Pathwork Lecture 97: Perfectionism Obstructs Happiness – Manipulation of Emotions


This lecture is given in an expanded poetic format, what I call a Devotional Format of the lecture, and in that sense, this is my interpretation of the intent of the lecture. I may have interpreted portions differently from you, and I ask you to ponder the words for your own interpretation. I did this Devotional Format so I can take the words into my heart, phrase by phrase, much as I would in reading poetry – that is, devotionally.

The blessings to me in developing this format have been truly profound, and my wish is that this Devotional Format will be a blessing to others. *I invite you to slowly read and ponder this format of the text – with an open heart to experience the Guide’s Presence and Love emerging from among the words such that the wisdom comes to LIVE you.*

For clarity: The original text is in bold and italicized. [My adds of commentary/clarification/interpretation are in brackets, italicized, and not bolded.] To learn more of my Devotional Format and see the lectures I have done in this way, go to [https://www.garyvollbracht.com/pathwork-lectures/pathwork-lectures-devotional-format/](https://www.garyvollbracht.com/pathwork-lectures/pathwork-lectures-devotional-format/)

<table>
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<th>Content</th>
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| **03** | *Greetings,*  
*my dearest friends.*  
*God bless*  
*each one of you.*  
*Blessed is*  
*this hour* [i.e., *Blessed is this time we now spend together in this lecture.*]  
*Blessed is*  
*your work.* |
| **04** | *Many people*  
in all sincerity  
*endeavor to find*  
*God.* |
However, if they were asked exactly:
  • what the search meant [i.e., what the search for God MEANT],
  • how they imagined it [i.e., how they imagined the search for God],
  it would be difficult for them to take place,
  to give a meaningful answer.

In such vague:
  • hopes and
  • endeavors people,
    often unconsciously, find themselves
    • in an illusion,
    • hazily
      • imagining something that they
        • cannot name.

Yet, of course, there is such a thing as "finding God."

In reality and in health,
  this [i.e., this “finding God”]
  is a very concrete process.

There is nothing
  • hazy,
  • unrealistic, or
  • illusory
  about it [i.e., about “finding God”].
When speaking of "finding God," people think of many different things.

What finding God actually means is finding the real self.

If you find your self [i.e., your real self] to some degree, you are in comparative harmony.

You understand and perceive the laws of the universe.

You are capable of loving and relating, and experiencing joy.

You are truly self-responsible.

You have the integrity and courage to be yourself, even at the expense of giving up approval.

All of this signifies your having found God – by whatever name the process may be designated.
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<th>06</th>
<th><strong>It [i.e., This “finding God”] might also be called “coming home from self-alienation.”</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>There are many indications of true selfhood.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Take for instance the capacity to</strong></td>
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<td>* experience and to*</td>
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<td>* give joy.*</td>
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<td><strong>You cannot give joy if you are not a joyful person.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>How can you become joyful living in a very imperfect world?</strong></td>
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<td>07</td>
<td><strong>People's</strong></td>
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<td>* conscious or*</td>
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<td>* unconscious concepts of a joyful life are always connected with a perfect life.**</td>
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[People’s conscious or unconscious concepts of a JOYFUL LIFE say:]

One cannot enjoy life
   if one is
   imperfect;
neither can one [i.e., neither can one enjoy life]
   if one's
   • neighbors,
   • life situation,
   and
   • relationships
   are imperfect
   as well.

This [i.e., This belief that one cannot enjoy life if one is IMPERFECT or if one’s neighbors, life situation, and relationships are IMPERFECT as well] is the
   cause of
   one of humanity's
great inner
   • conflicts
   and
   • confusions.

Intellectually,
you all know that
there is
no perfection
in this life.

This [i.e., This intellectual KNOWING that there is NO PERFECTION in this life] is why you often repress
your reactions [i.e., why you REPRESS your negative reactions, pain or disappointment]
to an imperfect situation –
   and repression [i.e., and REPRESSION of your negative reaction to or disappointment in an imperfect situation.]
causes the
   • conflict and
   • confusion
   to
   • increase
   rather than to
   • decrease.
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<th>It is one thing to</th>
<th>• profess</th>
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<td><em>a certain knowledge</em></td>
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<td><em>on the surface,</em></td>
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<td>and it is quite another to</td>
<td>• experience</td>
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<td><em>it [i.e., to EXPERIENCE this KNOWLEDGE that there is NO perfection in this life]</em></td>
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<td>emotionally.</td>
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In the course of this work, you have often come across **discrepancies of this sort** [i.e., discrepancies between what you **KNOW INTELLECTUALLY** and what you **EXPERIENCE EMOTIONALLY**], but you are still unaware of your inner demand for perfection.

I have discussed this subject [i.e., your demand perfection in this life] in many connections in the past, but consider it necessary to connect it now to the theme of • self-alienation and • the denial of joy in life through perfectionism.

I venture to say, my friends, that none of you, no matter how much progress you have made, are quite aware to what extent your need for perfection • alienates you from your true self and at the same time • prohibits a joyful life.
I do not mean [i.e., I do not mean that your need for perfection prohibits] a life of:
- one hundred percent joy,

no, but [i.e., no, but I mean rather that your need for perfection prohibits] a life in which you:
- live fully and
- derive the joy of:
  - experience,
  - growth,
  - feeling, to a much greater extent than you do now.

Strange as this may seem, the more you accept imperfection, the more joy you will:
- give and
- receive.

