

02 Pathwork Lecture #187 –1996 Edition
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(THE WAY TO HANDLE) ALTERNATION OF EXPANSIVE AND CONTRACTING STATES

03 Greetings, blessings and welcome to all of my friends here. First of all, I would like to say to this group of people, what an extremely wonderful thing it is you are doing. The long arduous years that many of you have spent, and the hard work in overcoming the ever-present fear of and resistance to meeting the self have brought so many fruits. This has created a strong center of light in the universal scheme of things. It has ongoing effects all around. The invisible effects already existed long before you were able to detect them. But now, effects become realities in your lives. Many of you begin to notice and feel a change within yourselves that seemed impossible even to visualize not so long ago. Your lives are fuller, pleasure is greater, fear is lessening, security grows. You become more firmly rooted in the reality within yourself -- the divine reality.

04 The effects are also manifest in what is beginning to happen to this group as a whole. The new gift I brought was made possible by this. The strength, the healing blessing that can unite with your self-generated new energy, is one such manifestation that will continue to grow and spread its light further and further. An increasing benign circle is beginning to establish itself: the effectiveness of your work on the path generates new energy which, in turn, makes it possible for me to bring to you a greater influx of energy to facilitate your efforts and make them increasingly more effective.

05 The new energy also showed in the very wonderful experience you had when all small working groups met together. This unification meant more than you can realize at the moment. You truly witnessed what it means to transform the energy of negative feelings -- because they are met and not denied -- into love. You have witnessed and been part of the process of transformation. In your individual pathwork you experienced this more and more frequently in recent months. But in the combined group experience you became part of the flow of self-perpetuating forces, without losing identity. You were moved by a vast force, by an inner volition that was not ego-directed. You were purified, uplifted and strengthened by this process. It has to deepen your faith, your knowledge, of the reality of the inner good life, of the spiritual realities I am striving to convey to you.

- 06** The love in this group is a tangible reality. Cultivate it, my friends. Realize how the law of brotherhood unites all of you. It will wither if you do not cultivate it. But it will grow and become forever more effective if you treasure the newly developed state of your unity. The bond is as yet tenuous, the strings that hold you together with love are still tender and new. But they will strengthen as you pay conscious attention to this new process and nurse it with your appreciation of one another and by expressing your innermost needs to one another, as true brothers and sisters should do. The help that you can give to one another will also heal your own selves because of your growing awareness of what you have to give and how you can help. You can truly sustain and give to each other, as you have spontaneously done during this significant group experience two weeks ago. Repeat such experiences at intervals. This is my advice.
- 07** And now we shall start with tonight's lecture. In this lecture I would like to give more tangible help in meeting the changing movements of growth and life. You remember that the movement of life is the alternation of expansion and contraction. You also know, to some extent, the meaning of these movements. But I would like to go deeper into this topic, for it is now very necessary for many of my friends whose phase of work on the path requires deeper understanding of this process.
- 08** Let us briefly recapitulate the meaning of the movements of expansion and contraction. Expansion takes place when a positive, open, committed, honest, loving, giving attitude exists. When the good feelings and thoughts create a corresponding attitude in life, they influence actions, behavior, responses, reactions, emanation and deeds. Such an attitude brings forth desirable experience, fulfillment, pleasure, bliss and abundance in all respects of life wherever this attitude holds true. Blissful, joyful life experience automatically creates open and expanding soul movements, which are the basis for a positive, affirmative attitude toward life -- and on and on goes a benign circle.
- 09** Contraction takes place when a negative attitude toward life exists -- when fear, hate, spite, distrust, negation of self and of the truth of the momentary state, pretense, dishonesty, self-deception, false ideas, negation of the beauty of the universe, secret cheating and self-rejection exist. Within the larger vicious circle, a smaller ingrown one is then at work and at cross-purposes with the affirmative, conscious striving of the personality. The negative attitudes create self-hate, the self-hate increases hate for and distrust of others. And on and on it goes.
- 10** These inner impurities have no adverse effect on you if you are truly conscious of them, if you understand them in proper proportion to the reality of the vaster scheme of your inner life and of universal life. In other words, if you perceive them correctly, their effect is not negative, but turns into a positive one. The energy of these attitudes begins to transform itself automatically as a result of awareness and proper perception. But if the self is too vain and frightened to see itself as it is at the moment, if it either denies or exaggerates the implications -- again out of vanity and

