

Pathwork on
Ego And Individuality

This quote from Pathwork Lecture 6 *The Human Role in the Spiritual and Material Universes*, explains the differences between the concept of the **ego** and that of **individuality**. I find it clarifying and rich – leading to celebrating our own true lives as individuals forever unfolding within a Oneness of All.

07	<p>QUESTION: I would like to ask you, what is the difference between the Indian and the Western concepts about the continuity of life after death. Which one is right? Is it true that there is nothing after death, as the Indians say, that after repeated incarnations the soul finally returns to nothingness, that the individual personality does not survive? Or does personality and individual consciousness remain in existence in some form?</p>
08	<p>ANSWER: First I want to mention again that there is hardly any religious concept which does not contain a kernel of truth. And whenever you ask such a question, ask about that also, and I will help you to see where you can find this kernel of truth, whether it concerns the Bible or any other religious teaching. So, to come back to your question, I want to explain to you first how it really is. This will shed light on the contradictions.</p>
09	<p>The higher evolved an individual is, the more will the limitations of the ego fall away. It is the ego which erects the wall of blindness and separation around the soul. The higher the development, the more will the band of love which ties one soul to the other become visible -- but this band is tied in freedom, in the sense that we are bound to each other by love. All who are connected with this band of love will feel the other's pain with the same intensity as their own; the other's joy will be like their own. The experience will be the same for you and the other. The ego, putting itself in its own separate place, elevates itself above the other by wanting something better for itself than for the other. The ego will disappear with each step that the being -- human or spirit -- takes on the upward path. When the highest steps are reached, the feeling of brotherhood, of love, of at-oneness with the Thou, every Thou, is so complete that each soul vibrates in an ever-growing unity with every other soul, forming a true, free bond with all its brothers and sisters and with the Heavenly Father. It is very difficult to explain this to you in words, because you lack the inner experience of such a state and therefore have no concept for it. Therefore I am asking you to try to feel into the meaning between the lines, so that you can in some way imagine what I am trying to convey.</p>
10	<p>The highest level is that which we call "the House of God." Do not imagine this as a house, but as a vast sphere. A being who enters the House of God, who does not have to incarnate in a human body anymore, has merged so completely with the Thou that, as I said before, everything is felt and experienced equally in the self and in the other -- exactly because the ego has been overcome. By the way, not everybody who no longer needs to incarnate on earth enters the House of God right away; often the development continues in other spheres first.</p>

	<p>Now, human beings often make the mistake, by confusing the basic concepts, of believing that the ego is identical with the sense of individuality the personality has. But one has nothing to do with the other. On the contrary, as I tried to explain in some of my lectures, the consciousness of the "I" is expanded and intensified with every higher level reached, and exactly because the separation of the ego has been overcome. Since this separateness is nothing but blindness and lack of understanding, it must necessarily diminish and reduce awareness, and thus the sense of individuality in the personality. One day the ego must be overcome and the merging accomplished. Then individuality will not only not be relinquished, but will come into its own in ever-increasing freedom, light, understanding, and love.</p>
11	<p>So you can see the kernel of truth in the Indian, as well as in the Jewish and Christian concept, though they seem to contradict each other. The Indian concept refers to the dissolution of the ego, while the Jewish and Christian concept deals only with the individuality of the soul, which truly and eternally exists in a heightened form. Both are true. The reason that the concept of Nirvana has spread in India is the following:</p>
12	<p>In India there have always been a number of people who, through certain meditation exercises -- similar to what I will eventually teach you -- and also because of their high spiritual development, have reached the capacity to free their spirit from their body without losing their consciousness. Thus they had certain spiritual experiences. Since transcending the ego, at least to a degree, is a basic requirement for a spiritual experience and for the feeling of great bliss that accompanies it, it is understandable that people who have not had such experiences distort the accounts given by those who have had them. Any feeling is difficult to express in words. The higher, the more beautiful and blissful an experience is, the less easy it is to clothe it into words for those who have not yet been able to go through the same experience, and this is especially true with a spiritual experience. Therefore, any spiritual experience relayed from one person to the other is even more prone to be misunderstood than accounts of factual events. And this is what happened here. It is thus not at all the case that the individuality is dissolved and annihilated. If it were so, the personal experience couldn't even have been registered and brought into consciousness, nor could the attempt ever have been made to convey it, however insufficiently. From all this it is easy to understand how the concept that the individuality ceases to exist came into being. Nevertheless, it is a gross error. As a matter of fact, it is an impossibility, my friends. Nothing that God created in beauty and purity ever dissolves, especially not the spirit. And the individuality, in its pure form, that is without ego, is purely of the spirit.</p>
13	<p>When seeing a beautiful flower or a lovable little animal you believe that they exist only temporarily because the body or external shell will decay, or perhaps because the species is dying out, you are mistaken. No, my dear ones, what is beautiful and noble, what is spiritual -- and whatever is beautiful and noble is always spiritual -- never dissolves, it remains forever, perhaps in a somewhat different form, but fully maintained in its essence, that is, in its individuality. For what is of the spirit is alive. When you see a dead body you</p>

	<p>often say, "Life has gone out of it," or "Life has left it." When you say that you know that you are referring to the living spirit. Therefore whatever is good and noble in the character of a human being or any creature never dissolves, it exists forever and in its individuality. Do you understand this?</p>
14	<p>QUESTION: Yes. And of course for us it is very important to ascertain or at least get some intimation that the ties we have with our loved ones will remain in existence.</p>
15	<p>ANSWER: That's exactly what I say. Of course. If there were no individual personality, there could also be no contact with others, whether in love or otherwise. And it is not only that the bond of love will remain between you and those who were close to you, but one day, maybe in a very long time according to your perception, this bond will expand and include other beings to whom you now may be indifferent or whom you even dislike. This loving connection will, in ever growing expansion, include more and more brothers and sisters. So that what is achieved through your spiritual development -- love, understanding, and so on -- can never be lost.</p>
16	<p>By the way, the erroneous concept of complete dissolution of the personality was never formulated or propagated by the Indian mystics who have had the spiritual experiences referred to as Nirvana. I can assure you that if you spoke to such a person, whether Indian or not, he would confirm that it is a misunderstanding and that the truth is exactly the way I tried to describe it to you. He would confirm that, on the contrary, the individuality, the capacity for personal experience, will only increase and in no way decrease, and that only the ego dissolves. And this is an essential difference! It would be good if you reflected and meditated about this difference. For you think that your whole personality hinges on the ego.</p>
17	<p>I would explain it in this way: The ego is a part of the lower self and the individual personality is the sum total of all that the being is in its momentary state of development, including the lower and the higher self. What passes is only the lower self, which makes you heavy and earthbound with its ego and which limits your individual capacity to experience the divine in every respect, be it a personal spiritual experience, love for your neighbor or compassion, or whatever. Imagine, then, that you have two "selves" who fight each other. This I always tell you. Once you are advanced enough to feel the difference and know how to discriminate one from the other within your soul, you will not only understand my explanations better, but you will also be much closer to the spiritual experience itself. When one clings so tightly to the ego, it is not only because it is so difficult to overcome any aspect of the lower self, but also because one has the misconception that with the ego one would also have to give up the individual personality.</p>