Your capacity for happiness depends on your capacity to accept imperfection – not in:
- words or
- theories, but in:
- your emotional experience.
As you well know, these [i.e., accepting imperfection in WORDS or THEORIES and accepting imperfection in your EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE] are two very different matters.

It takes a great deal of
• self-search,
• systematic work,
and
• the utter will to be candid with yourself
to
uncover the discrepancy in you [i.e., to uncover the discrepancy in you between accepting imperfection in WORDS or THEORIES and accepting imperfection in your EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE]
and
to
accept it [i.e., and to accept imperfection as an emotional experience] even for the moment.

Only in accepting, let us say, an imperfect relationship – and this by no means implies [i.e., implies accepting] the unhealthy submissiveness that is born out of fear of
• loss or
• disapproval –

will you
• derive
and
• give
joy
in the relationship.

Only through accepting your own imperfection can you begin to
• grow
and
• experience the joy that comes from your own individuality.
This [i.e., This statement that only through ACCEPTING your own imperfections can you grow and experience the JOY that comes from your own individuality] is so because your demands [i.e., your DEMANDS for PERFECTION rather than ACCEPTING your own IMPERFECTIONS] are incompatible with reality as you know it [i.e., the reality you KNOW – that in this life in your world there are imperfections].

Most of the time you are not even aware of what falls short of perfection in your own perception.

This [i.e., Not even being aware of what falls short of perfection in your perception] makes it impossible for you to grow enough to be able to accept imperfection.

You repress your lack: your • unfulfillments, your • frustrations.

You are not fully aware of them [i.e., You are not fully aware of your unfulfillments or frustrations].

You vaguely skip over them [i.e., You vaguely skip over your unfulfillments or frustrations], knowing that perfection cannot be had.
You do not realize how great a destructive energy you generate by being unaware of your unfulfillment.

The repression [i.e., The repression of your feelings of frustration and un fulfillment in your life] is harmful for two reasons:

first, if you had chosen awareness [i.e., awareness of your feelings of frustration and un fulfillment in your life] you would see that much frustration • is unnecessary and • can be eliminated by changing the patterns responsible for such frustrations.

Second, when you repress [i.e., when you repress your feelings of frustration and un fulfillment in your life] you cannot accept what is impossible to change – namely, imperfection as such.

You must be aware in order to discriminate between • changing to obtain more fulf illment and • simply wishing to accept the status quo because this is the easier way.
Deep inside, you often rebel against whatever is unchangeable in your world merely because no perfection can ever exist.

At the same time, your spiritual growth stagnates because your perfectionism keeps you from changing to inner patterns which would bring you much more fulfillment.

An important step is to allow yourself the luxury of facing your • desires, • unfulfillments, • longings, your complaints against • life or • fate or • others or • yourself.

Find in what respect you feel shortchanged.
You resent that something in your life is imperfect, yet to fully accept imperfection, you must first become fully aware of your resentment against it [i.e., your resentment against imperfection].

Only when you fully face the resentment against imperfection can you begin to accept it [i.e., begin to accept imperfection].

And only when you accept imperfection can you
• lead a joyful life and
• derive enjoyment from your relationships.

But as long as you unconsciously strive for a perfection that does not exist on your earth,
• you cannot accept what is [i.e., you cannot accept what IS on your earth: imperfection], and therefore
• your life and
• your relationships will be spoiled.
[As long as you unconsciously strive for a perfection that does not exist on your earth]

You cannot
* grow, and thus [i.e., and thus cannot]
* change whatever
  * is changeable
  and
  * could be
    much better,
    even though
    never
    perfect.

To be capable of
* joy
  only if
  you accept
  * imperfection,

and
* to be capable of
  * growth
  only if
  you accept
  * your own imperfection
  seems paradoxical.

But if you really think about it, you will see that this is so.

The task sounds easy to accomplish, but in practice it is often difficult because you are so unaware of your
* reactions
  and
  * feelings.
You have so many
  • subterfuges [i.e., so many deceptions to conceal, escape, or evade reality – to conceal, escape, or evade what is TRUE],

so many
  • hidden crevices
    in your soul,
    that
    becoming aware of them [i.e., becoming aware of these many subterfuges and hidden crevices in your soul]
    demands
    your
    • full attention
    and
    • focused inner will.

Yet
  once you have made
  a certain progress,
the task [i.e., the task of accepting the world’s and your own imperfection]
will become
  the simplest thing in the world
because it
  is based on truth [i.e., based on the truth of IMPERFECTION in you and in your world].

Again, the
  • reality, or
  • truth,
    of your world
    is
    • imperfection.

And the
  • reality, or
  • truth,
    of your personal state of soul
    is
    • non-acceptance of imperfection.
You will not have a sound foundation from which to proceed, unless you face the reality of both truths –
  • one in the world [i.e., the world’s truth of IMPERFECTION] and
  • the other in your soul [i.e., the truth of your soul’s NONACCEPTANCE of IMPERFECTION].

Even your progress in the pathwork is permeated with this perfectionistic attitude, be it ever so subtle.

Listen to its voice:

"I should have resolved my problems already.

I cannot be happy as long as my problems are unresolved; therefore, I must be
  • impatient,
  • compulsive, and
  • restless about it [i.e., about solving all my problems].
I cannot live in the present, but must somehow always look for and live in the future, when I hope to be perfect, and finally experience perfect happiness, perfect love, and perfect relationships."

