

Pathwork™ Steps

Mass Images PRS 11

Study Guide for Online Meetings

Week 1: Feminine & Masculine Images

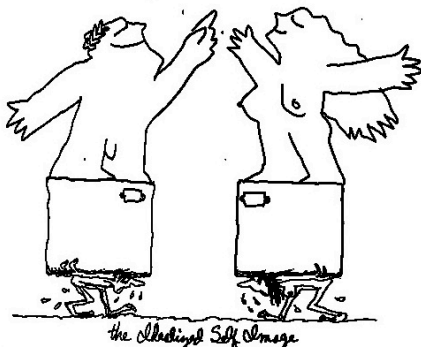
Week 2: Images of God

Week 3: Finding Images & Your Resistance

Week 4: Mass Images in Society

An image is a ‘[representation of the form of a person or object](#)’ (American Heritage Dictionary) We usually think of images in terms of sculptures, paintings, or photographs. The concept of Images in the Pathwork lectures is how we unconsciously project our inner judgments and pre-conceptions onto real people and current situations.

We also ‘act out’ our Images. The concept of a personal ‘mask’ (PL 14) is brilliantly illustrated in Marcel Marceau’s classic mime The Maskmaker www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXwGGbnvLYg (7 mins). The Idealized Self Image is a multi-dimensional Mask which “serves the purpose of obtaining the missing self-confidence... The idealized self masks the real self. It pretends to be something you are not. But since the self-confidence established through the idealized self is artificial and not genuine, the result cannot possibly be what was expected.” PL83



Another way of understanding Images is to see them as psychic projections of our fantasies -- an inner ‘virtual reality’ playing concurrent with real life events. Images become destructive or negative when they ignore or try to distort reality, instead of inspiring us to recognize and interact with what IS.

In the real world, believing that a cake is already baked (= already exists as its potential self) doesn’t change the reality of gooey batter. Becoming cake requires a catalyst (temperature + time) because batter is governed by the laws of nature. Batter also has a very limited consciousness!

“A mineral has a very small degree of consciousness, therefore its movement is almost imperceptible. A plant’s degree of consciousness is higher than the mineral’s. And so it proceeds on the scale, from animal to human being. The range of possibility for extension and movement of the spirit by far exceeds that of the body.” PL115

Consciousness can create a bridge between the earth plane and the realm of spirit where past, present, and future co-exist (time is a human limitation – see PRS 28 / PL 112). On the spiritual plane, we are simultaneously our past, present, and potential selves. In addition, thoughts and feelings create spiritual forms or ‘worlds’ (see last month’s topic on Dreams). Such forms create force fields (PL 201) that can magnetically attract (or repel) situations and interactions. We study Images in order to become more aware of our own thoughts and feelings, and the force fields that we are creating.

Week 1: Feminine & Masculine Images PRS 11 (also PL 169, 229 and 251)

Mass Images can be more powerful than individual images. We may need a broader perspective than we have ever imagined. Or, we may have always suspected there were deeper truths but never verbalized our feelings.

For example, in the Victorian era it was postulated that a "good woman" was not supposed to enjoy sex. This was a strong mass image whose effects still exist in the psyche of people, in spite of the fact that, on the whole, this image has begun to dissolve. The strength of the mass image had a certain effect even on the healthy woman who, to some extent, would feel guilt and shame for her sexual desires and enjoyment. But the healthier she was, the less effect the mass image had on her. The more personal conflict in the psyche of a woman, the more this mass image would affect her. She would, perhaps, glorify frigidity, feeling virtuous about it. The resulting problems and discontent could not be understood as to their true reasons, so that more repression, confusion, disharmony, were bound to arise.

The man, too, was affected by it, also to the degree he had unresolved problems and inner conflicts. The split between sexual freedom and enjoyment, on the one hand, and love, tenderness, affection and respect, on the other, is a deep-rooted and frequent inner conflict. It has helped to create this particular mass image.

Mass images influence existing values. They always distort and caricature realistic, healthy values. The above mass image distorts womanhood; it distorts decency; it creates the value of sexual coldness and joylessness in a woman. How deeply this not only affects her personal life, but also the life of all those around her, perpetuating the same detrimental standards, influencing future generations to abide by the same limiting and limited values, is impossible to perceive. It requires a wide vision to remotely sense the damage of any mass image, as well as to comprehend the influence one single individual has on either perpetuating, or dissolving, a mass image.

