This lecture is given in an expanded poetic format, what I call a Devotional Format of the lecture, and in that sense, this is my interpretation of the intent of the lecture. I may have interpreted portions differently from you, and I ask you to ponder the words for your own interpretation. I did this Devotional Format so I can take the words into my heart, phrase by phrase, much as I would in reading poetry – that is, devotionally.

The blessings to me in developing this format have been truly profound, and my wish is that this Devotional Format will be a blessing to others. I invite you to slowly read and ponder this format of the text – with an open heart to experience the Guide’s Presence and Love emerging from among the words such that the wisdom comes to LIVE you.

For clarity: The original text is in bold and italicized. [My adds of commentary/clarification/interpretation are in brackets, italicized, and not bolded.] To learn more of my Devotional Format and see the lectures I have done in this way, go to https://www.garyvollbracht.com/pathwork-lectures/pathwork-lectures-devotional-format/

Gary Vollbracht

by Eva Broch Pierrakos
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However, you do not yet fully understand what happens to your entire system when you become defensive.

Such knowledge [i.e., Such knowledge of what happens to your ENTIRE SYSTEM when you become defensive] will be very useful for your
  • further work
  and
  • self-observation.

It will mean a great deal to you to understand
  • the processes of your
    • physical,
    • mental,
    • emotional,
  and
  • spiritual nature,

and specifically
  • what happens on all these levels of your personality when you are defensive.

You have begun to observe a
  • hard knot,
  or
  • wall within,
  when you
    • withdraw in fear and
    • close yourself up, meaning to protect yourself.
However,
     this defensive reaction [i.e., this defensive reaction of withdrawing in fear and closing yourself up in order to protect yourself]
     • is so imbedded in you,
     and
     • has become so much second nature,
     that most of the time
     you are unaware
     that you
     are
     on the defensive.

Therefore [i.e., Therefore, because your DEFENSIVE REACTION is so automatic and spontaneous that you are not even aware of it]
     you have to
     understand more about this subject.

     • Be on the lookout,
     and
     • become
     more intensely aware of
     the defensive reaction
     so that you may
     get over it.

When you are
     on the defensive,
     you are
     • frightened;
     you feel
     • threatened
     and
     • endangered.

There certainly are
     realistic dangers,
     and
     the human system
     is equipped to deal with them.
If an actual attack is made on you, all your faculties will withdraw from their usual preoccupations and will be • directed to and • concentrated on this one danger.

In order to deal with an urgent issue at the moment, you need all your faculties to focus on that one point.

Then your entire system goes through a change for the single purpose of dealing with the emergency.

In such a moment, your glandular system releases a certain substance that shoots through your entire nervous system, • speeding up your blood pressure and • accelerating your pulse beat.

All this happens for the purpose of focusing your faculties on the danger point, • to heighten the speed of the appropriate reaction, and • to quicken the power of your perception.
When you are in real danger, this is
• good
and
• important,
for otherwise,
with only your normal
• reactions and
• perceptions
at your disposal,
you could not muster the energy that is necessary to protect yourself.

With the glandular reaction, however, you will develop more strength –
• physical or
• mental – than you normally have in order to defend yourself.

Or you will quickly
• judge and
• decide whether

• defense by counterattack
or
• flight

is the better way to deal with the particular danger.
In an average life, such actual dangers occur only every once in a while.

The substance released from your glandular system contains a certain poison which will not damage you if your defense mechanism works only in those rare instances.

After the danger is over and your system goes back to normal functioning, the poison is absorbed and dissolved.

This poison is a necessary stimulant for the moment, but if the stimulation is permanent, damage to your system is unavoidable.

It is the same with certain medicines that are important for a cure, but if you form a habit of taking them, you will be damaged in the long run.
When you are on the defensive in psychological conflicts, for
  • irrational,
  • unrealistic reasons,
your glandular system does not question the validity of the reason [i.e., does not question the validity of the reason you feel the need to defend yourself].

The poisonous substance is released the moment you are frightened, and
every time you are on the defensive, you are frightened.

Therefore [i.e., Because the poisonous substance is released when you are frightened, and every time you are on the defensive you are frightened], it is important that
  • unrealistic fears should cease,
and
  • being on the defensive for no valid reason [should] be ruled out of your life, otherwise
    • the poisonous substance will affect your bloodstream and
    • nervous system,
and
  • physical damage will accrue in one way or another.
According to
  • individual makeup
  and
  • the physical resistance of the various organs,

damage will appear sooner or later,
  more or less noticeably,
  in this or that part of the body.

This is the
  • physical side.

As to the
  • mental side of your nature,
    when you are in
    actual realistic danger,
    all your mental faculties
    will automatically concentrate –
      with the help of the poisonous stimulant –
      on the issue at hand.

You cannot concentrate on
  anything else.

