

Pathwork™ Steps

Negative Pleasure / Conflict as the Origin of Pain

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 140

Week 1: Negativity → Conflict → Pain

Week 2: Negative Pleasure

Week 3: Principle of Self-Perpetuation

Week 4: Awareness → Understanding → Knowing

Week 1: Negativity → Conflict → Pain

Pain is the Result of Conflict. When two opposite directions exist in a personality, pain comes into being. One direction -- the direction of the universal, creative forces -- strives towards light, life, growth, unfoldment, affirmation, beauty, love, inclusion, union, pleasure supreme. Whenever this direction is counteracted by another direction, a disturbance is created.

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. It is this which causes the suffering. This is very important to understand, my friends, because with this understanding, it will be easier to follow the rest of this lecture. The principle I explain here holds true on all levels.

It is very important to understand, my friends, that the negative can only be desired by a part of the personality, never by the whole of it. There will always be another part of the psyche which violently objects to the negative desire, so that pain must result.

The Physical Plane, as all other systems or planes, strives towards wholeness and health. When a disturbing force pulls into an opposite direction, it is the existence of the two directions that creates the pain. It is ascertainable that this is what actually causes the pain by the fact that when struggle is given up and when the individual lets go and gives in to the pain, the pain stops. The moment that struggle, two opposite pulls, is relinquished and even the negative direction (pain) accepted, pain must cease.

This is not necessarily a destructive way of embracing pain or a masochistic, self-punishing element that in itself harbors and perpetuates a negative wish. What I mean is a full acceptance of what is -- and with that, pain ceases. It is the principle, for instance, of painless birth. It is the principle of nonstruggle. It is the principle that Jesus Christ explained when He said, "Resist not evil."

When the struggle is too fierce (on all levels), death sets in. Or death may be a result of having given up the struggle. This applies to the physical plane, of course. Therefore physical pain ceases when tension ceases -- and this happens in death.

On the mental and emotional planes, something similar exists. When the struggle is fully understood and accepted as a temporary manifestation, as an effect, and is accepted as

such -- without finality and yet in awareness of the rightfulness of these consequences -- the mental or emotional pain ceases. This does not happen when the negative is wanted; for, as we have seen, this merely creates the new direction, contrary to the original, positive one. Then mental and emotional pain cease just as physical pain ceases when the opposite pull is abandoned. All of you who are on such a path of self-realization have at least occasionally experienced this.

On the spiritual plane, my friends, it is different. For, the spiritual plane is the cause, while all other planes or spheres of consciousness are effects. The spiritual plane is the origin of the positive direction. It does not and could not contain a negative direction. The negative direction creates and is created by different attitudes incompatible with the origin of all life. The spiritual plane is unity itself; therefore conflict, opposing directions, and, consequently, pain is unthinkable and illogical. If a person is free from conflict and pain, he must be in unity. He can be in total unity only when he follows the unbroken line of the positive direction of his life forces. Life, in its essential and profound character, cannot ever be negatively oriented. Since man and life are one, he cannot ever be fully negative. Whenever there is some negation in his make-up, tension and conflict must exist, so that he must be in pain.

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All negativities and faults can be summed up in the triad of Pride, Self-Will, and Fear PL 30. Ego-tricks use these traits in order to prevent self-transcendence. The fear of the ego to lose its self-awareness, is so great that it displaces the instinct of self-preservation PL 85. Fear always blinds and distorts truth and reality. Thus the ego maintains itself with pride... attitudes are pridefully put into the service of maintaining the separated state of the ego. It is always "I versus you," and this inevitably creates a spirit of one-upmanship.

Whether or not an individual happens, in his present incarnation, to be further in development or lagging behind another, to use this fact as a wedge between one's own ego and those of others is completely missing the point. For, in principle, there is no differentiation. It does not even take very long on the path to find out that it is only on the most superficial level that one's interests conflict with those of others. What is really right and good can be seen right underneath the surface. According to divine law, this is right for all concerned. Therefore all measuring, comparing, competing, striving to up others makes the confinement of separation even tighter and increases the illusion that this pitiful existence is all there is to life.

