

# Moving Toward Understanding and Practicing Phase Two Pathwork

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*This interview with Mary Janet Fowler was published in Pathwords Summer 2005. In it, Donovan ranges widely over subjects such as the spiritual reality of Eva's channeling of the Pathwork Guide, the Guide's teachings about Jesus Christ, what the Guide said about Phase Two Pathwork, and ways the truly devoted student can go beyond his or her ego in the search for a real experience of God.*

Our general subject is the transition from psychological and emotional work to spiritual work. Most people don't realize how different these are. I've noticed that when many people talk about spiritual work they are really just talking about ideas, not experiences.

## What is Spiritual Reality?

To put this specifically in the context of the Pathwork®, I remind everyone that Eva Pierrakos had a spiritual experience every time she went into trance and channeled the Guide. She had real contact with a real spirit. A spirit is an intelligence that does not live within a physical body. Many people who call themselves spiritual don't like to think about spirits! They don't want to acknowledge that there are angels, protective spirits, plant and animal spirits, and entire lines of spirits with certain tasks or particular teachings. The whole idea creeps some people out, or seems non-rational, or superstitious. But the teachings of the Pathwork Guide are unequivocal in saying, for instance, that there are negative spirits and positive spirits. Wherever you are in your mask, lower self or higher self at any given moment will attract and connect you with spirits of that level. If you're going to work in the spiritual realm, you have to develop some openness to being affected by and co-creating with entities that you might originally have been inclined to overlook and deny.

Eva had a spiritual experience every time she trusted that she could change her state of consciousness and allow the Guide to take over her physical being and utilize it for a higher purpose. And many of us who went to those meetings where Eva channeled lectures also had a spiritual experience, usually less intense than Eva's, but nonetheless real. These sessions were a great illustration that the Pathwork is a spiritual path; it is guided by information and revelations imparted by a spirit, not by a human being.

Now, years later, sitting down at your desk and reading a lecture is a much less intense, less illuminating experience than being in a room full of people witnessing a spirit delivering that lecture. You can study and assimilate the concepts from the lectures without even acknowledging that this is a spiritual path--a path that was brought to us by a spirit, and not just by a human being talking from her deepest unconscious, or from her well-developed intuition, or however else one might be tempted to describe it and diminish it.

When we forget that the Pathwork is a spiritual path, it's easy to relate to it simply as another form of psychotherapy. In Bill Griever's piece, which appears elsewhere in this newsletter, he says -- rightly, I believe -- that whatever we call ourselves, most

people who come to one of our introductory Pathwork weekends would look at us and say, "You're doing a form of group therapy." Might we be experiencing declining enrollment in our workshops because therapy used to be more "in" or "au courant" than it is now? The fact that we still look like group therapy (even though it may be good, effective group therapy) might be limiting us in reaching more people — people who are not looking for therapy but who *are* looking for a deep, authentic way to grow and expand spiritually.

## **The Guide and Jesus Christ**

In the last few years of the Pathwork before Eva died, the Guide began to channel lectures about Jesus Christ. Many Pathwork members, in New York especially, were very upset. About a third of the members of the New York Pathwork at that time were Jewish, and the constant repeated refrain to Eva (who was half-Jewish herself) was, "Why are you bringing in Jesus Christ now?" Eva would say, "I am not 'bringing him in.' This is what the Guide is saying. I am not the source of this material! You've been doing the Pathwork 10 years and you still think that I'm the producer of it? I'm just the channel!" She continued by explaining, "The Guide thinks it's important now to go back to the subject of Jesus Christ, who was focused on a lot in the first 30 lectures. Then, following those, there were a great many psychological/emotional lectures; and now, late in the Pathwork, the Guide thinks it's important that we look at Jesus Christ again."

I was a worker of Eva's — in fact her only worker — in the last year of her life. She was mostly confined to bed then, and I would come up from Virginia once every four weeks and go to her bedroom, and she would be propped up in bed, and we would have sessions. I had my last session with her about three weeks before she died. It's clear to me, having gotten to know Eva very well personally, that during the period when she was channeling lectures about Jesus Christ, she was also having actual experiences of Jesus Christ. And in fact, the lectures made statements like, "It is not enough to just have thoughts about Christ or to pray to Christ. You need to be open to the possibility that you could have a personal *experience* of Christ and a personal relationship with Christ."

