

02 Pathwork Lecture #155 –1996 Edition
October 13, 1967.....

FEAR OF SELF -- GIVING AND RECEIVING

03 Greetings, my dearest friends. May this evening prove helpful and strengthening for all of you, and thus become the blessing that further opens your path to self-realization.

04 In order to become what you truly are, the fundamental prerequisite is fearlessness. Overcoming fear of self is the key. Every kind of fear amounts, in the last analysis, to fear of self; for if there were no fear of your innermost self, you could not possibly fear anything in life. In fact, you could not even fear death.

05 Before one embarks on any intensive path of self-confrontation, one does not know that one really fears only one's own unknown depths. People project this real fear onto any number of other fears. The displaced fears may be denied and covered up as well. A person may, for example, fear any aspect of living. All the power of the hidden fear of self may converge on it. Or life itself may be feared and thus avoided, just as the self is avoided to the degree it is feared. This general fear of life may further be projected on the fear of death, since they are really one and the same. Whoever fears the one must fear the other.

06 Only when your pathwork has become concentrated and your awareness has sufficiently increased do you realize that you are really most afraid of yourself. You recognize this fear by the constraint with which you encounter yourself, by all the more or less obvious forms of resisting, by your terror of letting go of your defenses and allowing the expression of your natural feelings. The degree of guardedness is not clear to begin with; these guards have become such second nature that you do not even realize that they are unnatural and that you could be quite different if you would let them go. Your inability to let involuntary forces guide you is a sign of how much you distrust your innermost self.

07 I wish to stress again that people who constrict their natural soul movements do so because they are afraid of them, afraid of where they will lead. Those who are aware of this fear have made a substantial step toward self-liberation, for without being aware of the fear of self, it cannot be overcome.

- 08** Fear of letting go means that the real self cannot manifest. The self can manifest only as a spontaneous expression. Such spontaneity exists, for example, when knowledge manifests intuitively from within yourself, not through a learning process introduced from outside. Only people who do not fear themselves, at least to some degree, can even register the presence of the self, let alone summon the courage to acknowledge and follow through such intuitive, spontaneous manifestations of their inner being. The real artists and the great scientists make their important discoveries through this process. In this respect, they must be unafraid of their inner self. In other respects they, too, may block it out.
- 09** The manifestation of the real self is always a profoundly creative process, whether it surfaces as intuitive knowing or as the fullness and depth of feelings that make the personality vibrantly alive and joyous on all levels of being.
- 10** Fear of not conforming to the social environment is another aspect of the fear of self. The inner reality may be at variance with the environment; the real values of the self may differ from the values of society. Only those who do not fear their inner selves in this respect will refuse the ready-made values handed down to them. Outer values, whether right or wrong, are still shackles if they are not freely chosen.
- 11** One of the most important aspects of the fear of self is fear of pleasure. For humans are created for the purpose of experiencing pleasure supreme, intense joy, though the majority of individuals do not experience it at all. The truly healthy and fulfilled individuals, who function as they are meant to according to their inborn capacities, can completely surrender to the life force with its pleasure currents as it manifests in them. They will spontaneously express this powerful force; they will not fear or reject it. This will enliven their entire system with beautiful strength, energy, and delight.
- 12** Those who are caught in guardedness and defensiveness and who are constantly watching themselves so that these forces cannot manifest, numb themselves. They become dead. The prevalent manifestation in this world, today no more than at other times, is what may be called self-alienation, or lack of aliveness, or disconnectedness. It is a deadness of feelings that also brings in its wake a sense of emptiness and meaninglessness. It is deadness because the life force in its vibrant flow is willfully interrupted and prohibited by an overly watchful, denying attitude of the outer ego.
- 13** The average human being experiences some aliveness at least at certain times, but is so inhibited compared to what he or she could be that the full aliveness, even if there were a way to describe it in adequate words, would sound unbelievable. You do not even know how you could function and what your life could be like. You have only a vague longing, a vague sense that life could be different. Unfortunate are those who ascribe this longing to illusion, to lack of realism, and who then resign themselves to a half-dead life on the assumption that this is the way it must be. Fortunate are those who have the courage to acknowledge this longing, no matter how late in life, and then begin by allowing for the possibility that this longing is justified and means that much more

can be had in life. And more can be had out of life if you become alive. But you can become alive only to the degree you overcome the fear of self.