This attitude is [i.e., This attitude of always STRIVING for a future perfection is] never conscious, never formulated with such clarity; nevertheless, if your emotions were translated, they would often convey just that.

Whenever it dawns on you that you will never resolve all your problems in this life, you have a tendency to be discouraged or even to feel, "What is the use?"

Why then should I face all these truths about myself?"
Such reaction [i.e., Such reaction to the truths of BOTH the world’s and your own imperfection AND your soul’s nonacceptance of imperfection, a reaction of discouragement and feeling, “Why even try to face these truths”]
indicates exactly
the attitude of perfectionism
about your spiritual growth.

Your unconscious expectation is
• complete perfection,
  and
• not step-by-step growth.

You do not have to be
• problem-free.
  
You cannot be.

You do not have to be
• already perfect
to
  • live fully,
to
  • increase your awareness,
to
  • grow steadily
    in your capacity for
    full emotional experience.

All you have to do is to
• see into
  yourself
and
• evaluate
  what you see,
then
• make inner choices,
  which entail
  the flexibility of
  change.
In accepting
imperfection,
you become
less
imperfect.

For without doing so [i.e., For without ACCEPTING IMPERFECTION]
you can
never really
be flexible enough
to change.

Your
• haste,
and
• your shame for
not being perfect,
create a
rigid wall
that makes
• growth
and
• change
impossible.

The trouble is
that people are so often hindered by
the either/or attitude.

They feel
either
that they must
• strive for
  • immediate perfection,
  negating their still existing imperfection,
or
that they must
• give up striving for
  • progress
entirely.
To accept imperfection [i.e. To accept imperfection as always present and because of this to give up striving for progress and growth entirely, discouraged because one will never be perfect]

would then mean to
• stagnate
  and
• not even attempt
  any
    • growth
      and
    • change.

These two extremes [i.e., These two extremes of 1) striving for immediate perfection or 2) giving up striving altogether since one will never achieve perfection in this life anyway]

are interdependent,
  as are
  all extreme attitudes.

Only by letting go of both attitudes [i.e., Only by letting go of BOTH the attitude of 1) striving for immediate perfection AND the attitude of 2) giving up striving altogether since one will never achieve perfection in this life anyway]

can the
• healthy,
  • constructive,
  and
• productive
  attitude
  become
  an integral part of one's being.
There is another subtle deviation in the wrong attitude of perfectionism;

it is your unconscious emphasis on becoming perfect according to standards imposed on you by
- the world, by
- religion, by
- rules – in other words, by
- outer authority.

This effort [i.e., This effort to become “perfect” according to standards imposed on you by any OUTER authority], be it ever so subtle, • causes and • leads to further self-alienation.

The productive approach is to make conscious what you • feel, • desire, • fear, and then to find • your own innermost goal, • the goal of your real self.
If your focus is 
on
• growth
rather than on
• perfection,
you will
• live
  in the
  now.

You will
• dispense with
  • superimposed values [i.e., values superimposed by an OUTER authority]
and
• find
  • your own.

You will
• dispense
  with
    • subtle pretenses
    and
    • superimpositions
    and
    the
    • hidden
    but nevertheless
    • present
    attitude
    that you do what you do
    for
    • appearance's sake,
    rather than
    for
    • yourself.
Finding your own values leads to
- selfhood
and away from
- self-alienation.

This [i.e., Finding your OWN VALUES that lead to SELFHOOD] will bring you to a
state of harmony with yourself;
it [i.e., finding your OWN VALUES that lead to SELFHOOD] will anchor you in yourself.

Many of you will quickly say,

"Oh, I do not pretend; I do not do anything for appearance's sake."

Of course I do not refer to a
- crass outer way,
but to the
- inner subtleties of your emotional striving, from which not one human being is entirely free.
So accept the imperfection, for only then can you grow.

The very existence of your perfectionism
• stunts growth,
• causes
  • rigidity
  and
  • inner extremism.

You are so conditioned to manipulate your emotions
  that it will take considerable
    • time
    and
    • attention
  on your part
to gradually realize
  how you are actually doing so [i.e., how you are actually manipulating your emotions].

Again, perfectionism leads you to do this [i.e., leads you to manipulate your emotions].

Since you recognize many of your conscious feelings as imperfect, you try to forcefully superimpose inauthentic emotions over them [i.e., over your IMPERFECT conscious feelings that you refuse to accept].
How can you be your real self when your emotional life cannot function • naturally and • organically, • unhampered by superimposed commands?

The real self always dares to be spontaneous.

Spontaneity is out of the question when emotions are hampered.

It becomes a task in itself, possible only after much progress in this work, to observe how your feelings are not allowed to function naturally.

Tampering with the free flow of feelings can happen in many subtle ways.

A forceful • overemotionalism, • overdramatization, • exaggeration, • talking yourself into stronger feelings than you actually have, is an example [i.e., is an example of a subtle way in which you tamper with your natural spontaneous feelings].
You might even deceive yourself that you are not
directing the flow of your emotions at all.

We will look at this phenomenon in the light of self-alienation to understand why this seemingly harmless process [i.e., this seemingly harmless process of directing and manipulating the flow of your natural spontaneous emotions] is so damaging.

But first let us look at another way you manipulate your emotions:

by
• prohibiting their full force,
and
• stultifying their intensity.

