

Pathwork Guide Lecture No. 111
1996 Edition
February 1, 1963

SOUL-SUBSTANCE -- COPING WITH DEMANDS

Greetings, my dearest friends. Welcome, all of you. Blessings for all of you.

I should like to discuss first the difference between the healthy soul and the sick soul, as seen from a spiritual viewpoint. My words may give my friends a deepened understanding for their further development and inner growth.

When a new child enters this earth, its soul-stuff is very malleable, very soft. Within this soul-stuff lie all the potentials -- the talents, qualities, tendencies, characteristics, and also the unresolved problems. It is according to these potentials -- positive, as well as negative -- that the entity grows. The malleable, soft substance of the soul is, by its very nature, very impressionable. Therefore, when the child collects impressions during its early years, their impact will be greater or smaller according to the underlying potentials. Where the soul is potentially healthy and strong, even negative impressions will not make a deep dent. The experience is registered and assimilated realistically, so that the personality learns and grows from the experience, whether or not it was happy or unhappy. Where the underlying potential is positive, the corresponding soul-stuff will be so resilient that even a seemingly detrimental occurrence will bounce off it, in a manner of speaking. It will not leave a lasting mark other than the benefit of increased understanding.

However, where the underlying potential consists largely of unresolved problems, the soul-stuff is so lacking in resiliency that the impressions form deep dents and remain imbedded in the soul-substance. When you recollect my explanations about how images are formed, it will be easier for you to understand what I am saying.

When you have retained an impression in unresilient soul-stuff, your entire psychic mechanism functions according to this impression, exaggerating it way beyond its reality-value. As you remember, when an image forms in the soul the one-time occurrence is generalized and thereby falsified. A destructive pattern is set in motion, which remains in force as long as the dent in the soul-stuff is not smoothed out. The healing comes about only through the kind of active self-finding that you are engaged in.

Let us speak of flexibility versus rigidity. Flexibility is the quality of resilient, elastic, healthy soul-substance. When it comes to rigidity, however, there are two different kinds, and it will be quite helpful for you to discern their difference. The first kind of rigidity is based on the following circumstances: When the soul is constantly exposed to deep impressions that cannot be assimilated and therefore form dents, so that the imprints remain imbedded in the soul-substance, the effect on the personality is heavy. Then unfavorable circumstances create suffering that goes way beyond what is warranted in reality. Therefore the soul suffers more from an impression than it needs to and even favorable impressions cause exhaustion. You may all have experienced that you become

overly excited when something good happens; it has a disrupting effect. You are unable to assimilate the experience; it weighs on you and makes you restless. Assimilation and digestion in such a case is so slow that it engages all your faculties, thus arresting the growth and functioning of other aspects of the psyche.

To deal with an experience that would normally need only a certain amount of attention and investment, and would leave part of your faculties free to deal with other aspects of living and being, becomes a task in which all the inner forces are made to serve a comparatively unimportant event. That you are joyful and gratified about the event as such does not change the fact that an unnecessary amount of energy is being wasted. This creates a kind of restlessness, a holding on to the experience, and that blocks the soul's movement. Needless to say, this may not be conscious, but when you attend to your inner reactions, you are bound to discover such a preoccupation. It may manifest in intense thoughts about a relatively unimportant event; you may be unable to let go of its emotional impact, unable to forgive and forget. But, mainly, a much more subtle procedure is set in motion, an automatic reaction that is not commensurate with the outer occurrence. A one-time experience is falsely applied to an event of an entirely different nature. In short, something that frightened you once will cause you to be frightened again by an outer event that is really quite dissimilar to the first. Such automatic reactions, which you have begun to observe and begin to understand in yourself, are evidence of the presence of the too-malleable soul-stuff that did not grow healthily into resilient elasticity.

Over-tender soul-stuff causes both conscious and unconscious pain. Since the effect is bound to be detrimental, the psyche seeks a remedy. Such unconsciously sought remedies are often more destructive than the original evil, as are, for example, the pseudo-solutions. The false remedy, in this case, is an artificial, protective wall, set up to prevent constant heavy impacts causing hurtful dents on the soul-substance, which are experienced as "oversensitivity." The wall is hard and brittle; it prevents feeling and experiencing and causes the first type of rigidity.

