

Pathwork Guide Lecture No. 102
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THE SEVEN CARDINAL SINS

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

I have promised to give you a psychological explanation of the meaning of the seven cardinal sins. What is called sin is the outer manifestation, either in deed or thought, of psychological deviation and immaturity. In other words, the result of inner distortion produces what is called "sin." The common denominator of any sin is immaturity of the soul, which makes it incapable of relating, communicating, and loving. In the broadest terms, sin is lack of love. An immature person is never able to love. Anyone in that condition is selfish, egocentric, blind, and cannot understand others. Immaturity means separateness. In separateness, one does not love and is therefore "in sin." Sin, in psychological terms, is neurosis. The only difference between the spiritual and psychological approach is that the spiritual approach puts emphasis on the result, while the psychological approach shows the underlying causes and the different currents and components leading to separateness, neurosis, or sin.

The first cardinal sin is PRIDE. I have discussed this in the past.* You all know its origin, reason, effects, and side effects. Briefly: pride is always a compensation for feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. That the effects of your pride must lead to separateness is self-explanatory.

The second cardinal sin is COVETOUSNESS -- greed. Again, you know its deeper meaning from past lectures. If you covet something you do not possess you blind yourself, because you believe that having what you want would give you happiness, when, in fact, happiness is an inner state which can never be achieved by outer means. You are also blind when you ignore the inner causes of your not having what you wish to have.

In your search for self-understanding you have come to realize that whatever you lack in your life, provided your wish for it is a healthy one, is caused by a conflict within you. Such a conflict is your being afraid -- perhaps unconsciously -- of the very thing you want most. You may have desires and be unaware of many obstacles to their fulfillment. Finally, you may be even unaware of what you really wish for. Under these circumstances, you may envy others and covet what they have, because you cannot resolve your own problems which keep you from fulfilling yourself. What you covet may be a substitute for your real needs of which you may not be aware.

Covetousness, as well as pride, separates you from others and from your real self. Both lead to, and stem from, self-alienation; both are opposites of love, of communication, and of relating to others. These vices do not unite, but set you apart and above, in a special, isolated place you think someone else holds. All this is inner blindness which leads to outer selfishness and to separateness.

The third cardinal sin is LUST. Lust is so often misunderstood. It is believed to refer to sexuality, but this is not necessarily so. Now, what does lust mean? It means any kind of passionate desire, whether or not it has to do with sexuality, which is indulged in a spirit of egocentricity or isolation. It is the childish attitude of "I want to have, to get," without a true spirit of mutuality. One may be willing to give, provided one receives what one wants, and yet the basic emphasis is placed subtly on the self, rather than on mutuality. True mutuality is not possible without the capacity to relinquish, and to tolerate not always having one's own way. The maturity to withstand frustration and to relinquish one's will is a prerequisite for true mutuality. When the need to receive is a greedy force that is intrinsically selfish, then one can speak of lust.

As I have often said, it is easy to be deceived because the stronger this selfish need exists, the more the person may sacrifice, submit, and be a martyr. All this is an unconscious manipulation in order to get one's own way. Since this tendency is subtle and hidden, and often has nothing to do with sexual passions, it may not be obvious that it is lust. Yet all human beings have some of it. Where there is a forcing current and a driving need, there is lust. You all have that, and it is even stronger when it is not yet consciously experienced. You may deceive yourself because that which you so strenuously desire may in itself be something constructive. Yet, you are the craving, needy child who wants to be the center of the universe. The raging need, which you may or may not be conscious of, is disconnected from the causes that brought about the original unfulfillment. In your ignorance, the need -- or lust -- swells to unbearable proportions and you become more frustrated because you do not see the remedy, which is a change of inner direction.

In other words, an unfulfilled need that remains unrecognized in its primary, original form, produces lust. To the degree that you become aware of your real needs, you automatically increase your maturity. When a need is unconscious, a displacement occurs and a substitute need is pursued lustfully. No matter how legitimate, constructive, or rational it may be in itself, such a pursuit indicates immaturity. The stronger the urgency, the greater the frustration must be. It does not matter whether this refers to sexual desire, or the lust for power, for money, for being liked, or for a particular thing. When these emotions are investigated and the original need found, you can begin to dissolve the lust. You can come to terms with the original need, but you never can with the substitute need. If this original need is still childish and destructive, it can mature only by bringing it out into the open. A conscious need can mature into a mutual state where two people recognize and express their own respective needs in such a way as to help each other find fulfillment. An unconscious need must always be one-sided and selfish.

