, you come to understand more profoundly, and your power and capacity to love truly unfolds -- not by force and compulsion, but in reality -- you have an effect on others, and therefore on the world, such as you cannot imagine. You are a spreader of light and truth by the very act of your search into your own soul. Your innermost self unfolds, freeing itself of all the layers and masks, and thus you are capable of affecting the innermost self of other people. You penetrate right through their superimposed layers and masks. That is the case, as I explained before. Hence, every good and right act, most of all the act of self-unfoldment, makes you an instrument of grace. The power of good and love is infinitely stronger than the power of evil and ignorance. Others do not only learn from your example, but they are strongly affected in their subconscious by your emanation. You may think that it means nothing; it cannot be grace or guidance or anything divine because you did it. But any human being can be an instrument of grace or of any other divine manifestation. There are constant chain reactions, not only as far as the negative currents in the human soul are concerned, as you all have had plenty of opportunity to verify on your path, but also as far as divine manifestations are concerned. They come from a source and that source is divine grace. That it finally takes effect through various chains of instruments of grace -- also human instruments -- does not alter the fact that it originally comes from the divine source. I realize that this is a hard subject to explain and to understand.

QUESTION: Have those who receive it merited it in some way?

ANSWER: Again this indicates the wrong concept. Grace is not extended to a few chosen ones and withheld from others. Grace is all around you. If you want it, you can partake of it. If you do not want it, if you desire in some corner of your being to remain in blindness, grace will not be accessible to you. But those who want it will constantly be affected by it. It is there for everyone alike. Grace is there as the product of the divine world and you can all get it if you know how to turn toward it.

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