Both procedures [i.e., Both 1) over dramatizing and exaggerating your emotions, and on the opposite side, 2) stultifying your emotions’ intensity] tamper with the natural flow;

the emotional life is not trusted
• to function organically
and
not encouraged
• to grow.
- A wrong kind of caution,
- an unrealistic fear,
and
- a forceful will – the forcing current –
  play a role
  in establishing this pattern [i.e., this pattern of 1) over dramatizing and
  exaggerating emotions, or of 2) stultifying emotions’ intensity].

**Both ways** [i.e., Both 1) over dramatizing emotions and 2) stultifying emotions]
- can be,
and most of the time
- are,
  adopted by the same person.

Which particular way you resort to
depends on many factors,
such as
  your
  • personality structure,
  your
  • pseudo-solutions,
  your
  • life problems,
  and
  so on.

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**The forcing current**
comes from

your strong repressed needs,

all the more forceful
  because
  you are unaware of
  • them [i.e., unaware of your strong repressed needs],
or, at least, of
  • their intensity.
The moment you
• are fully aware of a need
and
• understand all its aspects,
  • the urgency recedes,
    as does
  • the compulsiveness,
    which, at least in part,
    is responsible for
    your tampering with
    your genuine emotions.

The urgency
  of unrecognized needs
  causes you
    to build up your emotions
    out of all proportion.

The unconscious reasoning is:

"If my emotions
  are strong enough,
  I will be gratified."

Or, if you happen to be
  a more
  • fearful and
  • pessimistic
  character,

you will
  not admit
  • their existence [i.e., you will not admit even the existence of your needs]
    at all,
  let alone
  • their urgency,

and thus you will
  squeeze these emotions
    out of existence –
    out of your
    awareness
    that is.
In neither instance [i.e., In neither the instance where you build up your emotions out of all proportions, nor the instance where you squeeze your emotions out of all awareness,]

do you afford yourself
the luxury of
• letting the emotions flow,
• observing them,
• learning from them
and
• recognizing
the true state of affairs within you.

Making your emotions
• stronger
or
• weaker
than they actually are
is a forceful tampering
that cripples
their functioning [i.e., cripples the functioning of your emotions].

Your
• intuitive,
• creative, and
• spontaneous
capacities
cannot unfold.

You substitute
other faculties
for the emotional ones
and thus
• discrepancies
and
• disharmonies
come into existence.

The richness of feeling
is prohibited
and thus
• you impoverish yourself.

• You live on the periphery,
which is the shallow living I discussed earlier.
Full awareness
of what you
really
• feel
and
• want
is your first aim.

Sit back, so to speak,
and allow
your feelings
to reach the surface
of your consciousness.

This does not necessarily mean
to act on them,
but when
the feelings show themselves
in
• their natural intensity,
or
• their lack of intensity
compared to what you
thought you felt before,
you will get a good inkling of
what it means
to be
your real self.

This practice
will give you a
very different outlook
on certain problems
in
• yourself
and
in
• your life.
You recurrently ask the question:

"How can I tell what my real self is?

I am so used to all these
  • false levels,
  these
  • superimposed,
  • defensive layers,
    that
    • they have become second nature,
      and
    • I can no longer tell which is
      • the real me
        and
        which is
        • a protective defense mechanism."
By observing emotional
- exaggeration
versus
- repression
you will finally see how
the real self reacts,
often in-between the two
- high
or
- low points,

and how
your real feelings, when they are not manipulated by unconscious needs, will create a very different
- inner situation
and therefore eventually a different
- outer situation.

This [i.e., This work of finding your real feelings, unmanipulated by unconscious needs,] is not exactly the kind of work you can do in your personal work sessions.

It [i.e., Finding your REAL FEELINGS, unmanipulated by unconscious needs,] may, and will, come up for discussion, but such awareness [i.e., such awareness of your real, unmanipulated feelings] can be reached only by quiet observation when you are alone.
Of course, the whole process of this work [i.e., of this pathwork],
• privately
and
• in your groups,
  enables you to become
  more aware of
  what really goes on in you.

The actual discovery of your genuine feelings, as opposed to the manipulated emotions, will come when you
• relax
  by yourself
and
• allow
  your true feelings to surface.

When you review how you reacted to certain incidents, you will be able to ask yourself whether your
• fears,
• desires,
or
• the ingrained principles you think you have to adhere to
  are responsible for
• overplaying
  or
• underplaying
  your emotions.
Is one of your "shoulds,"

regarding

• the other person

or

• yourself,

responsible for

your tampering with

your natural genuine feelings?

The truth

about your feelings

cannot ever be ascertained

by anyone but

yourself.

As you condition yourself
to observe

your real feelings

without manipulation one way or another,

a new

• strength,

a new

• certainty

will arise out of you,

because

these real feelings,

unmanipulated,

come from

your real self.

But this [i.e., But this new strength and certainty arising

from feeling your real feelings coming from your real self]
happens

only after

you have gone through

the maze of

experiencing

all sorts of other emotions

that are superimposed

by your

• pseudo-solutions

and

• defense mechanisms.
If you dare not experience these painful emotions [i.e., these painful emotions superimposed on your real emotions by your defenses and pseudo-solutions] – perhaps because you shy away from feeling a slight pain, or you think you should already be above all that, being already perfect – how can you
• discover what is responsible for them [i.e., responsible for these painful emotions] and • come to know the greater depth of the reality of your being?
How then can you convince yourself of the utter truth that all these painful emotions – whether • exaggerated or • repressed – are illusions, and that you really do not feel that way at all, even though you are now in the throes of • destructive, • painful emotions?

