

Pathwork™ Steps

Three Levels of Reality for Inner Guidance

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 162

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Week 1: Seeing Illusions From Different Angles

Week 2: What You Think Exists

Week 3: What Actually Exists

Week 4: What Could Exist

Week 1: Seeing Illusions From Different Angles

You are not only, by your presence, in the spirit of wanting to receive guidance and truth, but primarily by every single inner effort made toward the realization of your true being. **The more this realization is activated, the more blessings are generated from within.**

The human being who is cut off from his inner reality is indeed lost. The majority of human beings are, more or less, totally cut off from it, and must therefore find their way back to their inner reality. There are a few who have attained this connection – and they always were and will be the spiritual leaders of humanity.

Every effort on this path is aimed at reestablishing such a connection for inner guidance, for the manifestation of the inner reality. This path toward the inner reality and toward inner guidance is laborious. **But it is primarily laborious because you imagine the truth being so far away, so very much farther than it actually is.**

You cannot conceive of what life already is, right now, and how it could be for you if only you could see it, know it, and therefore realize it. You still perceive this as a faraway, abstract, unreal theory, and you experience yourself as an isolated particle in an essentially hostile universe or, at least, an indifferent universe that has nothing to do with you. You conceive of the universe as a static, immovable fact into which you are put and whose laws have no relationship to your own inner laws. This concept, and the way you experience yourself in relation to life, is your real difficulty. This is what makes the path so difficult and laborious - nothing else. Thus the difficulty is not actual; it consists of this concept.

The question is how you can change your concept. This is the labor and the effort. If the illusion about the separation between your true being and your momentary consciousness, or the separation between the universe and yourself, would not exist, there would be an instant awakening – a "click," as it were – and you would know who you are and what life is.

All my lectures, all our work together attack this problem of your illusion from different angles. All these different approaches have a certain sequential order. Generally, you find the same sequential order within your own, private, personal, individual path. Yet the individual path cannot be forced to imitate the sequence of these lectures. Rather, the process is (as some of you have already found out) that you, with this guiding help, find your own truth as a direct, spontaneous experience from within.

Thus this truth usually appears, in the first moments of understanding, so new and fresh that you think you had never heard it before. But afterwards, it can be verified as confirming the lectures you have studied, the lectures which have penetrated the deeper regions of your unconscious. You use the lectures, and then you use your own intuitive faculties, freed progressively more and more by facing the truth you did not want to see in the beginning.

Elimination of error frees intuition and creative experience from within. The lectures first give an impetus to this process and later fortify and confirm it when you read them again.

Three Levels of Reality

The first level of reality is what you think exists.

The second level of reality is what actually exists.

The third level of reality is what could exist.

It is preferable not to discuss this in a philosophical, general, or theoretical manner. The more specific and personal you can be in assimilating what I outline here and the more you can apply it to the seemingly most insignificant, subjective experiences and reactions in your daily struggles, the better it is.

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<http://pathwork.org/lectures/three-levels-of-reality-for-inner-guidance>

Exercise 1: Using Daily Review to examine problematic (i.e. disharmonious) reactions and attitudes. Keep a log for one week of those reactions and attitudes that do not leave you peaceful, happy and alive. If these are familiar to you, notice how they reflect experiences from your childhood. We unconsciously attract or are drawn in to patterns of behavior that are familiar to us, without consciously remembering or connecting these to the original experience.

This new awareness brings with it a sense of your being a creator in the scheme of things. I advise all my friends to specifically commit themselves more and more to seeing their lives in these terms. What is lacking and how do you create it? How much are you willing to be in truth with yourself? The truth of self-responsibility can be practiced not as a punitive accusation but as the highest form of dignity of man.

Outer Events Reflect Self-Creation – Three Stages PL 211

Daily Review PL 28

Exercise: Keep a record of incidents that disturb you. Focusing upon subtleties may help us from becoming distracted by exaggerating or over-dramatizing a situation. Notice feelings of discomfort, where your suspect you may be uninformed, ignorant, unprepared, or unaware.

Each week, see if you can relate with the sub-topic.

All you need is a ½ page of lined paper per day. Create 4 columns. At some point during each day, jot down brief notes about each incident (limit: 10 per day). Eventually, this can become a thought process. The Guide refers to Daily Review as 'spiritual hygiene'.

