

Pathwork™ Steps

Faith and Doubt...in Truth and Distortion Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 221

Week 1: Inner Obstacles to Faith

Week 2: True and False Concepts

Week 3: Four Steps of Faith

Week 4: True and False Doubt

Week 1: Inner Obstacles to Faith PL 221

After having invested considerable effort, time, and energy as you go through the spiral movement of your inner being, you finally find that which obstructs you. You find that which prohibits you. You find that which is negative. When you go deep enough and look astutely enough, you also find out **that which really obstructs you is the sum total of everything that is negative and destructive in you.**

The mind does not want to accept this. The mind has concocted all sorts of other explanations for unhappiness. Some of these theories may be valid as far as they go. The mind has created theories about sickness, neurosis, etc., which though quite correct in themselves, nevertheless strive away from the fact I discuss here, namely **that it is the negativity that creates these illnesses and neuroses.**

Rejecting the "punishing deity" concept, humanity had to tend towards the opposite direction and embrace doctrines that exonerate the individual from all personal responsibility, and thus man finds himself a victim.

When you look deep, deep inside you after having removed your reluctance to do so, and you no longer justify and rationalize, and you see without any embellishment those aspects of you where you hate rather than love, where you separate yourself in your defense rather than openly trust, where you look away rather than face, where you deny rather than affirm, where you distort truth rather than are in truth, then you see the place where you create unhappiness and frustration. It cannot be any other way.

The human mind has known this for many centuries but has misused this knowledge and made it into a punitive, authoritarian judgment that elevates those who judge and puts down those who are being judged. Religions have been particularly guilty of this distortion. Then a counter-reaction had to set in in order to reestablish the balance. However, any counter-reaction will first go beyond the truth into the opposite extreme, so all concepts of sin, evil, and personal responsibility for man's unhappiness were being denied.

But now your human condition has advanced sufficiently to see again that distortion of truth, denial of love, negative intentionality are what ultimately create suffering. And perhaps now without the authoritarian punitiveness, this fact can simply be seen for what it is.

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There is no pain that is not in some way the result of some denial of truth and denial of love.

There is no pain that is not, in the last analysis, caused by a violation of spiritual law, a basic dishonesty, and somewhere an ill will.

Now, once you fully understand this, you approach a crossroads. Many of you on this path have by now come face to face with your basic negative attitudes, the negative nucleus, the negative cluster that is one comprehensive whole. Or perhaps it is a series of negativities strung together. It is an ongoing chain reaction -- really, a vicious circle.

You may start out with the concept of finding your "problems." But when you speak of problems you really only deal with the manifestations, the results of this inner negative nucleus. When you go beyond the surface manifestation -- the problematic life situation -- you find, embedded within a wall of protective covering, **the lower self attitudes, intents, feelings, thoughts, and actions.**

It is not easy to see the negative nucleus in its entirety, its connectedness, its cause and effect chain reactions. As I said, this requires dedicated, committed, wholehearted work and the utter will to be truthful with the self. But once you have arrived at this juncture and fully comprehend this negative nucleus, a secondary phase is to follow. It does not suffice just to see this.

Many of you have experienced seeing and being fully aware of the negativity, even taking full responsibility for it and no longer projecting it outwardly. You lose your self-deception, you fully face the negative truth within. Yet you find yourself strangely unable, as it were, to really want to give it up. And this is a specific phase that everyone following a spiritual path to unification must encounter sooner or later.

For fear that you may not want to or not be able to give up what distorts love and truth in your inner universe, you must also, to a certain extent, not even want to fully see it. For a part of you may say, "I know I cannot, do not wish to change. So why should I want to see it? I would rather go on deceiving myself." This is a very typical obstruction. It is very important not to allow it to barricade your way.

PL 221

Ways to explore the concepts in our daily lives:

On the following page, I have copied an exercise for noticing the biological 'blind spot' that exists in each eye. In order to notice it, you have to be looking for it, because the mind has developed ways to cover it up.

The Guide describes a similar mental cover-up in the passages above. Finding 'the lower self attitudes, intents, feelings, thoughts and actions' can feel like trying to identify a blind spot.

In her 2007 book Leadership Blind Spots and What to Do About Them, Karen Blakely suggests a series of 8 'practices': Direct Attention, Harness Emotions, Overcome Defensiveness, Deepen Awareness, Engage Creativity, Find Reality Checks; then Change Behavior and Nurture Integrity.