fear -- then the alternation of life movements will bring those hidden impurities to the surface. It is up to the conscious personality to make the best of these periods.

- 11** The automatic procedure is the following: those negative attitudes and destructive thoughts and feelings that always negate the truth of life are bound to create a contraction of consciousness, of soul movement, and even of the outer body. In this state, the personality is unable to receive the abundance of universal life. Then you are closed in and must therefore remain poor. You cannot receive and are therefore deprived. The impoverishment of your own good feelings -- and therefore of desirable life experience -- furthers bitterness, self-pity, accusation, spite. The negative attitudes bring more and more undesirable, painful life experience, against which the personality defends itself by closing up, by building a protective armor -- which is the closed, contracted state. Thus a larger vicious circle becomes a self-perpetuating force in your life.
- 12** The creation of negative life experience, with its contracting movement, is supposed to ward off negative life experience. People make themselves more brittle and stiff, thus pushing away life itself and instituting a state of constantly unfulfilled longing. This is why it says in Scripture that the poor will become poorer and the rich richer. This is one of the laws of life the individual must discover to make the alternation of life movements a productive, growing process toward increasing transcendence of the opposites.
- 13** All this, broadly speaking, is a recapitulation, in a concise way, of many of the past lectures for the purpose of introducing the theme of today's lecture.
- 14** In this world, in this sphere of consciousness, expansion and contraction create opposite experiences: pleasure and pain. Only when you transcend this sphere of being, when you transcend the level of duality, do expansion and contraction both become blissful experiences of different sorts. But this can only happen when you have mastered the negative experience. Or, to put it differently, when you acquire a new reaction and approach to both life movements. Contrary to what you may believe, the positive experience also requires a new attitude. We shall discuss both tonight. The new approach to both is to be learned on this level of duality. This is the task the soul has to master at this particular stage of its evolution.
- 15** Let us begin with the contracting state, due to negation, which causes more contraction -- and so on. As I mentioned, the usual, automatic reflex reaction to negative experience is blind contraction with its accompanying destructive emotions and thoughts. More specifically, the personality invariably feels unjustly victimized, blames others or life, is resentful, withdraws good feelings in revenge and spite. The person is also fearful of what life brings, for how could it be otherwise? One can never trust somebody whom one blames and spites, whether this be another person, life as a whole, or God.

