Pathwork Lecture 57: The Mass Image of Self-Importance
1996 Edition, Original Given October 9, 1959

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/](https://www.garyvollbracht.com/pathwork-lectures/pathwork-lectures-devotional-format/)

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|    | *Greetings,*  
 |    |   *my friends.*  |
|    |   *God bless,*  
 |    |   *all of you,*  
 |    |   *God bless this hour* [i.e., God bless this time we now spend together in this lecture]. |

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|    | *We have often discussed*  
 |    |   *• inferiority feelings and*  
 |    |   *• their true origin.*  
 |    |   *This* [i.e., Having feelings of inferiority]  
 |    |   *• is an important trend*  
 |    |   *in human nature and*  
 |    |   *• needs further understanding*  
 |    |   *in your work of self-finding.* |
I think you understand clearly by now that the real reasons for inferiority feelings are hidden.

Subconsciously you do register your
• imperfections and
• inadequacies
and, although you do not want to
• face them [i.e., do not want to face your imperfections and inadequacies]

and
• come to terms with them,
your knowledge of them [i.e., your knowledge of your imperfections and inadequacies] persists.

You cannot eradicate that [i.e., You cannot eradicate your knowledge of your imperfections and inadequacies].

So you seek relief from this unpleasant feeling [i.e., you seek relief from this unpleasant feeling of having imperfections and inadequacies].

You believe, mistakenly, that this [i.e., that relief from this unpleasant feeling of having imperfections and inadequacies] can be accomplished by receiving
• attention,
• admiration, and
• approval.
Many of you have found out by now that no matter how much approval you receive, the relief [i.e., the relief from the unpleasant feeling of having imperfections and inadequacies that you get from approval] is, at best, a very temporary one [i.e., a very temporary relief].

In this connection [i.e., In connection with finding relief from the unpleasant feeling of having imperfections and inadequacies through the approval of others], I would like to discuss a particular mass image about the self.

This mass image [i.e., This particular mass image that I am about to discuss] exists at all times, regardless of:
- civilization,
- geography,
- historical period, or
- environment.

There are other mass images bound to [only] certain:
- times and
- civilizations.

[However,] Those [mass images] which:
- are universal and
- encompass all humanity are a product of a particular blend of:
  - human imperfection
  and
  - humanity's desire to reach perfection.
Such a universal mass image [that encompasses all humanity] is the following:

"If I receive
• attention or
• approval or
• admiration,
all my worth is established
not only in
• the eyes of the world
but in
• my own eyes.

If I cannot get it [i.e., If I cannot get attention or approval or admiration from others],
then
I
am
inferior."

Needless to say that this [i.e., this notion that if I cannot get attention or approval or admiration from others then I AM inferior]
is
• a wrong conclusion
and
not
• a conscious
  • thought,
but
• an unconscious
  • emotional attitude.

None of you will fail to verify this emotion [i.e., this emotional attitude of “I AM inferior”] within yourself.
Since this [i.e., Since this emotional attitude of “I AM inferior” if I cannot get attention or approval or admiration from others]

is
  • an image,

it is
  • illusory.

The purpose of this work
  is to free you of the illusory.

For
  no illusion can bring you
    • harmony,
    • peace, and
    • freedom.

All
  that is illusory
    is bound to create problems for you.

The particular illusion of this image [i.e., The particular illusion of this image that “I AM inferior” if I cannot get attention or approval or admiration from others]
  • has many repercussions and
    • creates a chain reaction of harmful results for
      • yourself
      as well as for
      • others around you.
At this point,
I might emphasize once again –
so as to avoid all possible misunderstanding –
that
the remedy [i.e., the remedy to this image that “I AM inferior” if I
cannot get attention or approval or admiration from others]
is not in
• defiance and
• rebellion
against
your dependence on
other's opinions of you.

Unconsciously,
• you rebel [i.e., you rebel against your dependence on other’s opinions of you]
just as frequently as
• you plead for
  • admiration and
  • approval.

Both [i.e. Both your rebellion against your dependence on other’s opinions of you
and your pleading for admiration and approval from others to
assuage your illusory feeling attitude of “I AM inferior”]
eexist simultaneously
in many a soul.

Both
• are equally harmful and
• are the result of
  the same unhealthy basic misconception.

Let us go back to
this particular mass image.

We, in our world,
can hear
your souls
shrieking for attention.

The earth sphere
produces this loud noise for us.
When we approach your plane, all souls send forth this loud:

- calling and
- clamoring, inaudible to your ears.

But you can imagine how noisy it is for us.

The voice of the soul is a loud one.

All emotions produce sounds, but the loud voice claiming self-importance does not produce a very harmonious sound.

The outer manifestation of this mass image [of self-importance] varies according to:

- temperament and individual characteristics;
- other trends,
  - healthy or sick,
    which determine the
    - strength and manner
      of the manifestation [i.e., of the outer manifestation of this mass image of self-importance]; and

- environment and education.
All this together [i.e., This situation with all these various factors and aspects taken together] determines just how

- noticeable,
how
- strong,
how
- obvious
  the cry for approval is
and in
- what area
  the need of self-importance exists.