The second type of rigidity is caused by a condition of the soul that is incapable of assimilating the experience and holds on to it instead. When the indentation in the soul is so deep that one cannot let go of it, the preoccupation with the experience excludes important aspects of reality. One sees and evaluates only that part of reality which appears to bother or disturb; other aspects important for understanding the occurrence in its full light are absent. Such a limited, subjective evaluation is inevitable if the soul suffers too much. The suffering makes a wider and more truthful view quite impossible. Therefore one-sidedness and an inability to perceive differently constitutes the second type of rigidity. One can deal only with what one immediately sees and perceives according to the highly sensitized area of the too vulnerable soul-substance. Every other aspect in the situation, or in the other person involved, is overshadowed. If those aspects were allowed to stand in the full light, the understanding would be much more objective. But this is not possible because one is too preoccupied with the unpleasant effect of the dent upon the soul-stuff.

If you suffer physical pain in a certain area of your body, you are bound to focus all your attention on the area, disregarding others. It is the same with the soul process. What makes this more complicated is that here we are dealing with very subtle and unconscious reactions that can be verified only if and when you become sufficiently attuned to your inner mechanisms.

To briefly summarize the difference between the two kinds of rigidity: one dulls your capacity of feeling and experiencing; the other colors your views and experience to such a degree that your perception of reality is narrowly limited. Often, people have both kinds of rigidities, alternately and simultaneously, one caused by the other and overlapping. Sometimes one is predominant. When this is so, the rigidity is relatively easy to recognize.

When the second type is predominant, it can manifest in harping on details, seeing only certain facets of others and of situations which may, in themselves, be correct, but the perception is incomplete because other aspects are overlooked. This may also apply to your attitude toward people and situations where you are not personally involved, but you are so conditioned to this way of reacting, due to the lack of resiliency in the soul-substance, that you cannot function differently even then. Such over-malleable soul-stuff makes you incapable of adjusting to ever-changing circumstances. You cannot see and evaluate them for you are conditioned to react only to the direct imprint made upon your soul-substance. This prevents you from being in the constant flow of life, from being in truth and reality. In order to flow with life, your soul-stuff has to have the healthy elasticity to quickly assimilate incidents according to their real significance.

Needless to say, healthy soul-substance cannot be created by an act of will. Only finding and changing your misconceptions, pseudo-solutions, and distortions can bring this about. To facilitate this process, it is very important to receive the healthy and unhealthy reactions of the soul-substance in this light. The recognition of the two kinds of rigidity is also necessary. It will be very helpful to feel their difference within yourself. They do feel different; they have a different "flavor," as it were. As indicated earlier, both may exist simultaneously. One may be a counter-reaction to the other. You may first find the brittle wall of rigidity. Do not expect to find a healthy flexibility beneath it. Be prepared to find the other kind of rigidity that may, at first glance, appear to be the very opposite of rigidity, because it is overly soft in substance. But upon closer inspection you will find that this very softness, devoid of healthy resistance, cannot let go of impressions received. You mull them over and over and are persistently influenced by what should already be obsolete. The soul-substance thus becomes rigid. Exaggerations of truth bring untruth in both directions. This holds true for everything and has often been discussed in many other connections. Here the too great resistance of the brittle pseudo-protective wall has similar effects to that of the too little resistance in the over-malleable soul stuff.

How can you cope with your life when you are not in reality? How can you be in reality when either of these two rigidities exists in you? How can you adapt yourself to the ever-changing flux of life? How can you evaluate objectively and perceive in truth? None of these is possible if your soul-substance is so easily indented that an impression of little importance, of minor significance for you, remains imbedded and dictates your reactions towards future events? You thus distort the relationship between the event and your reaction to it.

I have shown you a new angle on the inner mechanisms already familiar to you. Such increased insight can often be very helpful in giving renewed impetus to your work on the path.

Let me finish this topic by briefly describing what a healthy soul looks like compared to an unhealthy one, as seen from our vantage point. In the healthy soul the form is rounded, very smooth, and even. The substance is elastic -- a mixture of resilient and healthily resistant softness. This combination produces the ideal conditions that enable you to go through life with a capacity

for deep experience, which you are able to assimilate quickly, so that you are always ready for new impressions and new experiences.