14 Now let us consider this fear of self a little more closely, my friends. Why are people afraid that if they are not guarded and constantly watchful with their will and mind, something dangerous might happen? This dangerous something would manifest from the spontaneous depth of their being. What is it? Fundamentally there are two possibilities. There is the possibility that something negative and destructive would come out. And there is the possibility that something creative, constructive, expanding, and pleasurable would come out. It is not true, as it might be believed offhand, that only the former is feared. Fear of the negative is, of course, one very substantial reason why the individual prohibits the free-flowing soul movements, the cosmic flow as it manifests in each human being if it is unhampered. The destructive forces of hate, hostility, resentment, anger, and cruelty that the individual fears may vary in every conceivable degree. They exist in every human being. They exist to the degree that positive expressions have been prohibited, first by the parents and the environment in the ignorant belief that they are harmful and may lead to danger, and later by you yourself. This is very important to understand, my friends: You are not constrained, once you are an adult, by your past. You constrain yourself when you continue to hold back the constructive forces that were originally forbidden by others.

15 Here, again, is one of those famous vicious circles that result from every error instituted in human living. Because positive forces are restricted, negative forces grow. Or, to put it more accurately, the positive force is twisted, disturbed, converted, distorted, and thus becomes a negative force. This is not a different force that comes newly into existence, as you know. The rage is not a new emotion or energy current. It consists of the same original substance as love and can turn back into love if it is allowed to do so. In fact, it is easy for the negative emotion to reconvert to its original manifestation, for this is its natural form. For example, once rage is admitted and fully experienced under the proper circumstances in a way that is not destructive to anyone, and at the same time lets one fully identify with the emotion yet keep a sense of proportion about it, not rejecting the total personality because of it, the rage will transform itself into warmth, pleasure, and love. This transformation may occur directly or indirectly via a number of other emotions, such as sadness, self-pity, pain, healthy aggression, and self-assertion. All negative energy currents must be experienced and owned up to. They must be allowed to exist at the moment, as long as they naturally exist. Then, and then only, will whatever is unnatural and destructive reconvert itself.

16 Now let us go back to the vicious circle, which perpetuates itself when a healthy procedure as outlined here is avoided. The greater the rage, the worse the fear of it becomes; consequently, the more you guard yourself. The more guarded you are, the less possible it is for you to be spontaneous and thus to allow the destructive emotion to reconvert to its original pleasure current.

- 17** As I said, not only are the destructive forces feared, but often love and pleasure are feared as much if not even more, because the child has been made to understand that they are wrong and dangerous. They are feared because they require an unguardedness that trusts the spontaneous inner nature. Love forces can remain alive only when the self is totally unafraid of itself. Giving up guardedness seems like annihilation because then something other than the watchful ego cooperates in the process of living. Without the cooperation of the spontaneous inner nature life becomes impoverished. But the acceptance of this cooperation hinges on meeting what is feared. Thus in the vicious circle the love forces are feared because they demand giving up the watchful, stilted, premeditated attitudes that make all spontaneity impossible. Frustration and emptiness increase anger and rage, thus fear of self grows, and so on.
- 18** Those who are unable to make the decisive step to overcome their resistances to meeting their inner fears are caught in this cycle. Encounter with their fears is the one thing most people wish to avoid like the plague. It does not suffice to acknowledge in a vague theoretical way the existence of some negative feelings. It does not suffice to make abstractions about them. They must truly be lived through and dynamically experienced. This is inevitable and necessary and constitutes the facing of the self we are always talking about.
- 19** Once this is undertaken, it proves not as difficult or dangerous as first anticipated. In fact, the relief and liberation, the coming to life is so real and wonderful that the hesitation seems foolish in retrospect. Those who can bring themselves to make this step are blessed indeed, for life begins to open up only then. It is necessary to let go and let what is there come out, whatever the feeling may be.
- 20** I emphasize again, to avoid all possible misunderstanding, that this does not mean acting out one's pent-up anger, which only comes back to the self in retaliation. What I mean is that these emotions must be felt and expressed in certain circumstances, under therapeutic supervision, where they can cause no harm. In fact, the more the destructive feelings are acknowledged and the responsibility for them assumed, the less will you be driven against your will to act them out. Such acting out is always explained away; also people often remain unaware of how much more strongly they feel in a particular situation than is warranted. This inevitably affects others whether one admits it or not. The acting out that happens daily in everyone's life may not take violent forms, but it is all the more destructive indirectly. This phenomenon is very much underestimated.
- 21** All this can be avoided if the full strength of a destructive feeling is directly expressed and lived through. The more totally this can be done, the more quickly the transformation into pleasure will take place. What happens afterwards depends on the extent to which you are able to experience pleasure. This again depends on several factors, some of which we shall discuss.
- 22** Some of the foregoing sheds a little more light on the process of fearing oneself. The fear makes itself known in indirect ways, which you continue to rationalize. As long as fear of self exists, freedom and fulfillment of one's life are impossible, my