If the demand for approval is obvious to other human beings, it does not necessarily mean that such a person [i.e., that a person in whom the demand for approval is more obvious] is spiritually less developed than another in whom the same trend [i.e., the trend of demanding approval] is more
- hidden and
more
- subtle.

Rather, it is a question of the degree of suppression [i.e., the degree of suppression of the demand for approval, the degree of suppression being less for one in whom the demand for approval is more obvious to others].

By working on this particular trend [i.e., this trend of demanding approval] all of you will eventually find that part in you that
- demands to be elevated to first place,
that
- desires to be special.
It is not sufficient to call it [i.e., to call the demand for approval, the demand for being elevated to first place, the demand for being special] pride.

You will have to go further than that.

Why do you feel a need for pride?

Because of the wrong conclusion [i.e., the wrong conclusion that “I AM inferior” if I cannot get approval or admiration from others] of the image I have just explained [i.e., the mass image of self-importance].

It [i.e., The wrong conclusion that “I AM inferior” if I cannot get approval or admiration from others, which is the wrong conclusion of the mass image of self-importance] leads you to believe that

• when you are extra-special in the eyes of the world, your inferiority feelings will vanish;

that

• when others agree with what you do, believe, and think,
you gain in worth in your own eyes.

Of course, you do not think all this consciously.

But if you analyze the meaning of your emotions, this [i.e., others thinking you are special and agreeing with you means you are truly worthy] is what they amount to [i.e., is what your emotions amount to].
Thus, you use pride as
- a defensive measure [i.e., as a defense against feeling your sense of unworthiness],
as
- a means to an end [i.e., as a means to establish your sense of worthiness in the world].

This [i.e., Because you use pride as a defensive measure and as a means to an end and therefore think you need pride to establish your sense of worthiness] is why the realization that pride exists in you never really helps to eliminate it.

You may not have been aware of your pride before, but after some efforts on this path you discover, perhaps with a shock, that you, too, possess pride.

But no matter how often you then tell yourself, "This is pride, I must not be proud," it does not help [i.e., just knowing that you have pride and should not have pride does not help you eliminate your pride].

You have to go to the next stage of self-understanding by realizing why [i.e., realizing WHY you have pride].
You will have to understand fully that you unconsciously believe that your pride serves
• to gain something for you or
• to save you from some imagined disaster.

When you discover the error of this assumption, you can then get rid of
• the pride,
• the vanity,
• the self-importance:
you comprehend that there is no need for it [i.e., there is no need for pride, vanity, or sense of self-importance].

In order to grasp all this [i.e., In order to grasp that there is no need for pride, vanity, or sense of self-importance], it is essential that you become fully aware that the part of your personality where you harbor this wrong conclusion [i.e., the part of your personality where you harbor this wrong conclusion that pride is absolutely needed as a defensive measure against feeling your sense of inferiority and unworthiness and also that pride is absolutely needed to establish your sense of worthiness] indeed exists.
You have to get so far that you actually hear the inner voice
• shrieking for and
• demanding approval [i.e., shrieking for and demanding approval by those around you, approval by those who are important to you].

You have to observe the occasions when this voice [i.e., when this inner voice shrieking for and demanding approval by those who are important to you] speaks up louder than usual.

You have to question emotions that you have never questioned before.

What is
• their meaning [i.e., What is the meaning of these emotions] and what is
• the desire behind them [i.e., What is the desire behind these emotions]?

Only when you find the answer [i.e., the answer to the question of what is the meaning of these emotions you have never questioned before] will you be aware of the mass image of self-importance in your own soul.
In this mass image [i.e., In this mass image of self-importance] there is
• you
  on one side,
and
• the rest of the world
  on the other.

Many subtle emotions
will, upon analysis,
reveal to you
that this is exactly
what goes on in you.

This realization
is of great importance.

But again,
it [i.e., this realization of the mass image of self-importance in you
in which you see yourself on one side and the rest
of the world separate from you on the other side]
is only
a beginning of continuing search for
further
• understanding and
• connections.

You will see
how this image [i.e., how this mass image of self-importance in you
in which you see yourself on one side and the rest
of the world separate from you on the other side]
brings you
many
• conflicts and
• problems.

As long as
you do not know
how harmful
a condition is,
you cannot have
the necessary incentive
to eliminate
that condition.
And as long as
you are unaware
that the condition even exists,
how can you
see its effects?

First
you have to become aware of
this
• basic,
• universal

condition [i.e., become aware of this condition of the mass image of self-importance in you in which you see yourself on one side and the rest of the world separate from you on the other side]
in yourself,

and then
you have to
connect
• the effects of this condition
with
• various conflicts.

You will thereby
come to see
many of your problems
in an entirely new light.

You will realize
that many of your difficulties
need never exist
if you
were free of
this particular misconception.
This mass image [i.e., This mass image of self-importance in you in which you see yourself on one side and the rest of the world separate from you on the other side] takes on many forms in your unconscious.