Another mass image bound to a specific culture, is the teutonic hero-ideal, glorifying killing, ruthlessness, destructive strength, even cruelty, at the expense of sensitivity and reasoning power. The influence of this mass image, just as the one of the Victorian female ideal, extended over the period itself, distorting the concept of what represents masculinity.

The after-effects of the Teutonic hero ideal and the Victorian female ideal still prevail, especially in the deep psyche. Many a man is secretly ashamed of emotions, of his ability to love, of his intuitive faculties, of sensitivity and kindness, of his need for affection, of his human fears. In his unconscious distorted concept, all this is, he believes, weak and unmasculine. By denying and suppressing these aspects of his personality, which the fully rounded personality needs for a rich, creative life, he cripples himself, never knowing why he feels cheated and why he cheats those around him. A man becomes truly stronger, more resourceful, more creative, better equipped to meet and cope with life, with those faculties the mass image induces him to deny. He becomes more of a man by owning up to those general human aspects he falsely believes unmanly.

By the same token, the corresponding ideal of woman (in many ways, compatible with the Victorian female ideal image) requests of a woman to deny her intelligence, initiative, her independent thinking and action, her creativity, her self-sufficiency as a human being. She has to be a weak,

clinging, helpless, childish creature, incapable of mature reasoning power and logical deductions, in order to be what is looked upon as "truly feminine." Thus, images have come into existence which proclaim man's physical prowess as superior, while the female human being is allegedly inferior -- not only in physical strength, but also intellectually and spiritually. Both images cripple the individual's real potentials, brandishing general, universal human aspects as either masculine or feminine, thereby artificially limiting the unfoldment of the entire personality.

The result of these grave misunderstandings and distortions is that each sex rebels against its own predicament, resenting and envying the other sex. If man alone is supposed to be strong, intelligent, capable of handling life, this does not only grant him more rights, but burdens him with too great a load of responsibility. A mature mutuality renders both partners self-responsible. This wholeness, alone, makes an individual capable of love. The helpless, clinging of a child-woman may appear as love, but it is not. It is a parasitic need, clutching at the man, burdening him, while yet resenting his greater freedom. Hence, man (often unconsciously) rebels against the burden of over-responsibility and having to look out for, and sustain, a partner whose love capacity is impaired. He rebels against the demands that such a relationship imposes upon him. If he feels inadequate to live up to these demands, as he well might, he envies woman for her easier lot. Even in these days, when, outwardly, woman has about the same position as man, from an economic and material point of view, not so much has changed emotionally since the time this image was rampant. It is beginning to change now, also on a psychic level -- after both sexes are undergoing many fluctuations of the pendulum.

Woman (often consciously) rebels against the imposed inferiority of her person, feeling it necessary to curb her unfoldment as a complete individual, so as not to be rejected as "unfeminine."

When conscious or unconscious rebellion against one's own sex, and resentment against the opposite sex, surpass a certain limit, homosexuality is the result. The stages in between are increasing alienation from the self, particularly with one's sexual identity. Both denial and rebellion diminish the love capacity and must, therefore, diminish man and woman alike. Both images quoted here impoverish man and woman -- and, hence, society as a whole. PRS 11

Daily Review

Exercise: Keep a daily review (PL28) for one week focusing upon conclusions and generalizations you instantly apply to situations, others, and yourself. Include stereotypes, bias, and prejudice - these can be both positive and negative, it's the 'instantaneous' quality that can identify them as images. All you need is a ½ page of lined paper per day. Create 5 columns. Jot down each day these brief notes about each incident (limit: 10/day).

1. Two to three words to identify each incident.
2. What feelings or emotional reactions you expressed or felt.
3. The judgments or conclusions you came to **in the moment**.
4. At the end of the week, read through your entries. See if you can find any patterns, similarities, or themes.
5. Reflect upon your early childhood experiences. Can you find any 'seeds' in your relationships with your parents for these images?