I had a hard time even understanding what that meant, and I think most other people did too. I think they simply didn't let it in, or said, "I don't know what she's talking about, but it's not likely to happen to me." The year after Eva died I went with a group of Pathworkers to Arosa, Switzerland, which had been her favorite vacation place. I spent two weeks meditating and trying to open to Christ, with no success whatsoever. It was years and years later, after having totally put the subject on the shelf, that I had an experience of Christ — that is, an appearance of Christ in my consciousness that was undeniable. This led to a rich, personal relationship with Christ that continues for me to this day.

Eva understood the importance of having a personal relationship with Christ, or with some other being of this magnitude. She knew that to be truly on a spiritual path, it's almost essential to have an experience of a spiritual teacher. Perhaps not necessarily Jesus Christ, though he is very likely the most powerful avatar of the western half of this planet. You may find your spiritual connection with the Divine Mother, or with some other manifestation of ultimate spiritual wisdom. But the internal purification and ego-surrender that are required in order to, first, have an experience like this, and then to continue to be an open recipient of ongoing communication with this Teacher, will change you more than anything else you can imagine. And it will bring you into Second Phase Pathwork.

## Moving Into Second Phase Pathwork

It's frustrating that the Guide gave so few concrete pointers about how to "do" Second Phase Pathwork. Mostly he just laid out the concepts and didn't give any methods. In a later lecture that went back and summarized many of the important points of the Pathwork, the Guide said that the Pathwork enters its most important phase only after the therapeutic work is mostly over. This Second Phase consists of "learning how to activate the greater consciousness dwelling within every human soul."<sup>1</sup>

I would say that the best of the group work we do in our well-seasoned classes – dynamically energizing the emotions, finding and energizing the lower self, particularly with group Core Energetics – approaches Phase Two Pathwork. Working this way has a chance of at least momentarily changing your state of consciousness to the point where something new can happen: where some blocks in your being that are holding you back can relax beyond the control of the conscious mind, enabling you to see and feel more clearly.

Most of what the Guide says about entering Phase Two Pathwork comes under the heading of how to prepare your mind: how to look at the contents of your mind, your ways of thinking, your attitudes; and how to work with these so that your being becomes a more fertile ground for spiritual wisdom to reach you. In the same way, Eckard Tolle in his very popular book<sup>2</sup> says that as long as you don't find a way to break the normal, structured patterns of your mind, which are almost always escaping from the present into the past or the future, you have no chance of real change – you're not going to be able to go into a whole new dimension that could be called spiritual.

The general assumption at this level is that you're not aiming to find the right path to climb some external mountain or succeed in some external search to reach the wisdom of Spirit. You're working to shift something in *your own state of being* such that Spirit can reach into you and be well received there. The spirit is always around you. If you change something in yourself – if you become more porous, or more transparent – a spiritual presence can reach into you, interact with you and affect you.

Some of the lectures about this topic talk about how a major obstacle to this kind of preparation is your own self-will, augmented by a skeptical attitude. It's important to notice, over and over, how much you are into your self-will, and how and to what degree you resist surrendering to guidance from a higher source. It's my experience that most people need a specific practice that will cut through their self-will and change their state of consciousness. Meditation, seriously practiced, especially practiced for hours in a weekend-long or week-long or month-long retreat, really does change your consciousness so that you are more fertile ground to be reached by spirit. Other practices like chanting, drumming, or all-night dancing or praying, are well-known ways, some of them thousands of years old, to change your consciousness in such a way that you're out of your normal "head". Your normal head is usually chattering away in such a fashion that it's virtually impossible to ever hear the voice of the spiritual realm. Native Americans used to say that it's only in total silence that there's a chance of contacting Spirit. That's why they would leave their tribe, go out into nature, and fast in silence for days at a time, in the hopes of Spirit giving them a vision. Then they would return to the tribe and integrate their vision into their daily life.

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<sup>1</sup> Pathwork Lecture No. 204: *What is the Path?*

<sup>2</sup> *The Power of Now.*

In my own case, in 1992 I found myself in a deeply unhappy place in my life, seemingly at the end of what the Pathwork could do to help me. I took a big chance, and committed a month of my life and a significant amount of money, and I signed up for a month-long event in a remote valley in Brazil. This was my own form of a quite large and risky vision quest. My time in Brazil threw me into ceremonies of all-night dancing and singing of hymns in a foreign language, and the frequent ingestion of a consciousness-changing sacramental medicine from the Amazon. This deeply challenging work drastically altered my manifest personality. I wound up in a space of such openness and humility that Christ was able to come and say to me, "Hello, let me talk to you." This was the beginning of my relationship with Christ, which I still focus on and grapple with on a daily basis.