You have conditioned yourself into them [i.e., these destructive, painful emotions], but that does not make them real.
The discovery of their [i.e., The discovery of these destructive, painful emotions'] unreality is a tremendous relief, but you cannot come to it if you are not willing to sit back and let your feelings come to the fore and ask yourself pertinent questions.

Dare to feel what you feel, regardless of right or wrong, of what you think you should feel, of what you think you are expected to feel, or, if you overdramatize, what you think another person should feel or do.

*For this [i.e., For what you think another person should feel or do]* is usually the main reason for exaggerating the intensity of your feelings.

*It is a measure of forcing another.*
So observe this [i.e., observe what you REALLY feel, how you manipulate your feelings, and with what purpose you manipulate your feelings], my friends.

All of you have both these ways of manipulating your emotions [i.e., both OVERDRAMATIZATION and REPRESSING of your emotions and feelings].

The overdramatization is connected with the pseudo-solution of • power.

The repression of feelings is connected with the pseudo-solution of • withdrawal, • false serenity, • escape from • living and • experiencing.

Both alternatives [i.e., Both the alternative of POWER and the alternative of WITHDRAWAL, false serenity, and escape from living and experiencing] lead to • shallowness, and not to • real experiences.

Offhand, you may say that the one who • exaggerates his feelings and • makes them stronger than they actually are does, in fact, experience very acutely.
And I say, my friends, that everything that is not genuine is • conducive to, and • results in, • self-alienation, and therefore • shallowness.

Even if you seem to thrive on emotionalism, this is not the real experience of your soul.

You put on the overemotionalism, perhaps because, quite unconsciously, you thus wish to bend • life, and • others, to your needs.

It [i.e., Putting on the overemotionalism] is, in the true sense, a manipulation.

As for choosing withdrawal, which is connected with underplaying what you really feel, the outcome is obvious.
Do concentrate on this now, my friends [i.e., Do concentrate NOW, my friends, on discovering both where you OVERDRAMATIZE emotions and feelings and where you REPRESS emotions and feelings].

It will yield most important results.

Ask yourself what you
• really
and
• truly feel.

Seeing it [i.e., Seeing what you really and truly feel] may sometimes not be so easy, because
• you may skip over an incident,
  • leaving it vague
  and
• not registering any particular reaction.

In reality, there is a reaction on your part.

This process of ignoring your true reactions is a universal phenomenon that causes
• diminished awareness of
  • life
  and
  • self,
as well as
• self-alienation.
Awareness of life and of others can come only as a result of self-awareness.

And self-awareness is just the process of recognizing how you really and truly react.

Perhaps your outward reaction is not that different from your inner reaction, your feelings are simply dulled and you react in a state of half-sleep.

It takes time, effort, concentration, and training to wake up and become acutely aware; it [i.e., waking up and becoming acutely aware of your real feelings] does not happen overnight.
Once you get started on
this particular segment of your path,
you will often find
that you become aware of
a certain reaction on your part
perhaps
only
a few days after
the event.

Your first impulse
will be to be
angry at yourself
for noticing
only so much later
what you "should" have been aware of
instantly.

This [i.e., Becoming aware of a reaction to an event, BUT doing so only days after
the event instead of instantly at the time of the event, and then even noticing
also your anger toward yourself for the delay in your awareness,]
indicates progress, however,
because until now
you might
never
have become aware of
your real reaction.

You might have
passed it by [i.e., You might have passed by your reaction to the event]
in utter blindness.

Delayed reaction
is certainly progress
compared with
no conscious reaction.
In this respect, too [i.e., In respect to your DELAYED reaction, too], only if you accept your imperfection—
that you cannot, all at once, become perfectly aware—

will you

• rejoice in your growing process
and thus
• proceed further
to shorten the interval
  between
  • the incident
  and
  • the awareness of your reaction.

The synchronization of these two factors [i.e., The synchronization of the INCIDENT itself with the AWARENESS of your REACTION to the incident] can come only after a step-by-step development.

Only with the awareness that most of the time you are blind to your own reactions can the blindness gradually vanish.
And as you become more aware of what is really going on in you, you will become aware of the
• unconscious,
• still-existing perfectionism that makes it impossible for you to accept
  • people,
  • yourself,
  • relationships,
and
  • life for what they are.

Therefore [i.e., Therefore, since your perfectionism makes it impossible for you to accept people, yourself, relationships, and life for what they are], you
• cannot cope with any real situation
and
• are bound to make the worst of it [i.e., make the worst of any REAL situation].

Thus you make it impossible to derive joy from an imperfect situation, be it
• a relationship, or
• your own inner state which you otherwise could have enjoyed.
**QUESTION:**

If you have
an aggressive feeling
and
you don’t like it,
but it is
very strong,
your common sense
is telling you
that you shouldn't feel this way.

You understand
with your mind
that perhaps the person with whom you are angry
has problems himself,
but that doesn’t help.

How do you handle that?

**ANSWER:**

The first step
is the realization
that you
cannot
yet
feel differently.

Here,
perfectionism comes in,
because something in you says,

"I should
not have
these feelings of aggression.

I should
know better
because
he acts out of
his own unresolved problems."
All this [i.e., All this knowing that the other person acts out of his own unresolved problems, and knowing therefore that “I should not” have these feelings of aggression toward him]

may be true,

yet in it

is contained the

"I should not" of perfectionism.