Week 2: Images of God PRS 11 (also PL 52, 247)

The child learns in early years that God is the highest "authority." Parents rarely conceive of God within themselves, in spite of, often, intellectually adhering to the concept that God is within man, they feel God as an outside power. And so do the usual teachings of organized religion. Therefore, children perceive God as a person, residing outside themselves. Consequently, the ideas and feelings a child develops about, and his attitude to, God, are an extension of his ideas, feelings for and attitudes to, parental authority. The image created about the parents reflects the God image. The sum total of personal images, as long as unrecognized and unresolved, results in distortion of spiritual truth. Not only rigid and often senseless dogma in religion is a consequence of mass images, but the emotional undertone in the individual's relationship to God. Once one is awakened to these factors, it is not difficult to perceive them.

For example, the petty, wrathful, vindictive, punishing tyrant, angered if the slightest of his demands remain unfulfilled, often lurks behind the supposed God of love, when closely examining certain doctrines, postulates and religious laws. How is eternal damnation compatible with a God of love? How is it conceivable that a God, who has given man the sexual drive, punishes him for it? How can anyone reconcile that the flesh be sin, when it, too, is part of creation? How can a God demand blind obedience to other people, who take it upon themselves to represent the word of God, thereby crippling growth and the thinking mind, which is, after all, as much a part of creation as the body, or the spirit? Unquestioned obedience, replacing reasoning power, implies that the God-given intelligence be as ungodly as the human body of flesh and blood. There are many more facets of religious and spiritual distortions mankind has rarely dared to examine or question. The only alternative to blind acceptance often seems blind rebellion. Blind rebellion indicates as unfree a spirit as blind acceptance or obedience does. Total denial is as unthinking as total blind faith.

The concept of the petty tyrant, supposed to be God, often induces an individual to prefer an atheistic world concept. Therefore, one often finds human beings who just as fearfully and subjectively react to the question of the existence of God, as others, who react with fear and dependency when their religious doctrines are challenged. If this distorted God concept, and total denial were the only alternatives, the latter would, indeed, be preferable. The error is, as usual, to only visualize these two choices. This is why the atheist is as emotionally dependent and blind, regarding his "religious doctrine" as the person, embracing the other side of the pole.

The God image, at its extreme, induces, as a reaction, a self-generating dissolving process, becoming a life image of atheism. The image of a senseless, cruel God, if not dissolved in awareness, reason and realism, becomes an image about life, in which it is felt and experienced to be equally cruel and senseless. Creation is believed to be a chaotic coincidence, without rhyme or reason.

In patriarchic societies, this type of God image was, for a long time, more prevalent. The child's fear of an autocratic, unapproachable father, who was to be appeased, flattered, begged, in order to put him in a favorable mood, reflects the God image of the equally petty and tyrannic God. That is, many personal father images of this type helped to create this mass image about God.

There is a profound connection between patriarchy, the cruel hero ideal of man and the monster God image.

In a matriarchic society, God images tend to encourage fatalism, passivity, distorted versions of the state of being. There is a deep connection between the recent trend of woman's emancipation from patriarchic dictates, and distortions of psychological approaches to the education of children, in which overindulgence, lack of form and discipline, are supposedly "progressive." These conditions indicate a God image of permissiveness, God supposedly fulfilling every whim, constantly indulging childish and destructive trends, as well as taking on the responsibility man fears to assume himself. The consequences of any mass image become apparent only one, or several, generations later, after the image has begun to take shape and has created its effects. This recently evoked (or re-evoked) God image clearly shows its existence in this generation's refusal to accept self-discipline and self-responsibility, and its strong tendency towards self-indulgence. When it is discovered that this version of an "all forgiving God" does not exist, when reality is confronted on less agreeable terms, individuals often turn away from God altogether, just as the "tyrant" may induce such a reaction.

It must be understood that few people actually think "because God is the indulging, pampering Father, I can get away with everything." These concepts have an indirect, emotional effect on the psyche and resultant behavior and attitude. They have nothing whatever to do with formulated thoughts and conscious belief.