The Meaning of the Ego and Its Transcendence PL 199

Exercise 1a: Consider any bothersome situation as a form of pain.

See if you can find the either/ or that makes the situation seem impossible to untangle (because we are attached to one 'solution' over any other).

Notice what planes become active and how you sense them; physical (discomfort, tension, urgent need to move around), emotional (sudden onsets of strong feelings, irritability, numbness), mental (judgments, boredom, an intense focus).

The spiritual plane does not contain any negative directions, so cannot contain conflict or produce pain. If that's where you 'go' or 'activate', consider this could be a form of avoidance of self-responsibility, a pretense that you don't have any conflicts to work out.

"Whenever there is some negation in his make-up, tension and conflict must exist, so that he must be in pain." PL 140

Exercise 1b: Meditation on the Triad of Pride, Self-Will, and Fear

See a bothersome situation from the viewpoint of pride. In what respect are you in pride? Then visualize this same situation focusing on how it would feel to give up this pride. If the only alternative seems being humiliated, then start probing for other possibilities. Ask for inner guidance and experience yourself without pride, yet also in dignity and without humiliation. You have to make a real inner, volitional step to be able to see yourself in a new way that conciliates dignity and humility and leaves out both pride and humiliating submission. If you are ready for this possibility, even before you can experience it, the divine life will produce it from within. But you must make yourself receptive to it.

Then do the same with self-will. Envisage yourself in a new state of reaction in which you are neither self-willed nor spineless and exploited, in which you assert yourself and can let go and give in. The proper balance will come from your core in specific ways for specific situations. But the mind must be open and flexible enough to let in new possibilities, and the spiritual capacities in you cultivated, so that you entrust yourself to the inner guidance.

Have the courage to go through the anxiety that will be the first result when attempting to give up pride and self-will. Then, last but not least, you come to the fear.

The fear cannot possibly vanish before pride and self-will are being abandoned. For fear is a product of both, as you know, at least in theory. Also see the fear in terms of distrust of the universe. You evidently believe that only your self-will and pride can protect you from danger. This implies that the universe is untrustworthy and all you have as a safeguard is this puny protection: your pride and self-will.

Question this premise and experiment with new alternatives in this respect. Open yourself for the divine reality to flood through you. Do an exercise in trust in which you open yourself for the possibility that the universe will yield you whatever you need. Experiment for the moment with this thought: *"How would it be if I were to trust the universe, if in this particular situation I gave up the fear that is a result of my distrust and therefore of pride and self-will?"* Allow your central core to fill you with an inkling of a state in which you can react without self-will, pride, and fear.

[Interpenetration of the Divine Light Spark into the Outer Regions](#) PL 203

Exercise 1c: Finding areas where negative pleasure may be active

- 1. It doesn't hurt and it works.** Hooray! Keep going!
- 2. It doesn't hurt and it doesn't work.** No conflict, unless you are unhappy about it.
- 3. It hurts and it works.** *Negative pleasure may be active.* The pain may be temporary, an exaggeration, or a belief (work must hurt). Favorable results may only be in the short-term.
- 4. It hurts and it doesn't work.** *Negative pleasure may be active.* Is there an invisible trade-off that you aren't willing to admit, or a secret agenda that you are unwilling to give up? Or are the results long-term and your pain comes from the fear that your work won't pay off?

Consider continuing these exercises for a week, as part of your
Daily Review PL 28 <http://www.janrigsby.org/files/PDF/028-DailyReview-Suggestions.pdf>

Week 2: Negative Pleasure

Both the positive and negative directions are attached to the pleasure principle, as I have outlined in a previous lecture [[Movement, Consciousness, Experience: Pleasure, the Essence of Life PL 119](#)]. It is this attachment that makes it so difficult to give up and change.

