

02 Pathwork Lecture #81 –1996 Edition
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CONFLICTS IN THE WORLD OF DUALITY

03 Greetings. God bless all of you, my dearest friends. Blessed is this hour.

04 On this path you are going through various phases. Broadly speaking, so far we have investigated the first level of your unconscious mind. It is the level on which you harbor wrong impressions and conclusions formed into rigid generalizations about different aspects of life. We call these rigid forms in the soul images. Some of these may be in themselves insignificant, yet they are important enough to distort your life.

05 We have penetrated into the world of duality, which is below this superficial level of your subconscious mind. It is on this deeper level where the battle between the opposites is waged. The battle creates a tremendous confusion in your life. This confusion concerns the big issues as well as the seemingly lesser ones. The great opposites are life and death, happiness and unhappiness, love and selfishness, light and darkness. Your confusion comes about because a certain attitude toward life, that is supposed to lead to the desired goal, often brings with it, at least to some degree, the undesired one. It takes a great deal of self-honesty and awareness to understand this phenomenon and detect the inner error of action and reaction responsible for this confusing result.

06 Religion symbolizes the struggle between opposites as the struggle between God and the devil. The confusions originating from this duality are said to be Satan's trick to deceive humankind so that it can no longer distinguish between God's way and the devil's. That which is intrinsically selfish and destructive often appears on a superficial level as righteous and holy, and vice versa. The distortion of truth into falsehood is part of the great battle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness which human beings erroneously imagine to be raging outside themselves; they tend to believe that they are merely victims caught in the middle.

07 Having to choose between everyday alternatives that confront you often generates confusion. These alternatives are not crassly "good" or "bad"; they both stem from the same basic struggle in the human soul.

08 Modern psychology has recognized the same fundamental problem, calling it the life instinct versus the death instinct, or the pleasure principle versus the reality principle. In connection with the reality principle, however, there is also confusion. So

often people are not clear which principle stands for God and which for the devil. Is the pleasure principle selfish and therefore destructive? Can you indulge in it without hurting others? And does the reality principle stand for duty, responsibility, work, achievement, and is therefore constructive? On the other hand, you are told that God is happiness, bliss, light, and the pleasure principle makes you yearn for that. Whether you know it or not, right at this point you are engulfed in one of humanity's major confusions.

09 Underneath all the conflicts you have discovered through the work on this path is a larger conflict always related to your world of duality. Behind your images and misconceptions you always find conflict. In one way or another, you find that you are torn between several alternatives. By stripping away any superimposed motivations, at the core you are bound to find the basic opposites.

10 But this level of duality on which you are torn between the opposites is still not the core. Behind it is the origin of the world of duality, just as the world of duality is where your images originate. Strangely enough, this underlying source becomes on the next level one side of the two opposites. In other words, the source, which is a unified core, on the next level of consciousness splits into two opposites. This underlying core is your longing for complete happiness, light, love, bliss, peace. The original longing is for happiness supreme, but life on earth prohibits such fulfillment. This prohibition creates the world of duality, and therefore your conflict. It is equally true, however, to say that the world of duality created the prohibition. It created life conditions on earth which made "reality" something that opposed the pleasure principle, to speak in psychological terms; in spiritual terms, that "reality" on earth opposes the divine principle of bliss.

11 This puts you into a vicious circle. How to get out of it and find your way into the light of truth is the relevant question. In the first place, you have to understand what is responsible, at least in part, for the human being's creation of duality out of a single core.

12 Life on earth necessarily involves physical death. Even if we remove many of life's miseries as unnecessary, as created out of confusion, physical death still remains. It is still a mystery, unknown, and therefore frightening, in spite of religious faith. It seems to be an end; as such it is in crass opposition to the longing for life. And life, in essence, means bliss. All the religious explanations, however true they may be, are still conjectures. Thus, by following through in logical steps, we see that the fear of death creates the world of duality and the world of duality creates a reality that says no to humanity's longing for complete fulfillment. This leaves us with the problem of death. It is by dealing with it that we can break the vicious circle.