Every God image -- because it is an image and, therefore, false -- hinders man to approach life's problems in a constructive way. Man childishly expects God to solve his problems for him. He may "buy" God's grace by sacrifice and obedience, as well as superstitious practices, hoping for reward, hoping that this divine authority will lead life for him, make his decisions, assume his responsibilities. Or, he may rely that this forever indulgent, forgiving, understanding God does likewise, overlooking the consequences of his irresponsibilities. In either alternative, self-responsibility remains undeveloped, the personality remains weak and helpless, disappointment, dependency and fear are the inevitable results. PRS 11

The God Image PL 52

Exercise from Elizabeth Mylonas' worksheet in
'How to find God and have fun doing it' © 1979 The Center for the Living Force

1. Repeat the phrase 'God is...?' over and over, writing down exactly what you say regardless of any irrationality or illogic. Are any of your feeling perceptions of God different from your conscious knowing of what God is?
2. Make a list of all the things that you think / feel God has done to you.
3. Make a list of various authority figures from your childhood. Match up the characteristics from Question 1 with these figures wherever possible to see if you have transferred feelings from these authorities onto God.

Week 3: Personal Images PRS 11 (also PL 38)

Society consists of individuals. Therefore, the same principles apply to humanity as a whole as to the individual. The same laws govern both, the same psychological processes exist. As an individual forms an image, due to a misunderstanding and generalization of a painful occurrence or situation, so does society. We then speak of mass images. Every culture, every civilization, every era, has its special mass images. Some of them are exclusively connected with a certain historical period, being a result of conditions within this period. They change as outer circumstances change, and to the degree that society matures sufficiently to shed these specific mass images. Other mass images persist and are carried over from one culture to another, until sufficient individuals free themselves and, thereby, influence their society. Then the mass image dissolves, making room for truthful concepts.

As the child forms an image because it misunderstands an occurrence it has difficulty to accept and come to terms with, so does society. When the latter's needs cannot be fulfilled on its own, as yet childish, terms, this void gives rise to misconception, distorted vision -- and therefore fixed imprints result, according to which it is henceforth compelled to act. When society cannot come to terms with a frustration of a need, and cannot find its way to fulfillment of this need in a realistic, constructive way, it substitutes the rules and regulations of a mass image. It is the identical process as with the individual. The psychic processes of an individual are a reflection of the psychic processes of mankind as a whole, and vice versa.

However, no individual can be affected by a mass image if he does not have corresponding inner tendencies, concepts, problems; if a similar, or complementing, personal image does not exist. Where the psyche is free of distortion, a mass image will have no effect, no matter how prevalent it may be. Mass images fortify personal, and personal images fortify mass images. PRS 11

Finding Images PL 38 (also PRS 13)

Images are the one factor in your life that is responsible for every unhappiness. No one else is responsible for it, only you yourself. PL38

1. Research

“The way to start searching for the image is by thinking back in your life and finding all the problems. Write them down. Include problems of all sorts. You cannot do it unless you take the trouble to put it down black on white, concisely. For if you merely think about it, you will not have the overall view necessary for comparison. This written work is essential. It is certainly not too much to ask. You do not have to do it in one day. Take your time even if it takes a few months.” PL38

2. Look for the common denominator

“Then when you think of all the big and small troubles, even the most nonsensical, the most insignificant ones, start to look for the common denominator. You will find in most instances the existence of one common denominator, sometimes even more than one. All

unpleasant experiences are probably due to your image and connected with it at least in some remote way.” PL38

“The most apparently unconnected happenings turn out to have one common denominator. When you have found that, you have made a major step forward in your search, for then you possess a clue to the image.” PL38

“But the common denominator by itself is not yet the key to the image. It is a strong directive, but by no means does it open the door that will make you fully understand your whole life. In order to get to the image itself, to all the devious ways in which it was formed, and to the understanding of the processes of your reaction when you formed it, you will have to explore your subconscious more thoroughly.” PRS 11