In the unhealthy soul the soul form is bumpy, uneven in shape, with the bumps hardened on it like scabs. The scabless substance is, as I have said, so malleable, sticky and pasty, that it retains all imprints, unable to regain the original printless, resilient surface.

In the course of your work many of you have glimpsed that all unhealthy reactions are artificial. They are much more difficult to keep going than the natural reactions. When an insight comes -- even if it happens only seldom to begin with -- it is a decisive step toward growth and self-realization. At that moment you understand how strenuous the pseudo-protections and pseudo-solutions are. How much more easily, more reliably and safely does your natural being guide you through life! This is not to be confused with the line of least resistance and the giving in to one's destructive instincts. Before you have reached certain levels of inner recognition, such a statement might easily be so misinterpreted. But once these insightful levels have been reached through the steady progress and organic growth that persevering work is bound to bring eventually, you will understand and experience for evermore the truth that pseudo-solutions are strenuous and energy-consuming, while experiencing the real self is safe and easy. I mention this again because I see a tendency to overlook the importance of such vague glimpses. Please ponder over them. Look at the first rare occurrences of such experiences so as to attain the full value and deep significance they harbor. Such glimpses of health, as compared with the distorted, artificially strained ways of living, are the best way to heal your soul-substance.

Once again, it is true that awareness of unhealth leads to health, while unawareness or covering up lead further away from health.

Now I would like to discuss a different topic, although it is, of course, connected with the foregoing, as everything in the human soul is interrelated. In the course of this work, we have often found and discussed your demands. I am now referring mainly to the hidden, unconscious demands that exist in you without your being aware of them. When you found them you were often surprised to discover how stringent your demands on others, on yourself, and on life, really were. This often took considerable time and effort on your part, and you were probably shocked to find out how incompatible they were with your conscious concept of yourself. If you have not reached full awareness of your own demands, you may be well advised to investigate your previous findings in this particular light. You will find that an imbalance does exist: You have excessive demands, on the one hand, in that you expect more from others than you are willing to give, no matter how much you may cover up this fact. On the other hand, you may be too modest in your expectation. This is a logical consequence that occurs automatically. It is based on the balancing quality of inner law.

But let us now consider another aspect of this theme: the demands that are made on you. How do you react when demands are being made on you? How do you cope with them? Before going any further, let us be clear that you may be no more conscious of demands on you than you are conscious of your making demands on others. The fact that you are unaware of demands made on you does not eliminate their effect on your special, inner way of dealing with them. You certainly react strongly to such demands, even though you may never know it consciously. It needs the increased awareness that is cultivated on a path such as this that will finally make you capable of

being aware of how others are making demands on you and, subsequently, of your real reactions to them.

It is my advice to my friends who work in this intensive study to devote some attention to the topic of demands. Look at your associations and relationships from this particular viewpoint. When you have established that here or there you feel a demand that is being made on you, and you have this or that reaction to it, then you can go a step further. I will outline the way, even though, of course, these subsequent steps cannot be taken until you have clearly become aware of your demands on others and others' demands on you, as well as your real reactions to them.

To understand your reactions, it is important to view them also from the point of view explained in the first part of this lecture. When your soul-substance is too impressionable, when you unduly retain impressions -- in this case, the currents of others' demands on you -- when you cannot healthily assimilate, evaluate, and come to terms with the effect that others have on you, then their demands have an overpowering impact. Either you will interpret something as a demand that is no such thing, and an inner defense against it will be triggered off, or you may give in to the most immature, unjustified demands from others to avoid feeling guilty or fearing unwelcome consequences. In both cases the result is resentment, defiance, and hostility. None of it may be conscious in you at the moment, or these feelings may not be linked with the recognition that they are your responses to demands being made on you. You are often unconsciously so fearful of demands, or of your compulsion to give in to them, and so afraid of what might happen if you did not give in, that you set up a defense against them.

Yet an inner alarm seems to ring whenever an actual or imaginary demand is being made on you. Your guilt and fear do not permit you to become aware and investigate what has set off the alarm. Instead of investigating it with your reasoning faculties, you blindly reject rational inquiry. The rejection is not so much a reaction against the demands themselves as against the temptation and compulsion to give in to them. Your inability to discriminate is what makes you insecure. Keeping your reaction hidden will make discrimination even less possible. Your lack of trust in yourself makes you unable to determine and differentiate. Insecurity, in turn, is the result of an impaired integrity.