To assume that the sexual urge per se is sinful lust is utter distortion. As I have often said, sexuality is a natural, healthy instinct. If it matures properly, it combines with mutuality and leads to love and union. If it remains separate, it is lust, but it is no more evil than the lust for power, for money, for fame, for always being right, or for anything else.

The fourth cardinal sin is ANGER. What is anger, my friends? Anger is always, in a sense, a lie. The original feeling is often one of hurt. If you owned up to the original feeling, you would not need to be angry. In pride, due to inferiority, you feel humiliated when you are hurt because you give someone else the power to hurt you. Therefore, you substitute anger for the original pain. Anger seems less shameful, setting you above the other person, rather than feeling your vulnerability, which seems an inferior place. Anger lifts you above the true position you find yourself in -- that of being hurt. In pride, you lie about your real feeling. Thus, anger and pride are

connected. The lie is one of self-deception and therefore of self-alienation. It is displacement. Thus, the lie causes negative effects, while owning up to your feelings does not.

Hurt, free from anger, cannot negatively affect others: therefore it will not come back to the self. If the primary emotion -- pain or hurt -- is no longer conscious, or if it is intermingled with the secondary emotion of anger, it turns destructive. Whether the anger manifests in deeds or words, or whether it is merely an emanation, makes no difference. When you admit that you feel hurt, you do not cut off the bridge to the other person; in anger, you do. The genuine, primary emotion is not contrary to love and communication, while the substitute emotion is.

You know that I usually shy away from the word "sin" because it encourages self-destructive and unproductive guilt. Instead I concentrate on the underlying conditions. However, in this context, I have to use this word. Anger which leads away from communication, from bridging gaps between human beings, is a sin.

Of course, there is such a thing as healthy anger, but we are not talking about that. There really should be another word for it.

QUESTION: I would like to ask a question here. Why is it that in the Bhagavad Gita anger is considered the worst sin of all, producing complete confusion?

ANSWER: Because in anger, when it is a secondary reaction, you no longer know what you truly feel. You are in error about yourself and therefore you cannot possibly perceive and understand the other person. In many of the other so-called sins, you may be utterly aware of the original feeling. Due to certain missing links, you may be unable to feel differently, yet you know what you feel. But when you are angry, you are not feeling the primary emotion. Only with awareness can you penetrate deeper and find the underlying hurt or pain.

I might also add that many other destructive emotions, such as jealousy, envy, or lust, also contain anger. Anger may be a permanent state of the soul that is too subtle, too insidious, and too hidden even to be recognized. You will now understand the reason why I have been admonishing you to become aware of what you really feel. Whether you call it resentment or hostility, anger or hate, makes no difference; they are all the same. Most human beings are not even aware that they feel anger. Once they become aware of it, it is easier to find the underlying original emotion.

QUESTION: What is healthy anger?

ANSWER: Healthy anger is objective, when justice is at stake. It makes you assert yourself. It makes you fight for what is good and true -- whether the issue is your own or another's, or for a principle. You may even feel objective anger about a very personal issue, while projecting a subjective emotion upon a general issue. It is impossible to determine whether or not the emotion is healthy anger by looking only at the issue itself. Healthy anger feels very different from the unhealthy kind. Unhealthy anger poisons your system. It calls forth your defenses and is at the same time a product of them. Healthy anger will never make you tense and guilty and ill at ease. Nor will it compel you to justify yourself. Healthy anger will never weaken you.

Any healthy feeling will give you strength and freedom, even if the outward feeling appears to be negative, while an apparently positive feeling may weaken you if it is dishonest, if displacement and subterfuge are at work. If your anger leaves you freer and stronger and less confused, then it is a healthy anger. Unhealthy anger is always a displacement of an original emotion. Healthy anger is a direct emotion.