1. Two to three words to identify each incident (no details)
2. What feelings or emotional reactions came up
3. The judgments or conclusions you came to at the time

At the end of each week, read through your entries and complete the last column:

4. What do you notice today that you did not notice at the time? Are there patterns?
5. Using your preferred form of meditation (sitting, walking, or while doing 'mindless' chores) reflect upon your early childhood experiences and how they relate to your feelings in the present.

Week 2: What You Think Exists

No matter how insignificant a disturbance may appear to you or how world-shakingly important, ask yourself, *"What do I really believe exists? in me? around me? in the interaction between me and others? in the condition as I experience it?"* To penetrate this level is perhaps the very greatest difficulty. Once this is done, the next two levels of reality will be much easier to deal with. Man is utterly confused about and ignorant of what he really thinks and feels. This level of reality must absolutely be disentangled.

If man is unwilling to see what he believes to be true, he cannot ever come to see what is really true at this moment. Consequently, he is unable to reach the third level of reality by changing the present reality – and not by wishful thinking, illusory magic, or denial of the facts – into a reality that is more favorable for him.

Conscious and Unconscious influences on what you think exists include:

- 1. Taking refuge** in collective, oversimplified labels, supposed to express what is really going on in him.
- 2. Fear of change** and a vested interest in avoiding change
- 3. Beliefs and impressions** you assume to be true to some degree. These are even more difficult to handle.
- 4. Beliefs you may sense are somehow false**, but you do not wish to alter them.

Taking Refuge in Collective, Oversimplified Labels

When man says he is depressed or anxious or hopeless or angry or hurt or fatigued, he is content to call a host of feelings, impressions, and beliefs by any one of these emotions as though no further search would be required. If he would use the naming of such emotions as a beginning to explore them, it would serve its purpose. But only too often he uses the words of such emotions as a final explanation. Thus he cannot even attain the first level of reality – of his often confused and erroneous interpretation of life, of others, and of self.

The first reaction often is that you do not even know why you feel this way and you give yourself a quick and easy answer. Such quick and easy answers may sound exceedingly plausible and serious in a world that shies away from a fresh, new approach. However, every problem needs examining as if it had never existed and as if society hadn't its predigested answers ready.

If one gives some attention to what one really believes causes the specific unhappy feeling, one finds some answers quite easily.

For example, it is not at all impossible that a person thinks secretly at one and the same time that he is the most important being in the universe **and** that he is the least worthy in the universe. Even one such assumption is bound to have innumerable further consequences, breeding further wrong assumptions in one's dealings with the world. The two contradictory original assumptions multiply the confusion, entanglements, misconceptions, and the resulting pain. For error is pain, as truth is happiness. Anyone working on such a path knows from experience how burdensome they are and what a relief it is to shed them. Most of my friends do not see in their day to day life where just such a dual concept of the self as at once the highest and the lowest is responsible for that layer of reality where one thinks certain things exist without their necessarily being true.

Fear of change and a Vested Interest in Avoiding Change

It is often the case that although you have actually recognized a false assumption, you still do not follow this through to the further consequences of such an assumption. You fail to see, for example, how this assumption affects your belief about others, what you believe them to be and to think of you, what a situation or incident means in the light of this assumption about yourself, what certain reactions of the self and of others really mean.

If you verbalize what you believe this person, situation, or event means, you will then know why you are unhappy in any form. This clear-cut knowing of why you feel the way you do makes a tremendous difference. But not only that, it also gives you the possibility to realize that some of your beliefs are preposterous. You might have, again, admitted this in general and as a theory, but to do so specifically is still extremely hard. **Man's intellectual arrogance makes this so difficult.** It is so hard to admit what childish nonsense is lodged in the unconscious because this contradicts the concept man has of his intelligence.

But perhaps an even greater motivation for keeping the secret beliefs in the haze of vague impressions and feelings (rather than acknowledging them precisely) is the following: **man has a "vested interest" in keeping these things secret because he feels vaguely that, once out in the open, he is obliged to make changes.** He fears to do this because he is so committed to his false ideas that a different mode of approach appears a threat to him.

It is hard to admit the utterly childish side with all its senseless ideas and beliefs. The moment this childish side is out in the open, you know it is nonsense, and you are relieved to give up the burdensome beliefs.