You will not be capable of
  harboring thoughts of
    • truth
    and
    • wisdom,
      except
      those that deal
        with
        • the danger of the moment,
        and
        with
        • protecting yourself.

All other considerations,
  which are otherwise important for a
    • harmonious and
    • meaningful
      life,
      will be excluded.
If this reaction happens in isolated moments of actual danger, it is
• good
and
• purposeful.

When the
• actual,
• realistic
danger is over, you can
return to normal,
and your thought processes can again concentrate on
• the many aspects of life,
on
• others and
on
• yourself,
  all of which have nothing to do with protecting yourself from danger.
However,
if you are
• constantly,
or
• often,
  in a
  psychological state
  of warding off
  • danger
  and
  • attack
  at a time when there is actually
  no danger of attack,
• the development of
  your mental faculties
  is bound to suffer.

• Your concepts
  will remain
  • immature and
  • limited,
  even if you happen to have
  a good brain.

• Your outlook
  will be much too limited
  to deal with life adequately.

All this happens
in such a
• subtle
  and
• insidious
  way
  that you are
  utterly unaware of it.
You cannot tell the difference between
  • actual
and
  • unreal
    threats,
    because
the state of
  being on the defensive
has become second nature.

This [i.e., This state of always being on the defensive in life]
hinders your
vision of truth
about
  • others,
about
  • life,
and
about
  • yourself.

It [i.e., This state of always being on the defensive in life]
prohibits you
from seeing your
  • possibilities
and
  • potentials
in making proper choices.

All this comes about
because
  your entire mental system
is geared
  • to ward off
    an imaginary danger
    and
  • to defend yourself from it [i.e., from the imaginary danger].

Thus
  the same processes are operative
when the danger is
  • imaginary
as
when you are in
  • actual danger.
In actual danger,
your heightened perception makes you decide whether to
• launch a counterattack,
or, if this is hopelessly dangerous and futile, to
• run away and
• protect yourself by hiding.

There is no room for consideration of anything else.

A similar procedure occurs when your defense mechanism functions in a
• neurotic,
• unreal situation.

You choose either
• the pseudo-solution of aggressiveness,
or
• withdrawal from life,
or
• appeasement, which robs you of your integrity.

All these defenses stem from your fright of being exposed to the possibility of danger.
You live in a constant state of war, with most of your mental faculties focused on defending yourself, which does not leave you sufficient room to deal with life adequately.

You can easily see that such powerfully one-pointed concentration is

- only necessary in the rare instances of actual danger,

but

- extremely damaging and
- limiting when there is no such danger.

The emotional side of your nature, when faced with actual danger, feels only

- fright and
- anger.

In the rare instances of real danger, it is good that this is so, because these two emotions [i.e., because the emotions of fright and anger] produce the necessary

- impetus and
- strength to defend yourself.
All other emotions [i.e., All emotions other than fright and anger] are withdrawn at that moment.

If you were at such moments [i.e., at moments of actual danger] capable of having all sorts of other feelings, the necessary strength to defend yourself would be absent. However, when the danger is over, the

• normal and • integrated person can quickly return to a state wherein many other emotions can be felt, apart from

• fear and • anger.

If you are constantly on the defensive, however, the predominant feelings are

• fright and • anger.

I hardly need to discuss how damaging this is for

• you and for • your surroundings.
Whenever you are hurt, you erroneously believe yourself to be under attack.

You think there is a danger to your safety.

Thus you immediately repress the • hurt – your primary reaction – and you substitute • anger and • hostility for it [i.e., for the hurt, the hurt which is your primary reaction].

You begin to allow your defense mechanism, whatever your individual pseudo-solutions are, to go to war.

Needless to say, you are no longer in truth.

The hurt you experienced, unpleasant as it may have been, • is no • real danger and • does not call for • elaborate defenses, infinitely more damaging than the original hurt could ever be.
Also

• you are no longer aware of
  • the original hurt,
  but only of
  • the secondary reaction –
    the anger.

Repressing
the truth
institutes a process
of
• self-alienation,
  of
• psychological self-estrangement.

You can all begin to see
how predominant
this defensiveness is.

It [i.e., This defensiveness]
may be
• subtle
  and
• not easy to detect,
  but once you are on the right track,
  you become
  more acutely aware of
  its permanent existence.

You not only defend
against
• hurt
  as a supposed mortal danger,
but also
against
• frustration of your will,
  and thus
against
• anything
  that does not go
  according to your wishes.
All this [i.e., All this hurt, frustration, and anything else that does not go according to your wishes]
represents,
  unconsciously,
  a threat to your safety,
  which in reality
    is null [i.e., a threat, which in reality is insignificant].

Frustrations
  may be undesirable,
  but not necessarily
dangerous.

Yet a defense mechanism,
  by its very nature,
  is a process of
  warding off danger.

When the process
  is used for
    actual danger,
      it is meaningful;
  when it is not [i.e., when this defense mechanism is used for warding off experiences that may be uncomfortable but are NOT actually dangerous],
    your entire system
      is put out of balance.

