

**02** Pathwork Lecture #132 –1996 Edition  
March 19, 1965.....

### **THE FUNCTION OF THE EGO IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE REAL SELF**

**03** Greetings, my dearest friends. Blessings and guidance are extended so that each and every one of you finds your path easier and reaches the goal with less struggle and resistance.

**04** What is the goal? The goal, as far as you are concerned, can be only one thing: becoming your real self. We approach this task from many angles.

**05** First I wish to discuss how the inner self differs from the outer self, or the real self from the ego. What is their relationship to each other? There are many confusing theories about the function of the ego. According to some the ego is essentially negative and undesirable and the spiritual goal is to get rid of it. Other theories, particularly those that characterize psychoanalytic thinking, say that the ego is important. The scientific view is that where there is no ego, there can be no mental health. These are two entirely opposing views. Which one is correct? Which one is false? Perhaps this lecture will shed some light on this important question.

**06** Even if such conflicting views are not consciously held by you, they nevertheless blur your vision and hinder you from reaching the important goal of your self-realization.

**07** Let us briefly recapitulate the essence of the real self. Your inner self is an integral part of nature, bound to the laws of nature. Therefore to distrust this innermost self is unreasonable, for nature can be wholly trusted. If nature seems like an enemy, it is only because you do not understand its laws. The inner self, or the real self, is nature; it is life; it is creation. It is more accurate to define the real self this way than to say it is "a part" of nature. The real self and nature are one and the same.

**08** Whenever you function from your real self you are in truth, you are joyful. The most creative and constructive contributions to life come from your inner self. Everything that is great and generous, everything that is life-expanding, beautiful, and wise comes from the inner or real self. This cannot be emphasized often enough, even in your meditations. Trying to understand this truth, not only with your mind but with your feelings, is essential.

**09** Now then, my friends, if this is so, what then is the function of the ego, meaning

by this word the outer level of personality? The ego level is more accessible to you and you are more acutely and more directly aware of it. The ego is the part that thinks, acts, discriminates, and decides. The person whose ego has not sufficiently grown, whose ego is weak, is incapable of mastering or coping with life. And the person whose ego is overgrown and overemphasized cannot come to the real self. In other words, both extremes of the ego's weakness and its inflation must hinder the reaching of the real self. Your problems and conflicts always result from either too big an ego or too small an ego.

- 10** It cannot be said that one person has too big an ego and another too small or too weak an ego. Although this is so at times, most often an imbalance exists: underdeveloped in one area of your personality and overdeveloped in another. In this way nature tries to reestablish balance. The overdevelopment may be nature's attempt to straighten out the disturbance resulting from too weak an ego.
- 11** Only when the ego is sufficiently developed can it be adequately dispensed with. Now, this may sound like a contradiction, my friends, but it is not. For if the ego is underdeveloped, your efforts to compensate create a weakness and evasion that can produce only more weakness. As long as the ego is not strong enough, you lack the faculties characteristic of your outer self which are to think, discriminate, decide, and act appropriately in any situation you encounter in the outer world.
- 12** Anyone who strives to reach the real self by rejecting the development of a healthy ego, does so out of poverty. Such people do not yet own their outer self. Perhaps they know that their outer self, or ego, is ceasing to be necessary, so they try to skip the creation of a healthy ego. This may be due to laziness since ego development is so difficult, and they hope that this vital step can simply be avoided. But this error, like all errors, is costly. It actually delays reaching the goal. Only when you are fully possessed of your outer self, your ego, can you dispense with it and reach your real self.
- 13** This is a law. It is a logical law, for then you act out of strength and abundance, not out of weakness, need and poverty. Only when the ego is healthy and strong can you know that it is not the final answer, the final realm of being. Only when you possess a strong and healthy ego that is not overgrown and overemphasized, can you use this ego to transcend itself and reach a further state of consciousness.
- 14** In your work on this path you learn through your meditations, for instance, to use all the faculties of your ego to reach beyond it. What you absorb from outside must first pass your ego faculties. In practical terms: you first reach out with your ego faculties and use them to grasp truths that you later experience on a deeper level of consciousness.
- 15** There are many human beings who do not realize that there is anything beyond the ego. Their final goal is to cultivate a strong ego, whether or not they think about it in these terms. This striving may lead them to the distortion of an over-developed ego. It is a dead-end street: the goal is misstated because it is much too limited in scope and

possibilities, so instead of transcending the stage of the powerful ego, one's energies are used to further aggrandize it.