- 16** To find the key to breaking this vicious circle, the conscious volitional self must make a deliberate effort to remove the blindness that makes you believe the negative experience is coming to you without your having produced it. As long as you believe this, there is no way out. As long as you are unaware of the connection between the event and your own attitude that causes it, you must remain trapped in the vicious circle I described. Thus, the first step out is a willingness to search for your own contribution to the undesirable event, no matter what the appearances to the contrary may indicate. The moment you can truly accept this and can proceed from that premise, you create a different pattern of energy and consciousness within your psyche.
- 17** The next step you must learn in order to break the vicious circle is to observe your own contracting movement when the negative, undesirable experience comes to you. Become keenly aware of your state of contraction, of hardening and numbing yourself, of warding off experience from within and without. Observe all the feelings involved, with their meaning -- rage, hate, fear, guilt, blame -- and all the tightnesses in body, soul and spirit. Only then -- in this observance, in this acceptance of the tight contraction that is still automatic -- can you proceed to acquire a different reaction. Begin to first want to not contract, but to remain pulsatingly open, even to the negative experience and the negative feeling. You will soon see that this is far from dangerous. Being open does not make you more helpless; it makes you less so. It makes you more feeling. A plasticity of soul substance, a state of open vulnerability is required to let feelings and experiences be in you.
- 18** First this must, by necessity, apply to painful experiences and feelings. If you cannot bear them, you are not equipped to experience joyful life. The idea that they are unbearable is a concoction of the limited, fragmented mind. It is not true. If you do not "make" something of it, if you do not project untruthful interpretations into the cause of the undesirable experiences and the feelings they evoke in you, you can bear them easily, sustain them, accept them, experience them fully. Allow the painful experiences and feelings to be in you. Go with them. Do not fight them -- accept them in the realization that somehow you must have created this condition.
- 19** Thus the anger and resentment you feel against life will decrease. Anger, fear, resentment and self-pity create tightness and brittleness. They numb you to all life experience, to the truth of your momentary state. Only when you truly encounter the negative experience, without aggrandizing or diminishing it, without any manipulation, do you really master it. Only when you thus master the negative experience -- when you no longer fear and flee from it -- have you truly overcome or transcended the negative side of duality. And only then are you indeed capable of accepting its positive counterpart.
- 20** Initially all human beings try to avoid undesirable experience. They defend against it and thus make themselves more prone to it. This puts them deeper into the painful duality that is so hard to overcome until this key is discovered. Of course it takes considerable work on the path before you are really conscious of your fear and

of your running away. For, to begin with, you are hardly aware that this is the case, or how you really hate, spite and pity yourself, reject life and yourself. Often many years of attentive self-search are necessary to obtain this self-awareness. But when you do, then you can truly enter the phase I am discussing here. This requires paying attention to your innermost soul reflexes. When you do so, the negativities that create contraction will gradually diminish. Sustain the painful feelings -- not masochistically, not self-rejectingly, not in the spirit that this is what you deserve because you are such a miserable creature -- but rather in the attitude of "I am indeed capable of enduring a little pain. Somehow, inadvertently, I must have created it. Therefore I will not create a new negative condition by denying what I have created."

21 In this way, you initiate true transformation. It first manifests when you discover that you no longer find the pain so unendurable. You will ride with it, as it were, you will let yourself be carried by it without ever losing a realistic sense of proportion about it. No hopeless depression can ever get hold of you in this spirit. This builds great self-respect, my friends. The ability to handle your self-produced pain gives self-confidence and strength. How can you not respect yourself in this spirit of courage and truthfulness? While you are in the painful feeling in a fully accepting spirit, slowly -- and often even quite fast -- the feeling of pain transforms itself into pleasure, the feelings of hate and fear become love, the feeling of distrust turns into confidence and even into the knowledge that life is as good as you choose to make it. The self-respect thus gained will then make you want to make the best of your life. Thus you meet negative experience without a negative attitude that reproduces negative experience endlessly. When you meet negative experience with a positive attitude, instead of contracting against it, you remain open, flexible, pulsating, alive -- even though at first this means enduring a pain or some other unpleasant emotion. This is truly one of the most important keys. But that key is unavailable as long as you are unaware of the disturbances within yourself, the destructive thoughts and feelings.

22 In this new way the negative feeling will become a tremendously positive, creative force, which is the same as that which you have experienced here together. You did not plan to create the sweeping love that moved you toward each other, opening up for each other and giving to each other, thus receiving. It happened as a natural, spontaneous, unplanned event, as an inevitable result of opening yourself and encountering first the negative emotions honestly. You did not hide from them. You did away with your pretenses and masks. You did not defend yourself against unpleasant feelings by being critical and judgmental with each other. You thereby opened new doors. The fact that this experience was possible is a result of true growth. But this is only a beginning. The same must happen individually with increased frequency in order to transcend the cycle of suffering, so that you can enter into a new cycle of joy and peace.