However,

if you say to yourself,

"I cannot help feeling this way
because I grope in the dark,
and I, as a human being,

often
grope in the dark.

I do not know many answers.

I do not understand
other people,"

then you are in truth.

But because somehow
you all feel,

"I really
should understand
everyone,
everyone else
should understand
me,

and
I should know
all the answers concerning
my

• life
and
my

• personal human relationships,"

you express the very attitude
that makes it so difficult.
Only by accepting your human limitations will the • aggressiveness and • hostility vanish;

because [i.e., because, by ACCEPTING your human limitations, then] underneath [i.e., underneath the aggressiveness and hostility] you will • discover and • become aware of • being hurt, of • feeling rejected.

Your • shame and • fear of these emotions [i.e., of these emotions of being hurt and feeling rejected] make you superimpose the • hard and • much more unpleasant feelings of aggressiveness.

Once you become aware of the hurt, which is a more genuine element, it is easier to cope with your feelings, and soon the hurt will • dissolve and • make room for even more genuine feelings which are still closer to the real you.
But first of all [i.e., But first of all, before you become aware of the HURT underlying your aggression and before the hurt DISSOLVES, thereby making room for genuine feelings, which are still closer to the real you],

- you have to accept your human limitations;
- you have to dispense with the expectation that
  - you, as well as others, should always
    - understand and
    - know.

If you can own up to groping in the dark, you might be able to pinpoint in your mind what it is that you are unclear about.

Accept that the lack of clarity may remain, or it may even clear up by itself, simply because your resistance against it [i.e., because your resistance against the clarity] has disappeared.
Accept also
your still existing aggressiveness,
asking yourself
whether it is not
a distortion of hurt.

Then own up to
the hurt.

This way
you may find the answer
much sooner than
through the
• cramped and
• compulsive
drive
that says that you
already
"should not have aggressiveness."

Do you understand that?

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**QUESTIONER:**
Yes.

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**QUESTION:**
Isn't this kind of
joyful acceptance of
lack of perfection
conducive to
a loss of ambition
for further development?

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**ANSWER:**
Not at all.

I spoke about this, I believe,
quite extensively in this lecture.

When you reread it,
you will understand.
Let me only repeat:

Distinguish between
  • perfection
  and
  • growing.

If you wish to grow,
  and if you realize that you can only grow a step at a time,
while still being far away from perfection,
you cannot stagnate.

Acceptance of imperfection does not mean the wish to remain static.

It [i.e., Acceptance of imperfection] means only that you know that you
  • never become perfect in this life,
  • but wish with all your heart to  
    • grow
    and
    • change wherever it is possible.

This [i.e., Wishing with all your heart to grow and change wherever it is possible] is a decided difference [i.e., is a decided difference from remaining static].
As I said, this [i.e., this accepting imperfection WHILE wishing with all your heart to grow and change wherever it is possible] is the only way you can grow.

However, being perfectionistic
• is such a strain,
• leads to such
  • discouragement and
  • rigidity and
  • pretense,
  that
growth becomes impossible.

You already know this to some extent.

Wherever you have found your great idealized self-image, with all its
• tyrannical demands upon you, with
  • all the
    • shoulds and
    • musts,
you can now see that
  where this image ruled you is exactly where you have not grown.

You have only grown where your idealized self did not govern you.
Perfectionism makes for
• pretense and
• rigidity – and this [i.e., and this pretense and rigidity] excludes
  • growth and
  • development, as well as
  • change.

Only when you
• can be relaxed about your imperfections and
• do not need to pretend in order to hide them,
only then
• do you grow,
only then
• is the soil fertile for growth.

QUESTION:
May I ask about this subject too?

To differentiate between
• goal-direction and
• compulsion,
would you explain how the latter falls into the circle of
• pride, • self-will, and
• fear?
ANSWER:
Where there is perfectionism, which
  • prohibits growth rather than
  • encourages it,
    all three are present:
    • pride,
    • self-will,
    and
    • fear.

There is the pride of
  • wanting
  and
  • needing to be perfect.

And since a part of you knows that you are not perfect, you pretend [i.e., you PRETEND to be perfect].

Again, I emphasize:
  this [i.e., this dealing with perfectionism as related to pride and pretense] does not concern the whole of you.

There may be many sides to your being where you
  • are quite relaxed
  and
  • free,
  and
  • do not pretend.
But there are other areas in which, emotionally if not intellectually, you feel you cannot admit certain things.

What may appear an imperfection to • you may not appear as such to • another person, and vice versa.

You may be ashamed of not always winning in certain areas of life, and therefore pretend that you don't care, while you do not pretend in others [i.e., do not pretend in other areas of life].

This pretense [i.e., This pretending that you don’t care if you do not always win] is not a • crass outer falsification, but a • much more subtle inner strain.
- Rejection
  or
- failure
  may
  subjectively
  constitute imperfection
  of which you
  are ashamed –
  and where there is such shame,
  there must be pretend.

All this implies
  a fierce pride.

The self-will says,

"I have to be perfect
  already."

Since one knows quite well
  that
  this
  is not true [i.e., one knows that one is NOT perfect at this time],
one tries to adhere at least
to a
  superficial perfection.

Again,
  this [i.e., this adherence to a superficial perfection]
  is pretense.

Both
  • pride
and
  • self-will
  lead to
  pretend.