Therefore, the outer manifestation [i.e., the outer manifestation of this mass image of self-importance in you in which you see yourself on one side and the rest of the world separate from you on the other side] varies too.

People seek admiration in various ways.

One person may believe that material wealth will gain him greater stature in the eyes of the world.

With someone else, other values serve to gain that • admiration and • approval.

I might say the majority of my friends fall into the latter category [i.e., the category where values other than material wealth will be the means by which a person seeks to gain his or her needed admiration and approval].

With some people the means [i.e., the means by which these people seek to gain their needed admiration and approval] might be • a particular • accomplishment or • talent.
With others again, it may be [i.e., the means by which they seek to gain their needed admiration and approval may be]

- good character,
- decency
- loyalty
- intelligence.

With most the means to get
- approval and
- admiration
  is a composite of many attributes,
  supposed to serve the same end [i.e., to serve the establishment of one’s sense of worthiness in the world].

There is even a category of people who use misfortune as a means to gain sympathy – and, of course, sympathy stands for approval, too.

Other sick currents also
- affect the image [i.e., affect the mass image of self-importance] and
- twist it into a particular direction.
The image [i.e., The mass image of self-importance in you in which you see yourself on one side and the rest of the world separate from you on the other side] says that without the approval of the world around you, • you are lost.

You believe • you lose the firm ground under your feet, that • your whole world • stands or • falls by what other people think of you.

Again, I ask you not to confuse • the opposite manifestation [i.e., the manifestation “I care nothing for what other people think”] with • a healthy reaction.

"I do not care what people say," is rebellion.

And where there is • rebellion, there is still • bondage.

The rebellion [i.e., The rebellion in “I do not care what people say about me.”] • tries to break loose of the bondage [i.e., the bondage of needing the approval of others in order not to feel unworthy or inferior], but it [i.e., but the rebellion] • chooses the wrong way to go about it [i.e., the wrong way of breaking the bondage of needing the approval of others].
You believe you rebel against
• a world
  that tries to force you
  into behavior patterns.

But this, too,
is an error.

You actually rebel against
• your dependency on
  the world’s opinion.

Therefore [i.e., Since you actually rebel against
your dependency on the world’s opinion],
the remedy
lies in your discovery
• why
  you are so bound [i.e., discovering why you are so dependent on
  the world’s opinion];

• what misconception
  leads you to the bondage [i.e., discovering what misconception
  makes you so dependent on the world’s opinion].

Then, and then only [i.e. Only when you discover WHY you are
so dependent on the world’s opinion],

can you
free yourself of the
• bondage and
• compulsion
so that you
need no longer rebel.

Nor do you have to make
painful efforts
in an attempt to gain something
that is
not
your salvation.
Also,

in such a dependency [i.e., in such a dependency on the opinions of others]
you often become
untrue
to yourself,
and this [i.e., and this being untrue to yourself],
more than anything else,
causes
inferiority feelings.

Often,
you cannot
both
• please the world
and
• be true
to your
  • innermost self and
to your own
  • inner life plan.

Nor can you
please
all
people.

But
since you are
so dependent on approval,
whenever you
have to take a stand
that makes it impossible
to be approved by
all,
your soul
gets into a turmoil.

• These
and
• many other
conflicts
arise out of
the mass image of self-importance.
You can easily see
that this mass illusion,
existing in every human,
may
at times
compel you to
sell your soul.

This [i.e., Selling your soul]
may happen
in many subtle ways,
and I venture to say
that there is hardly a person
who has not done so at times [i.e., who has not sold
his or her soul at times].

I can assure you
that there is
no exception [i.e., no exception to people selling their souls]
• among you here, or
• anywhere else, for that matter.

But
you have to find
individually
that part in you
which is bound by
the image [i.e., bound by the mass image of self-importance
where you depend upon the approval of others
for your sense of self-worth and sell your soul].

You will find
at least some areas in you
where the image exists [i.e., where the mass image of self-importance
in which you depend upon the approval of others
for your sense of self-worth exists] —

no matter
how
• subtly,
how much
• hidden or
• covered up with
• worthy motives and
• plausible rationalizations.
The subtler the form of manifestation [i.e. the subtler the form of manifestation of the mass image of self-importance in which an aspect of yourself depends upon the approval of others for your sense of self-worth in that area], the more difficult it will be to find the affected part.

But find it you will, for sure, if you really want to.

If you • observe your reactions in your everyday life and • analyze them honestly, you will come to the very point I am showing you: you will recognize the mass image [i.e., the mass image of self-importance in which an aspect of yourself depends upon the approval of others for your sense of self-worth in that area] with which you, too, are inflicted.

In that part of your being you feel exactly the way I described.