Your faculties
  are limited
    to a degree you cannot fully comprehend as yet.

In other words,
  your instinct of
    self-preservation
      is at work
        when not required.

Whenever instincts which were
  originally destined to meet a specific danger
    are used in other situations,
the human psyche is
  • distorted
  and
    • put out of balance.
Looking now at
the spiritual side of your nature
as you face actual danger,
it again is necessary
that your capacity of
feeling
be limited to
the moment.

Remember that
the whole range
of your feelings
is reduced to
• fright
and
• anger
precisely because
this enables you to protect
your physical safety.

Such concentration [i.e., Such concentration of your feelings to fright and anger]
does not leave room for
feelings of
• love,
• warmth,
• affection,
• understanding,
and
• compassion.

Therefore
in moments of danger
you withdraw into yourself,
gathering your forces for
• counterattack or
• flight.

You no longer
• reach out into the world;
you no longer
• try to bridge the gap
between
• yourself
and
• others.
[In moments of danger]

- Eliminating the separation between
  - yourself
  and
  - others,

or
- communication

and
- union

are

not

your immediate concerns.

In moments of actual danger

such positive feelings would be detrimental.

When the danger is over

you go back to feeling all the
- warm,
- good,
- outgoing,

and

- outreaching

feelings.

The same is true about your creativity,

another side of your spiritual nature.

No matter how creative a person may ordinarily be,
in moments of acute danger

the creativity

- is temporarily suspended

and

- returns only after the danger is over.
When you are more or less permanently defensive because you believe, erroneously, that any
  • hurt or
  • frustration,
any
  • criticism or
  • rejection
is a danger you must guard against,
you limit the range of your feelings.

You also limit the potentials of your
  • creativity,
your
  • ability to
    • reach out into life and
    • communicate with others,
to
  • love and
to
  • understand, and
to
  • feel and
  • express yourself.

In short,
  [when you are more or less permanently defensive]
your spiritual life is gravely impaired.
**By such self-imposed limitation** [i.e., By such limitation, self-imposed by your being more or less permanently defensive]

you

- isolate yourself
  more and more,

and

- institute the very patterns
  which cause
    others to
      - hurt
        and
      - frustrate
        you
  again and again
    because
    you
    unknowingly
    reject them.

**Therefore** [i.e., Therefore, because you institute the patterns that cause others to hurt and frustrate you again and again,]

you need to defend yourself
more,

and

two full-fledged vicious circles
are set into motion.

One is a

vicious circle
within yourself,

and

the other a

vicious circle
between

  - yourself
    and
  - others,
    which
      - triggers your defense-mechanism
        and
      - causes both parties
        to mutually
          reject
each other.
While you defend yourself unnecessarily because no actual danger exists, you are releasing poisonous substances into your physical body.

You

• are limiting your range of
  • thought
  and
  • feeling

and

you

• short circuit your creative processes.

You do not see the manifold possibilities of

• life

and

• communication with people.

Instead you isolate yourself with your busy defense against an unreal danger.

Actual dangers in which you need all your defensive equipment are encountered very rarely.
You do not have to learn how to use your defenses.

They [i.e., Your defenses] are automatic processes in every human being.

Even a child will have automatic reactions without having been taught.

I wish to make one more important point:

the more you use the instinctual faculties for • unreal danger the less they will work • effectively and • spontaneously when required for • real protection.

Therefore, a person whose inner system is constantly geared for defense against • unreal dangers is often incapable of coping with • real • attack and • threat.
**He or she** [i.e. *A person whose inner system is CONSTANTLY geared for defense against UNREAL dangers*]

- is
  - paralyzed,
  - helpless,

and

- actually becomes
  - a prey,
  - behaving like a victim
  - when he actually is not.

**This condition**

- can never be remedied
  - by bolstering the defenses for real danger.

  **That will not work.**

**However,**

- your defenses will be automatically reactivated if and when you learn to stop defending when there is no need to do so.

---

**This is why we have to eliminate**

- the unreal defense against an unreal danger.

**Such "dangers"** [i.e., Such UNREAL dangers]

- are
  - emotional hurt,
  - rejection,
  - frustration of your will, and
  - criticism.
When you feel accused of something
• true,
• half-true, or
• untrue,
you feel in mortal danger.

If you translate your emotional reactions to such criticism, you will readily see that your feelings say,

"I am in danger."

Now, let us examine the truth of the matter.

Are you really
• endangered or
• threatened because of
  • hurt,
  • frustration,
or  • criticism?

You, yourself, will have to verify that this [i.e., that the statement, “You are endangered or threatened by hurt, frustration, or criticism”] is not so.
Even

unjustified criticism
cannot endanger you,
provided
your attitude toward it
is
• mature
and
• realistic.