13 Humanity has tried to cope with the problem of death for as long as it has existed. Unfortunately, these attempts were unsatisfactory and were bound to fail, just as your unconscious attempts to solve psychological problems by shortcuts and evasions are doomed to fail. Instead of facing the issue squarely, you superimpose ready-made

answers which may be true as such, but they are not true for you personally, because you have not arrived at them using the strength and courage that come only from facing the issue. You chose rather the way of avoidance out of fear and weakness. This is one way of trying to deal with the problem. Many religious people who cling to faith out of fear are examples of those who want to avoid confronting the reality of death on this earth.

14 Another attempt to deal with the problem of death is through negation of the very thing for which one longs most deeply. Humanity longs for bliss and eternal life, but many who desire it are terrified of not attaining it. Therefore they rush right into the negation of what they long for most. This self-destructiveness can be found on all levels. It manifests in your attitude toward less significant aspects of life, but is basically your way of coping with the problem of death. The atheist/materialist and the superficially religious who wants to avoid death by superimposed faith are two prototypes. Neither realizes that each is doing essentially the same thing, that is, throwing away what they most desire. They violently oppose each other, because to each one the other represents the opposite of what he or she believes to be the solution to the great problem. Yet neither has found the answer, since that must come from the self, from within. It comes only by courageously facing these problems, questions, confusions and fears, and examining how you have tried up to now in your particular way to cope with them.

15 My speaking of the longing for God may sound distant and abstract. When you try to imagine the divine bliss that spirits enjoy, your automatic association produces something that is usually quite different from the happiness which you as human beings long for. You imagine the bliss of heaven as something dull, sterile, uninteresting. There are many people who believe that the very presence of unhappiness is what gives happiness its flavor. Of course, this is not so. Since the word "happiness" to most of you connotes such vague and distant spirituality, let us use the phrase "pleasure supreme on all levels of your being" instead. Your deep-rooted longing for this "pleasure supreme" is constantly in conflict with reality as you know it on earth. This is the result of your inability to come to terms with death.

16 Modern psychology claims that this deep-seated longing stems from the desire to return to the womb, where the fetus lived in a state of being, without worry, responsibility, or hardship. The more the entity grows, the more it has to face the realities of life; therefore the struggle becomes more intense. But the longing of the human being goes back further than the mother's womb. The truth is that you all have imbedded in your spirit the vague memory of a life in another state of consciousness, when you knew nothing but supreme bliss without any opposing alternative. You can recapture this state gradually, by stages, and to a degree, even while you are still an incarnated entity. It is not enough to remove your images and wrong conclusions. However, as you do so, you are bound to encounter the level of the world of duality. Once you comprehend it at its deepest core, you come face to face with your struggle against death, or "anti-pleasure," if I may call it that.

- 17** As I indicated before, there are two major ways in which the unconscious attempts to cope with death. Both are based on negation: one by evasion, the other by deliberately going into what you are most afraid of. In both alternatives you struggle desperately against death. You struggle no less when you deliberately choose death out of cringing fear, in a negative spirit of weakness. It is an altogether different choice to accept death in a healthy way, out of strength.
- 18** When I use the word "death," I do not mean merely physical death. I refer to all the negative aspects of life, everything that opposes your pleasure drive. In that sense death also means loss, change, and the unknown that may actually contain something better than the state you are in, but by the very fact that it is unknown, it becomes terrifying. There is no human being who does not die many little deaths every day.
- 19** Your attitude toward death in all its aspects determines your ability to live and experience pleasure. The healthier your attitude toward death, the more the life force can flow through you, and therefore the more healthy and enduring will be the gratification of your pleasure drive.
- 20** Your first step is to detect how much you struggle against death. Become fully aware of this, just as you need to become fully aware of the constant longing for pleasure supreme. Both may be very hidden. Find which of the two ways you have chosen to cope with death -- evading it, or rushing into it. Both are present in every human being, but one or the other may be predominant.
- 21** In the latter attempt, you sabotage the happiness that you could have because you are too afraid of losing it again, or not achieving it to the degree that you desire. You say, "Death, or loss, is unavoidable anyway, so I might just as well get it over with." An extreme example of this is suicide.
- 22** You are torn between two unsatisfactory and damaging attempts to negate death. These artificial, forceful, and cramped attempts bring you so much nearer to what you want to avoid, and you forfeit that which you wish to gain. So it is not in acceptance itself that you find strength and healing, but in how you choose to accept death. Acceptance mixed with fear and negativity -- both of which lead to self-destructiveness -- is altogether different from a healthy, strong acceptance of the inevitable. Squarely facing it, not cringing from it, you will come to terms with it, thereby freeing the life force in you, which remains bottled up as long as you do not learn to cope with death in a healthy way.
- 23** You sense that the solution lies in acceptance. But you also believe that in acceptance lies annihilation. As long as this confusion is not brought into consciousness, you cannot begin to find your way out of the maze.
- 24** Faced with this confusion, people often resort to religion in any of its varied forms. But they do it in the spirit of evasion and fear. Thus religion, no matter how true its teachings, will not really help, just as the wrong kind of acceptance does not