friends, absolutely impossible. It is so much better to acknowledge the fear of self, to own up to it and say, "Here is where I am at this moment. I cannot allow to let out whatever is in me, for whatever reason," than push it away and make believe you do not have this fear.

23 From here, my friends, we go a step further and look at another topic that is directly connected with this one. It will give you a new slant on your inner life. Psychology has postulated for some time, and quite correctly so, that a human being's unfulfilled needs to receive create damaging conditions in the psyche. Much emphasis has been given to this. Just as the body becomes thwarted when its needs are not fulfilled and it is not given the proper sustenance, so the human soul becomes thwarted when its needs are not fulfilled and it is deprived of sustenance on which it thrives -- love, affection, warmth, acceptance of its own individuality. Both soul and body require pleasure; without it you become crippled, your growth stunted.

24 It is true that the helpless child depends on receiving all its needs from others; however, far too little emphasis has been put on the importance of giving out. The frustration resulting from not sufficiently receiving has been overemphasized in the last decades, while the frustration of not sufficiently giving has been very much neglected. It has been correctly postulated that those who did not receive enough in childhood would find it difficult to give of themselves, but usually this is as far as it goes. The healing of damage from insufficient receiving can be much better accomplished when you realize that you are not helpless about your past, that you contain forces that can establish a new balance; but this can be done only when you comprehend the far worse pain caused by the frustration of not giving what you have.

25 The overemphasis of one psychological aspect has created a generation of self-pitying people who go around in life moaning that they have been shortchanged, that they have not received enough in their childhood, and that they have to continue as cripples. The ability to unfold and give always exists, once it is contemplated, once it is taken into consideration.

26 So much more of the pain in your inner life is the pain of withholding what you have to give, rather than of not having sufficiently received in the past. This is quite easy to understand when you think about it dispassionately. If more and more of any substance, of any force, of anything accumulates, the surfeit will create more tension. The overfullness exists, my friends, whether or not you know it, whether or not you hold the overflow back in fear. Therefore many of you are pained at least as much because you do not allow yourself to give whatever it is you bemoan not having received and wish to receive from others.

27 The energy flow of these soul movements forms a continuum. The movements create an ongoing process in which you must cooperate in order to be healthy and fulfilled, by allowing it to function. By "function" I mean work according to the laws of life that prescribe that the positive forces be passed on to others and that you receive from others what they let flow into you.