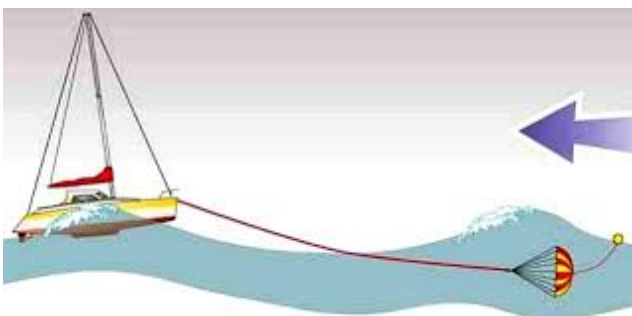
Exercise 2a: Finding Contradictory Beliefs

Whenever you desire a positive outcome, yet experience reality as negative or as blocking the fulfillment of your desire, a contradiction exists in your belief system.

-- **Find an example** where that you were able to resolve what felt like opposing arguments, priorities, or desires.

-- **Explore and clearly verbalize** the underlying beliefs of each 'side'. If this was resolved, what changed?

-- Apply this concept to a current situation, bringing the opposing forces into conscious focus.



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).

For example, a person may believe that he is worth nothing, and the rejection is such a great threat only because it seems to confirm the "fact" of his worthlessness. It is thus not sufficient to acknowledge a stereotype "explanation" by saying one feels anxious. It is necessary, first, to acknowledge that the anxiety exists because one fears rejection.

Subsequently, it must be unearthed that rejection is so threatening because one feels worthless and does not wish to admit this feeling. Then it becomes necessary to find out on what specific grounds the heretofore secret conviction of his worthlessness is based. In other words, all these very specific beliefs and assumptions must be taken out of the fog of vagueness where they hide under the collective label of "anxiety."

When the approach is changed in the fashion suggested here and serious investigation is conducted, when nothing is taken for granted and everything is approached in a new and fresh way, you will find out what you believe exists. From there on, you can begin to look further and begin to question the premises of these beliefs. You can begin to open your eyes and look objectively for what really is.

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Exercise 2b: Make a commitment to find and admit -- to yourself only -- that one (or more) of your beliefs may be childish, only partly true, or somewhat false.

-- Notice any subtle – or not so subtle -- reactions to even considering doing this!

Interlocked Triads of Personality Defenses

PL	Concept	Reason Type:	Will Type:	Love Type:
14/83	Mask / ISI	Serenity	Power	Love
30	Primary Fault	Pride	Self-Will	Fear
84	Lower Self	Withdrawal	Aggression	Submission
248	Primary Distortion	Materialism / Proof	Separation	Half-Truths
43	Primary Fear	Chaos / Injustice	Helplessness	Disconnection
43	Higher Self	Wisdom	Courage	Love
43	Primary Gift	Clarity, Order	Leadership	Connection
107	Way to NOT love Not feel Real Self	Disconnection	Outer Values	Overwhelm

[PL 43 'Three Personality Types'](#) describes three general defensive patterns that begin energetically via thoughts, feelings, and physical reactions based upon emotional history.

Withdrawal: contraction, sudden lack of movement, or reliance upon an alternate authoritative source or experience as a substitute for relying upon inner knowing.

Aggression: outward movement, a sense of getting ready for a fight, putting on 'armor' or rallying support. All of these defenses intermingle with each other to some degree.

Submission: repressing or avoiding anything unpleasant, by aligning with authority figures or seeking to hide behind group beliefs; also approval-seeking, hiding real feelings.

Week 3: What Actually Exists

All the false assumptions you harbor seem to dictate that they must be kept secret. For example, should it be true that you actually are worthless and beyond redemption, facing such a fact would indeed be a hard undertaking. But then is it preferable to live a lie by pretending you believe in your worth, while underneath you doubt it?

Such considerations will give you the necessary logic to look at what you believe exists in order to then find out what actually exists. The actual truth is that you have a great deal of worth although perhaps in a different way than you believed.

For example: Conversely and simultaneously, you may believe that you are the most important and valuable person on earth, who deserves very special privileges.

To ascertain such a belief is difficult because your intellectual knowledge refutes such arrogance and even creates shame. Also, admitting such an idea brings one closer to questioning its validity, which one fears all the more since in the psyche there also lurks the precise opposite extreme – the assumption of one's worthlessness. If you are not special, then you are nothing.

Hence, both assumptions must be kept hidden from consciousness and cannot be examined. Therefore the further chain reactions and compulsive behavior patterns cannot be tested as to their reality value.

Exercise 3a: Ask yourself the question: whether you really want to find out -- first what you think exists and second, what really is. *Take some time to consider these questions. It is very important not to pretend that you want something that you do not actually want.*

-- If you discover that you do not want to find out what exists in you, find out why you do not wish to do so. What false beliefs prevent you from doing so?