Is it not true
that
the criticism,
against which
you so strenuously defend yourself,
often threatens to expose
something you do not wish to face?

Perhaps
• it is
uncomfortable
for you to consider
changing,
or
• you believe that,
if the truth came out,
you would
not be
• loved
and
• worthy of respect,
and
you defend yourself
against
what is true,
even though
the truth may come from
people who are,
in their own way,
as imperfect as you.
The supposed mortal danger
you are compelled to ward off
is often
truth itself, my friends.

And you defend against it [i.e., you defend against the truth itself]
by pointing out
the truth
in the other person,
which that other
also does not want to see.

Maybe
• one is stronger
and
• the other weaker,
  but what difference does that make,
since everyone
  has their own
  • rhythm
  and
  • value system.

No one
can be compared with
another.

Evaluation
  on that basis [i.e., Evaluation on the basis of
  comparison with another person]
is never valid.

Thus two parties
point out truths
about each other,
and each
may be correct
to a degree, while
  not wanting to see
  the full truth
  about their own side.
You erroneously believe that if your weaknesses, or at least certain specific weaknesses, were exposed, others would have a right to reject you and not love you.

And this [i.e., And rejection and not being loved] you cannot bear.

So, to ward off the imaginary danger [i.e., imaginary danger of rejection and not being loved], you use all your defense mechanisms to preserve your status as a lovable human being.

You use such heavy fighting equipment only to your own detriment, for it is never true that people reject a person due to a fault or weakness alone.

If you observe life around you closely, you will find out without a doubt that hiding the truth is what causes rejection.
This [i.e., This fact that HIDING the TRUTH causes REJECTION] is why a
• free admission of
  the worst
  • fault
  or
  • distortion
  will bring forth
  acceptance,
while a
• defense against
  exposure
  • brings forth
    • contempt,
    • dislike,
    • rejection, and
    • fear,
  and
  • is bound to make the other person
    • defensive.

If free admission
  is not yet possible,
  perhaps because
  the truth
  is not yet
  fully seen,
then
  the willingness
to see,
  which can only come
  when one
  does not go on the defensive,
  will have a similarly favorable effect.

Only after
  you have tried this new reaction [i.e., tried this new non-defensive, truth-seeking reaction to criticism]
  will you see
  how much more
  • constructive
  and
  • advantageous
  honesty is.
Whenever you are on the defensive, your primary aim cannot be truth.

When it comes to real dangers, the real danger is the truth of the moment,

but when it comes to unreal dangers, the truth lies somewhere else.

[With unreal “dangers”]
You do not ask yourself at such moments, "Is it right?
Is there a grain of truth in it?"

Your concern at the moment is, "Am
• I right,
or is
• the other person right?"

It is this limited concept of "I-versus-the-other-person" that befogs the issue of what is
• right
or
• true.
Your defense may often be a basic way of life of
• not involving yourself,
and
• only when you are called upon will you choose a more direct defense.

Then [i.e., Then when you feel called upon or pressured to choose a more direct defense]
you either
• try to run away,
or
• hedge the issue and
• put it on another level, where you can prove yourself right.

Your third option is a
• counterattack, pointing out
  the other person’s shortcomings.

There is a great difference between
doing this [i.e., between pointing out the other person’s shortcomings] as a defense of
one’s own undesirable traits,
or
doing it [i.e., or pointing out the other person’s shortcomings]
• in truth and
• for the sake of truth.

It should be easily understood that defensiveness is not truth-producing.
It [i.e., Defensiveness] does not give
• truth
and
• reality
any breathing space.

Wherever a defensive wall is put up,
your concern at that moment is to ward off
an accusation which you believe might bring
• rejection,
• frustration, and
• hurt.

At that moment, it becomes more important for you to prove
that the accusation is unjustified, even if it contains elements of truth,
rather than to find the elements of truth the accusation contains.

Thus you run away from
• truth, and therefore from
• yourself and from
• life.

• Pretense and
• self-deception, and
• self-alienation and
• isolation
must be the result.
Defensiveness
not only
• damages your physical body,
but
• limits
  your
  • thoughts,
  your
  • range of emotions,
  your
  • concepts
and
  your
  • creativity,
  your
  • spiritual life,
your ability to
  • relate to others,
your
  • inner freedom,
your
  • concern with truth,
and therefore also
your ability to
  • love
  and
  • respect
    • yourself
    and
    • others.

All this is
due to a
completely erroneous concept of
perfectionism,
in which you believe
that your
  • value
  and
  • acceptability
are at stake
because
  you have
  imperfections.
If people would learn to deeply probe within to
• find and
• eliminate this defensive wall,
so much hardship could be avoided in day-to-day communications.

People would not
• dislike each other so easily.

They would not
• fear each other.

The erroneous feeling that you are the target of an attack against which you have to defend, often makes you • fear and • dislike others.