help. This kind of religiousness will not help because it is accepted out of weakness, which pollutes people's motives. Deeply sensing the untruth of their motivations, they despise themselves for it. Moreover, the superimposed faith has no real power to help them. They accept God, and everything that belief in God implies, not out of real conviction, nor out of a deep, genuine insight, but because they are afraid. Thus, the enemies of religion are often right when they say that religion is an opiate. By the same token, the enemies of materialism are right when they reject the materialistic point of view, not only because it is not true, but also because the motivation for accepting it is fear.

- 25** The more we look into this subject, the more we find that the solution lies in facing the unknown and confronting the fear of it. The task is learning the strength to die, for only the person who knows how to die knows how to live.
- 26** Needless to say, you do not have to wait to experience actual physical death in order to learn how to die. Not only can your occasional conscious fear of anything that connotes death help you, but also all the other aspects of death that comprise daily living. If you do not know how to die, you cannot live because you cannot reconcile the opposites that constitute the dualism in your own soul. Hence you cannot free the life force that lies within unutilized.
- 27** So examine your faith, too, my friends. Do not be afraid to recognize that, to whatever degree, it also is an intellectual superimposition to which you cling out of weakness and fear. Such a frank admission will give you the very strength to build a genuine faith that is also a conviction and a knowledge. It will come from an inner experience of the truths which so far you have known only intellectually. This certainty will come after you have learned to cope with death in the fullest sense. As long as your ability to accept death is based on the superimposed knowledge that life goes on and that death is an illusion, your faith is built on sand. But if you take the great, courageous step to face your unbelief, your uncertainty, and your fear, and come to terms with them by accepting the unknown, you will build up your strength and make room for true conviction and the experience of spiritual truth. Then it will become part of you because you then learn to live. The life force will be released and a great measure of your longing for bliss will be fulfilled while still on earth.
- 28** Seek and you shall find an area of your being that clings to life only in order to avoid death. This motivation is negative and negates the life force itself. But if you face and come to terms with death, your embrace of life will have a positive spirit. This alone can solve the problem of duality, since duality arises out of negation.
- 29** The problem of duality has to be tackled eventually along the road of development and growth. For some it will surface sooner, for others later, but it must come for everyone.
- 30** Do not fear that you are being disloyal to your faith when you face that part of it which is superimposed on your terror of death. For only then can you truly become

strong, from knowing and accepting the uncertainty of death in small ways, every day. This strength does not come from evasion, or from anything negative. You will know that death is an integral part of life. To the extent that you grow in this direction the life force will flow through you and give you a foretaste of what real happiness, pleasure supreme, and true security are, even while you are still in the body.