QUESTION: Is that the wrath of God in the Old Testament?

ANSWER: Yes, that is right.

QUESTION: Does that have anything to do with righteous indignation?

ANSWER: Yes, that is also healthy anger. But my friends, be very careful in your self-examination. When you have an outer issue in which you may be utterly justified in feeling angry, that still may not mean that what you feel is healthy anger. The only way to determine that is by the effect your anger has on you and others. Only you can determine the truth. Only utter candor with yourself will enable you to distinguish between them.

The fifth cardinal sin is GLUTTONY. The deeper meaning of gluttony has to do with need. A need that is unfulfilled and frustrated for a long period, that is thwarted again and again, will seek outlets. Such an outlet, among many other possibilities, may be gluttony. Why would ancient wisdom refer to this as sinful? Not merely because it is destructive of your physical health. That would certainly not be sufficient reason to call it a sin. There are many activities in a person's life which are undesirable and damaging to one's health, yet they are not considered sinful. Something much more important and vital is at stake here. If you are unaware of your original needs and therefore cannot go about fulfilling them through the removal of your inner obstructions, then you cannot fulfill yourself. You cannot fulfill your potentials. You cannot become happy and give happiness. You cannot unfold your creative abilities. You cannot contribute, be it in ever so small a way, to human society and its development.

All human beings, no matter how much you may look down on them or may consider them insignificant, have the possibility to contribute in some way to the evolutionary plan. But only if they fulfill themselves can they do so. They cannot fulfill themselves when they are unaware of their real needs and why these needs remain unfulfilled. As they understand the reasons, thus bringing fulfillment closer and closer, they can contribute something to the vast reservoir of cosmic forces and influence evolution and general spiritual development. The fulfillment and happiness of every human being is a necessity for the entire evolution.

It would be unfair to say that unfulfillment is always due to selfishness. It may be selfishness, or it may be a childish self-concern. Yet there is another part of the psyche that realizes that only in happiness can one contribute, and one loses out by not contributing. This gnawing feeling of missing out makes you strive, and if you strive in the right direction, you will eventually turn inward and seek the reason for your unfulfillment. However, there are many wrong ways of striving that bring only temporary relief of the inner pressure. One of these is gluttony. As I indicated previously, there are also many other forms of addiction, such as alcoholism.

QUESTION: Some psychologists say that masturbation is a primary addiction. Is this connected with gluttony?

ANSWER: I would say that this very much depends on the frequency and on the age of the person. To a degree, masturbation is normal. If it is a constant practice in adulthood, it is certainly related to gluttony, although the displacement of the real need is not quite so great. It is easier to see that the real need is a yearning for a rewarding relationship on a mature basis. With gluttony, the displacement is so far removed that it is more difficult to recognize the underlying real need. However, masturbation is also a substitute. It may be an easy way out to obtain relief and release without risking the involvement and responsibility of a personal relationship.

The sixth cardinal sin is ENVY. Again, I do not have to go deeper into this because I have covered it before. What I said about covetousness also applies to envy. I have discussed envy on many previous occasions.

QUESTION: Is there something like healthy envy?

ANSWER: No, there is not, although envy might, under certain circumstances, lead to a healthy activity. Let us say that someone is without ambition -- and there is such a thing as a healthy ambition -- and is lethargic, withdrawn, apathetic, and indifferent. This person comes into contact with someone whom he feels compelled to envy and thus may be pulled out of his lethargic state and, perhaps, even get on the right track. A destructive feeling may have a constructive result, just as a feeling, in itself constructive, may have an unhealthy effect. It depends on the many intricacies of the human personality in relation to life circumstances. But the fact that a destructive feeling may produce positive results in certain cases does not make the feeling itself positive, healthy, or productive.

The seventh cardinal sin is SLOTH. Sloth is the indifference and apathy that I just mentioned. Sloth represents the pseudo-solution of withdrawal from living and loving. Where there is apathy, there is rejection of life. Where there is indifference, there is laziness of the heart that cannot feel and understand others -- and cannot, therefore, relate to them. Nothing produces more waste than sloth, or apathy, or withdrawal -- whatever name you give it. A person who has a positive, constructive attitude toward life will not be slothful. Someone who is not preoccupied with personal safety will not withdraw, and therefore will not become apathetic. Sloth always indicates selfishness. If you are too afraid for yourself, you will not risk going forward and reaching out toward others. Whoever reaches out takes the risk of being hurt and accepts this risk as worth while.