- 28** Religion has emphasized giving. It has preached for a long time that giving love is more blessed than receiving it. It constantly stresses, in one form or another, the importance of loving -- that is, of giving love, mercy, understanding, and other gifts of the spirit. Here the distortion was, and often still is, that love is a pious command that is fulfilled through sacrifice. Then the image forms that to love means to impoverish oneself. Loving acquires the connotation of self-sacrificing deprivation. If one does not suffer through loving and for the love of another by shortchanging oneself in some fashion, it is not considered love.
- 29** The command of love became more of an abstraction and contained the threat of forcing upon individuals certain actions that went against their interests. To this day, many people's unconscious concept of love is exactly this. No wonder people fear loving; it is represented as a pleasureless, sacrificial, and depriving act that impoverishes the self for the sake of being "good" and of pleasing an authoritarian god. No wonder love is rejected, since the pleasurable feelings it causes in the body are denied and accused as being sinful. One must then fear love doubly: either one gives in to its spontaneous manifestation, then it becomes "wicked," or one cuts out the very feeling that makes up its force, then it becomes an unpleasant duty.
- 30** Humanity fluctuates between these two extremes: either to remain the greedy, selfish child, demanding to receive exclusively and not being disposed to giving in the least, or straining for the false concept of love I just described. Since each of the two alternatives proves undesirable, people usually switch back and forth, although the tendency to one extreme may be stronger.
- 31** Only when you look at yourself with great honesty and a great deal of discernment will you find both these distortions within yourself. Now, how can a healthy flow of giving and receiving be created when such faulty attitudes bar the way? The fear of self must exist in both instances, for the natural impulse, the spontaneous urge, is to give abundantly -- as abundantly and generously as all of nature does! This applies on the most outer material level as well as on the most subtle level. The greater the natural, generous giving is, the less masochistic, suffering, and self-depriving the personality becomes. The more the false giving by self-impoverishment and lack of self-assertion takes over, the less real generosity and spontaneous outflow exist.
- 32** There are innumerable occasions in people's daily life when they stand at a point of decision whether to hold back the self or give. The issue itself may not be important, but the underlying attitude is. The question may be whether to hold on to one's old grudges, one's old ways, which exclude others in resentment or censorship, or to allow a new spontaneous attitude to come forth from the depth of the self. The latter happens naturally, not by force; it includes seeing new realities about the other person that make the holding of a grudge meaningless; it sees no shame or humiliation in giving up arrogant pride; it sees no "lack of character" in understanding and forgiving. Many such "little" incidents loosen up the block of withholding that causes more pain than any lack of receiving. From there it becomes easier and more and more natural to allow

feelings of warmth to flow. But at one point the self must make this choice: to stick with the old, excluding, restricting way, or to allow for a new strength from within and follow it.

33 Needless to say, the point of decision must be noticed. It is never unconscious the way certain truly unconscious material is. It is quite on the surface, only most people prefer to gloss over it and do not allow themselves to acknowledge the tiny points of decision about so many issues in daily living.

34 When this point is acknowledged and truly faced, it may appear like a precipice. The new way may appear to be risky, and the old, cold, separating way to be safe, although you all know that this cannot be true, that it does not make sense. Giving yourself to this apparently new inner force seems like going with a great, unknown wave. You may even sense the joy and liberation of it, but it still makes you fear its further implications. If you can let go and give up the destructive attitude, whatever it may be, no matter how covertly it manifests outwardly, you institute an entirely new way of inner living. It is the healing you have sought and hoped for. This is the way it comes about -- no other way.

35 Even after you come to this point of observation, you will not be able to take the step immediately. You will dwell a while in this teetering position and observe quite clearly how you exclude yourself, how, by holding on, you restrict the cosmic forces within your soul and constrict the outgoing flow. When you observe yourself at this cusp, you become aware of the implications of both alternatives -- the old constricting way, with all its rigid formulations and pat ways, as well as the new vistas that open up. When you observe yourself for some time at this cusp, at this point of decision, and then do not pressure yourself but simply observe fully and remember what each way means, you will finally become capable of letting go of the old way that refuses life, love, feelings, happiness, unfoldment, giving forth of what you have to give. At this moment you may not yet have the strong feelings, but you will have a new understanding that includes others.

36 The new way increases steadily, provided you do not stop the flow. The flowing movement is so beautiful that it cannot be adequately described. It contains a wonderful self-regulating mechanism that can be utterly trusted. To the degree you let go and give up a self-centered, selfish, self-pitying, or self-destructive attitude, fear of self automatically decreases. Something new begins to happen from within. The creative powers begin to function. Thus, you will no longer thwart yourself. You will no longer inflict frustration and therefore pain upon yourself, because the immense pleasure of following the natural movement will fill your being. The pleasure of giving and receiving will become possible.