The positively and negatively oriented pleasure principle tears man apart. It inflicts pain on you by itself, but it does not exist in you alone. If those with whom you are involved in this conflict were perfectly in balance and free from such an inner division, they would surely not be affected by your struggle.

But how much more complicated does it become when the other person is in a similar position, for then the struggle is not twofold, but a compounded fourfold one. Both venture into the positive, but since the negative principle still exists in them, the positive position is only tentative, so uncertain, so fearful, so divided, so defensive and apprehensive that all these negative emotions about the positive direction are found to produce negative results sooner or later. These are then attributed to the positive reaction rather than to the problematic emotions about it. This again brings together a number of recent lectures into one comprehensive whole:

[References with study guides: [Transition from the No-Current to the Yes-Current](#) PL 125

[Love: Not a Commandment but a Spontaneous Soul Movement](#) PL 133

Suffering Through Attachment of the Life Force to Negative Situations PL 135

[The Illusory Fear of Self](#) PL 136]

The negative, the denial, the destructive direction would not be as fierce and as difficult to overcome if the pleasure principle were not attached to it.

Man then comes into the position of not wanting to part from the precarious pleasure he derives from indulging in destructive feelings and attitudes. This may come into existence subtly, insidiously, and inadvertently when an individual starts out with the healthy and constructive direction in force.

Exercise 2a, From the Q&A section of PL 140:

Are you aware that while you indulge in negativity that you enjoy doing it? If so, the next step would have to be a very simple one, my dearest friend. That is the issuance and expression of the thought:

"I want to give up the negative. I want my pleasure to be attached to a positive situation. I want to be constructive. I want to give my attention to this situation and be governed by the most constructive forces."

Do this in a relaxed and light way, enlisting the subliminal forces within yourself to help you do it. Do not try to do it by sheer outer power, for with that outer power you cannot succeed. If you are not yet willing to do it, the work must proceed very simply and easily. Where and why do you believe that wanting the negative is safer for you than wanting the positive? You hinder yourself from wanting the positive. If you cannot stop this process, there must still be reasons you have not understood, and they must be unearthed. Meditate and truly want to find what is in you.

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Self-Perpetuating Principle of Insight and Understanding

Suppose on your road towards self-realization, you gain strength and self-confidence. Where there was uncertainty and guilt in you when you experienced friction with another person, you now experience a new inner calm, certainty in yourself, and a strength and resiliency you never knew existed. In the old way, you might have responded with submissiveness in order to assuage your guilt or with aggression and hostility in order to assuage your self-contempt for your uncertainty. Whatever you did, however you responded with the negativity and self-doubt in you, you were involved in the negatively oriented pleasure principle. You enjoyed your woes.

Now, you have progressed. You experience yourself in a new way. Instead of the nagging self-doubt, you gain insight into the other person. By this insight, you understand why the other person behaves as he does, what makes him tick. For the moment, this objective understanding sets you free, makes you strong, gives you more objective insight into yourself and into the other person.

In other words, the self-perpetuating principle of insight and understanding has been put in motion. But then the still existing, because not yet fully recognized, negative pleasure principle attaches itself to your understanding of the other person's negativity. You begin to talk yourself into more and more of his faults and blindnesses, and you inadvertently begin to enjoy this.

You do not immediately distinguish between the two different kinds of joy: the first, when you saw the detachment, what exists in the other, setting you free; the second, when you pleurably indulge in the other's wrongness, blinding you. What you first noticed as observations, you build up and build up until the old negative pleasure principle has reappeared in a new guise. This is where you lose your harmony and freedom because you again indulge in the negative pleasure principle. This is an example of how insidiously this can happen whenever the old roots still exist, unobserved.

Pl 140

Exercise 2b: Find what you do not accept in yourself, what you do not like and close your eyes to. Notice when something good comes along, that you shrink away from it. Cultivate a purposeful willingness to see whatever it may be that still eludes you. You will experience, step by step, that as you cease rejecting yourself, you will become better equipped to sustain happiness, to "bear" happy feelings.