31 Many aspects of civilized life stand in the way of the supreme bliss that could be had to some degree even on earth. They are a direct result of the inner duality, which in turn comes from the inability to die. Civilized life constantly imposes on you the alternatives of pleasure and unpleasure. Let us consider, for instance, work that is not always according to your creative abilities and inclinations, and therefore not according to your liking or pleasure. Moreover, the conditions of working, with all their "musts" which stem from political, economic and sociological factors, which again are themselves a result of the inner duality, necessitate a struggle for living. This encourages ambitiousness, drives, and compulsions. In addition, these often confront one with obligations which may only be necessary within the framework of your present life on earth. In these ways a reality principle is created that stands in clear opposition to the longing for and fulfillment of the happiness that could be yours. Here individual inner problems have collectively brought about a state of civilization that makes life unnecessarily difficult. Thus your often unpleasant reality is in many respects unnecessary, and shows up as a collective manifestation of the inner duality. As each person begins to face this problem within, he or she helps to change the world and these conditions in ever so subtle but nonetheless decisive ways. As you focus on these problems within yourself, you become able to cope with the unnecessary duality in a much healthier way. Simultaneously you also help to change the overly harsh collective reality principle.

32 Now I wish to touch upon another conflict and confusion. In the course of this work you may have become acutely aware of the desire for happiness, love, fulfillment, or -- to put it in the words I used tonight -- pleasure supreme. You have discovered that much of this longing comes from your unfulfillment as a child, now manifesting as exaggerated craving. You learn to distinguish between the healthy wish for mature love and the childish craving need to be loved. With the help of this awareness you free yourself to some extent from the craving. Nevertheless, it is necessary for you to understand also the origin of the excessive demand. The need comes from a vague memory imbedded in the spirit.

33 Now you may ask, "If this wish has a spiritual origin, then why is it unhealthy?" Part of the answer is that it is impossible to gratify such excessive expectations on this earth given the reality that humankind has created. Nor is it enough to say that childish craving is one-sided, while mature love is willing to give and love as fully as one wishes to receive. In the adult, the childish craving subtly merges with the mature love-capacity, so the individual's justification remains that, "If I could only find such completely satisfactory love, I would be willing to give my all." This is often true. But the answer lies still deeper.

- 34** The difference between the immature desire and the craving on the one hand, and the mature wish for love and pleasure supreme on the other, is not determined by intensity of feeling, but by the time element, and the prevailing illusion of self versus the other. Often the gratification of an instinct or the fulfillment of a wish may produce a conflict because it may simultaneously prove damaging to another person. It may make you selfish. Thus, you feel you have to decide between pleasure and unselfishness, both of which are part of the divine purpose. How is one to cope with this duality? You may remember a recent lecture I gave on the great transition in human development.* In that lecture I showed you the illusion of self versus the other. There is no such a thing as a true experience of bliss at the expense of another. Realization of this truth will come only as you proceed on this path, through all the steps I lead you.
- 35** This wider vision will be attained also by a reflection on the time element. Instant gratification -- the child's way -- often sets one's own pleasure against the other's. However, from an expanded vision, this ceases to be true. The more mature one is, the better one will be able to connect cause and effect even if they are not close together. Time is a product of your world of illusion, and therefore the length of time between cause and effect makes a great deal of difference in your comprehension and evaluation of things. The more a person matures spiritually and emotionally, the more the aspects of illusion are outgrown. Although still in time, such a person begins to sense time's illusory character. Practically, this manifests in the ability to see cause and effect even if they do not follow in direct sequence. When they do follow closely, even a very small child begins to make the connection and learns from it. The process of growth therefore is determined also by the ability to connect cause and effect even when they are separated in time.
- 36** To learn this, you have to connect past and present causes and effects. You learn this anyway in your work on the path. But you also have to cultivate patience as far as the present is concerned. If your instinctual drive toward wish-fulfillment interferes with another person's happiness or if for other reasons you cannot at once receive the gratification you long for, you can cultivate this wider outlook. Take the instantaneousness out of the wish which in itself is healthy, and you will begin to see the law taking its natural course, and find that you can lift yourself out of time at least to some degree. So the difficult choice between happiness and unselfishness exists only in the relative time element.
- 37** When your longing for happiness is not instantly fulfilled, this, too, appears as a kind of death. It can often feel like bleak misery, and in that sense seems like death to you. When you give up instant gratification but retain the attitude of keeping alive, in principle, the wish to obtain what you seek, you are using the healthy way of coping with death. The giving up of the wish itself is really an unhealthy acceptance of death. As you become stronger in the healthy way, you are bound to experience that you do obtain what you want eventually. You cannot help but become aware also of the illusion of actual physical death, not by intellectual superimposition, but by the strength that comes from coping with dying everyday, little by little, and confronting it in the

healthy manner. Once you overcome this conflict, the pathway will be smoothed toward that real strength of living which lies in the strength of dying.