So does the erroneous hurt you suffer when something is brought out which you feel diminishes your value.
Another cause of
• fear and
• dislike
of others
is the
erroneous feeling of
inadequacy
when
• life
and
• others
  • do not respond to your wishes
  and
  • frustrate you.

Such unfulfillment
is not half as painful as
the error
of believing yourself to be
inadequate.

The criticism
would not damage you at all
if you were aware
that others
will not like you
less
because
• you have this fault,
and that
• you are willing to face it.

In a state of
defensiveness
you do
not
• perceive,
• experience,
or
• think
  • truthfully
  or
  • reasonably.
In a state of defensiveness

You do
not feel feelings of
• warmth,
• affection,
and
• understanding.

Therefore,
you are
• not in reality,
and
you
• cannot really communicate.

Your system
is focused on
one small point
as you defend yourself against
an imaginary danger.

In this state [i.e., In this state of defensiveness]
a vital part of
• life
and
• reality
is left out of consideration.

Defensiveness
can take many forms, as you know,
in ways that are
so subtle
as to make them [i.e., to make these subtle forms of defensiveness]
unnoticeable
to others
until
a direct "attack" is launched.
The defensiveness may be much stronger in
• calm,
• reticent people
  who quietly go their own ways
than in some people
  whose defenses
  are more obvious.

For them [i.e., For calm, reticent people]
• the fear of attack
  is so great
and
• the confidence in themselves to handle it
  is so small
  that they are
  constantly in flight
  from
  • life
  and
  from
  • other people.

But whether the defense is
• outer aggressiveness
  or
• withdrawal and
• flight,
  both [i.e., BOTH aggressiveness AND withdrawal and flight]
  • are equally damaging
  and
  • have the same negative results.
Both alternatives [i.e., BOTH outer aggressiveness AND withdrawal and flight] make reaching out toward • the other person, toward • truth, • involvement, and • life itself impossible.

These alternatives [i.e., outer aggressiveness AND withdrawal and flight] force you to • stay on your guard and • be blind to • life, • other people, and • yourself.

Thus the harm you inflict on • yourself and on • those around you, creating • disharmony and • separation, is impossible to describe fully.

When you are on the defensive you cannot fulfill the needs of • others, not to speak of • your own [i.e., not to speak of fulfilling your own needs].
When you
• discover that
  the need to defend yourself
  is an illusion
and
• stop defending,
the sense of liberation you experience
is impossible to convey.

You simply have to
• live it [i.e., LIVE the undefended life]
  to know the
  • joy of it [i.e., to know the JOY of the undefended life].

• Let go [i.e., Let go of your defenses]
and
• receive
  whatever come to you.

Look at it [i.e., Look at whatever comes to you after you let go of your defenses]
quietly
with the intention
• not to ward it off [i.e., not to ward off whatever comes to you
  after you let go of your defenses],
  • but to
    see
    the truth.

This attitude [i.e., this attitude of letting go of your defenses and seeing the truth]
will change your reactions.

Your emanations
will have a different quality.

Your whole life
will become different.
If you can learn to
  • detect,
  • observe,
  and
  • understand —
    and therefore
    eventually
    eliminate —
    your defensiveness,

you will be freed
  of an illusion.

There is
  no greater
  • hardship,
  no greater
  • prison
    than
    illusion.

There is nothing
  more destructive on this earth
  than people
    unnecessarily
    defending themselves.

There is nothing
  that creates
  more
    • disharmony,
    more
    • untruth,
    more
    • hostility,
    and
    more
    • friction,
      in personal
      as well as
      in public
      life,
    than defensiveness.
QUESTION:
You say that the body releases poisons which damage the physical system.

On this path, is it possible to heal such damage?

ANSWER:
Of course it is possible.

• If and • when the defensiveness is eliminated, further poisons will cease to contaminate the system.

This in itself will bring relief.

However, it is possible that the damage is already so considerable that the results of the past cannot be entirely eliminated from the body.

Whether this [i.e., Whether the damage from past defensiveness can be eliminated from the body]

• is or • is not the case depends on many variables impossible to enumerate now.

But, in principle, it is possible.
**QUESTION:**
Do you mean that we should just listen to someone who criticizes?

**ANSWER:**
Calmly listen and evaluate:

Could there be some truth in the criticism?

Observe your inner reaction of fright.

You will soon discover that your fright [i.e., that your fright of another’s criticism] is unjustified, even if the criticism is wrong.

Nothing can happen to you;
you are not in danger [i.e., you are NOT in danger when another criticizes you].

**QUESTION:**
But what if we get annoyed at being unjustly criticized?

**ANSWER:**
The very feeling of annoyance is the proof of your defensiveness.

Without defense, you would not be annoyed.

How could you be?
[Without defensiveness against the criticism of another]

You would simply

• evaluate the criticism

and

• decide whether there may be
  • some truth,
  • a little truth,

or

• no truth in it at all.