When you are slothful, you do not give to life, to yourself, or to others, a chance. Such life-negation cannot ever be resolved unless you come to see this basic selfishness and self-concern as unhealthy. Sloth is one of the defense-mechanisms I have discussed. In your fear of being hurt, you defend yourself by becoming lazy and indifferent towards everything that is life-producing. Therefore sloth is rightly called a sin.

QUESTION: What happens with a life, from a spiritual point of view, that has been wasted in sloth?

ANSWER: The life has to be repeated, again and again, until the person finally pulls out of it. You see, a law applies here which you so often observe around you: the more you are caught in a vicious circle, the more difficult it is to break out of it. The deeper you are involved in your own conflicts and problems -- which, in the last analysis, arise only because you do not want to come out of them and change -- the more difficult change becomes. The more you run away from facing up to yourself and continue to resist change, the greater the difficulty becomes. This continues until your outer life becomes so unbearable that the very unhappiness finally makes you want to face it and change.

If the will to change can be mustered before life becomes so unbearable, much unhappiness can be avoided. This is why you often see that people remain caught in their inner problems as long as they somehow "get by." They seriously settle down to changing only when life is no longer bearable for them. The same holds true on a larger scale. If a life is wasted in sloth, time after time, finally the circumstances of an incarnation may become so unpleasant that the entity pulls itself together and struggles out of it.

Unfortunately, only too often sloth takes the path of least resistance as long as circumstances are not too bad. This creates for the following life the psychological conditions that make it harder to live in sloth because the instinct of self-preservation finally takes over when circumstances become bad enough. When that turning point is reached depends on the person. That turning point may come in a new and more difficult incarnation, or it may occur in the course of the present life.

QUESTION: I was wondering why some of these deadly sins are effects instead of causes. Also, hatred and fear are not mentioned. They too are cause and effect at the same time.

ANSWER: It is very often so in religious teachings that the effect is spoken about and not the cause. At one time, humanity was not ready to delve deeply enough to see the causes. The best that could be hoped for was to prevent people from destructive actions, even if the underlying causes were not eliminated in the individual. At least, the contagiousness and the direct outer effects of destructive actions were decreased, if not entirely eliminated. You know how contagious human behavior is. Thoughts and emotions are also contagious. In other words, outer behavior will influence outer behavior, while thought influences thought, and unconscious feelings influence unconscious feelings. The contagious actions, at least in their crassest forms, were kept in check. That is why at one time the effect was more concentrated on than the cause. Now that humanity is evolving, more attention must be given to the inner causes.

QUESTION: And why is fear not mentioned?

ANSWER: Because fear is not an act. It is an involuntary emotion. It is a result of many other emotions and cannot be eliminated by a direct admonition not to fear. Fear can only be tackled by a process of psychological understanding, and by dissolving the underlying cause. If you tell people, "You must not fear because it is a sin," this will not prevent them from being frightened. They will be even more frightened. But if they slowly unroll the processes of their emotional deviations, understanding them and correcting false concepts, then they will see that irrational fear is always selfish and separating, and they will no longer find cause for such irrational fear. It is more or less the same with hate and with anger.

QUESTION: The conquest of fear in Matthew is by way of faith in God. How would you relate that to our teachings?

ANSWER: As you all know by now, faith in God, in a genuine, secure, profound, and sincere way, can only exist if you first have faith in yourself. To the degree that you lack faith in yourself, you cannot have faith in God. Yes, you can superimpose it and deceive yourself about it, out of a need to cling to a loving authority, but it cannot be true faith unless you have gained the maturity of faith in yourself. Now, how can you have faith in yourself, unless you understand yourself as much as possible? As long as you are puzzled and grope in the dark about what effect you have on others and the effect life and others have on you, you ignore some vital information about your own psychic life. Ignorance is a result of your inner unwillingness to discover the truth, an unwillingness that is often unconscious. Overcoming the hidden resistance will make you understand yourself better and have increasing faith in yourself, and thus in God. Only in this way can you conquer fear.