Or, to put it in other words, they [i.e., both pride and self-will]
  lead away from
  truth.
All this [i.e., All this pretense driven by pride and self-will, which in turn are driven by perfectionism]

is so subtle
that it is almost
impossible to understand
if you
• do not
  live this pathwork
and
• have not come across
  areas of your
  emotions
  that used to be
  hidden from
  • sight
  and
  • awareness.

If you
• do not make it your goal
  to uncover them [i.e., to uncover areas of your emotions
  that are hidden from sight and awareness],

and
• are not involved in this process of
  self-finding,
these [i.e., these words about pretense driven by pride and self-will, which in turn are driven by perfectionism]
will merely be words
which do not mean very much.

Or if they do,
they mean something
at the moment,
but will be forgotten in no time.

This [i.e., This quickly forgetting my words]
even happens to you who work on this path.
The fear [i.e., The fear in the triad of pride, self-will and fear] must exist in a double way.

On the one hand, it exists because you fear that

"If I am not perfect, I will be
• unhappy,
or
• disapproved of,
or
• not loved."

Or, the fear is, "If the other person is imperfect, he or she will prohibit my happiness."

You try to push this constant fear away by
• self-will and by
• the pride of pretense.

Then there is the second fear which is a particularly poisonous one, the fear of exposure that you are not as perfect as you think you should be, that your pretense [i.e., that your mere PRETENDING to be perfect] may be shown up.
In order to guard against exposure, you invest valuable • energies and • soul forces into the superstructure, which • impoverishes your life, your • capacity to experience real feelings, and • necessitates • repression and • self-deception.

QUESTION:
In a previous lecture you mentioned • secondary reactions and • primary reactions. Am I correct in assuming that • secondary reactions are the ones that come from • manipulating emotions [i.e., from exaggerating or stultifying emotions], while the • primary reactions are from • the real self?

ANSWER:
Yes, you are quite right.

But it is not quite the same in that we are now on a much deeper level.
Secondary reactions are a result of what we discussed tonight [i.e., a result of manipulating emotions by either exaggerating them or stultifying them].

They are [i.e., Secondary reactions are] the effect of the cause now under discussion [i.e., the CAUSE being manipulating emotions by either exaggerating them or stultifying them].

We have now reached the level in our work where we begin to see • causes,
while in the past we dealt much more with • effects.

But you are quite right in seeing a connection.

You see, • secondary reactions, or • the lack of primary ones, are due to • inhibition, • lack of spontaneity – and this [i.e., and inhibition or lack of spontaneity] is due to • manipulation [i.e., manipulation of real emotions by either exaggerating them or stultifying them].

QUESTION:
It is a very subtle thing I want to ask and it is very hard to explain.

I went through a long time of deep depression and then I found that I had failed in everything I wanted.
After I realized that [i.e., After I realized that I had failed in everything I wanted], and also what you were talking about – my complex of perfectionism –

I finally
accepted
my mistakes.

It took me a long time,
but anyway I now
• faced my failure
and
• was at first very unhappy about it [i.e., about my failure].

Some days later I
accepted
• the failures,
• the mistakes
and
• everything.

I felt a
wonderful
• revelation and
• relief.

This kept on, somehow,
but I don't know how.

Sometimes I
have the feeling
my heart is still crying about
all I've lost.

And then I don't know
whether
• I cover it up [i.e., cover up the feeling that my heart is still crying about all I've lost and my failures],
or whether it [i.e., or whether the feeling that my heart is still crying about all I've lost and my failures], is
• real
or
• not.
ANSWER:

Yes,

you have made an important step forward,
but you have not continued.

You have remained there
and have not seen what follows.

I hope you will see it [i.e., I hope you will see what follows],
because
even if I tell you [i.e., even if I tell you what follows],
as you know from previous experience,
this will not help very much
if you do not
discover it for yourself.

However,
I will tell you.

You see,
the failures
are
exaggerated
because you tend very much toward
building up emotions
out of all proportion.

It would be important for you
to investigate this
and become
aware
• that this is so [i.e., that you DO indeed build up out of all proportion your emotions about your failures],
as well as
• why it is so [i.e., as well as WHY you build up out of all proportion your emotions about your failures].

For there is
a great exaggeration about
such
complete
failure of
everything
you wanted.
There are things you did want and which you attained, so that you are not a failure there.

You see only what you wanted and did not get, and forget that you also wanted what you now have.

But there is also something else responsible for your present uncertainty [i.e., uncertainty about whether you cover over your feeling of failure and loss or whether this feeling of loss or failure is real or not].

Investigate the motivations, both healthy and unhealthy, and ask yourself why you desired what you failed in.

Superficially this [i.e., SUPERFICICALLY your motivations for desiring what you failed in] may seem obvious, yet it is not that simple.
You will find a curious mixture of the
  • healthy
  and
  • unhealthy
  [i.e., healthy and unhealthy motivations for
desiring what you failed in].

You will find that,
  partly,
  your motivations in wanting something
  that in itself was
  perfectly all right
  were governed by
  • superimposed,
  • immature
  • reasons,
    • crutches,
    rather than
  • the reality of
    your own being.

On the other hand,
  you will find that
  the healthy motivations
  you did not allow to function
  were put aside
  due to your
  perfectionism.