23 Every day you can come a step further on this juncture of your path. You can look at your negations without hiding. You can acknowledge them. You can observe your negative attitudes and see their deeper meaning, their significance. You can also

observe the cramping contraction and become intensely aware of this state of your being, which you still take for granted and thus do not even notice as an unnatural, painful and unnecessary state. When you listen into your unfeeling numbness, you will detect painful longing and other undesirable feelings. As you allow them to simmer on the surface, you institute the process I just described. Welcome the painful feeling that awakens in you. It is your life, it is your energy, it is your creative substance. When this occurs, a positive, benign circle will very definitely and solidly build itself.

24 Now, let us talk for a moment about the positive circle or sequence. Offhand, it may appear as though there is nothing else needed for a good experience: all you do is enjoy it. But this is not true. There is much more to it than that. The more you handle the negative cycles in the above-mentioned way, the more frequent positive experience will become. It will also become increasingly obvious that positive experience does not befall you by accident either. You will sense that it is a lawful result. However, unless you become attentive to the positive as much as to the negative experiences and feelings, you will lag behind and obstruct a greater expansion that is intrinsically possible at this stage. Pleasure, too, requires attention and understanding so that you can deal with it in the best possible way.

25 The habitual reaction of the average human being to pleasurable experience is a momentary rejoicing. But, at the same time, there exist a number of other emotional reactions that you overlook and thereby you lose out. So, my friends, begin to be as attentive to pleasurable and fulfilling experience as you have learned to be with difficult and painful ones. You will soon note that, in addition to the welcoming joyful reaction, there are others present, for instance a vague, half-aware anxiety and apprehension. On one level it is due to the fear of losing the good state again. On a deeper level it is due to the inability of enduring a greater expansion of positive experience. This exists in exact proportion to your inability of enduring unwelcome feelings. You deny the fear of not being able to endure good feelings just as much as you deny negative feelings. You simply look away from that part in you in which you react negatively to happiness -- and this is very regrettable because it causes you more unnecessary hardship.

26 As I said, becoming aware of this reaction should make you look at the opposite picture: your reaction to pain. As you react, are frightened of and angry about painful experiences and feelings, you are also unable to live in the higher climate of pleasure, joy, bliss, and finally even ecstasy. You can attain the higher vibration, the raised level of functioning of the higher realms of life experience, only when you go through the self-produced negation and negativity. Otherwise the climate is too heady, the altitude too high, so that, instead of security, it must bring anguish.

27 To repeat: the same approach is necessary toward both pleasure and pain. First, simply observe the previously hidden reactions. The more you encounter your negation of the good life, the more you can understand why you do not live in a happier and more fulfilled state. This will have the great benefit of making you less

angry at life, less resentful of others, less blaming, less vindictive and spiteful, less self-pitying. Hence you will increase your capacity of dealing with the negative experience which, in turn, must increase your capacity of having a good experience. As you let the negative emotion be, you are carried by it without fighting it, and you become capable of the identical attitude toward bliss. As you become aware of your negative emotions toward pleasure, you can endure it with less and less anguish, apprehension and anxiety.

28 Sensitive listening into your most subtle reactions will reveal to you that you rarely welcome good experience with all of yourself. You do so as a matter of principle, and because you fear pain, and also, of course, because the longing can never be entirely stilled. But there is a large part in all of you that still denies good experience, while you are entirely unaware of this fact. If you desire positive experience out of a negative reason -- out of fear of pain -- you still bar the ability to live in a higher state of functioning. Again there is a correlation: to the degree you avoid and deny pain, refute it and rebel against it, repress and project it onto outer circumstances, you cannot want pleasure for its own sake, but only to avoid pain. In that way it is impossible to come out of the wheel of suffering and of painful struggle with the opposites.

