

Pathwork on
Healthy Atheism

This quote from Pathwork Lecture 227 *Change from Outer to Inner Laws in the New Age* succinctly summarizes a key aspect of spiritual growth: **our healthy and inevitable passage through a stage of agnosticism or atheism.**

First stage: Early in one's spiritual growth one comes to a strong belief in God – the God external to the self. This God sets the rules by which one is to live, the truths one is to believe and profess, and sometimes is cast as the punisher for those who fail to obey the rules or who disbelieve the teachings taught by those who are one's chosen religious authority. Many religions begin – and sometimes end – right here: the God “out there” who knows all, controls all, rules all, and demands our obedience. In this stage there is no other responsibility for us than to obey.

The **second stage** is the movement from this external God to no God – to either outright atheism or sometimes to a softer questioning and open agnosticism. What is key in this stage is ego-development and self-responsibility. It is a time for reason and will, a time to question what one actually holds to be true or not true, to question *why* one holds to certain beliefs or values.

The **third stage** is a return to God. It can be a long long journey before one arrives at stage three, but eventually one discovers that God lives, and lives *within*, that one has, at one's core, a **divine Essence**. The **goal of life, and the goal of Pathwork, is the liberation of this God within**. One moves from relatively dead atheism or agnosticism into a profound state of inner Life!

In the **first stage** one tries to obey God's laws to love God and each other. One tries, and tries, and tries. One feels guilt for not succeeding. Sometimes the dogma lets one off the hook with a teaching of forgiveness, a teaching of a sacrificial offering on one's behalf to appease a righteous God. But this sometimes requires faith. So one tries to have faith. And tries, and tries, and tries. Once again one comes up short. A vicious circle. Profound peace evades one in this first stage.

In the **third stage** one lives spontaneously. God within manifests. One loves spontaneously – not obeying rules from without but because the **God within, one's very essence, is love. One's essence is faith**. One **knows**, one **trusts**, one lives in **freedom**, in **peace**, in **joy**. This is life by the awakened inner “rules,” the rules of evolution, the same “rules” by which an acorn grows to become an oak. The acorn does not fight the inner rules of its growth. Why do we? It is humanity's path of growth. It is why we are here: to purify, to transform. By Grace.

22	The God consciousness that existed in previous ages was always projected outward, as you well know. Then, as a necessary preparation, the pendulum had to swing to emphasis on the self. The individual had to give up God outside to assume full responsibility for the self. But to make the transition from the God outside to God inside, and bridge that gap in time and space, a transitory period of atheism or agnosticism had to come to prepare the individual for full autonomy and selfhood. This had to happen first only on the outer levels, for full autonomy and selfhood on all levels can exist only when God within is liberated and when your oneness with God has been found. That is reality.
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Note: a more complete description of spiritual development is given in Pathwork Lecture 105 *Humanity's Relationship to God in Various Stages Of Development*.