## "Who Am I?"

In Phase One Pathwork you work on expanding yourself and reincorporating formerly repressed or excised parts of yourself. The work is about getting to know more and more clearly who you really are, how complex and multi-faceted, sometimes even self-contradictory you are, and coming to know and love and accept that. You could say that Phase One work is about developing a larger and more solid sense of self.

In Phase Two Pathwork you can now learn to thin your boundaries so that you fall into a different kind of confusion than before—one in which you lose your sense of who you are, in which you become *less* solid. If you really go into it, it's disconcerting, because it seems like you're starting to lose all the ground you've gained. You can say, truthfully, "I don't really know who I am." This kind of awareness is likely to come, for instance, through intense meditation practice, going to a retreat where you meditate 12 hours a day for four days, or something comparable. You may well wind up saying, "There's nothing I can say about myself. I don't know who I am anymore." This kind of humility seems to be essential for God or God's messengers to be able to reach through and shake you up in some way.

When one is in this state of, "I no longer know who or what I am," it's more possible for spiritual wisdom or divine wisdom to come through. I want to illustrate this by looking at Christ's often-quoted comment in the New Testament, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Most people take this to mean, try harder to be nice to people. Try not to be so selfish. Try to care about the beggar on the street, the homeless person who wants a quarter from you, the starving and the sick in the Third World. In fact, Christ's message is intensely more radical than that. Christ had a total experience of recognizing that he was not at all who he originally thought he was. When he said, "Love your neighbor as yourself," he wasn't advising us to make an effort of will to be nicer or more charitable or more loving. The Pathwork Guide reminds us that this is impossible anyway. You cannot just tell yourself to be more loving and then be successful in that effort of will. You can push yourself to behave in a certain way, or to polish a *mask* of appearing to be more loving, but you cannot successfully force yourself to be genuinely more loving.

So what does Christ mean? No words will adequately convey it, but he's saying something like, "Do the necessary, very intense work on yourself and your own consciousness and your own being until you get to the point of realizing: There is *no difference* between my neighbor and myself. She is me, and I am her. Therefore, it is really the height of un-wisdom even to *assume* that there could be something that is simultaneously good for me and bad for her, much less to *aspire* to something like that. To say my neighbor and I are one does not just mean, well, we're all part of the human

race, and we should love each other more. It means, *we are one*. We are like two fingers on one hand. Of course we need to be concerned with what is good for the entire body, and not just for a single finger."

## **Follow Your Yearning**

Phase Two Pathwork pushes you toward a course of discipline that can cause you to know and understand this message in a way that will truly change you. What is that course of discipline? I can't say, well, you have to do this practice for 20 years and that technique for 10 years. There's no set course. What counts, as the Guide says many times in the lectures, is the sincerity of your search and your willingness to try anything, to commit totally, to dedicate your life to this search; to say: "This search is the most important thing in the world, and I will put it above everything else." To the extent that you do this – to the extent that you are on fire to know God in all Her/His manifestations – Spirit comes close and touches you. It's not as though you are climbing a mountain, getting closer and closer to Spirit. Rather, as you keep looking within, and you thus see and give up your own inner blocks to being affected and transformed, Spirit increasingly has the ability to reach you, touch you, and change you.

There's a Zen story about a student who encounters the master by the river where he always sits, and comes to him and complains: "I've been meditating for 20 years and I still haven't gotten anywhere. I still feel like the same person I always was. I've been disciplining myself and fasting and meditating. How come I can't have a spiritual experience? I haven't seen the Buddha yet, I don't know what Buddha is, I'm not getting anywhere." And the master, finally getting tired of hearing his student whine, grabs him and thrusts his head under the water. He holds him down, and the guy is spluttering and floundering and thrashing around, and finally the master lets him up just before he drowns. The student says, "What in the world were you doing? What was that all about?" And the master says, "When you want enlightenment as bad as you wanted that next breath, it will come to you."

So, that's the story...can it be applied to you? The story says that if your desire, your willingness, your yearning for clarity and wisdom and for contacting the ultimate is strong enough, you will do whatever it takes. And one cannot say ahead of time what that "what it takes" includes. That's why everyone's path is different. Krishnamurti said that the truth is a trackless land. No one can say, go through these 20 steps and you'll get there, because everyone is different. Your blocks and demons are different from other people's. But if your heart says, "I want to *join* God, not just to worship God from afar but to recognize and feel my oneness with God and to experience God's love pouring into my soul," – if you yearn for that intensely enough – you will open yourself up and take the risks necessary for it to happen. Then Spirit will draw near and claim you, and you will never be the same.

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