

Pathwork on
The Complexity and Formative Power of Early Life

This quote from Pathwork Lecture 87 *The Next Phase on the Path; Questions and Answers*, lays out how early life experiences so powerfully form our images (our main image, our idealized self-image, our God-image), patterns, pseudo-solutions – all of which govern our thinking and behavior from our unconscious. The purpose of life is to bring these matters to our consciousness where we can break down and dissolve these walls that we wrongly think will defend us from pain. In truth, these walls separate us from our real power, our Divine Essence – the God within and without that lives in and through us and to Whom we pray for help.

47	<p>QUESTION: Will you enlighten us on the relationships among the main image, the idealized self-image and the God-image, particularly in regard to prayer? How does this conglomerate interfere with our ability to pray?</p>
48	<p>ANSWER: This is a very good question. Any conflict, distortion, or illusion interferes with creative processes, the search for truth, or any constructive endeavor, such as prayer. Regardless of how much real talent, healthy desire, or serious striving you show, the severity of your conflicts proportionately influences your activities, thoughts, feelings, and motives. This may occur through the subtle coloring of self-deception, or it may be crass enough to make prayer or any other constructive activity impossible.</p>
49	<p>The God-image** is not an actual concept of God, common to all human beings. The God-image may be life, the rules of life, or it may be authority, in the sense of a "must."</p>
50	<p>The main problem in life, resulting in the main image, is always the feeling of helplessness in the face of a difficulty that the child finds impossible to cope with unless special defenses are established. The God-image plays a major role in building these defenses, whether as a vague authority or an imaginary, severe, punishing God. The decrees of this powerful authority make safety and happiness impossible, cause frustration and unhappiness. Here you are, the helpless, unloved child -- whether you actually were unloved, or felt unloved makes no difference -- feeling lonely, misunderstood, not accepted for your own sake, insecure, frightened. Only by adhering to certain rules do you have a chance to feel safe and gain a minimal amount of pleasure. Alternatively, if this is your main image, you may believe that you can find the safety and pleasure you need for survival only by breaking the rules, exercising power, and becoming the dictator in your environment. In either case, the God-image is the first obstacle and, according to character, personality, and environment, you either comply with it, or try to become it. Neither alternative works. Broadly speaking, either one of these attitudes to the God-image determines the type of idealized self-image that you establish; this attitude represents your pseudo-</p>

	<p>solution. Your pseudo-solution, in turn, represents the predominant attribute of your idealized self-image.</p>
51	<p>The establishment of the idealized self-image has a further purpose in connection with the God-image. To obey the hated rules against one's will would be very humiliating. Therefore the psyche pretends to accept these rules for the sake of perfection per se. In other words, the rigid standards and demands of the idealized self-image not only serve the purpose of coping with a hostile, dangerous world, but also cover up the helplessness of having to adopt rules one inwardly rebels against. This holds true even if the idealized self-image is predominantly rebellious and antisocial, because the rebelling minority also represents rules, but of a different order. The rule then may be ruthlessness, dominion over others, selfishness. This then is regarded as intelligent and those not following these particular rules are viewed as stupid.</p>
52	<p>In such a case, the God-image will subtly merge with the idealized self-image. You try to identify with what you fear most. Such emotional reactions can be found constantly in your self-search. They exist with the predominantly power-driven person, as well as with the predominantly submissive type. Each does it in a different way.</p>
53	<p>In addition to the separation and loneliness that this distortion generates, there is the added yoke of feeling that you have to obey, whether you want to or not. The idealized self-image serves the additional purpose of easing the brunt of this yoke.</p>
54	<p>So you see how the basic helplessness links the God-image and the idealized self-image, creating the fundamental problem with its pseudo-solutions. The pseudo-solutions are adopted in order to cope with the God-image, and that, in turn, creates the idealized self-image.</p>

** see Pathwork Lecture #52 *The God-Image*