Try to put your feelings into precise words. That [i.e., Putting your feeling into precise words] in itself will be a great relief for your soul.
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<tr>
<th>You can safely assume that you are not the only one with this image [i.e., this mass image of self-importance] – you share it with all other human beings.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find your bondage to public opinion, no matter how subtle. Then find, further, why you need the dependency [i.e., WHY you need the dependency on the opinions and approval of others] and pride, or rather, why you think you need it [i.e., WHY you THINK you need the dependency on the opinions and approval of others and pride].</td>
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<td>Crystallize the wrong conclusion. Once you get that far, you will have begun to loosen a heavy chain that has held you prisoner of the world of illusion. Then [i.e., Once you have crystallized the wrong conclusion and thereby have begun to loosen a heavy chain that has held you prisoner of the world of illusion] you can begin the process of emerging free.</td>
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**This** [i.e., This process of emerging free once you have crystalized the wrong conclusion and thereby have begun to loosen a heavy chain that has held you prisoner of the world of illusion]

*can be done only by*

• analyzing,

• understanding

your reactions.

**Always go behind the emotion you have just unearthed and clothe it [i.e., clothe the emotion you have just unearthed] in concise language.**

**Ask yourself why, based on what reasoning, you hold the particular conviction you have just unearthed.**

**Right or wrong, find out why you are convinced of it.**

**If there were no conviction, you would not have held on to it for so long.**
You know that your unconscious reasons too, although its [i.e., your unconscious’] reasoning is often faulty.

Now you have to become consciously aware of such [i.e., such heretofore unconscious] reasoning processes.

What is important is that you experience the existence of this image [i.e., this image of self-importance in which an aspect of yourself depends upon the approval of others for your sense of self-worth in that area] within you.

When you experience it [i.e., When you EXPERIENCE this image of self-importance in which an aspect of yourself depends upon the approval of others for your sense of self-worth in that area], then the time is ripe for you to understand many of your conflicts that often involve • actions and • reactions on the part of the world that seem • unjust and • uncalled-for.
I assure you, my friends, you can find this image [i.e., you can find this image of self-importance in which an aspect of yourself depends upon the approval of others for your sense of self-worth in that area]

behind every conflict, • outer or • inner.

Sometimes the connection [i.e., the connection between this image of self-importance and an outer or inner conflict]

is • indirect; at other times, • very obvious.

Your personal images are always connected with the universal mass image of self-importance.

I would now like to mention a very frequent occurrence that happens to practically everyone at least a few times in their lives, in one form or another.

This occurrence is hardly ever understood, and the • existence and • influence of the mass image [i.e., of the mass image of self-importance] is rarely connected with it.
And yet it [i.e., And yet the understanding this occurrence and its relationship to the existence and influence of the mass image of self-importance] is so vital, for only through such understanding can you find the solution.

This example is not directed at anyone in particular.

It [i.e., This example] applies to everyone:
- at certain times,
- in connection with certain events.

There are few people who have not experienced:
- grief and
- disappointment because they felt betrayed.

They have displayed utmost:
- loyalty and
- decency.

In spite of this, the betrayal took place.

Moreover, as it is bound to happen, the offender in turn will claim to have been betrayed to justify himself.
The one betrayed [i.e., The one who originally felt betrayed]
is accused [by the one whom he felt originally betrayed him]of having done the very thinghe has so painfully experiencedas a victim [in being betrayed originally by the betrayer].

Therefore
the hurt [to the one who originally felt he had been betrayed]is double.

The betrayal
would not be half as difficult to bear
if he were not,in addition,accusedof having perpetrated a• disloyal or• dishonestact of some sort.

The pain of the accusation [i.e., The pain of being accused of betraying the other]is the more gnawingof the two [i.e., is more gnawing than the pain of having been betrayed by the other].

He [i.e., The one who originally felt betrayed but now is accused of betraying the other]
searches within,
but cannot findanything to blame himself for.

Yet
a deep uncertainty remains [i.e., a deep uncertainty about whether or not he actually betrayed the other in some unconscious way remains].

Why [i.e., Why all this uncertainty about who betrayed whom and how]?
You on this path
who have benefited from
many a spiritual
• truth and
• teaching
through
• this channel or
• others,
know that
no mishap
can ever occur
that you have not caused in some way
yourself.

You know
intellectually
that this is true.

You may even
confirm it
through
personal experiences.

Yet
when certain events occur,
you do not find
the connection [i.e., the connection between the mishap and
how you, in some way, participated in causing the mishap]
easily.

The example cited
may be one such occasion:
you simply cannot find
the point of connection
between
• what happened
and
• a cause in you.
[In the example cited]
You know
you have been
• betrayed and
• disappointed
and on top of it
you are accused of having done something
that you did not do.

In actual fact,
you did
nothing
that you could be blamed for.

• Your actions
  were correct,
• your intentions
  were the best.

Now let me show you, my friends,
how
the particular mass image of self-importance,
strengthened by various
personal images,
may be responsible for
such an occurrence,
which is
especially painful
since you do not see
how you
attracted it.
This mass image [i.e., This mass image of self-importance] makes you

• strive and
• fight
to be

• in the first place,
to be

• special [i.e., to be in a special place],

so that

you can collect

whatever your soul

thinks

it needs.