**16** The law that you have to reach a certain state and fully be there before you can abandon it for a higher state is extremely important to understand, my friends. Humans often overlook it and, even more often, totally ignore it. The importance of this law has not been made clear enough to humanity, in spite of the discovery of many spiritual and psychological truths. This is one of the great, important laws for you to know and deeply comprehend.

**17** In a variant form, the essence of this very law can be seen in the topic under discussion: the function of the ego in relation to the real self. The real self knows that the universe has no limitations; that in truth absolute perfection does exist, attainable for each individual; that unlimited expansion of faculties and forces, in the universe as well as in the individual, makes this perfection possible. When you become your real self, your godself, you become omnipotent, for you become the master of all existing laws. Even people who have never heard of such a philosophy deeply sense and yearn for this final reality, this potential of life and being.

**18** It is possible to perceive this message from the real self quite clearly even without the ego. But without the ego the meaning of the message must be distorted. Not only have you all heard from psychological teachings about the childish striving for perfection, but you have experienced it within yourselves. The little child at birth does not yet possess an ego. It seeks omnipotence, pleasure supreme, the ultimate bliss that knows neither lack nor unfulfillment or frustration.

**19** Without an ego these strivings are unrealistic, even destructive. You all have experienced in your pathwork that you first have to shed these desires or strivings before you can come to them all over again realize them.

**20** In other words, every one of you who is on this path has to come to terms with and has to accept your limitations as a human being before you can realize that you have an unlimited fount of power at your disposal. You all have to accept your own imperfections, as well as this life's imperfections, before you can experience that absolute perfection that you must ultimately realize is your destiny. But you can comprehend this only after you have shed the childish distortion of this knowledge that is flawed because of a lack of ego. You all have to learn to let go of a desire for pleasure supreme and make do with limited pleasure before you can realize that absolute pleasure is your ultimate destiny. Accepting less is an acceptance of this earthly reality. For dealing with this dimension the ego faculties are necessary. Only when your ego deals adequately with the realm in which your personality and your body now live can you then deeply comprehend your real faculties, possibilities, and potential.

**21** When I speak of the ultimate aim of perfection, of limitless power, of pleasure supreme, I do not mean that you realize this in a distant future when you no longer possess a body. I do not speak of this state in a measure of time, but in a measure of

quality that could exist at any moment, specifically at the moment when you awaken to truth. Awakening to truth is possible only when you have first found and then let go of the childish distortions of utter perfection, utter power, and utter pleasure. In the underdeveloped ego, these desires are not only illusory but selfish and destructive. They have to be abandoned before they can be attained.

**22** This is the very same law that determines how working from abundance produces abundance, but working from poverty and need produces more poverty and need. The healthy, strong ego knows reality without being upset that fulfillment may not yet be possible because of the obstructions to the real self. The weak ego considers itself annihilated when its wishes for omnipotence remain unfulfilled; therefore, its wish is negative. It will clutch to laws and conditions of the little ego, thereby distorting the greater laws. Out of need and weakness the ego forgoes the strength and fullness that comes when it deals adequately with the immediate now, thereby transcending it.

**23** My dearest friends, this lecture is of very great importance to all of you. It may not only dispel the confusion about apparent contradictions in philosophical ideas about life, but, even more important, it may provide an essential key to your own development. It may facilitate a letting go that can happen only when you trust your innermost self as an integral part of nature and creation.

**24** When you feel and experience your real self, you will not fear and consequently overemphasize your ego faculties. Nor will you leave important underdeveloped ego faculties to slumber, untended.

**25** Are there any questions, first regarding this topic?

QUESTION: Am I right in thinking that to be in a state of reality would be eventually equivalent to being in a state of godhood?

**26** ANSWER: Yes, of course. But when this state is sought after artificially because the task of developing the ego seems too difficult, it is not the true way. The ego must be mastered. When I say the ego, I mean everything it has to deal with. Let us take an example. In a distorted view, the life of the outer person is often hard. You have to work hard, you have to struggle for survival and subsistence. It was distortion and misconception that have brought you to this state. At the same time, you dream of the state you will eventually find when struggle no longer exists, where only bliss exists. To attempt to escape the struggle by finding a shortcut to bliss is an error. The struggle corresponds to the ego. Only after struggle has been positively accepted will it prove superfluous, and work and pleasure will become one. But evading this work leaves important potentials in the psyche and the ego untended, unexplored. After acceptance of the struggle, people discover relatively quickly that tediousness in daily survival can in truth come to an end. It is then that they realize the godlike state to some degree.