38 Are there any questions on this subject?

QUESTION: Can you show us how to approach this subject in our everyday life and in this work? How can we learn to eliminate time?

39 ANSWER: This is a misunderstanding. You cannot eliminate time as long as you live on earth. You can only develop a different understanding, a wider vision. Cause and effect move closer together, and therefore the illusory character of time lessens in your perception. You begin to sense something behind time.

40 The best practical approach with which to begin is the process you are using in this work. You all began working on this path with the conviction that so many mishaps in your life were caused by other people's faults, or an unkind fate. As you proceeded, you found, not as theory but as fact, how reactions or attitudes of your own were responsible for such occurrences. This came to you as a wonderful revelation. You may not have as much success in other areas of your life yet, but you have begun, and you can now connect cause and effect. You were incapable of doing this before, since cause and effect were not close together. Careful investigation, however, has revealed the connection. The more problems you find, and therefore resolve, the closer you come to sense the illusory nature of time.

41 So in this respect you have a new work assignment, and the more you work on it the closer will you come automatically to sense another dimension behind time. I do not want to use the word eternity. This other dimension behind time is still not the ultimate, for behind this is something else still, and beyond that is yet something else, for which there are no words at my disposal.

42 As to the practical approach in learning to face death in your everyday life, it is so self-explanatory that I hardly need to go into it. Work first toward the recognition and awareness of the basic current of your longing for pleasure supreme, as well as your apprehension of death in all its facets. This is not too difficult; it is a matter of focusing your attention. By looking at your various moods, emotions, fears, apprehensions, and anxieties -- which all represent a form of personal death -- you will see how you really react to death. Find out which of the two wrong ways of coping you use in your emotional response. Learn to become aware of everything from which you cringe; do not repress this fear.

43 You will then begin to see that you fear not only the negative, but also change, because it is unknown to you. This is the great battle between another pair of opposites. One is the surging spirit going forward, the other is the supposed safety in sameness. Stagnation is a distortion of the timeless element of being.

44 You may say that you are aware of your longing for happiness as well as of your fear of the negative. No, my friends, not one of you is aware of even the slightest degree to which these two currents exist within you. So much is "conditioned away," if I may use this expression. This work brings into clearer focus the awareness of that for which you basically long, and also what you fear. As this awareness grows, you will understand what I have been talking about.

45 QUESTION: I do not understand what you mean by saying our reality is negative for us, so that we cringe from it.

46 ANSWER: There is physical death and sickness, and the world of matter, bound to decay. There is struggle and work for daily subsistence, and obligations imposed upon you that you may not like. Life is constant change, bringing losses and unknown factors that create anxiety in you. All these seem to block the way toward the gratification of your wish for pleasure supreme. You do not like it, but it is your reality at this stage of evolution.

47 QUESTION: Can you explain a little more clearly how healthy acceptance differs from unhealthy acceptance, for instance in a martyr?

48 ANSWER: The unhealthy way contains, above all, a spirit of defeatism. As I indicated before, the very fear of something makes you rush into it. Your repressed desire for the exact opposite of what you fear, whether or not it is avoidable, makes you abandon the very desire. The healthy way is to say, "Yes, death is unwelcome. I really do not know what will happen and therefore I do not like it. But it is part of life, and when it comes my way, I will be strong enough to accept it. Others have gone through it, and so will I. I will meet it in full awareness of my uncertainty. I am now aware that I still fear it, but I will learn to accept what cannot be avoided, and thus I will eventually lose my fear." This applies also to every other negative facet of life, and can be practiced every day. It is very difficult to put into words. Perhaps it will help you to understand by visualizing a soul movement of tensing and letting go. When you struggle away from something frightening, you tense up and pull away. This very pull in tension pushes you into it. Courage, an honest facing of the self, and a relaxed attitude will produce the necessary strength. The lack of these attributes will either push you into what you fear or make you run from it. Both have the same result, namely, negation.