QUESTION: It seems to me that the seven cardinal sins are a subtler explanation of the Ten Commandments, which are definitely based on fear, or create fear in their application.

ANSWER: Yes. Every teaching, if misapplied and misunderstood, will create fear. A rigid commandment, if pronounced without the possibility of finding the underlying obstructions to following such commandments, will produce fear and guilt, and therefore hate.

Today it is no longer possible and even constructive for human beings to merely obey a commandment in their actions. Since this is not good enough, your innermost self will be fearful, even if your actions are entirely proper and conform to the commandments. The final authority is not outside of yourself, but embedded in your own psyche. There is a vast difference between the perfectionistic demands of your idealized self, and the productive life that your real self wants you to lead.

QUESTION: I noticed that these sins are liquid. They sort of flow into each other. Sometimes they seem like opposites, like sloth contrasted with covetousness or with gluttony. They are not exact opposites, but in some ways they are. And yet they can exist at the same time. I wonder if there is any definite connection, say, between sloth and gluttony?

ANSWER: The two are opposites, because gluttony is a greedy reaching out, coming from a frustrated need, while sloth is indifferent withdrawal and does not reach out. Yet both sloth and gluttony have the same common denominator: an unawareness of the original need. Both contain the cowardice that prevents people from finding that need and changing the conditions that prevent fulfillment, namely childish self-concern and selfishness. Since both sloth and gluttony come from confusion and disorder, they create more of the same.

It is perfectly true that all of these sins intermingle and overlap. They may contradict one another and yet exist simultaneously. This is so because they all have the same common denominator. Since the human personality is in conflict and not one-dimensional, one level of the personality may adopt an attitude that is contradictory to another level. All of you have found such contradictions in yourselves and in others. This is why mature people will never think of another

person as either this or that. They will perceive the contradictoriness of the human being and will be able to apply this knowledge to individual cases in their surroundings.

The sins, as well as any commandments, represent universal tendencies. The human psyche is not separated into clearly defined compartments, one compartment not having anything to do with the other, but instead one affects and influences the other. So it is with these sins.

QUESTION: From what you said then, there is really no difference in weight between the seven deadly sins? Sometimes it is said that sloth is worse than pride.

ANSWER: Evaluating this is difficult and may be misleading. It may be true that sloth is more difficult to overcome because it is inactive. Sloth paralyzes the faculties, and thus lasts longer. But all the seven sins are symptoms of the same underlying causes.

QUESTION: I wanted to ask about the fear of the Lord. In the Bible it is said that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Have we properly understood the fear? Have we evolved beyond this?

ANSWER: This question has been discussed before. It is a question of semantics and of wrong translation. The word "fear" is extremely misleading and damaging. The original meaning is "respect" or "awe" before the greatness of the Creator. God's infinite greatness is such that no human being can even remotely understand it. As you grow into emotional and spiritual maturity, you realize your own limitation in understanding the greatness of Creation and of the Creator. That is the awe or respect that comes out of wisdom. The wisdom, however, lies not in the unhealthy attitude of making yourself a small "sinner," of flagellating yourself, or diminishing your own value. In so doing, you would diminish the value of the Creator. Only the very immature, the spiritual infant, will abuse himself, not knowing that it cannot possibly grasp the universal mind: God. Knowing that is wisdom. As you grow, sometimes, perhaps in a few short moments in a lifetime, you will sense your inability to comprehend Him. In the moment you become aware of this incapacity, you are already much greater than you were when you ignored it.

QUESTION: Is not the fear of the Lord an element out of the ancient religions where religion had a punitive character?

ANSWER: Yes, it also comes from that time. But there is also a question of wrong translation, perhaps because of the remnants of that earlier time.

QUESTION: How about sin from the spiritual point of view? If you don't actually commit the sin, though you are thinking about it, but out of fear or any other reason do not execute the sinful act, does this still count as sin?