In order to reach

that special place [i.e., In order to reach that special place that you are striving and fighting to be in],

your actions

would have to be

anything but

• decent,
• loyal, or
• idealistic:

they [i.e., your actions]

would have to be

• ruthless,
• selfish –
and would often have to

• betray

the very

• thing or
• person

you desire to be loyal to.

To gain

this special place of approval,
you feel

tempted
to do the very thing
you in fact

abstain from [i.e., you feel tempted to be ruthless to get this special place of approval, but you do not in fact give in to this temptation to be ruthless to get this special place of approval].
Being a
• decent and
• honest
individual,
you do not give in to
the temptation [i.e., you do not give in to the temptation to be ruthless to get this special place of approval because you are a decent and honest individual].

You feel it [i.e., You feel the temptation to be ruthless]
• vaguely,
• without real awareness of its [i.e., of the temptation’s]
  • significance and
  • meaning.

In fact,
you are so afraid
when you feel
• such a temptation [i.e., such a temptation to be ruthless to get the special place of approval you are striving to get]
  and
• such emotions
  that you cover it up quickly [i.e., you quickly cover up the temptation to be ruthless].

You do not want to acknowledge
that it [i.e., that such a temptation to be ruthless and selfish to get the special place of approval you are striving to get]
exists in you.

Your conscience
neither allows you
• to act in accordance with the temptation,
nor does it allow you
• to become fully aware of it [i.e., to become fully aware of the temptation].

In order to
counterbalance the influence of
the mass image of self-importance,
you overcompensate
by scrupulously proving
• the decent side in you,
• the side you intend to obey.
What is the result of this conflict [i.e., this conflict between wanting to be ruthless on the one hand and yet wanting to be decent and kind on the other]?

Due to the unconscious nature of the inner battle, the outer happening responds to:
- your unconscious negative side [i.e., your desire to be ruthless to get what you need for approval by others]

and not to:
- the positive side [i.e., your desire to be decent and kind], even though the positive [i.e., your desire to be decent and kind] has won out in your outer actions.

This is according to an unalterable law [i.e., the unalterable law of cause and effect – it is the unconscious cause, not the conscious action, that causes the effects].

I have often told you that.

You have experienced it [i.e., You have experienced the unalterable law of cause and effect]

in some ways on your path of self-purification,

but there are many areas left where you are as yet unable to apply this truth.
If the battle you are fighting
is not
consciously understood
in its full significance,
outer events will follow in such a way as if
the selfish side [i.e., the selfish and ruthless side of you that you had so carefully hidden from view] had won out.

The outer result
MUST respond to the impulse [i.e., to the impulse or temptation to be selfish and ruthless] which is unconscious.

The more you advance on this path, the more you will see that you are not asked to accept anything I say as a dogmatic statement.

[Rather,]
You will experience the utter truth of these statements yourself.
But you can do so [i.e., But you can experience the truth of these statements yourself] only if you have the honesty to
• search for,
• verify, and
• acknowledge
the negative side
you so bravely battle against.

This [negative] side will cause you trouble until you
• come face to face with it,
• acknowledge it,
• allow it to exist – not by
  • giving in to it
nor by
  • trying to change it after you have recognized its existence,
but by
  • seeing its reality at the point where you are.

When you do that [i.e., When you see its reality at the point where you are on your path], you can take the next step by asking yourself
• why
  that negative tendency exists in you.

• Why does this temptation exist?

You will invariably come up with the answer that you desire an elevated position in the eyes of the world in order to convince yourself that your inferiority feelings are unjustified.
You believe, 

deep in your heart, 

that you need all this [i.e., that you need an elevated position in the eyes of the world] in order to survive – 

not 

• physically, 

but 

• emotionally.

And, to get it [i.e., to get the elevated position in the eyes of the world that you think you need in order to survive emotionally], it seems necessary to 

• betray others, 

• ruthless, 

• disloyal, or 

• selfish.

But as long as your good intentions [i.e. as long as your good intentions to be a decent and kind human being] prevent you from even recognizing this temptation [i.e., this temptation to be ruthless, disloyal, or selfish], the outer occurrence will, as I said, respond to the negative side [i.e., respond to your unconscious ruthless, disloyal, or selfish side], even though you have not given in to it [i.e., even though you have not given in to the temptation to be ruthless, disloyal, or selfish].

Not knowing this [i.e., Not knowing that the outer occurrence will respond to your unconscious negative side], it [i.e., the negative outer occurrence] seems like an injustice to you.
And it is actually
• the injustice that hurts you
more than
• the disappointment in a particular person.

This [i.e., This negative outer occurrence you experience at the hands of the other] may still seem unjust to you.

You may think,

"As long as I have not given in to the temptation [to be ruthless, disloyal, or selfish], why do the consequences have to be as though I had actually committed the wrong act?

Isn't the most important thing that my actions are right?"

No, my friends.

Feelings are actions too, although they [i.e., although feelings] do not manifest
• in the same way and
• with the same quick results as outer actions do.
Nevertheless, every thought and attitude, whether conscious or unconscious, is a definite act.