49 QUESTION: What is your attitude toward the ascetic? Is he running away from it all? Does he face up to reality or is he avoiding it?

ANSWER: In general, an ascetic tries to buy himself out of what he fears. He forfeits all pleasure and happiness by self-imposed hardship. In other words, he chooses unnecessary hardship because he so greatly fears another hardship.

50 QUESTION: How about the spiritual ascetic?

ANSWER: Exactly the same. Asceticism is so often a great self-deception and a complete denial of the life force. The principle of death is feared so much that the life force is completely negated. It is a very self-destructive and damaging way of coping with death.

51 QUESTION: How do you account for the supreme pleasure that comes from mastery in achievement and accomplishment of the so-called unpleasant problems?

ANSWER: Here again, it depends on the motive and the way it is done. If it is genuine and healthy, the process I have described has been lived. Since the duality is a result of negation, one can only find the way out of duality by no longer negating, but facing up to it. This will then show the unity behind the duality, so that pleasure and pain become one. But there are also imaginary, superimposed, and therefore unhealthy ways of doing this, and these are illusions.

52 QUESTION: Doesn't the healthy state deny the unpleasant emphasis?

ANSWER: No, I would say it is just the opposite. Death ceases to be, but this happens in a genuine way only after it has been worked through by facing the fact that it still exists for you. By denying it, you may encounter the danger of negation and evasion. If belief in the end result is artificially clung to, it has the very opposite effect. You cannot deny that which still exists for you.

53 QUESTION: Is it life and death, or life or death?

ANSWER: It is life and death.

54 QUESTION: Therefore it could not be unpleasant, otherwise it would be life or death. So death must be a pleasure. Doesn't the healthy attitude therefore deny the unpleasant emphasis?

55 ANSWER: Let us not confuse the end result with the process of arriving at it. Many religious philosophies have taught this truth. But the end result has been used to avoid facing that which still seems unpleasant, if for no other reason than that it is unknown. Before you can truly experience that death is pleasure in a healthy way, you first have to go through your own distortion, in which death seems bleak and frightening. Only after going through that will you come to the realization that life and death are one, that pleasure and pain are one.

56 QUESTION: Is it not equally illusory to think that the problems of everyday life and the crass things you encounter are unpleasant? Aren't they pleasant for he who has mastered them? Therefore this does deny the unpleasant principle, except in terms of an unhealthy attitude.

57 ANSWER: Once you have arrived at that state, you will find it so. But until a person arrives there it would be dangerous to try to talk one into it. Too much of this

has been done already. One has to be very careful, since evasion and self-deception are always so close at hand. The temptation is so great because humanity fears to face the truth. Truth is never unpleasant, but it may often appear so in your state of temporary reality and distorted vision. People have to let go of a truth that they themselves have not yet discovered and at the same time face the untruth that still lives within. You have to look into the very difficult abyss of illusion, as long as it is still an abyss for you.

58 COMMENT: I think it has to do with the interpretation of the word "deny." If one means that something doesn't exist, then one is wrong. However, if by denial one means that something is not real, that it is an illusion, that is different.

59 ANSWER: Yes, that is very true. But you see, there are so many religions which originally possessed this truth when they taught the denial of death. However, due to an inclination to arrive at the result through shortcuts in order to avoid the unpleasantness of facing the illusory abyss, humanity clings to such words as "there is no death" and misuses them. The result is superimposed faith that is embraced out of fear and weakness. So let us be careful and always keep in mind that what seems most frightening -- death in all its aspects -- must be faced before it denies itself.

60 This was not an easy lecture, my friends. It will give you much food for thought and material for progress.

61 Be blessed, each one of you. Divine strength and love envelops you. This love is a reality. May you feel it and carry it with you into your lives. Be blessed. Be in peace. Be in God!

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PO Box 6010
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