29 As your whole system, your whole organization of the human apparatus grows, you become more acclimatized to happiness, to fulfillment, to bliss, to pleasure, to abundance, to true expansion, to the joyousness of the living energy and to the divine consciousness that dwells within you. Only then are you in harmony with the nature of creation, which is all those things. Only then can you awaken to the harmony that has always been there, and recognize that it always instructs and guides you, that it is an ongoing process in you that never dies. Usually you are dead to it because your busy outer mind is so accustomed to its own noise -- that is, to its self-revolving, erroneous thought processes.

30 If you are not aware of negating the movement toward the expanding experience, you lose it ever so quickly again, without understanding why. And this breeds hopelessness. Hence, there is always so much disappointment -- and then the fear of the disappointment mars the good experience, so that the disappointment becomes inevitable. Whenever you are in a blissful state and count on never losing it again -- which is your way of denying the reality of your present state, your fear of pain -- the loss becomes a tragedy and not a predictable stage you can learn from because it brings forth unpurified soul stuff.

31 It is therefore my suggestion that whenever you find yourself in a joyful state, let your concentration and meditation be particularly concerned with observing your vague and hidden reactions. Do you fear losing this state? And do you also fear remaining in this state? Admit these reactions with the same candor you already use toward your negative feelings. Observe your automatic soul movement when you encounter pleasure and joy. Does it respond with involuntary contraction, notwithstanding your conscious desires and aims? This observation will allow you

once again to become attuned to what is really going on. You will see the finely and easily glossed-over reactions, which sorely need your conscious awareness.

- 32** As you are aware of this absolute key, you can begin a new process. Do not push yourself into a state in which you are not yet capable of functioning. Rather admit this -- it will automatically increase your ability to live in this state. As you observe yourself, you can prepare for the negative phase, so that you will no longer contract against it quite so much. You can let your soul movement be, rather than manipulate it. In that way, you will increase your capacity to endure all life, first the pain and then the pleasure. Only as you observe your inability to do so, do you come closer to enduring both. That is the unification and the transcendence. A willing attitude toward observing yourself makes you more real and more alive.
- 33** Each time you come through a negative period of contraction in this self-observing way, your ability to endure pleasure grows. You become acclimatized to functioning on a higher level of being. This is a very important concept to comprehend, my friends. Your reaction to pain -- the denial of it and the refusal to ride with it -- is the reason for its existence. It is intimately connected with your incapacity to live in bliss. Only as you see the meaning can the meaning and thus the manifestation change. And only as this happens can the dialogue between your conscious mind and the involuntary responses of your soul movements go on. This dialogue is an essential prerequisite to change. The dialogue should consist of stating and acknowledging in clear-cut words your contracting reaction, with all that this implies. Indicate the momentary situation of how you make yourself brittle, how you deny what is, how you prefer to be numb. As you state it, you awaken this part of your soul substance. As you do so, the pain will no longer appear so frightening or so deep or so unacceptable. You will endure it without the terrible cramp you inflict upon yourself.
- 34** Then the second aspect of the dialogue can begin, in which your conscious self also speaks, but this time in response to the previously stated and admitted negation. You state that you wish to experience what is, that you have the strength and the honesty to do so, that you no longer wish to deny life, that by feeling pain you prepare yourself to sustain pleasure, and that you wish to increase your aliveness and the courageous meeting of your own feelings -- thus of universal bliss. Such statements to yourself produce an ever-increasing affirmation of life and feelings.
- 35** Even you, my friends, who have accomplished so much, are still unaware that in some respects you still blame and accuse, feel sorry for yourself and hide from life. As you look at those reactions and encounter them in the way I have suggested, the change in you will become more complete and more grounded in the reality of your divine existence. Focus on your actual reactions to pain and pleasure -- and as you do so, your capacity to endure them will make the former obsolete. Lo and behold, the endured pain will transform itself, naturally and as if by itself.