But the more unconscious it is [i.e., the more unconscious the act, thought, attitude, or feeling is], the greater the consequence and therefore the more puzzling the outcome.

By facing the negative side [i.e., the selfish, ruthless side of you], you evidence the bravest emotion there is: that of self-honesty.

Therefore, you do not have to be ashamed that this battle [i.e., this battle with your negative side] is going on in you. It [i.e., This battle with your negative side] is to your credit.

But you will fight the battle [i.e., you will fight the battle with your negative side] much more effectively by allowing it [i.e., by allowing your negative side and your battle with it] to enter your conscious mind.
You will then [i.e., By allowing your negative side and your battle with it to enter your conscious mind you will then]

come to understand
to a fuller degree
all
the laws of
  • the soul,
the laws of
  • human relationship, and
the laws of
  • the universe.

Then [i.e., Then when you come to understand the laws of the soul, of human relationship, and of the universe]

  • you will no longer
    feel
    that an injustice has been done to you
and
  • your hurt
    will be alleviated
    to a considerable degree.

Also,

there is a good chance
that no further
  • betrayal and
  • accusation
    will occur.

Because
	once the negative side
  of your battle
    has become conscious,
it [i.e., the negative side of your battle]
    will lose power.
But if such an outer event [i.e., if a painful or negative outer event] does recur, you will feel very differently about it.

You

- will learn a lot from such an event [i.e., such a painful or negative outer event]
- and
  - will be
    - strengthened rather than
    - weakened.

You

- will feel something very constructive about it, and you
  - may be able to turn the course of events in a positive direction.

When you

- experience the existence of this mass image [of self-importance] in you – not just
  - intellectually but also
  - emotionally –

and

- recognize the underlying erroneous concept that has thus far governed you [i.e., The erroneous concept that “I AM inferior” if I cannot get approval or admiration from others, which is the wrong conclusion of the mass image of self-importance],
you will have made a major step forward in the direction of inner freedom.
The example I gave [i.e., the example regarding betrayal] is just one of many possible ones.

Believe me, my friends, whenever you experience something that
- hurts and that
- you do not understand,
whenever you feel unjustly treated because you cannot find any wrongdoing on your part,
search in this direction [i.e. in the direction of the mass image of self importance].

Bring out the mass image of self-importance.

You can only do so [i.e., You can only bring out the mass image of self-importance] by
- feeling the need to be special, and
- understanding that you feel so [i.e., that you feel the need to be special]
  not
- out of malice,
  not
- because you wish to belittle others – who must automatically become smaller if you succeed in becoming bigger –
and not
- out of pride for the sake of pride,

but
- out of the mistaken idea that being special means survival for you.
When you recognize this trend [i.e., this trend where you feel your need to be special for your emotional survival],
you will also free yourself from destructive self-accusations [i.e., self-accusations that you are trying to belittle others or that you are operating out of malice or pride].

You will simply know
• that you have harbored a wrong concept, and
• that your emotional survival does not depend on
  • other people's opinion of you,
  but [depends] solely on
  • your own opinion of yourself.

The more you cater to the opinion of others, the less you think of yourself, deep in your soul.

Hence a vicious circle, always built on a false premise, is activated within you.

Again, I say: all this cannot be understood on a purely intellectual level;
it will benefit only those who develop the habit of questioning the significance of their various emotional reactions.
Yet these words [i.e., the words of this lecture]
• may leave valuable impressions
in others too [i.e., in those who have not yet developed the habit of
questioning the significance of their various emotional reactions]
and
• may come to fruition
at a later time,
when the path is voluntarily undertaken.

Before we turn to your questions,
I would like to say a few words
to some friends
who have never
• found their way here and
who have never
• had any personal contact with
this group,
but
who
• read the lectures with interest.

Attention has been brought to us
that some of them
try, on their own,
to reach the depth of their souls
• by themselves, or
• with some friends.

Their good intent is appreciated.

But I should like to tell them
that it is not really possible
to succeed
• by oneself,
or even
• with someone else
who has not had
personal experience
in this particular method.

The method of the work itself
cannot be conveyed by the lectures.
The lectures
serve as
• general material,
but they
cannot give
• the method itself.

You will do
no harm
in working by yourself,
but you will
not really get very far.

I would therefore suggest to those friends [who only read the lectures with interest, working by themselves or with friends],

do not hesitate
to get in touch with those members of this group who are qualified to help.

If they [i.e., If those who are working by themselves] are really interested in using this method,
whether
• for others
or
• for themselves,
this [i.e., working with members of the group who are qualified to help] will be necessary.
And now, my friends, 
let us turn to your questions.

Do you have any questions about this lecture?

**QUESTION:**
I cannot understand
which alternative to take
between
• being dependent on other people's opinion and leaning too much
  in the direction of catering for approval, or
• going to the opposite extreme [i.e., disregarding all opinions of others].

I cannot see how to compromise.

