

Pathwork on
Balancing Love and Aggression; Self-Punishment

This quote from Pathwork Lecture 78 *Question and Answers* beautifully describes the psyche's inner battle between love and aggression and how, when this battle is distorted or mismanaged, self-punishment can be a result.

37	<p>QUESTION: You suggested last time that I bring this question up again. The question was: "If there is to be a hurt anyway, I'd rather have a self-inflicted hurt than be hurt by someone else."</p>
38	<p>ANSWER: In part, I have gone into the subject of self-punishment and self-destructiveness before, but I will extend it a little in the light of the new knowledge you have gained. Of course, this is also a question of pride, of the feeling of being exposed to others, while one is a helpless victim. All this contributes greatly to the unconscious desire to hurt oneself before anyone else has the chance.</p>
39	<p>But there is a deeper and more important underlying reason which has evolved out of the recent lectures. I will show you how it applies to this question. As you now know, there are two predominant inner attitudes, currents or forces in the human being. On the one hand, there is the desire for love -- to be loved and to love -- both realistic and unrealistic, mature and immature. On the other hand, there is the aggressive tendency of desire for rulership, for mastery over others, for dominion. One must inevitably interfere with the other. One must exclude the other. Yet, unconsciously you think they can be combined. You try to make one serve for the other, and this attempt is bound to fail. It creates a tremendous conflict within. As long as you are not acutely and specifically aware of these two currents, you cannot come to terms with life. As long as you try to struggle out of this conflict by blind and unconscious attempts to make two mutually exclusive forces serve the same end, you must inwardly be torn apart. Only conscious awareness of this conflict will show you the way to make peace within yourself, or how to integrate the two currents.</p>
40	<p>How these two currents are distributed varies with each human being. With one person one may by far be the predominant one. With another, it fluctuates and changes, at one time one current is stronger, at another time the other. Still with another person it is sort of evenly split. Your outer life, what you have and what you lack, and how you have what it is you aim for, is a clear indication of the strength and distribution of these two forces battling within.</p>
41	<p>Integration of these two forces does not mean the complete elimination of one or both. It simply means that both forces be used in a healthy way, when there is a real reason or need for either, without compulsion, without frenzy, without imagined need that does not actually exist. Only upon clear insight of the existence of these two forces and how they damage you in your blind struggle can you realize how much superfluous energy you put into the pseudo-solution that you unconsciously thought would work for you. And only then will you use</p>

	<p>either of these two forces in the healthy and constructive way for which they originally are destined. Such knowledge can never come to you by theorizing about it. The only way is by finding at first the existence of their negative functioning within yourself. For instance, the desire for love is quite legitimate. But if this desire is used in your adult years to overcome a childhood hurt, if you use all your unconscious energies in this direction, the urgency of this blown-up desire becomes destructive. It no longer fulfills its original purpose. But you have to clearly understand and see how this applies to you. On the other hand, you unconsciously use the aggressive force to overcome your insecurity, your feelings of inadequacy. You use it to gain respect, power, admiration, unconsciously believing that thereby you also gain love. In reality the aggressive force, in its healthy way, is supposed to serve you in actual danger for actual defense, to assert yourself when your integrity is at stake, or to prohibit others from taking advantage of you. But most human beings are submissive in the wrong place and yield where they should assert this healthy current. Yet where they should not, they often use aggression most violently. The healthy way will never cause interference and mutual exclusiveness. The desire for love and healthy aggression are meant to live peacefully side by side.</p>
42	<p>Due to this conflict tearing you apart -- and the time has come when all of you should become acutely aware of this -- the tendency to inflict hurt upon yourself rather than taking the chance of being hurt by others can be much better explained. Unconsciously, you know perfectly well how futile this struggle is. One part of your subconscious tries to take the easy way out. Another, deeper part of your being, watches and knows this is futile and damaging. This deeply hidden knowledge is not correctly interpreted by your consciousness. This voice merely means to convey: "You are on the wrong track the way you are going. Seek another way out." Your conscious feeling only knows "futility" and this gives you a sense of hopelessness, impatience and disgust with life, the feeling of "What is the use?" Yes, this mood can sometimes be applied to outer things happening to you that seem to be a "reason" for your discouragement. But deep down, this is the real reason. In this disgust with life, this feeling of pointlessness, you must hurt yourself. You must even want to hurt yourself, for then, at least, you have a visible explanation for your deep discouragement. This is easier to bear than the absence of all outer "reasons."</p>