**27** QUESTION: Regarding the overdeveloped and underdeveloped parts of the ego: would they be connected with overactivity and passivity, respectively?

ANSWER: Yes. The functions of the ego further the state of becoming, while the real self is the state of being. Of course, humans misconstrue the state of being as meaning no activity. But the activity is within the state of being. Activity and passivity blend as one harmonious cosmic movement.

**28** QUESTION: Where I am unable to let go of my selfwill and therefore unable to let go and trust in God, is where my ego is overdeveloped. Where I fear self-responsibility, that is where my ego is underdeveloped. Is that correct?

**29** ANSWER: Indeed. Where you do not dare to make your own decisions, where you lean on ready-made rules, there your ego is not sufficiently developed. And here you have a very good illustration of what I spoke of in this lecture: one distortion creates an opposite distortion. Because your ego is underdeveloped in the areas you mentioned, something in you tries to attain the selfhood you simultaneously deny when you refuse self-choice and self-responsibility. Only it does so by choosing the wrong way. Since the entire process is blind, and lacks awareness, the self-willed, wrong way of attaining selfhood is chosen, instead of true independence. Concomitantly, your deep psyche feels that there should be a loosening up as the clutching becomes a strain. Your psyche seeks to loosen up again in the wrong way, by not relying on your discriminating ego to make your own decisions. Rather you choose the directives of others in your obedience to rules.

**30** QUESTION: I find it very difficult to let go of the dependency I feel toward any person possibly representing my father or my mother. I have been quite aware of this. But what you said tonight about the reluctance of letting go of this childish desire for omnipotence, the dream of pleasure supreme -- this seems to me to be an important factor. I don't think I realized this sufficiently until today. Could you perhaps explain to me how these two act together, making it difficult for me to let go?

**31** ANSWER: Now, of course, it is very important that in your work you find specifically in what areas you do not wish to give up omnipotence, pleasure supreme, and the ease the spirit longs for, a state where hardship does not exist. You yearn more for this state than you know. You do not want responsibility because it still appears a burden to you. In a corner of your being you believe that the childish state where no adult responsibility exists can be maintained. Simply by insisting that your parents continue to care for you, you believe that the childish state can be perpetuated. In your self-observations you must find in what specific ways this manifests in your emotional reactions.

**32** Something deep inside you clamors to have all the childish wishes fulfilled. You do not want to give up any of these wishes, not comprehending that, in this form, the wishes are unfulfillable. At the same time, on an equally deep inner level, you fear the consequences of this weakness and dependency. Therefore, as an inwardly weak and dependent person, how can you afford to let go? For the only way you can appear strong in your own concept of yourself is by insisting, by not giving up and letting go.

The weakness creates fear, and fear generates distrust. Therefore you cannot let go and give yourself up to the universal flow that will bring you to a state where the higher self attains these initially childish wishes on a different level. You must first determine to become a strong, self-responsible ego, an ego that is mature enough on all levels. Of course, I emphasize that I speak of this inner level, and not of you as a whole and outer person, for there are many levels where you are mature and self-responsible enough to give up the childish version of essentially realizable wishes.

**33** Beware of the feeling of resignation that you can never have any of that. Know that the fulfillment exists. You will come to realize that when you give up the perfect dream, what you have now will be so much better, so much more pleasurable. Meditate and pronounce the words that you truly wish to let go of the immature wishes, but without resignation, in a positive spirit that awaits the good possibilities, even though the rigid, childish version is abandoned.

**34** Part of this maturing lies in establishing clearly and specifically in what way you have caused a specific hardship, difficulty, or void. When such meditation is used, you will see that you become strong. You will then trust yourself. As you do so, the innermost self becomes a reality. Being part of life and creation, you will trust them all. Your distrust now prevents you from giving yourself up, from letting yourself be. You must distrust yourself if you refuse to become a strong enough ego that adequately deals with the immediate issues around you. Do you now understand the connection?

**35** QUESTION: I understand it; it is very clear. Only I feel, isn't it a long way to go, in the sense that one wants a certain experience, or a certain pleasure, or a certain power? And then I would say, must I accommodate myself to the present circumstances or can I reach out for whatever I want?