- 36** I would now like to mention three different states of human consciousness. These states are very specific grades of development which I have not discussed before, but which become relevant in connection with the present phase of our work. In the scale of development, the least developed state is that in which people live in fantasy. They may appear to live in reality. They may hold jobs, have families and friends and go through all sorts of activities, but their real pleasure in life lies in fantasy. I mentioned this last time in a different context. This is more prevalent than you realize -- even among you, my friends, at least in some respect. For instance, the preoccupation of the mind with would-be situations belongs to this category. So do day-dreaming, playful thoughts of conversations as they should or might have been, living through fulfillment in a concocted series of mind pictures. All this belongs to the fantasy state. All of it uses up valuable life energy that cannot be regenerated, for if energy is misused it does not renew itself. Thus the energy is unavailable for real living. Subsequently real living becomes more and more fraught with apparent danger, so that taking refuge in fantasy life is the only avenue of fulfillment. Vicarious living can also take place by over-identification with figures in books and plays. Escape into them is often due to fantasy living, rather than real living from the self.
- 37** The second grade on this scale is to live for the sake of impressing others. We discussed this often and found repeatedly that this aspect exists in all of you. Different forms of this manifestation exist. You may do what you are doing -- either quite overtly and deliberately, or in a more subtle and hidden way -- for the sake of gaining approval from others. You may express this state of consciousness by echoing opinions and values you have never truly examined and that are therefore not your own. You may put yourself into a tight little box of prescribed behavior and values that is not the true expression of yourself and that does not further your real self, your pleasure, your innermost individual qualities, potentials and talents. You must recognize the distorted and neurotic reasons that may keep you hooked on this appearance level and abandon it, just as you needed to abandon the fantasy level. Such attitudes may still exist in you on more subtle levels in spite of your having recognized them. Envisage this possibility and observe yourself from this point of view. Living for impressing others permeates you more than you know.
- 38** The most developed and real state in this particular triad is when you truly live for your own sake, when you do and want things for their own sake.
- 39** Most individuals live on all three levels. These aspects interact and overlap. There may be some areas of health where you are on the third level, others where you are on the second, and still others where you are on the lowest first. The degree varies with people. Some are much more developed and live predominantly on the third, and only minor aspects of their personality remain undeveloped. With most people it is the other way around. How is it with you? Are you truly able to see and acknowledge where you are in this respect? To the extent that you live in either of the first two spheres of consciousness, to that extent you foster your ongoing frustration.

You perpetuate negation of life and negativity of feelings, thoughts and attitudes.
You create the vicious circle we are discussing.

40 A dearth of good experiences may then impel you to seek substitute fulfillment in fantasy -- or in obtaining approval and being envied from others. In both instances, it is a would-be, or "as if" life. In the "as if" life, you lose yourself. You lose the sense of hope, of real fulfillment and experience. The latter can come only if you first live through what is in you now and invest all your energies into the reality of the moment, of what and where you are now. Observe well what is going on and accept the momentary state, without fighting yourself. For the more you fight, even for the good, the more you contract. And the more you contract, the more you perpetuate the negative cycle. But not fighting must never mean giving in to resistance and fear. It cannot mean looking away from yourself.

41 This lecture, my friends, will prove to be of tremendous help and provide rich material, if you truly work with it, really use it, and do not just gloss over it.

42 And now, my friends, before we go to the questions, we will turn to the "mutual enterprise" we have started last time, whereby a power and a new influx of energy can help you to overcome stagnation and transform a negative condition. Let those come forth who are ready and willing to commit themselves to wanting to overcome their present stagnation, to wanting additional help.

43 [Four people came forth, one at a time, to receive the force. Each made a personal statement and received, either with some accompanying words or without, a very strong current of energy, of a force of light that a few could see and all could feel. It is unfortunately not possible to convey this experience in words. Perhaps the readers can use their inner sense to tune in intuitively and participate in spirit and also benefit from the force that came through so strongly. Not only those who came forward personally benefited from this force, but to a degree all who were present did. Afterward some questions were asked and answered, but these were not recorded because the tape ran out.]

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