All too often,

you are convinced

that it [i.e., that the criticism]

is

unjustified

before you even give yourself the chance
to find the possible
grain of truth in it.

If there is

no trace of truth in it,
why would you have to get annoyed?

What can this criticism do to you
that causes annoyance?

Have you ever analyzed it [i.e., analyzed your annoyance at being criticized]
from this point of view?

• Justified

or

• unjustified
criticism
cannot really harm you,
unless
you think you
cannot be
• loved

and
• respected

if something to be criticized
is found in you.
| QUESTION: |
| What if it is a lie [What if the criticism is a lie]? |
| If it is untrue? |

| ANSWER: |
| I said that before. |

It [i.e., Criticism] cannot harm you if you look at it calmly.

Your defense against it [i.e., Your DEFENSE against criticism, even if the criticism is a lie.] does the harm.

- The lie itself, or
- the erroneous judgment [i.e., the erroneous judgment of you by the other], could never harm you.

The less defensive you are, the more adequate you will be to straighten out an outright lie or misunderstanding.

I do not mean to imply that you must never defend yourself against a flagrant lie, or harmful rumor.
This [i.e., This defense against a flagrant lie, or harmful rumor] falls under the category of
  • realistic defense,

which can be adequately handled only to the degree that
  • unrealistic defensiveness is absent.

41

QUESTION:
If
  • the accusation covers a betrayal
    and
  • you have a natural anger about it,
your anger may cover self-defense, but it is also a natural reaction against someone who has made promises to you who have fulfilled your part only to find that you are betrayed.

What you
  • were promised and
  • have hoped for does not come true.

Is this not a cause for natural anger?
ANSWER:
Before we deal with the term of what is
  • "natural"
  and
  • "unnatural,"
I would like to say again that I did not imply that people should take any
  • injustice
  or
  • betrayal
without doing whatever is
  • necessary,
  • constructive,
  and
  • productive
toward it off.

There are many instances when it is wrong to
  • sit back
  and
  • do nothing.

This [i.e., Sitting back and doing nothing constructive to ward of an injustice] would be sick;

it [i.e., sitting back and doing nothing constructive to ward of an injustice] would be
  • playing the martyr,
  • making a mockery of justice.
It is interesting to note that the more defensive a person is, the less equipped he is to employ constructive defense or attack,
and the more he will tend to victimize himself and become a martyr.

There exists a proper and healthy aggressiveness and assertiveness.

When aggressiveness is healthy and when not [i.e. and when aggressiveness is NOT healthy] cannot be determined by a general rule.

The difference [i.e., The difference between healthy and unhealthy assertiveness] is too subtle and can only be found in truthful self-examination.

Actual dangers are not only physical in nature; they also occur on other levels.
I can only emphasize again that
the freer you are of unrealistic defensiveness,
the better you will be able to cope with a danger through healthy defense.

Often when the two defenses [i.e., when the HEALTHY and UNHEALTHY defenses] intermingle, the unhealthy • weakens and • undermines the healthy one and diminishes its [i.e., diminishes the healthy defense’s] positive effect.

Now as to what is "natural."

It is certainly "natural" to have • immature, • unproductive reactions, because everyone else has them too.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>45</th>
<th>QUESTIONER:</th>
<th>Yes.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First</td>
<td>you must clear up your emotional entanglement in the relationship, and then you will deal with it [i.e., deal with your defensive reaction to criticism, even when the criticism is a lie,] realistically.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>46</th>
<th>ANSWER:</th>
<th>Yes, that is right.</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>You see, your unhealthy emotional involvement makes it impossible for you to rightly evaluate the situation, and therefore you cannot deal with it [i.e., you cannot deal with your defensive reaction to criticism, even when the criticism is a lie,] as you would otherwise.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**QUESTION:**
I think what our friend said about the lie [i.e., about criticism when it is a lie] is also a realistic danger?

**ANSWER:**
Yes, it could be.

I said that.

It all depends on whether we deal with
- facts
  and
- actions,
or with
- the more subtle
  - trends,
  - attitudes,
  and
  - qualities.

But when it comes
- to this work,
- to voicing one's
  - impressions
  and
  - feelings
    about others,

the truth of the matter cannot necessarily be established at once.
It [i.e., Establishing the truth of the matter] requires probing to see whether or not there is some grain of truth in what the other person says, even if it [i.e., even if this grain of truth] is brought out in a distorted way, perhaps due to • his or her own problems, or merely to • human limitations.

In such cases, it cannot easily be stated that "this is a lie [i.e., this criticism is a lie]," because these things are very subtle.

QUESTION: You were talking about situations in which our emotions flare up.

How about human beings whose emotions are • dulled and • curbed, and who have • no reactions?
ANSWER:
When a human being gets into that state [i.e., that state of having NO VISIBLE defensive reactions arise, say no anger or no hate when one faces inner emotions of fear or pain], it is a result of being overdefensive.

