

Pathwork on
Spiritual Or Psychological Growth?

Should we emphasize spiritual or psychological growth in our Pathwork? In this quote from Lecture 87 *The Next Phase on the Path; Questions and Answers* we are told that we cannot ultimately experience spiritual maturity in our feeling being without doing the psychological work necessary to experience our feelings at a deep level. The lecture says that the distinction between psychological and spiritual growth is arbitrary and even unnecessary. Exploring our unconscious is the key, and our path is a spiral that allows deeper and deeper feelings to be experienced and worked with as our unconscious become conscious.

07	<p>Some of you have wondered why at the beginning my talks were of a more spiritual nature, while lately the emphasis has been more psychological. Although you all realize by now that true spiritual development cannot occur without clearing up distorted emotions, your knowledge is still largely theoretical and not yet conducive to a true understanding. Only as you become increasingly aware of the true significance of your emotions will you understand that spiritual development deals much more with your unconscious emotions than with your actions and thoughts. The general knowledge you can acquire about them will not really help your spiritual development. But each apparently insignificant insight about your own reactions and emotions will constitute a major step toward spiritual growth. This is why the emphasis has been, and still is, on the unconscious. And the approach that explores the unconscious is a psychological one.</p>
08	<p>The time will come, however, when the circle will close and we will return to a more spiritual emphasis, but with a deepened and broadened understanding. We shall come back to this point with a different attitude. Spiritual knowledge, even spiritual action, is one thing. But spiritual living, feeling, being, and inner experience is an altogether different matter, and can be experienced only after the inner world of feeling has been explored and understood. The inner world is the only reality that counts. It determines your material life just as much as your spiritual life, as you will find out more and more on this path. You can already see clearly, as a consequence of this work, that your inner problems are responsible for your outer ones.</p>
09	<p>So, my friends, do not for a moment believe that you move away from spirituality by our emphasis on psychological work. The one must include the other, and you will recognize this more and more in the coming phase of our work.</p>
10	<p>If we purposely refrained from evaluating your inner conditions from the viewpoint of spiritual law, we had good reason to do so. As you know, stringent self-judgment is usually destructive and hinders your search. It must not be</p>

	<p>encouraged at a time when you cannot yet get away from the childish distinctions between so called good and bad. This would only strengthen your guilt feelings. It would also strengthen the exaggerated demands and standards of your idealized self-image. It would hinder you from accepting yourself as you are, and that acceptance is the only basis for growth and change. This fact requires the neutral approach we have adopted.</p>
11	<p>But in the last analysis you will realize that you must apply spiritual values, which up to now you have applied more to actions and thoughts than to feelings, to your inner life. In order to spotlight the feelings without courting the dangers of self-judgment, more substantial growth has to take place. True development is indicated when your inner life corresponds to what you all know to be right, good, true, and loving. However, since feelings cannot be controlled by an effort of will, you cannot simply influence and control them as you do actions and thoughts. Only if and when you completely understand your unconscious reactions and therefore control them, can you safely take a spiritual approach to your emotions.</p>
12	<p>The distinction between the spiritual and the psychological is arbitrary and, in reality, nonexistent. But since you do think along these lines, it is necessary to explain the difference.</p>
13	<p>When you become aware of how you use spiritual values to castigate yourself for falling short of a false perfection; when you understand the falseness of your motivations; when you see the pride and the pretense, contrary to your belief in your goodness; when you are aware of the real aims you wish to pursue with your desire for spiritual perfection, then, and only then, can we return to spiritual evaluation and consider your inner problems without damage and obstruction.</p>