Notice the tools and techniques in this and other lectures that encourage a similar approach.

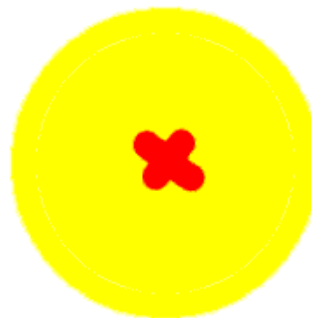
Blind Spot and the "Filling-in" phenomenon

www.colorcube.com/illusions/blndspot.htm

Did you know that your eyes have blind spots (and not just at the back of your head)? Each of your eyes contains an area that has no photoreceptors because it is occupied by the optic nerve. You may not have noticed these areas because they are on opposite sides of your visual field. However, this exercise is designed to isolate your blind spot and you will be amazed at the results.

Hold the paper at a comfortable reading distance. Cover your LEFT eye and stare at the + with your RIGHT eye (keep the paper centered). Adjust the distance until the items on the left side disappear. Then try it by covering your RIGHT eye and stare at the dot – the + will also disappear!

You may be surprised to see that the dot is replaced, not by a black region, but rather blank white space. The brain simply "fills in" the most probable stimulus (in this case, a uniform white area) where there is none. On the other two lines, you should notice the red markings each time are replaced by the most probable pattern that your brain is able to perceive.



Week 2: True and False Concepts PL 221

For this larger particular aspect or hurdle on your path, I want to talk about the true and false concepts of faith and doubt -- about the duality that can distort faith as well as doubt.

This is the topic that should, if fully understood, make the next step much easier for those who have arrived at that crossroads. This is important because *if change is contemplated before the unpleasant, unpalatable truth is fully seen, accepted and dealt with, it cannot work. Such rush would merely indicate that you don't want to feel the pain of the guilt; you don't want to accept the consequences of being negative and destructive. It would be merely a shortcut. So the topic of this lecture can only be applied at a very specific juncture.*

The popular concept of faith in this era of mankind's development is that it is a blind belief in something you have no way of knowing, that you will never know. It means that you just blindly and, if I may say, unintelligently and gullibly trust without rhyme or reason, usually out of wishful thinking, laziness, and ignorance. Therefore, faith in today's intellectual mind stands in ill repute. If faith were indeed what it is supposed to be according to this concept, there would be good reason to discard all faith. If faith were a gullible lack of discrimination, then of course the intelligent person would rightly guard himself against anything that might resemble faith. For he does not want to be gullible, he does not want to be stupid, he does not want to believe in something that has no substance in reality and cannot ever be experienced as truth. Therefore he stays on an intellectual platform on which everything supposedly real can be seen, touched, known, and proven. And never is the leap made into the unknown.

Yet, unless a leap into the unknown is being made, no expansion and no change can ever come to pass. For, as you well know, growth and change always imply a momentary anxiety. This anxiety cannot be accepted if you believe it to be an end result rather than a temporary leap that will land you on some firm ground. The firm ground is reality, but a new kind of reality, a kind of reality you have not known before. But unless this new kind of reality is contemplated from a truly firm ground where man can rest and function, the leap cannot be made.

Faith, according to popular notion, implies a perpetual state of blindness, of not knowing or comprehending, groping in the dark, floating on a groundless, unreal (reality-less, if I may coin a word) way of being. It is therefore extremely important to differentiate between the false concept of faith and the real concept of faith.

What is the real concept of faith? In reality, faith requires a succession of several steps or stages. Each of these stages is highly grounded in intelligence and realism.

Step 1

The first stage would be to contemplate a new way of functioning, as opposed to continuing in the particular negative chain reaction that has been discovered.

Let us suppose you have found on your path that a more or less substantial part of your personality functions on defensive negative premises. As you really explore your mode of reacting and your mode of functioning in life, you find to your unpleasant surprise that these modes of functioning are undesirable for yourself and other people. They are destructive and cut out life. So you face this

and know this, but somehow you do not know how else to function.

To give up the only mode that is known to you without anything else to go by except a lofty theory, is absolutely impossible for you. Therefore you must have a clear-cut perception of the stages you must expect to go through in order to acquire a new and better way of functioning and a new and better reality expanded beyond the narrow confines of the fenced-in present.