• Outwardly
and
• consciously, emotions may be dulled to a considerable degree,
but
• inwardly they still exist.

They
• smolder underground
and
• do their damage.

That is why it is so important in this work to bring the emotions to the surface.

Only then can they be dealt with properly.

As long as you do not feel your hate, for example, you cannot rid yourself of it.

It [i.e., Your hate] has to
• come out of repression and
• reach surface awareness in order for you
  • to understand its origin
  and then
  • to free yourself from it.
It is the same with
the defensive wall [i.e., as it is with HATE, so it is with
the DEFENSIVE WALL].

As long as you are
unaware of it [i.e., unaware of the defensive wall]
you can do
nothing.

Therefore,
the first consideration
is to use the methods of this work
to bring into
• awareness
what was hitherto
• submerged.

However, there is
no person
entirely
devoid of emotions.

They [i.e., Emotions]
are on the surface,
but never named,
and
their significance
is never questioned.

These few surface emotions
will furnish sufficient material
with which to work first.

Even people
whose approach is predominantly
• intellectual
and
who
• deliberately dull their feelings,
still
have
certain feelings.
The more defensive human beings are, the more limited the scope of emotions they can feel.

But they can make an effort to pinpoint them.

In such cases [i.e., In cases where people are very defensive and hence have a very limited scope of emotions they can feel] the predominant emotions will be

• fright

and

• anger.

The people may be unaware that these [i.e., unaware that FRIGHT and ANGER] are emotions because they are so used to explaining them away.

QUESTIONER:
Yes, but the person whose emotions are above board has an easier time to observe them.

ANSWER:
Yes, certainly.
**This** [i.e., Because a person whose emotions are above board has an easier time to observe them]

| is why it is of primary importance to become aware of all the emotions you were not conscious of. |

**Only then** [i.e., Only then when you are AWARE of ALL the emotions you were not conscious of]

| can we go into the kind of problems we are dealing with now. |

### QUESTION:
In my private work, my helper and I found that I have an inadequate concept of a human being.

What is a human being?

### ANSWER:
If I were to answer that, it would probably take me at least a month of continuous talking.

This, I think, may be the best answer for you to adjust

- **your concept** [i.e., to adjust YOUR concept of a human being]
- **a more truthful one** [i.e., to a more TRUTHFUL concept of a human being].
Compare
• this statement
with
• the limited concept you have
  when you say,

"he is
  this or that,"
or
"she is
  thus and thus."

Realize
the
• infinite variety,
  the
• manifoldness,
  the
• contradictoriness,
  the
• unlimited
  • possibilities
    and
  • potentials
    of thought,
  and
  the
• range of feelings

  in every human being.

Every
human being
has,
in both a
• positive
  and a
• negative
  aspect,
every
• emotion,
• trend,
or
• characteristic
  you can name.
The reasons why the same quality displays its 
• positive facet at one time 
and its 
• negative [i.e., the quality’s negative facet] at other times are among the difficult intricacies of the human psyche.

The more you understand the limitless 
• possibilities and 
• potentials of 
  • any human being, the further do you come in understanding 
  • a particular human being.

On the other hand, the more you believe, either 
• consciously or 
  • unconsciously, that a human being is only 
  • this or only 
  • that, in other words, the more limited your concept is, the less will you understand about others.
In a strange way,
the unconscious aim of human beings
is to
limit
the human personality,
because they
believe that
if there is
• less to a human being,
it is
• easier to know one another.

This is not true.

The more you realize
the infinite
• possibilities
and
• aspects,
the more
• understanding
and
• insight
you will have.

This is the best answer I can give you.

Any description [i.e., ANY description of a HUMAN BEING],
no matter how detailed,
would not do it justice.

It [i.e., ANY description of a HUMAN BEING]
would be
• limited,
and
it [i.e., and ANY description of a HUMAN BEING]
would be
• an oversimplification.
| 57 | QUESTION:  
|    | *After a person has become greatly aware of his hidden currents – let's say, he has become aware of seventy-five percent of them and can see how they work –*  
|    | *what can he do to train the subconscious mind?*  
|    | *Or is it necessary?*  

| 58 | ANSWER:  
|    | *I will repeat what I have said many times.*  
|    | *Merely observe the*  
|    | *• wrong,  
|    | *• childish,  
|    | *• untrue,  
|    | *and  
|    | *• distorted  
|    | *• reactions  
|    | *and  
|    | *• concepts.*  
|    | *The more you observe them [i.e., The more you OBSERVE your wrong, childish, untrue and distorted reactions and concepts], the better you will be able to learn why your emotions are not functioning according to *  
|    | *• reality  
|    | *and  
|    | *• truth.*
Get a clear understanding of how they [i.e., of HOW your emotional reactions] are

- erroneous,
- inadequate,
- destructive,
- disadvantageous,

and

- unrealistic.