This fine, delicate awareness will weaken the rage with which you blame others, circumstances, people, life itself. It will remove a poisonous atmosphere in your psychic organism that is totally alien to and incompatible with the bliss that is, by right, your inner home. Accepting the truth about oneself is one and the same as accepting happiness.

There is nothing hazardous about your life. The violation of spiritual law within the psychic organism simply creates a climate ill equipped to "endure" blissful, joyous feelings. If you do not believe it is possible to be truly happy, it becomes indeed impossible.

Fear of Bliss versus Longing for it PL 170

Week 3: Principle of Self-Perpetuation

The finding and the awareness of deliberate negative desires, or the avoidance of positive results (which amounts to the same thing) is an essential milestone on your whole road of evolution. This is practically more important than anything else.

It constitutes the difference between feeling oneself a helpless straw in the wind, a little tool in a vast universe, forgotten and helpless, and feeling oneself to be self-governing, autonomous. This autonomy works in the positive as well as in the negative way.

The entire cosmos exists by the great principle of self-perpetuation. Whenever we discussed the principle of cycles or circles -- whether the benign or the vicious -- it is always the principle of self-perpetuation. Everything is self-perpetuating, set in motion by reality consciousness.

When you come to a certain degree of insight into your psyche, you see how the positive and negative attitudes are self-perpetuating. Take, for example, any healthy, positive attitude. When you are outgoing, constructive, open, including, all things go easily. You do not have to work hard at it. It perpetuates itself. You do not even have to spend energy on any deliberate kind of meditation. By themselves, your positive thoughts, attitudes, and feelings create more positive thoughts, attitudes, and feelings. Hence fulfillment, productiveness, peace, dynamism exist in such an area.

It is exactly the same with the negative situations. The self-perpetuating forces, in this instance, can only be changed by this deliberate process, which sets something new in motion. The process of such pathwork accomplishes this.

PL 140

There are three essential elements that determine life. They are movement, consciousness, and experience. There are many triads in the spiritual facets of life. The triad forms a whole. If the life organism is in disharmony with the universal laws, the three factors will become a contradiction to one another, and instead of harmonizing the whole, they will be in opposition to one another. So it is with this triad.

Movement, Consciousness, Experience PL 119

From the Q&A Section of PL 140:

QUESTION: Irrationally, I fear that I may be taken advantage of and lose my integrity. I have a slight feeling that this is not true, but I can't see exactly how.

ANSWER: In the first place, you must truly want to see that this is possibly a wrong conclusion. The feeling of helplessness or powerlessness is again the self-perpetuating principle in that you have given up self-government when you allowed yourself to be taken up by the negative force. Therefore it does not occur to you that you have the possibility of governing yourself.

The moment, for instance, you say, "*I decide that I do not want to be in negativity or hang on to misconceptions, such as these,*" in that moment you take command.

Then, further, if you say and mean, *"I do not have to be a slave to decisions that do not come from me because I am constructive. It is up to me whatever I want."* You will then experience that the more constructive your desires are, the freer do you become, and the easier will it be to determine independently what you will or will not do. Others will not be able to impose their will on you, hence your integrity will be preserved and increased in exact proportion to your active desire to be constructive and to give up the negatively attached pleasure principle.

What weakened you was the loss of awareness of your negative desires. You had repressed, denied, and hidden them, having superimposed false positive ones. Hence you lost touch with yourself. Had you been aware of the negative desires, you would not have been able to let them grow so strong.

In reality, your weakness and helplessness does not exist in regard to the stronger will of the others. It exists because you are swept up in the negative self-perpetuating force of your negative desires which you have consciously ignored until now. This lack of control makes you unable to imagine how it is when you take command.

Self-Perpetuation Operates on All Spheres of Consciousness

To simplify, there is the positive principle and direction. This is the sphere of reality, the sphere in which there is unlimited self-perpetuation in whatever respect consciousness is aware of its existence. In chemistry, in physics, in practically every field of science, this principle can be found to exist. Therefore it should be easier to accept than if it were a phenomenon that had not already been found to exist in human material realms.