So the first step is to consider such a new way as a possibility. When you sincerely do this -- grope and wait, patiently wait for the revelation from within -- you will find a new modality.

In order to find this new firm ground that is without conflict, a leap must be made -- a leap into an unknown, new possibility. Even when you merely open yourself to a new alternative in principle and feel ready to abandon an old and accustomed mode of operation, there is already a certain leap.

Because to some extent, no matter how tentatively, you have already left the pseudo-firm ground of your old security which had seemed the only way possible for you.

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Exercise for Stage 1 from PL 221

For example, you say: "I recognize the old way of functioning as being destructive, negative, undesirable for myself and others (it cannot be either the self or others, it can only be both). I do not know yet that there is another way, and if there is, how it would be. I do not feel such a new modality. But perhaps there is another way. Perhaps I am indeed an expression of a divine reality that dwells deep in me even if I have not yet experienced myself as a divine reality. If that possibility exists, it has also the wisdom to convey to me how I can find another and better way of functioning in this or that particular area. And I will simply be receptive to this as a possibility."

This is a highly realistic approach. It is a most effective meditation. And it has nothing to do with a blind belief in something that can never be ascertained as real or as something that is not grounded in reality. It is an honest, open approach that simply makes room for alternatives not yet experienced.

I have mentioned in many other contexts that this is the indispensable attitude that every serious scientist pursues. Yet it is precisely the scientific minded who hold faith in ill repute because they believe in the false version of it. But the real steps in faith, that make faith a dynamic road in itself, are completely compatible with the scientific turn of mind. To consider alternatives that are as yet unknown is an honest attitude, it is objective, it is humble. So the first leap into the unknown -- and into the new -- takes place in this frame of mind. This is not to say that there will be no anxiety for all new experience is connected with anxiety, but it is an anxiety that is quickly and easily overcome.

For example, if you find yourself secure only if you issue forth negative judgments, if you hate and put down others, you can apply this first step. You can consider that maybe there is another way and open yourself to new insights. You will find that you can be secure without this destructiveness. You may have to work hard to establish real self-respect -- and this approach is a sure way to attain it. But no matter how hard you work, it is always worth it, for you pay literally with your life for the negative kind of "security."

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Step 1

The first stage would be to contemplate a new way of functioning, as opposed to continuing in the particular negative chain reaction that has been discovered.

So the first step is to consider such a new way as a possibility. When you sincerely do this -- grope and wait, patiently wait for the revelation from within -- you will find a new modality.

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Examples of Step 1 in daily life:

Feeling a strong calling for an experience or opportunity that you may not be able to articulate.

Falling in love, with anything or anyone. Eros (PL43) is a soul movement. Although it is vulnerable to distortions in the personality, it always contains a 'grain of truth' (PL 5, 26, 43, 101 etc.)

Step 2

More of a leap is taken on the second step in faith. With that leap you open yourself to the divine ground within you **so that it can supply the knowledge your intellect cannot find.**

In the second step you allow the divine self to supply the answer.

If this step is sincerely taken, you will catch occasional glimpses into this divine self within, of how it is, how it feels, how it operates. Then you will forget again and be hurled back into the old pseudo-security of your negativity. Again and again you will have to grope your way back through these stages until, in order to make this newly glimpsed reality your own, your permanent home ground, you undertake an even greater leap of courage and honesty.

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Examples of Step 2 in daily life:

We consider exploring beyond usual thought processes or comfort zones.

We open ourselves to the potential for new truths.

We allow our daily routines to be interrupted, re-arranged.

Step 3

[During Stage 3 we may express:] "Yes, I have experienced something new, but I am not yet able to hold on to it. It is not yet my own permanent ground. In order to make it my ground, I fully surrender to the greater reality in the universe. I let go of the known safety valves, the familiar ego habits of finding security and self-fulfillment in at least partially negative ways. I give up to the divine power and let it guide me. I dedicate my life to truth and love for its own sake."

That is the big leap -- a leap that must be repeated many times until it is no leap at all, and you realize that it only seemed that way in the imaginary separation of the little ego.

At this point you are no longer in the total unknown because you had gained glimpses of reality in the course of the second step. If you truly question yourself with all the logic and reason at the disposal of your mind, you will see that you are not really taking so much of a risk.

