

Pathwork on
Growing in Love

How does our love capacity grow, through what stages, and where does love for God fit in? This three-page quote from Pathwork Lecture 115 *Perception, Determination, Love As Aspects of Consciousness* provides a helpful framework for understanding the evolution of our love-capacity as we grow in consciousness.

29	<p>How can you love if you are insecure? It is not possible. Again, of course, there are degrees; it is not a question of either/or. There are areas in which a person is secure and therefore may be capable of love. But to the degree insecurity permeates the soul, complete capacity for loving is absent. Let us now connect inner security with love and evaluate various stages on the scale of love-capacity.</p>
30	<p>The basis of loving is healthy self-love. We have discussed this extensively in the past. But I will add this: If you are insecure, you cannot trust yourself. If you do not trust yourself, how can you love yourself? So you see, healthy self-love and inner security are directly linked. And since love for others is dependent on healthy self-love, the former is equally dependent on and connected with inner security.</p>
31	<p>Let us now consider other stages of love. Lowest on the scale is surely <u>love for inanimate objects</u>. There are many whose inherent need to display love does not dare go any further than loving inanimate objects. That is their sole outlet. Objects do not oppose. They do not require the complicated mechanism of perceiving the feelings of another. They do not disapprove or criticize. They demand a minimum of personal sacrifice or consideration. Objects will make no demands.</p>
32	<p>Next on the scale is <u>love for abstract ideas, principles, art, nature</u>. The love for one's profession can also fall into this category. Love for abstract ideas evades personal involvement with the accompanying apparent risks, but, at least, it moves the mind, soul or spirit in some measure. It may also require some personal contact, confrontation with others of different opinions, while love for objects may not necessitate this in any but the most rudimentary form. Love for ideas and principles is certainly more outgoing than the isolating pursuit of loving mere objects.</p>
33	<p>Next on the scale is <u>love for living creatures other than humans: plants or animals</u>. They require a certain amount of sacrifice, consideration, putting one's immediate selfish comfort aside -- at least occasionally, if the love is active and not merely theoretical. It does neither require the risk of rejection, nor taking the trouble of pondering what the other's needs are, or the effort to establish mutual understanding. Though to a very minor degree this may apply to keeping and caring for an animal, but certainly not to the degree required in a close relationship with another human being, where one's senses have to be alert to the other person as well as to oneself.</p>

34	<p>Next on the scale is <u>love for humankind as a whole</u>. This may still relieve a person from intimate personal involvement -- the most taxing form of love, and therefore the most fulfilling one. But it does require effort, thought, the willingness to sacrifice, activity, and many other attitudes that are highly constructive. Again this applies only if such love is followed through in practice, rather than remaining a theory only.</p>
35	<p>Highest on the scale is the <u>love for individuals in close, intimate relationship</u>. I do not have to repeat why, for I explained it in connection with the lower degrees of love. If you ponder this question, you will find many other reasons for it to be by far the most constructive and the highest on the scale. The fact that you, and those you are involved with, may often demonstrate love by turbulent manifestations that have nothing to do with genuine love but indicate immature needs and dependency and thus often bring rupture and disharmony, does not alter the truth that even such intercommunication furthers your general development and capacity for love. A life of turbulent relationships may be infinitely less harmonious than the life of a hermit or a recluse, but the process of inner growth cannot be gauged by apparent outer harmony.</p>
36	<p>It may be comparatively easy for you to cope with the difficulty of interacting with certain people, but you may dread relating to others. If so, do not fail to question whether you do not run from the very area in which you most need growth. Beware of a quick, superficial evaluation. Only when you question your fears and insecurities, your reactions to those aspects of love that you wish to avoid, will you begin to sense a truthful answer. This will not harm you, even should you decide to postpone exposing yourself to what still seems threatening to you. Then at least you will not deceive yourself about the level you have reached.</p>
37	<p>Some of you may wonder about the scale of love I have established. You might think that the <u>love for God</u> would fall under the category of love for abstract ideas and principles. You may also wonder why I did not mention the love for God as the highest level on the scale. You see, my friends, love for God can be healthy and genuine. It can as well be an escape. If it is healthy and genuine, it manifests through the love for others with whom one is able to communicate and relate. This, in turn, cannot happen unless you overcome your fears and vanities; unless you find and dissolve the obstructions in you that cause inability and unwillingness to love. Humans need not preoccupy themselves with speculations about the inconceivable and incomprehensible existence of the Creator of all beings. Have the humility to admit the limitations of such understanding and turn your attention to the things human beings can learn, namely to give to and love other human beings. So it is possible, as I often said, that an avowed non-believer is in fact closer to loving God than a professed believer. The former may not shy away from taxing involvement and mutual growth through it, while the latter may hide his wish to escape under an unhealthy preoccupation with an abstract God-idea that could anyway never be really understood through mental processes. The only way to come closer to an experience of God is through inner growth and liberation of feelings, perception</p>

	and determination.
38	<p>If God is not an inner experience, derived through self-development, but the pursuit of an idea or ideal, it falls under the category of love for abstract ideas or principles and is, as such, of lesser value than the intimate relationship of human love that requires practical involvement, the flexibility of putting one's egocentric aims below the needs of the other person. To love God as an idea does not require any of this, but to love Him through a fellow-creature does. Through the deep understanding of the self, the understanding of others grows, and through that a perception of the divine.</p>
39	<p>An intense relationship that is often turbulent because of blind egocentricity, selfishness, or possessiveness may certainly appear to be the product of a less evolved human being than the apparent serenity of a person who does many good works for humanity, but who lives a life secluded from personal involvement. It may indeed be true that the latter is actually more developed in general, but in the area of close involvement he or she surely needs to learn. It may be true that people whose immaturity shows in stormy relationships are indeed more immature and may indeed have a troubled soul. But such people, at least, are truly in the midst of life, not avoiding its lessons even if they cannot, or will not, understand them yet. Nevertheless, in the end the experience itself will be what counts, because then the way will be open to properly evaluate and assimilate it, to sort out error from truth, proper perception from misinterpretation.</p>
40	<p>How can you perceive that there is something amiss, if you do not expose yourself to experiencing what you may perhaps fear, even while you also desire it to some degree? How can you raise your perception, how can you free your scope of determination, how can you purify your capacity of loving, if you do not go through and face the impure, self-centered form of love you are now capable of? By avoiding it, you do not grow out of it.</p>
41	<p>All of you who persevere in the pathwork know that you indeed do what is most essential. Go on searching, even though at times you feel discouraged. You will not regret it, provided you do so wholeheartedly and not because you fulfill an unpleasant duty.</p>
42	<p>Those of you who have not, as yet, ventured onto this path, think about your anxieties and your insecurities and realize in what ways you try to assuage them. See how you run away from yourself. This may perhaps induce you to seek a more reliable remedy for what really ails you. The most beautiful prayers, the loftiest thoughts can never replace utter self-facing and making conscious what heretofore slumbered in the hidden recesses of your soul.</p>