Compare
- these reactions [i.e., these emotional reactions you currently actually have]

with

- your knowledge – as yet only theoretical –

  of the

  - realistic,
  - truthful,

  and

  - productive reactions,

  without trying to force yourself to feel the latter [i.e., without FORCING yourself to FEEL the realistic, truthful, and productive emotional reactions].

Merely
- compare

and

- understand why

  - one way of reacting is

    - unproductive

    and

    - unrealistic,

  while

  - the other is

    - productive

    and

    - realistic.
• Fully acknowledge
  that you are
  not yet capable of
  • feeling
  and
  • reacting
  in the desired way;

and
  without
  • guilt,
  without
  • any forcing current,
  • fully accept yourself
  as you are,

but
  • recognize
  the immaturity.

If you do this,
  without being
  • angry
  and
  • impatient
  with yourself,

your
• emotions
  will eventually begin to
  absorb
  the knowledge of your
  • brain
  that heretofore
  could not penetrate into
  your emotions.
It will give you peace simply to observe the childish emotions in action, while
• knowing, and
• getting to understand more and more fully,
  • why and
  • how they [i.e., why and how these childish emotions] are unproductive.

59

QUESTION:
You wanted to talk about the background of the seven deadly sins.

60

ANSWER:
I would suggest that you prepare a list of them.

I said last time that this topic cannot just be added on to a lecture because it would take too long.

Put down each of them and ask about each separately, and then I will answer.

That will form a lecture in itself.
QUESTION:
In the traditional Scriptures of
  • Judaism
  and
  • Islam,
    the texts are specific
    regarding the consumption of
      • fish,
      • flesh, and
      • fowl.

It is commanded that

"of their flesh shall we not eat."

Christianity
  has no ban against pork.

In the fifteenth verse of Matthew [i.e., Matthew 15:17-18],
  Jesus said,

"Not that which
  goeth into the mouth
defileth the man,
  but that which
  cometh out of the mouth."

However, during Lent,
  dietary restrictions are observed by Christians.

My two questions are:

Are the dietary laws
  based on
    that which is
      • unclean,
  or on
    that which is
      • holy;

and

what is the meaning of
  • Lent
  and of
    • the counting of the days?
ANSWER:
To your first question:
The dietary laws were given at a time when human beings' scientific and hygienic knowledge was so insufficient that such information was connected with religion.

Merely
• sanitary,
or
• health reasons dictated them.

In certain periods of history, under different circumstances, the laws were changed.

Nowadays, it is unnecessary for religion to set up such rules.

At no time did these laws have anything to do with spiritual life.

They were merely safeguards to protect health.
If humanity
   at this time
       still clings to them
           as a spiritual necessity,
   it shows a
       gross misunderstanding of
           what true spirituality is.
It shows
   the superficial approach of humanity:
       people's
disinclination
to think.
Your science today
   may find certain conditions
       that make it necessary
           to observe certain laws
               as long as the specific conditions prevail.
When the conditions
change,
the laws
will be eliminated.
To persist in keeping them
without any
   • purpose or
   • reason
would be senseless.

As to your second question:
The original symbolic meaning
of the time of Lent
was to give people
a period
of
   • going into themselves,
   • purifying their systems,
       not only
           • physically,
               but on
           • all levels.
Again,
  • the outer
is merely a symbol of
  • the inner.

A combined purification of
  • body
and
  • soul
is often healthy,
  provided it is done
    • in an individual way
  and not merely by
    • adhering to dogma.

Under whatever guise
dogma appears,
it shows
  • rigidity
and
  • lack of self-responsibility
    in thinking for oneself.

Thus it [i.e., Thus dogma]
becomes
something dead.

The living spirit
has gone out of it [i.e., has gone out of dogma].

The original symbolic meaning
was that of
  • purification,
  • contemplation,
  • a time of
    • looking within the self
  and
  • preparing for
    • a new influx,
    • a new strength
      with which
      to reach out.
May you all become more
and more aware of your defenses.

May you understand what they do
to your
• entire system,
to your
• thinking process,
to your
• faculty of feeling,
to your
• physical system,
and
to your
• spiritual life.

May you thus become capable of
• letting go,
of
• receiving,
• examining,
• discriminating,
and
• objectively looking at an issue without defending yourselves.

May you no longer
• think and
• feel in terms of "right versus wrong"
and become thereby [i.e., and, by not thinking and feeling in terms of "right versus wrong," become]
capable of
• experiencing others and
• reaching out to them.
The defense
makes you
• withdraw from others
and
• no longer reach out.

May the blessing
that is extended to you again this evening
help you
particularly in this respect [i.e., particularly in respect to
taking down your defenses]
for your further work
and
help you to
free yourselves of
the most damaging obstructions within.

Be blessed,
each one of you.

Receive our
• warmth
and our
• love,
each one of you.

Be in peace.

Be in God.

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