The personality level that wants the negative (and pursues its direction) creates a new world, or psychic sphere, covering the original one. Images and forms -- the product of attitudes, thoughts, and feelings -- create this negative world. There are many variations, degrees, and possibilities according to the strength of the negative desires, the awareness of both positive and negative desires, and the balance between the two.

You may gain an inkling of this by looking at your own change from the point of view of awareness as compared with your previous unconscious denial of positive experience, or even of a direct desire for the negative one. Compare this with your present awareness, and you will see that this difference constitutes a different sphere of consciousness, a different world -- each distinct with its own flavor and atmosphere.

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Exercise 3a:

Recall a period of time when you held a genuinely positive attitude and were naturally outgoing, constructive, and open to life in a relaxed way. Did life move easily? Did you have to work hard to maintain this attitude, or did it feel self-perpetuating?

Then recall a period of time when you held a negative attitude about yourself, others, or the world around you. Did life move easily? Did this attitude also feel self-perpetuating.

Consider that some movement / change / decision on your part shifted the dynamic from positive to negative, or from negative to positive. See if you can identify an inner cause, since outer manifestations only reflect inner movement.

We Create the Pain We Experience

Where you are relatively free from negative desires, it will be relatively simple and easy to grasp, to feel, to experience the world of truth where all good exists and is self-perpetuating. Therefore there is no need for struggle, for doubt, for fear, or for deprivation. In these areas, you will find that you fearlessly open your heart to the positive, dynamic experience which moves eternally towards further unfoldment, greater happiness, more inclusion. You do not stop this movement with your fearful mind, holding it in check and bringing it to a standstill.

And then there is always the area in your psyche where the fear of the positive, hence its negation, exists. Consequently, deprivation and suffering manifest in your outer life. It is this sphere within your consciousness that **you must fully experience so that you can transcend it**. You must live it through, not by denying it or struggling away from it, but by seeing and accepting it, by learning to understand its nature. This is what is meant by going through it.

Whenever man is separated from others, from his fellow creatures, he must be in the negative world, in a self-perpetuating negativity he sows through his destructive wishes. He must therefore be in suffering because he denies and ignores the full significance of the thus evolving struggle.

Man finds himself in this constant struggle. The struggle varies from individual to individual, and with one individual from phase to phase, and even, at times, from hour to hour because at different times, the different directions come up. They alternate in predominance at any given moment. At one time, one direction is more on the surface and the other more submerged, at other times it changes. So there must always be in you the unceasing struggle, in which one side strives towards wholeness and union with your fellow creatures in many different ways; towards love and understanding, towards consideration, towards giving and receiving.

But always there still is this other side which negates and denies the former direction, which fears and resists it. Therefore a particular pain exists -- the greater the denial, the greater the pain. For, do not forget, it is impossible to completely want isolation, withdrawal, and separation. If it were possible to fully want this and be wholly reconciled to its results, there would be no pain. But it is not possible totally to ever want this. One can only want it to a large degree. And therefore the larger the percentage, the stronger the pull into the opposite direction from health and union -- hence, the fiercer the pain.

Now, the pain is aggravated by the struggle that sets in with the other person. For, do not forget, my friends, it is painful enough that you want and do not want, alternately, to relate and love on the one hand and to hate, reject, and withdraw on the other. It becomes infinitely more complicated and conflicting when this is multiplied by a second individual into whose circumference you enter and who wages a similar fight within.

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Exercise 3b: Identify a negative dynamic that includes another person. What is it that you do not love or accept, in you or in the other? What would ‘winning’ look like for you, and how would it help you develop spiritually? How would ‘losing’ help either of you?

Week 4: Awareness → Understanding → Knowing

On the physical as well as on the emotional and mental levels, it is possible temporarily to accept the negative as a passing stage in the understanding that it is the effect of an inadvertent cause and a momentary disturbance.