**ANSWER:**
It is
not a compromise.

You have difficulty
in finding
the right middle way perhaps? {Yes.}

Let me try to show you
how this comes about [i.e., how finding the right middle way comes about]
in a very natural way.

You are not expected to
decide
what the right middle way is.

*You couldn't do that* [i.e., You could not “decide”
what the right middle way is].

The moment
you would have to do that [i.e., the moment you would have to “decide”
what the right middle way is],
there would already
be something
compulsive
about it.
There cannot be a choice for you, such as:

"I go that far in this direction, and then I go this far in the other direction."

This [i.e., This “choosing” which direction and how far to go in a particular matter] would be something
• forced and
• unnatural.

The necessity for you to make a decision does not apply to
• weighing and
• measuring the right middle way.

It [i.e., The necessity and process of your “making a decision”] applies much rather to your
• facing yourself honestly and
• entirely forgetting, for the time being, the question:

"What am I supposed to do?"

I might say that this "What am I supposed to do?" stands in the way of arriving at recognitions [i.e., arriving at honest recognitions about the self].
It [i.e., This questioning, “What am I supposed to do?”] prevents you from finding the truth about yourself.

It [i.e., This questioning, “What am I supposed to do?”] blocks you [i.e., blocks you from finding the truth about yourself].

First, do not think about that [i.e., do not think about, “What am I supposed to do?”] at all.

The outer action may not change at first, even after you have made your recognition [i.e., even after you have made your honest recognition about what is true about yourself].

But your inner motives will change [i.e., your inner motives will change as you come to recognize the truth about yourself].

In some cases, your outer actions will change automatically, but this will be fruitful only if it [i.e., only if the change in your outer actions] is a natural result of your inner growth.

The first thing you should be concerned with is understanding yourself: your emotions, your motives, your desires and fears.

All these can be brought to light in every incident that bothers you.
Once you have reached a certain point in self-recognition, you become aware of the false concepts you harbor unconsciously.

Each time such a false concept is observed and therefore becomes more and more conscious, you will be less and less under
• bondage and
• compulsion.

By understanding your
• wrong conclusion,
you will become more aware of the
• right conclusion.

If you go on that way, you will
• be increasingly able to observe your emotional reactions and
you will
• understand them [i.e., understand your emotional reactions] better.

Then a point will come where you realize that your
• wrong concept is
• useless and
• harmful.
When it [When the point where you realize that your wrong concept is wrong, useless, and harmful] comes,
discard it [i.e., discard your wrong concept] –
not
• outwardly,
  but truly
• within yourself –
and
  you will be
  free.

False concepts are always held on to in the mistaken assumption that they are
• useful or
• protective.

Once you realize that this is not so [i.e., that your false concepts are neither useful nor protective], you will
no longer hold on to them.

You will then be able to say to yourself:

"I no longer need approval so desperately that I sometimes
• violate myself,
• become untrue to myself, or else
• defy dependency by rebelling against it [i.e., by rebelling against my sense of dependency for approval].

I can now stand on my own feet.
My
• inner life and
• value
  is not dependent on others.

It [i.e., My inner life and value] depends on
  my own self-respect
    which I can
      • further and
      • live up to
        only
          by being fully aware of myself."

Once you have
gained this freedom,
the right middle way
  will not be something
    you have to laboriously figure out;
it [i.e., the right middle way] will develop
  • naturally
  • without your even thinking about it.

The right way
  will just be there
because
  you no longer have to prove anything
    • to anyone else
  or
    • to yourself.
If you have a tendency to depend too much on other people’s opinion, it is because you have to prove something to them.

And if you
  • rebel against this bondage [i.e., against bondage to other people’s opinion] and
  • turn into the opposite extreme with a defiant "I don't care" attitude,
then you prove something to
  • yourself [i.e., prove to yourself that you do not care about the opinions of others].

Both extremes come from an attempt to prove something.

When there is no longer a need in you to prove anything, the right middle way will be as natural as breathing.

Do you think of having to breathe less or more in order to get the proper supply of oxygen into your lungs?

No.
  • You breathe automatically.

  • It [i.e., Breathing] is a completely natural process.
[In breathing]
You have found
  the right middle way
  without having to
  • deliberate and
  • choose:
    • not too much and
    • not too little,
    • just enough
      to give you what you need
        so as to maintain your health.

The same applies to
  any
    soul process.

Do you understand?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONER:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well, to a certain extent.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

I wonder if all that applies
  • intellectually
    as well as
  • emotionally?

ANSWER:
Very few people
  think
    in terms of this
      mass image [of self-importance]
        intellectually,
          my dear.

It [i.e., This mass image of self-importance]
  is rarely
    on the surface,
      since
        all images
          are of an
            unconscious
              nature.
You may ask anyone, at random, whether he believes in his intellect that his
• life and
• happiness depend on what other people think of him.

Everyone prefers to be thought well of by others.

That is natural.

But
• the degree of dependency [on the opinions of others],
• its consequences, and
• the extent to which a person goes to meet the demands of the image [i.e., the mass image of self-importance] is usually completely unconscious until a serious self-search is undertaken in this direction.