ANSWER: Jesus said all there is to say on that topic. The difference between action, feeling, or thought is not half as great as human beings want to believe. This happens especially when not committing the act is due to fear and not to love and understanding. You know that you all have an aura. What you feel and think emanates from you and is somehow always perceived by others. The higher the level of the other people's consciousness, the more aware they may be of the emanation

they perceive from you. The lower their level of consciousness, the less will they be aware of it, but unconsciously they would still know. Hence your "sin" affects others, even if it is not acted out.

On the other hand, if you repress these feelings and desires out of fear and guilt, the results are even worse. You will never get to the roots and you will not understand what makes you feel that way. You will not accept yourself as you now are and will deceive yourself into believing that you are a more evolved person than you happen to be. But if you freely admit your feelings and desires, if you acknowledge them in yourself and face them, then you can find the underlying causes. Thus you will do the one thing that will free you from fear and guilt.

QUESTION: In today's Post, Harry Golden wrote something to the effect that conformity is not living in a house similar to your neighbor's, but rather living in that house in order to impress your neighbor, or to make your neighbor like you. I think this is probably an adequate explanation of conformity. Now, I would like to know to what extent do mature people conform with the society in which they live?

ANSWER: If we use the word "conforming" in the sense in which it is usually used, that of living up to other people's expectations, either out of a need to impress, or out of fear of rejection, mature people will not conform at all. But that does not mean that they rebel. Nor does it mean that they do everything differently from others. They may do certain things in the same way as their neighbors, but only because they freely choose to do so. Just because they are free does not mean they have to make a show of not conforming. Conformists often find it necessary to rebel and do the very opposite of what they want to do merely to show that they are different. This is the other side of the coin and stems from the same root as the behavior of those persons who cannot make an independent choice because they cannot risk being different. The outer manifestation does not show whether or not a person conforms. This is determined by the inner spirit, the motive. People living like those around them may do so out of insecurity, needing to conform, or out of the freedom to choose this way of life independently, because they like it. When people do everything differently out of rebellion, their underlying need to conform is exposed. They rebel against the need and insecurity in themselves, rather than against society. Such rebellion is not free. It often makes people do the very opposite of what they really want to do. But it is also possible that those who have the courage to be different do so with a free spirit.

QUESTION: This question pertains to the "one and only love." The mature person, it seems, gives love very easily and certainly would want something in return. If a person is, let's say, seventy-five percent mature and gets this wonderful feeling from giving love, then it seems that the object of the love is not so important. How could such a mature person who needs and wants to give love, who is able to give it, reconcile this with what romantics say about two people coming together, and then, suddenly, this is it!

ANSWER: There is a great deal of confusion here. In the first place, there are many different kinds of love. It is perfectly true that a mature person can love many people in many different ways. For clarity's sake, let us use the words "warmth" and "understanding." These feelings can even be felt for people who do not actively love this mature person in return. Yet, this very same mature person will certainly not harbor erotic love, the love between the sexes, when it is not reciprocated. A mature, rewarding relationship is mutual. It cannot be one-sided. It would be a crass misunderstanding to believe that mature men and women can love when they are hated. The best

that can be expected is that they will not hate in return because they are not defensive. They are uninvolved and objective, and therefore they sense why the other person hates. However, they will not seek a relationship in such a case, not even one of casual friendship. Mature men and women will have understanding and warmth in different degrees for different people. They will relate to many people in different ways. But in marital, committed love, mutuality is a prerequisite for a mature relationship. This does not mean that both always feel the same way and with the same intensity; marital love cannot be measured in such terms. Relationships change and fluctuate, but on the whole there must be reciprocity. You bring two different kinds of love together here -- general human relationship and erotic love -- and this is why you are confused.

QUESTION: In marital love, is it possible that perhaps the husband loves more at first, and then the wife, and then it changes again?

ANSWER: Of course. But this may also have to do with something other than love in its true sense. It may be that at one time the need and insecurity of one person may be greater, and then that person manifests dependency. When the need is satisfied, the picture may change.

QUESTION: Isn't the greatest and best adjusting factor in a marital relationship the ability to slowly grow into seeing God in the other partner?

ANSWER: This applies to any kind of human relationship.