37 For you cannot receive as long as you remain in the old position of refusal and isolation. As long as you fail to let go of the self-imposed restrictions, you not only make your giving impossible, you make receiving equally impossible. A vessel that is closed cannot be filled any more than it can be emptied. When you hold yourself tight

and guarded, you not only fail to protect yourself from danger, but you close yourself to all the healthy universal forces -- those that could and should stream out of you, and that could and should stream into you.

38 Because guardedness impoverishes and deprives, you inevitably become enraged. Most people find themselves in the preposterous predicament of holding themselves tight and restricted, guarded and overwatchful, unable to be spontaneous, always determining with the mind and the will, never allowing the creative processes to manifest. Therefore they frustrate their tremendous need to be part of the creative process. They frustrate themselves by withholding from themselves the intense delight and pleasure of being in the flow of giving and receiving. It is not an esoteric, otherworldly pleasure, disconnected from the body. It involves physical pleasure as well. The irony then is that these same people resent the world for not giving to them. The world wants to give to them, and yet they can never see what is given. They do not even know quite what they are not getting. They resent most those who really want to give to them and whose giving they reject, thus depriving themselves even more of whatever wants to flow into them. Allowing this to happen would help them to give, to become part of the creative process again. In other words, they disconnect themselves from the cosmic, creative flow of giving and receiving, of the constant turnover, the constant movement that takes place in the life process.

39 Now, my friends, what I am saying is not impractical philosophy, beautiful perhaps, but not realizable in one's daily life. These words express the most practical reality, applicable at any moment you choose. The truth of this applies to all levels of your being -- physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual -- that is, your total being.

40 Your impoverishment is self-inflicted because you cannot face that "moment" I spoke of when you refuse both what is given to you and what wants to flow out of you. The new outflow wants to eliminate, once and for all, the constricted, resentful, destructive, enraged, rigid place in you from which you do not want to budge. Those of you who can find this place in yourselves and observe yourselves on the cusp have the best chances. Your goodwill to heal, to become free, can make you reach for the inner strength and resources to make and follow through the decision to adopt the new way. All fear of self will eventually vanish as you express your negativity under the proper circumstances, and as this fear vanishes, the new fears can be tackled: the fear of pleasure, of happiness, of fulfillment, the fear of being in the stream without constriction. You will then see that acclimatizing to happiness and pleasure is not as difficult as it first seems when you wish to give what is in you. It is unbearable only as long as you want to receive but not to give.

41 Those who are still hooked, consciously or unconsciously, on receiving will fear fulfillment and pleasure. Because they are unaware of the ramifications and total significance of their predicament, such people complain that the world leaves them unfulfilled. Their complaints and resentments may take as many forms as there are human personalities. Many people are not even aware of making such a general complaint against life. This, too, may be rationalized. It is part of your pathwork to

discover it within yourself, to discover how resentful you become and how you refuse to budge from the negative position because you feel deprived.

42 You must feel deprived because you make it impossible to give out of your wealth and are therefore afraid of receiving. You are doubly frustrated. Your refusal to let go of the negativity and the refusal to give of yourself makes you unable to receive pleasure, delight, happiness -- often even material success, which does not involve the emotions. Although you sense the existence of great joyousness, it must remain unattainable to you. You cannot tolerate it; it frightens you precisely because you are stuck in that spot where you simply want to soak in from others. It cannot work that way. All efforts to attain liberation and well-being require equal attention to the frustration of not giving and not being able to receive.

43 My dearest friends, may these words open up the way for you that makes possible the transition you seek so ardently with one part of your nature but still deny yourself with another part. Perhaps they kindle a spark in you so that you can see and decide, little by little, to relinquish everything that bars the way to your destination. This destination is complete fulfillment and pleasure supreme.

44 Be blessed, be in peace, be in God.

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