If there is no such thing as a divine reality, what do you have to lose trusting in it? You would find nothing but what you already know.

But should you indeed find that it exists, if its manifestations are no illusion, then surrendering to it is indeed the only wise and reasonable thing to do. Then surrendering to it will only temporarily appear as an abdication of your selfhood. Soon you will discover that what you perceived as constituting your selfhood is the most dependent and weak of all imaginable ways of existing. Do you not constantly discover your dependency on other human beings as ignorant and floundering as yourself? But, surrendering to the divine life will make you aware that in this is your real identity in which you will find new security, new joys and pleasures, new creativity of which you know nothing so far. Only then do you find true and full selfhood -- after you make that leap in self-surrender to a larger self that is truly you in the best sense.

Since divine reality is truth and is love, **truth and love must be your motto** to which you totally surrender all of your being. When you come to this point, you will see that the alternatives are simple.

Your not surrendering to truth and love as divine attributes, to divine will is based almost exclusively on self-seeking and vanity -- in other words, what others will think of you precedes consideration of truth and love.

The little, immediate advantage is not abandoned for the sake of truth and love. Thus the leap in faith -- that by being true to the divine will, to truth and love, more profound "advantages" on all levels will accrue -- is not made.

Of course, the results may not be immediately noticeable. For that, the leap into the unknown must be made -- for the sake of truth and love, for the sake of the will of God.

***A Key:* Let all of your life, all of your actions, all of your directions, all of your goals be dedicated to the truth and love that are essentially divine attributes and expressions inside and outside of you.**

That is the greater leap that will land you on new ground -- the divine ground. It will bring you into a new reality so widely expanded that it defies your present imagination. You cannot even conceive yet of what it means to function without conflict because you are so used to living in perpetual conflict that you unconsciously take conflicts for granted and know nothing else. You suffer from so many, many conflicts when you do not abide by truth and love.

They tear you apart, but only as you gradually grow in self-awareness do you become attuned to seeing this -- at first without knowing exactly what the trouble is and how your life could be changed. **I herewith give you a key: Those conflicts pull out your life force and strangle it.** That need not be if you make the leap to truth and love as the ultimate reason for being in your own life.

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Exercise for Step 3:

Repeat the sentences at the beginning of Step 3 several times. Where / how does it resonate?

Step 4

When you do this consistently, you arrive at the fourth step: **where faith becomes an experienced reality...a proven fact, so securely anchored in you that no one can take it away.**

The difference between this state and the first glimpses gained on the second step is that those glimpses are known to be real, very real while they happen to you, but when you sink back and lose this "state of grace," as it is often being called, you doubt again and think that perhaps it was illusion or imagination or coincidence. Or you have dreamed the whole thing, and the tangible things that happened would have happened anyway. Here the false doubt comes in, about which we shall speak shortly.

But in the fourth step, you do not experience this at all. What you have gained remains your reality. You know it is more real than anything else you have ever experienced and known. Even if you lose this good state temporarily and must revert in the spiral movement to the residues of negativity, at this stage you always know that which is real and that which is false. There is no longer any confusion. You now know the glory of the truth of God.

If the whole world confronts the outer reality you experience, you may begin to doubt that. But you cannot doubt any longer the reality of the inner universe you have gained as your home ground, as a result of your consistent surrender to it. When you have arrived at the fourth step in the venture of faith, this reality can never be doubted. The proofs and the experiences are too real. They tie up all loose ends in a way imagination could never accomplish. Do not shy away from the momentary anxiety that the leap into an unknown new reality induces. Do it for the sake of truth and love or, if you will, for the sake of God, your own, inner Godself.

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The Back and Forth Struggle within Step 4:

Epiphany! Eureka! I get it!

Get what? It doesn't make any sense an hour later...

Oh, right... of course, I understand!

Must be my imagination...

I see my own process very clearly.

*I'm inventing this.
Everyone else says it's someone else's fault.*

No – I'm not imagining it. Something here is real, even if I don't fully understand all of it.

Week 4: True and False Doubt PL 221

Doubt in the real and constructive sense exists, of course. For if you would live without doubt, you would indeed be gullible. That would fit into the category of the wrong and distorted version of faith.