QUESTION: I'm becoming aware of a new kind of feeling. As depressions, fears, and repressions dissolve, there emerges a personality that has no personal involvement and feelings, so that one first realizes that love has two sides: a kind of negation and a positiveness, both in a personal involvement with the self as the object. Thereby love becomes an understanding and a non-personal involvement, such that you may feel for a stranger whom you do not like particularly and with whom you have no personal involvement. It is just an acceptance. In a personal relationship, this becomes a process of growing between two people, without questions like "who loves most." It is a deep personal giving, a most interesting feeling. You feel as though you have lost your body.

ANSWER: Yes, it is as though someone else spread this feeling through you. As though some new being took hold of you inwardly. You may perhaps experience the same with thoughts, as though a thought is thought in you, as though it is not your own thought process that thinks, and yet it is very much your own, but it comes from a new and unaccustomed area of your being. It is something calmer and wiser that thinks and feels through you.

This is what I talk about again and again. It is the real self that is slowly coming to the fore, emerging out of all the layers of disturbance. As you learn to understand and accept yourself the way you are, and therefore resolve conflicts -- not by repression and escaping from them, not by pseudo-solutions and defenses, but by squarely facing all that is in you, understanding it and comparing it with reality and truthful concepts; as you go through this pathwork -- this real self begins to manifest. What you describe is the manifestation of the real self. Now, this does not come in all areas of living and being at once. It may first appear in the areas where conflicts of lesser seriousness have been resolved. The next step will be to resolve the more serious problems which reveal the existence of a deep, subjective and destructive involvement, even if non-involvement is

being used as superficial pseudo-solution. In the new state of the real self there is indeed a deep involvement, but in an entirely different way -- in a way that does not weaken and confuse. This involvement is productive for all concerned and fills you and those in touch with you with a meaningfulness you could not experience in non-involvement or in childish dependency and over-involvement.

From a certain point on the path, you may find yourself on a plateau where you experience, as the result of your efforts, the manifestation of the real self. Yet, you may have to come away from it again, as you tackle the still unresolved problems, repeating the cycles you have gone through on a deeper level, until you reach the next plateau. At a time like this, as you describe it, the feelings I spoke about before, the awe of God, and the realization of one's own limitation to grasp the Creator, may come simultaneously. A divine aspect in yourself begins to fill you, first with a feeling as though it were something else, and then penetrating, enveloping you from inside out, until you know it is an integral part of you: your real self.

QUESTION: If a man marries without being really deeply in love with a woman -- first, is this wrong? Second: is it possible that with proper guidance this marriage could turn out well? Is it possible that they then fall in love, that it develops into a real love affair, even though it was started rather coldly?

ANSWER: It is very hard to answer you with a definite statement of right or wrong. It depends on so many circumstances. It depends on the motivation, on the kind of feelings you do have, and on the will and effort that is put into the relationship. But, generally, I may say that if the motivation is sincere and if feelings of affection, respect, liking for the other human being are there, together with certain common basic interests, this may indeed turn out to be a better marriage than one based only on passion. In the latter, the real values may be overlooked. Yet, I do not mean that if two people are in love, they necessarily overlook the real values. They may have fallen in love just because of them.

What you say is certainly not a rule, but it is possible under certain circumstances if real values are perceived. However, a careful examination should be made in such a case as to the motivation in both people. This cannot be quickly and easily done, because deep and hidden factors may play a role. Even distorted and unhealthy motives, when finally brought out into the open, may not have a damaging effect. But they will be extremely damaging if one is unaware of them or not willing to deal with them.

My dearest friends, may you succeed in absorbing and making an integral part for yourself of the material I have given you in all these lectures. Much of it has not been absorbed yet, and only your will to plow ahead in this work of self-finding will enable you to do so. May these words tonight fortify your understanding, both in your intellect and in your emotions. Be blessed, each one of you, on your path, in your work, in your activities, in your human relationships. May you all learn to accept yourselves as you are without a feeling of sin, and in this acceptance resolve the conditions that are called "sin." Be in peace. Be in God!

* See #30, Self-will, Pride, and Fear

Edited by Judith and John Saly

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