QUESTIONER: I feel
• consciously and
• very definitely that other people's opinions are very important.
ANSWER:
I wonder whether you realize consciously
to what degree
this [i.e., to what degree the opinion of others]
is important for you,
and
what this dependency causes you
to do or
to forsake.

But the more conscious it is [i.e., the more conscious your dependency on the opinion of others is], the better for you in the sense of being able to think about it objectively.

QUESTIONER:
I thought it is more difficult if a wrong conclusion goes so far that it is in the • intellect as well as in the • emotions?

ANSWER:
On the contrary.

Your intellect is more accessible to reasoning.
Once you have understood, once intelligence is at work, a wrong concept can be corrected.

But when one is consciously convinced of the right thing, it is often difficult to break through the separating wall between • reason and • emotion.

The resistance to face the fact that one holds an opinion that does not correspond to one's • conscious and • reasonable thoughts is an obstacle.

However, you do not have to struggle with it if you admit to yourself that your concept is wrong.

QUESTION: May I ask how this mass image [of self-importance] affects the individual's God-image?
ANSWER:

God-images
    have many forms.

But whatever they may be,
    the connection
    between
    • the mass image of self-importance
    and
    • the God-image
    is this:

    it [i.e., the connection between the mass image of self-importance and the God-image]

    creates
    a further conflict in the psyche.

The stronger
    • the mass image of self-importance
and the stronger
    • the God-image,
the more
    the personality
    will be disturbed,
    because
    two conflicting
    • needs and
    • compulsions
    • work against
    one another and
    • cause
    a short-circuit.
In cases that are less crass, where one image [i.e., either the God-image or the mass image of self-importance] is much stronger than the other, the conflict will exist, of course; it [i.e., the conflict brought about by the stronger of the two images, either the mass image of self-importance or the God-image] will create many disturbances, but each [i.e., each disturbance] would be due to one particular wrong concept [i.e., either wrong concept due to the God-image or the wrong concept due to mass image of self-importance].

But when • the God-image and • the mass image of self-importance work against one another, the person who has this conflict cannot handle life any more.

The existence of these two images [i.e., the God-image and the mass image of self-importance] together causes a vicious circle. One current is: "I need to be in first place, I need special consideration."

Because of religious mass images about God, one feels all the more • guilty and • inferior [i.e., guilty for having to be in “first place” and “special”].
Guilt cannot remedy this situation [i.e., Guilt cannot remedy your guilt and sense of being inferior to others before God because of your need to be in “first place” and “special”].

You can only do so [i.e., You can only remedy your sense of guilt and sense of being inferior to others before God because of your need to be in “first place”] if you understand the cause of it.

The guiltier you feel, the less you dare to look into the cause [i.e., the cause of your guilt and the cause of your sense of being inferior to others before God], and the stronger you are compelled to wish a wrong attitude away, so to speak [i.e., wish away a wrong attitude, the attitude, which is the very cause of your guilt and sense of being inferior before God], by looking away from it [i.e., by looking away from this wrong attitude].

Thus the following vicious circle is created:

• the guiltier you feel,
• the more you need approval in the belief that it [i.e., that approval by others] will alleviate your feelings of
  • guilt and
  • inferiority.

• And the more you clamor for such approval,
• the guiltier you feel [i.e., the guiltier you feel for clamoring for such approval even more than before].
This conflict arises out of two different directions:

one direction is
• the God-image,
the other direction is
• the real self in you
  which
• registers and
• observes
  everything and
• tries to convey to you
  • that you are mistaken,
  • that this [i.e., that trying to relieve your feelings of guilt and inferiority before God by getting even more approval from others]
  is the wrong way [i.e., wrong way to relieve your feelings of inferiority].

But its voice [i.e., But the voice of the real self in you]
• is misunderstood and
• is identified as
  the voice of the God-image [instead of the voice of the real self in you].

Thus the contrary pull [i.e., the pull from the message that getting approval from others is the wrong way to relieve your feelings of guilt and inferiority before God],

which draws you away from the mass image of self-importance comes from two sides:
• the side of the real self [which is the true message] and
• the illusory side,
  where the false God-image rules,

  [and these two, the real self in you and the false God-image,]
  • do not coincide,
  they
  • are not at peace
  with one another.

Do you understand? {Yes.}
Receive our blessings.

Accept from us  
the strength  
to look for that part in you  
that causes you so much trouble.

It is the part in you  
where you  
separate  
• yourself  
from  
• your fellow human beings,  
out of  
• wrong conclusions,  
because of  
• imagined needs.

Find it [i.e., Find that part in you where you separate yourself from your fellow human beings, that part that causes you so much trouble]

and

• your entire outlook  
will change.

• You will  
become objective,  
• you will  
be in reality.

The mere awareness  
of this part of your being,  
where you are caught in the mass image [of self-importance],  
will change your life.
Receive our
• love and
• blessings,
  each one of you.

Continue on this path,
• grow
  in it,
• rejoice
  in it.

Be in peace,
be in God!

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