-- When you answer that question, you open another little gate that will eventually enable you to change your mind so that you will want to find out (a) what you think exists and (b) what really exists.

-- In that moment, you are already two important levels closer to the inner guidance and to the inner reality, to the possibility of what could be. This is the kingdom of God inside you. As long as the entanglements of false opinions, of what you believe exists as opposed to what actually exists is not cleared up, you cannot see that even what actually does exist need not be your ultimate state of being. To realize this leads to a tremendously important transition.

Finding Truth Brings Enormous Relief

The level of what actually does exist is always an enormous relief as compared to what you believe exists. Truth is never, never anywhere near as threatening as the foggy half-truths and evasions, no matter what it is.

What you believe exists is a relief as compared to the fog; what actually exists is an even greater relief compared to what you believe exists. The discovery of the manifold possibilities in creation of what could exist is more than liberation. It opens the gates to the world, to the great freedom of cocreation, to unlimited expansion.

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In a mundane psychotherapy, the highest obtainable goal is usually the level of reality,

what actually exists. When man accepts this reality, accepts his manifest values and liabilities, accepts the limitations of himself and the outer world, when he copes and deals with this world so as to produce his best actions and feelings, this would be the ultimate that can be expected under the very best of circumstances. It would be the point at which a patient is successfully dismissed as cured.

This is only where our spiritual path begins although, of course, the levels overlap and one cannot say that one must first have completed one level before reaching the next. It never quite works that way. This is why the realization of the third level now and working with it to the best of the present possibility will help the attainment of the lower stages perhaps a bit faster and more painlessly, perhaps a bit more safely and more meaningfully.

Exercise 3B *from the Question and Answer section of the Unedited Version: See if you can find a relatable area of your life that mirrors the question asked, and ask yourself the 3 questions:*

QUESTION: I am aware of the fact that I distort reality. I wonder how this applies to my job situation, wherein I am caught in a hostility cycle with my boss. At least on my part, I feel very hostile to him. This is very real to me although I know I am overreacting to it. Would you comment upon this?

ANSWER: As you already know, this has really not much to do with your boss. It is all a question between you and your father. You have to ask yourself the relevant questions:

What do you really feel about him?
What do you believe he felt about you?
and why?

If you tackle only these three questions, you will already be more in clarity on the level of what you believe exists, rather than being in the fog of not quite knowing what bothers you.

Out of these questions, more questions will arise, of course. But let us not hurry ahead; just concentrate on these three questions without taking anything for granted. It is essential that you ask yourself, and answer, these questions. Then you can tackle the next level of considering what is.

The truth is happiness, while unhappiness is always error and misconception. Do not ever forget this. This fact may lead you to have more initiative about discovering the misconceptions of your suffering.

On this day that commemorates the leading faith of this hemisphere [this lecture was delivered on Good Friday April 12, 1968], you can perhaps find a special strength in this memory of your forefathers – not because a special day in itself is of any value of importance as such, but because at times man needs an outer impact or push in order to get something in motion within. For some, religious memories and commemorations may represent such a push. For others, this may not be necessary. They, in turn, may need other reminders and incentives, or another impetus that gives them a motor force with which to find a way out of the entanglements on the outermost level of fog-bound existence which cause so much anxiety and suffering.

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Week 4: What Could Exist

Many of you have experienced that the power of your thought, the power of your attitude, the power of your feelings does not have an immediate effect. **It has an indirect effect**, which at first seems so disconnected that it requires specific attention and awareness until you truly comprehend what I discussed in the last lecture [[Cause and Effect, PL 196](#)]

Only when your consciousness expands can you sense the oneness of this tremendous mind power and the energy it sets in motion. This works both in a constructive and a destructive way.

[Energy and Consciousness in Distortion: Evil PL 197](#)

Working with an Organic Reality

Man is not put into a universe that has its predetermined existence, whose conditions are fixed. Even objects are flux, are condensed energy, constantly moving. The energy is generated by consciousness and by the way it operates.

What actually is – which is what is usually called the reality – is not a static condition. It is no more real, true, and unchangeable than the level of what one believes exists. When he assumes that reality is static and immovable, man is as far removed from actual, ultimate reality as he who assumes his illusions to be the final truth. Ultimate reality is essentially flexible and movable.