**36** ANSWER: Yes, you can and certainly should reach out. But you can adequately reach out only if you trust that it can happen, and let it happen. But now you want to do it with your outer ego deficiencies. In this case the ego cannot adequately serve you. To want it now is a gross misunderstanding of the functions of the ego. You use your ego where it cannot serve you, and you refuse to use it where it must serve you. You want to attain that pleasure with the limited scope and vision of the ego, rather than through letting that most real part of nature: life and creation within you, bring it to you in its own way. But you do not entrust it, because you do not let go. And you can let go of this part of your ego only when you have understood these things and when you use the ego faculties in their proper way, even getting out of the way and claiming that different, higher functions fulfill their role for you. When this interplay is learned and lived with, self-trust grows, and positive chain reactions between ego, real self, and universal forces are set in motion.

**37** When you reach into the ego world with your ego faculties, you limit yourself. Reaching out into the universe must be done by a decision of the ego, but not with ego limitations. You must reach into another realm. This is where the ego must be abandoned. This was the essence of this lecture. The giving up of the ego can happen

only when you fully possess it.

**38** QUESTION: Isn't the ego connected with selfwill?

ANSWER: Indeed. False ideas, as well as selfwill, are naturally a result of the ego world, and not of the real self. But it is also within the power of the ego to give up both selfwill and false ideas. Only the ego can do so. The ego plays a necessary part in changing its own mind and intent. It plays a necessary part in understanding that it has a false idea; that it does have selfwill. It is up to the ego to maintain or abandon either of these two. The ego alone is capable of exchanging the false idea for a truthful one. This means letting go of tense, anxious self-will and replace it with a relaxed, free-flowing, flexible will, based on discriminating reasoning power, and calling upon the intuitive levels of self for higher inner guidance from the real self.

**39** QUESTION: I cannot visualize how the law of karma and heredity works and how the process of birth takes place. Does the soul exist before the baby is born? How does that work?

ANSWER: Perhaps the best way for you to understand these principles would be to realize that the human body is a direct result of the personality which, of course, exists before the baby's birth. The personality's thinking, attitudes, emotions, actions, all have their effects. The body with its environment, the life and life situation, the personal fate -- all these are effects of the mentality and personality and character. Not only your body, but your life conditions are a result of what you are. If you look at the question from this point of view, you will avoid a great deal of confusion. Karmic law, heredity, and specific conditions of birth are then no longer a problem. The way you now perceive the process of birth is as if a body were built by forces outside the personality. This creates confusion because such thinking occurs in a dualistic split rather than in the spirit of unity, where you perceive that you are an immediate result of yourself, including your body, your country, as well as every other factor in your life.

**40** QUESTION: It is difficult to feel that.

ANSWER: Of course. You must not try to enforce such feeling. It will come by itself if you shelve this problem now. The more you comprehend cause and effect in your immediate life, where blindness in this respect still prevails, the greater your experience will be of the self as the central cause of your life.

**41** All my friends still overlook very immediate links of cause and effect: how you forfeit the results you wish for and overlook patterns and attitudes that create certain undesirable conditions in your immediate life. As long as there is a veil over these links between cause and effect, it is impossible to feel how this law operates over a wider time span.

**42** QUESTION: I suffer from occasional heart palpitations which have no organic cause. I have found in my work that this is due to repressed guilt. Is there self-

punishment involved?

**43** ANSWER: Yes. It is self-punishment, at the same time fear of punishment, and also fear of and resistance to giving up what causes the guilt in the first place. You have made good progress in your work. Now, if you uncover a level where you do not want to give up any of the facets that create the guilt, you will have a profound understanding and experience of your basic problem. The self-punishment is a substitute for giving up the guilt-producing attitudes. By doing so, you unconsciously believe that it is possible to maintain these attitudes yet absolve yourself of the guilt. Therefore you go on punishing yourself, believing that this makes up for the fact that you do not give up the destructive patterns. If you say often enough how bad you are, if you suffer enough from your guilt, you feel you are still a nice person, in spite of maintaining what is, in actuality, of no conceivable advantage to you and to others. The specific realization of this level will come to the degree that you truly wish to find it. Your ego faculties will help you to shed the guilt-producing patterns. Even if something in you doubts, you may shed the patterns anyway in the understanding that at any time you have the right to reassume them, should you so desire. This will strengthen your ego. Then you will succeed. You will no longer be a helpless prey. You then take hold of yourself by using your ego in the proper way.

**44** Bring your personal problems, my friends. We can go into them more deeply at the question and answer sessions. You will surely profit from such participation.

**45** All the blessings are extended to every one of you. These blessings are a reality that transcend and envelop you. They are the universal love, responding to your valiant efforts of self-expansion. Be in peace, be in God!

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