3. Noticing resistance

“The common denominator may not be easy to find. In self-will, something says in you: ‘I do not want the risk of life; I do not want the pain of life; therefore I draw this conclusion which seems to me to be a safeguard against it.’ That is not a safeguard, for it will bring you in fact infinitely more trouble, the very trouble you are trying to escape from, for life cannot be cheated. This is the merciful law of God. How merciful you have no way of knowing yet. For otherwise you could never come out of the misery of the lower planes with their darkness. Only when you begin to face what your own wrong conclusions and fears are and you are ready to accept life for what it is, will you be able to cure your soul. Only then will you have given up some of your self-will that wishes to deny life in its present form, the form that is necessary for your development. Only then will you have acquired the humility not to wish to be protected from these risks and hardships of life. They will cease to be necessary only after you can fearlessly accept and shoulder them.” PL38

“Do not let yourself be dissuaded by your own inner resistance. For that resistance is just as erroneous, ignorant, and shortsighted as the image itself. In fact, the very same quality that makes you resist is the one that has created the image in the first place, without your knowing it has created and will continue to create untold misery for you and will counteract your conscious wishes.” PL38

Cognitive Dissonance

When truth just doesn't feel true.

"In psychology, cognitive dissonance is the mental stress or discomfort experienced by an individual who holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values at the same time, or is confronted by new information that conflicts with existing beliefs, ideas or values." [Wikipedia](#)

In '[Why Science is Hard](#)', Joel Achenbach writes for the Washington Post: 'science is not a body of facts. Science is a method for deciding whether what we choose to believe has a basis in the laws of nature or not.' He adds, "Even when we intellectually accept these precepts of science, we subconsciously cling to our intuitions -- what researchers call our naive beliefs. [Shtulman's research](#) indicates that as we become scientifically literate, we repress our

naive beliefs but never eliminate them entirely. They nest in our brains, chirping at us as we try to make sense of the world.

From [Changing Minds](#):

Cognitive Dissonance is the feeling of uncomfortable tension which comes from holding two conflicting thoughts in the mind at the same time. Dissonance increases with:

- The importance of the subject to us.
- How strongly the dissonant thoughts conflict.
- Our inability to rationalize and explain away the conflict.

Dissonance is often strong when we believe something about ourselves and then do something against that belief. If I believe I am good but do something bad, then the discomfort I feel as a result is cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance is a very powerful motivator which will often lead us to change one or other of the conflicting belief or action. The discomfort often feels like a tension between the two opposing thoughts. To release the tension we can take one of three actions:

- Change our behavior.
- Justify our behavior by changing the conflicting cognition.
- Justify our behavior by adding new cognitions.

Dissonance is most powerful when it is about our self-image. Feelings of foolishness, immorality and so on (including internal projections during decision-making) are dissonance in action.

If an action has been completed and cannot be undone, then the after-the-fact dissonance compels us to change our beliefs. If beliefs are moved, then the dissonance appears during decision-making, forcing us to take actions we would not have taken before.

Cognitive dissonance appears in virtually all evaluations and decisions and is the central mechanism by which we experience new differences in the world. When we see other people behave differently to our images of them, when we hold any conflicting thoughts, we experience dissonance.

Dissonance increases with the importance and impact of the decision, along with the difficulty of reversing it. Discomfort about making the wrong choice of car is bigger than when choosing a lamp.

http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/cognitive_dissonance.htm

Week 4: Mass Images in Society PRS 11

Economical, political, religious and cultural systems are influenced by mass images, just as it is true that mass images result from them. The present forms of government, most wide-spread, and conflicting with one another, are Capitalism and Socialism. They both have their own mass images, with their effects. For example, in a capitalistic society, wealth is considered virtue and a stamp of personal success and adequacy. Its lack connotes failure, weakness, inadequacy. A man who is unsure of his whole value, who is torn by inner unresolved personal conflicts, which weaken his self-esteem, may be strongly affected by the mass image of his culture. He may be strongly inclined, in this instance, to sacrifice other important values, for the sake of conforming with the ideal success image of his environment. This leads to the impoverishment of his real self -- not because he is materially successful, but because this success serves as a cover-up for retaining his inner conflicts. He can only feel his masculinity when he is financially successful. The perpetuation of this mass image becomes necessary because it confirms the values he abides by. The sacrifice of impoverishing the rest of his personality, which he vaguely senses, would be in vain if this mass image were removed.