Thus the immovable outer world is a direct product of you and your consciousness. When you can begin to question whether what you found to be reality need be so, you begin to expand the horizon of your concepts, your grasp, and thus it increases your creative power to alter the seemingly static reality.

Reality can be expanded for you to the exact degree you wish to expand the horizon, or the frontiers, of your concepts.

When your mind can truly and deeply embrace limitless vistas of experience for happiness and self-expression, this is exactly what your reality must become. For consciousness is explosive, powerful stuff. Each thought, as you know, creates and truly builds your life – your very own reality circumstances.

By concepts, I mean more than the superficial beliefs and theories, of course. If the limitless expansion is unconsciously striven for as the child strives for magical omnipotence (because the personality fears and dislikes dealing with the present limitations), it cannot possibly work. It is necessary to first accept the present limitations and cope with them, for they are a product of what the consciousness believes.

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Exercise 4a: Notice if you discount the indirect effects of your own thoughts, feelings, and energetic interactions with others. Spend some time considering that you do affect others, but not in the way you imagine, or to the degree you wish to affect your reality and theirs.

Cause and Effect: Negative Beliefs create Negative Reality

It is impossible to discover one's own creative power in the positive before one recognizes the connection between negative reality and negative beliefs. Only when you realistically accept the limitation as it is now, can you transcend this limitation in the realization that it does not need to exist.

Thus you move into the third level of reality, in which your intellect cannot help you. It is then that the inner guidance can come forth.

This inner guidance will be unobstructed when you have moved from the outer level of haze and fog, where you do not know what is going on in you, to the level of what you believe exists, to the level of what actually exists in comparison, and, further, to opening your way into the third level, of what could exist.

Realizing what could exist, the ultimate truth of the inner being, of the real self, is the aim of life itself. For then man has come into his own. The more these levels are transcended, the freer inner guidance becomes, and the more you will comprehend those three levels of reality, which are man's way of keeping from "being thrown into the outside world" and to coming back home into his inner reality.

The existence of evil is the blind drive of not knowing, the vagueness of misbelief, distortion, error. That is truly the most alienating state – not knowing what one believes, assumes, and concludes.

If you truly comprehend these words, my friends, it will be quite impossible for you to ever hate anyone or to believe in the evil nature of certain human beings. You will never hate the person ensnared in the error of not knowing what he believes. You must beware of judging yourself or others on having reached any of these levels on the whole. It is always a question of fluctuation and overlapping. An individual may have attained in his development a state of fluctuating between the second and third levels. He may have activated sufficient power from the third level to guide him in all his life expressions. But where he is still trapped in his haze, this guidance does not easily penetrate and cannot be heard.

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From the Question and Answer section of the Unedited Version:

QUESTION: What if one doubts that one's needs are justified? Isn't it also a question of what *should* be?

ANSWER: This is part of the confusion. If you do not know what you are supposed to want, what is a legitimate need on your part, you get confused between the childish aspect that desires unreasonable and unrealizable love and attention, and the adult, legitimate need for human warmth and affection.

-- In this confusion, you may reject yourself for the latter, while, at the same time, you rebel against not obtaining the former. These confusions must all be brought out in the open and examined so that you can put order into them.

-- In addition to this confusion, **there may be confusion about what the other person really feels.** Your own confusion inevitably breeds confusion about what exists in the other person.

-- The childish level may conclude you are being rejected since the unrealizable demands are not fulfilled.

-- You may not be able to recognize actual love because it appears in a different way from what you imagined in your present state, in which you may not be able to make room for differences in self-expression.

-- You may also misinterpret the actual rejection as a personal one, and not recognize that this is the manifestation of another person's immaturity and fear of love. All these interactions and mutual currents must be investigated.

The way you can gauge whether you have arrived at what you ought to know about yourself at the moment is the only reliable gauge there is. Do you have the feeling of utter relief and liberation, of being energized and light?

If so, you can be absolutely sure that you have attained, at this moment, the level of self-knowledge that you ought to have. When this feeling is missing, you can be quite sure that there are many answers that are still outstanding and that you need to find. You need to ask yourself the appropriate question.

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Exercise 4B: Notice your 'shoulds'

Notice an area of your life where you believe that you 'should' get something that you want. See if you can notice how using 'should' gives an illusion of authority to your demands, where 'should' is an attempt to overrule the organic reality of the relationships between cause and effect. Seeing when and how reality doesn't – and won't -- fulfill our desires is a developmental skill. That is, to see reality we need to be willing to give up (even if it is only temporary) our 'shoulds'.

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