The total being cannot ever totally want the negative. Pain and suffering are always the result of two directions, of the personality being pulled in two directions, the life and the antilife directions, the love and hate, isolation, fear directions, the positive and negative directions. The outer layers of personality must suffer as long as unity is not achieved -- and unity exists exclusively in the reality of the cosmic creative principle.

PL 140

The Four Stages of Spiritual Evolution

Summary of PL 127

1. Automatism / blind reflex

- Lowest phase of consciousness --Responses based upon deeply imprinted wrong conclusions and generalizations
- Becomes stronger as parts of personality are liberated (less development = self deception is not needed)
- Blind reflexes are rationalized and explained in order to prove they are based on freedom of choice rather than compulsion

2. Awareness

- Starts with becoming aware of the blind reflex mechanism
- Awareness => acknowledgement (=admitting or owning to something) such as limitations, facing wrong conclusions, destructive emotions, self-defeating devices, lack of integrity in the widest possible sense
- Becoming conscious of error, deviation from truth
- The Aha! moment is knowing that we are / have been driven by false ideas

3. Understanding

- Seeing the cause and effect of negative, destructive emotions, false ideas
- Comes after a degree of awareness has been gained and (proportionately) blind reflexes have ceased
- Requires deep experience of the answers to all these questions (deeply felt as a reality rather than learning a lesson by heart)

4. Knowing

- Knowing the truth
- Greater than understanding cause and effect
- Knowing what the right conclusions are behind the wrong ones
- Experiencing the truth
- Connects us with a greater spiritual principle
- Opens up the world

Automatism / Blind Reflex

On the surface, the majority of people cannot imagine how they might harbor destructive desires. It makes all the difference for an individual to be aware or not to be aware of his negative desires. The more the awareness of a deliberate desire for the negative exists, the more will you be in control of yourself, of life, and the less will you feel victimized, helpless, and weak.

When an entity is not aware of this deliberate desire for the negative, the suffering must be infinitely greater than any suffering or pain that can ensue when one is aware of having wanted it oneself. Lack of such awareness must create a psychic climate in which the individual feels he is singled out to be a victim. It is inevitable to feel helpless when one lacks awareness of the fact that the effect was self-created. Separation between cause and effect in one's consciousness must create confusion, doubt, and hopelessness.

Awareness & Understanding: A Non-Linear Process

The moment awareness of the negative desire has been attained through the painstaking struggle of this work, you at least know, my friends, what causes your outer difficulties and unwelcome situations. Even before you are capable of giving up the negative desires because you do not yet understand the reason for their existence, the mere fact that you know that you have created the undesirable manifestations in your life will render you a freer person.

Be careful to extend this awareness, and to link and connect it with the unwelcome manifestations in your life. This essential step must not be overlooked. For it is indeed possible to be aware, to some extent at least, of a negative desire and nevertheless ignore or overlook that this negative desire is the immediate cause of any number of manifestations in your life which you strenuously oppose and struggle against.

And that is exactly your pain. You struggle against something that you have yourself induced and continue to induce, while, at the same time, there must always be the pull towards the light, towards wholeness, towards loving, inclusion, and constructiveness, towards beauty and unfoldment. Your denial of the direction towards wholeness and your oblivion of this denial, your not knowing that you deny it, your not knowing that you want two opposing things at the same time is what confuses and pains you. It will easily be seen what is required for an entity to reach this awareness and understanding.

Knowing

Those of you who have begun to see the first beginnings of your negative desires have gained a new strength and a new hope whenever this awareness is alive, dynamic, and not pushed out of sight. For then, indeed, at first as a principle and as a possibility, you see how it can be when you no longer have the negative desire even though you do not yet know why and how you insist on the negative desires and why you harbor them in the first place. But the mere fact of knowing that you have them and subsequently connecting them with the unwelcome results must give you new hope and a new outlook.

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