A socialistic mass image idealizes lack of individuality, lack of initiative, lack of ambition, thereby impoverishing the personality in another way. Needless to say that society cannot possibly profit by individuals who are made to feel guilty when they unfold their inherent potentials. Hence, individuals affected by a socialistic mass image suppress faculties that lead to creative unfoldment.

When a man complies with the demands of this mass image and has thwarted, often the best part of himself, he, too, must strive to maintain the conditions that sanction his impoverishment, for, otherwise he has nothing left.

Since all images (mass images, as well as individual ones) are based on misconceptions, misunderstood reality, their consequences are impoverishment, conflict, unhappiness, frustration, limitation. Since images come into existence by dint of faulty, childish reasoning, an outer authority is required. Externalizing authority and the existence of images are always intimately connected. The integrated person, functioning out of his real self, is his own authority. And this is not a demonstration of defiance, incapable of accepting criticism, advice or suggestions. He is not too lazy or afraid to think matters through to their very roots and make responsible decisions, for which he is willing to pay the consequences. His decisions and choices are not based on fear of disapproval. His reflections seek the real values in any given issue. Where a person is impressed with images, this is not possible. Where he is free of images, this mature and liberated state exists. PRS 11

Suffering does not equal Goodness

Connected with, and part of all existing mass- and personal images, is one overall soul imprint on the entire human race, with the few exceptions of those whose spiritual ascent has enlightened and freed them. This is the concept of the necessity of suffering. Suffering is glorified in many religions. Implicitly and explicitly it is conveyed that the spiritual person must suffer; the saints had to suffer, otherwise they would not be saints. It is implied that the happy person is frivolous, selfish, unspiritual, that pleasure is sin -- especially physical pleasure. The idea that the capacity for physical pleasure is commensurate with the degree of spiritual evolvment may have crossed certain enlightened individuals' minds, but it is certainly not taught or preached from any pulpit. On the contrary, sin and punishment are connected with physical pleasure, while reward is promised for sacrifice and suffering.

The wornout "explanation" for this trend, that otherwise base instincts would take over, is no longer tenable. Only extremely superficial consideration of this subject could lead to such a conclusion.

Even modern psychology makes the "reality principle" into a harsh, pleasure opposing, difficult, and often painful life, which the mature person is supposed to accept, as opposed to the immature striving for pleasure.

In all those philosophies and attitudes to life, the basic, underlying image of the necessity to suffer can be found. Images, wrong concepts, are always a result of a dualistic attitude to life. Dualism produces error and, consequently, suffering. Unity produces truth and happiness. PRS 11

Useful Concepts in Exploring Images:

Pattern: "An image always forms a pattern in one way or another -- a pattern of behavior, or reaction on certain occasions, and also of outer happenings that seem to come to the person without his doing anything to call it forth. In fact, consciously the person may fervently wish something that is the very opposite of the image. But this conscious desire is the weaker of the two since the unconscious is always stronger." PL38

Paradigm: "a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them." American Heritage Dictionary

Paradox: *a statement that seems to contradict, but may nonetheless be true.* "The silence rang in my ears', or 'a deafening silence' describes the contrast between perception and physical reality.

"I realize, my friends, this seems like an utter contradiction. I say here, on one hand, the wrongdoings of another person cannot harm you. I say, on the other hand, that if you go ahead, following your lowest instincts, it is harmful. Both are true, my friends. But both can be untrue if you understand this in the wrong sense. It is extremely difficult for me to explain how these apparent paradoxes still hold true." PL60

"In order to overcome this erroneous duality, particularly the conflict between giving up the self and full possession of the self, I would like to say what may indeed sound like a paradox. You find yourself in the labor of such a path of self-realization in order to be capable of giving yourself up -- in union with the other sex, and in death. You cannot give up successfully that which you have not found. For you cannot freely let go of something you have never really possessed. Only when you can give it up freely, will you gain more -- selfhood!" PL123

"So what I am saying here sounds indeed like a great paradox: only when you give yourself over can you find your real strength and autonomy." PL254

Study Guide © Jan Rigsby: 2014

The Path to the Real Self © The Pathwork Foundation 1999

Guide Quotes © The Pathwork Foundation 1999

Full text of this plus all other lectures may be downloaded from www.pathwork.org