You prohibited
  your own creative unfoldment
  just because of
  your perfectionism,
  so that
  both the
  • healthy [i.e., the healthy motivations, which were not
    allowed to function due to your perfectionism.]

and the
  • unhealthy
  motivations
  contributed to
    • the unfulfillment,
or
    • the "failure."
You chose the goal out of
• partly unhealthy motives,
and
you prohibited yourself from reaching the goal entirely out of unhealthy motives.

This may appear like a paradox, but do you follow what I mean?

QUESTIONER:
A hundred percent!

It is so right!

ANSWER:
Now, if you
• investigate and
• analyze
  that fully,
you will come across a new
• insight,
• finding,
  contrary to your present emotions,
that it is never too late.

The same factors,
if transposed into healthy currents,
can still give you fulfillment,
perhaps
not exactly in the same way [i.e., not exactly fulfillment in the same way you desired],

but
not any less [i.e., but nevertheless not any less fulfillment].
You know that now [i.e., You know now that you can have the same
or perhaps even more fulfillment than you originally desired],
in your
• intellect,
but
• emotionally
  you cannot accept it.

You will not be able to
accept it [i.e., accept EMOTIONALLY the fact that you can have fulfillment]
• until
  and
• unless
  you completely understand
    what I am indicating here.

QUESTIONER:
Yes,
  I understand that entirely.

QUESTION:
You were speaking about
  our
• true self
  and
• fulfillment,
  our
• closeness to God.

Can you say a word about
  an individual making progress along this path
  by just doing the work that is his to do?

  The village blacksmith –
    I don’t know how deeply he has to probe.

  He makes good horseshoes.

  He has unhappiness in his life.
He seems to be quiet.

Brother Lawrence in the kitchen.

The surgeon may come home and say,

"I skipped a stitch."

But he saved a man's life.

He did good surgery.

Is it necessary for a person
to proceed in this rather
• deep
  and
  • involved
  search of the subconscious
  when he
    • feels he is doing
      God's work
    and
    • has fulfillment
      on that level?

ANSWER:
The human entity
  is a
  • deep,
  • involved,
  • complex
  being.

Therefore,
in order to be
• undivided
  and
• unified,
  these levels [i.e., these deep, involved, and complex levels]
  have
  eventually to be reached by some
  • process or
  • method.
It is entirely possible that someone is fulfilled in one way, while another aspect of his being waits for • unfoldment and • growth that cannot be reached merely by doing good work.

Yet, a number of people on this earth may not be spiritually mature enough for such deep probing.

• In their life work and • in meeting their daily problems as best as they can, without the awareness of their deeper feelings, they do the most they can.

On the other hand, there are isolated beings who are • spiritually and • emotionally so mature that in their own way they follow such a path [i.e., a path such as pathwork], even though it may appear different in • method and • organization, but the end result is the same [i.e., the result is the same as that of a path such as pathwork].
But for those who are somewhere in-between on the scale, it is necessary to become aware of what goes on in the deep, involved, and complex levels of their soul, in order to attain the maximum development in all areas of their personality, not only in one or two aspects of life.

For this [i.e., For attaining maximum development in ALL areas of their personality], a certain help is necessary, some sort of organized method, for working alone one is usually too involved to see clearly.

Overemphasis on those aspects of the personality that function smoothly may lead the person to overlook what is not in order yet and what could be brought out.
However, the work should never be approached in a spirit of "God demands it of me."

Then it [i.e., Then, if done in the spirit of “God demands this of me,” the work of growth, purification, development, and transformation] would

- be compulsive
- and
- indicate, somewhere in the psyche, a wrong approach to
  - God,
  - to
  - universal law,
  - and
  - to
  - the self.

It [i.e., The work of growth, purification, development, and transformation] should not be done in a spirit of fulfilling a superimposed duty.
The more you grow into
• life
and into
• yourself,
the more you will realize that you wish to do it [i.e., you WISH to grow and develop into life and yourself] in order to
• live a
  • fuller
and
  • happier
  life,
and thus
• give
  more happiness.

You will wish to override your resistance to facing that which you suspect is there but
• wish that it were not.
It is not so much a question of
  • necessity,
but of
  • making
    the
      • best,
    the
      • fullest,
    the
      • most meaningful
        experience
          out of your life –
            in
              • every possible respect,
            not just in
              • work alone.

Getting to
  know one's
  unconscious mind
  is not something
  entirely unconnected
  with
    • the soul,
  with
    • one's being.

Quite the contrary!

In the last analysis,
  it is
  not possible
  to grow spiritually
  to the fullest
  without
    • psychoanalysis,
  or
    • self-search by any other name.
There is no separation between
• spiritual living
and
• psychological processes,
if you consider it from the point of view of seeing the truth in yourself.

**This** [i.e., This “seeing the truth in yourself”] is so
• simple,
even though certainly
• not easy.

Good actions are fine,
* but there comes a point in one's development when more is at stake
  * than
    • good,
    • kind,
    • helpful
      • actions
  and
    • fine
      • execution of one's work.

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**QUESTIONER:**
Thank you.

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*Be blessed, all of you.*
Continue
in your
• work,
in your
• step-by-step growth,
  for that is
  the glory
  of your life.

It [i.e., Your work, your step-by-step growth] is
  not to
  • fulfill a duty,
  but to
  • make yourself
    more capable of
      • being in joy,
      and thus capable of
      • giving it on [i.e., giving joy on]
        in your
        now
        • imperfect life,
        within your
        • imperfect relationships.

Be blessed,
  my friends.

Be in
  peace.

Be in
  God.

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