Also, this gullibility, this lack of right doubt contains many negative aspects. It contains wishful thinking, not wanting to accept and deal with any unpleasant aspects of the self or others or life in general. This comes from laziness.

The person who does not doubt in the right way wishes to avoid the responsibility of making decisions, choices, and of executing autonomy.

The person who doubts in the right way moves toward faith and is in faith.

But the person who doubts in the wrong way creates a tremendous split. The question here arises not only what you doubt, but also how you doubt and why you doubt. What are the real motives for doubting?

Let us say, for example, you doubt the existence of a supreme intelligence, of a creative universal spirit. In such an attitude you claim that you doubt, but you really mean that you "know" it does not exist. This of course is not only impossible, for you cannot know this, it is also dishonest because you take your very limited present perceptions as the final reality.

Moreover, such a statement always contains a further dishonesty -- and that is the hidden stake in such a belief. It is as personally tinged by wishful thinking as the wrong kind of faith is. There are numerous reasons for this personal stake, as for example the fear of having to face one day what the personality frantically avoids facing now. There is wishful thinking in believing that life ends, that nothing has any rhyme or reason, because then nothing matters anyway.

So "faith" in a non-God exists in order to hope for no consequences.

When people deny the value of a spiritual path of self-confrontation, although possibly not denying the existence of God, this, too, harbors the hope that such confrontation can be avoided, is unnecessary. Doubt of this kind is seldom doubted. It is always justified with "this happens to be my belief, which is as good as yours" and is presented as if this kind of assumption were arrived at truly honestly and deeply.

If you doubt something that you do not want to know, for whatever reason, then your doubt is dishonest. This wrong kind of doubt has a lot in common with the wrong kind of faith.

They both are governed by wishful thinking. Very often those who are proud of their doubting because they do not wish to appear gullible in the eyes of others never doubt their doubts.

So your doubts must be questioned:

- Do you have a stake in what you doubt?
- What are the honest reasons for your doubts?
- On what real considerations do you honestly base these doubts?

If you doubt your doubts, if you question them, you will arrive at the truth that governs you in this respect, and thus you approach faith.

If you doubt others rather than your own motivations, distortions, and opinions, your subjective judgments and negativities; you deny the truth in yourself. Only when you are in your truth can you

lose the self-doubt that gnaws behind the suspicions and doubts you harbor about others.

This projected self-doubt must not be confused with true intuition and perception which feels very differently and leads to a very different expression and interchange.

If you use pseudo-intelligence to substantiate your doubts, distrusts, and suspicions in order to avoid the discomfort of self-confrontation, you create a greater split between you and reality and therefore between you and truth. Thus you manufacture suffering and discontent and a vague unease that you cannot really pinpoint.

A Key to the Paradox

Now we have here a typical dualistic picture. We have apparently two opposites -- faith and doubt. Religion will glibly say faith is "right" and doubt is "wrong." Intellectually minded people will say equally glibly that faith is "wrong" and doubt is "right." The two factions quarrel. Each believes he is right, he has the truth. Yet on both sides exists a real and a false version.

In the real version, faith and doubt are not mutually exclusive opposites. They both complement each other.

The real kind of doubt selects, weighs, differentiates, gropes for the truth, not shying away from the mental labor of dealing with reality.

This leads to the various steps of faith. In each of these steps, the right kind of doubt is necessary. For example:

- when you hesitate to leap, you must doubt your fear and your assumption that this fear may be the ultimate reality.
- When you tend toward the lazy kind of faith, doubt must awaken you into mental activity.
- When you tend to doubt in the destructive way, faith must protect you from being submerged in it and blot out the moments of truth you have already experienced.

There is a key to how you can always find the unity, the right faith and right doubt, and thereby come out of ill placed faith and ill placed doubt. **That key I have given you: It is your dedication to truth and love.**

Even long before you experience and therefore believe in a divine spirit that governs and dwells in all that is, you can "safely" use truth and love as your guiding posts as your directives to govern your life, to surrender to, to let go of something untruthful and unloving into that which is truthful and loving. And as you make truth and love the center of everything you do, you will experience the living God within. You will experience the strength and the health and the know-how to solve all your problems and to get out of the negativities you seem locked into, unable to give up. **That is the movement. That venture in faith is the movement** that combines faith and doubt as one complementing whole in the service of truth and love.