The inelastic soul-substance with its oversensitivity creates such an aversion to dealing with anything that impacts it from the outside that outer input is simply cut off. Thus healthy intercommunication cannot exist.

Your response to the demands of others may frighten you so much that you may withdraw more or less from all meaningful relationships. It is very important to realize that the fear of involvement may not only exist due to fear of hurt and disappointment, but also due to the fear of having to cope with the demands of others.

Now, my friends, it is important to become aware that demands are all around you. The more you are involved, the more demands multiply. When you calmly consider them, you will see that in some instances the demands of others are excessive and childish. On other occasions, the demands are simply a part of human communication, and your fright and refusal to engage are unjustified. Such reaction indicates an excessive demand on your part: wanting the advantages of close relationships without giving in the real sense of the word, although perhaps over-giving instead on a

different level. You put the entire relationship out of balance. Since the other people receive what they really do not ask for, their demands become more urgent, while you become more guilty and resentful.

Whenever this knowledge is not sufficient to enable you to deal freely with any demands being made on you, you have to look for the key in your own attitude. Where were you oblivious of your own excessive demands? They may reside perhaps in another area, hidden from sight or explained away. Important as it is to establish that you cannot cope with the demands of others, it is not in itself sufficient. Of equal importance is to find where your own hidden demands exist. When you find these, and transform the unreasonable greed of your childish expectations, you will become perfectly capable of coping very satisfactorily with other people's demands on you, thus maintaining good, deep relationships.

And now my friends, to your questions.

QUESTION: I would like a clear definition of what the soul is. I think it would clarify this lecture.

ANSWER: As you know, there are many interpretations of the soul, and they may all be quite accurate. If they seem contradictory, it is because words are too limited to describe a dimension inaccessible to human language. This is why higher dimensions can never be made accessible by verbal learning, but only by inner experience which, in turn, becomes possible only if and when inner errors and distortions are dissolved.

Let me explain the soul as we use it here. The soul is the sum total of the inner personality: the thinking, the feeling, the concepts, the potentials, the attitudes, the patterns, the characteristics, the temperament, the emotions, the idiosyncrasies -- everything that is behind the physical being. It also includes, of course, unresolved problems. But it does not include the cover-up for the unresolved problems, the pseudo-solutions, or the false defenses. They are not part of the soul itself. But the particular choice of the pseudo-solution is an expression, or manifestation, or indication, of the soul.

QUESTION: Karma, then, is the memory of the soul from former unresolved problems?

ANSWER: I would not say memory. It is the result of all previous incarnations. Karma is the effect the soul has produced.

QUESTION: The sensitivity is carried along?

ANSWER: Of course. The sensitivity, the perception, and the ability to experience. All these faculties have a progression. One person's sensitivity may be on the lowest note of the keyboard, another's on the highest. The latter may exist in a healthy or unhealthy way. Karma, as you know, is the result of everything up to the present point.

QUESTION: You gave attributes to the soul of a physical, material nature. You gave it roundness and malleability in a physical sort of substance. Is it localized like any other organ in the body?

ANSWER: No, it is not localized in that sense. It is a body, consisting of matter very similar to your earth matter, although not perceivable with your physical organs. As you know, and have often heard, it is a "subtle body." When I spoke of roundness, it does not mean it is a round form, like a ball. The surface of the subtle body can have all the attributes I discussed. You might best compare it with the consistency of skin and flesh, but the surface of the subtle body of the soul has much greater variety than physical skin and flesh. Words are so limited that they may often seem preposterous, but this is the best way of giving you an idea of what the soul-body may look like.

QUESTION: May I ask about the relationship between the subconscious and the soul?

ANSWER: The soul is the unconscious mind. The unconscious motivations, attitudes, driving forces, and inclinations are from the soul and the deeper regions of the unconscious self belong to the real spiritual being and the real spiritual being is at home in the deeper regions of the unconscious self. However, the unconscious is only a part of the soul, much of it is conscious.

QUESTION: We claim that attitudes determine the happenings in our lives. How is it that people with bad motives so often derive all the happiness and success in life? I know such cases.

ANSWER: I have answered this question in previous sessions, but will answer it briefly again. In the first place, the human view is very limited. Whenever effect does not immediately follow cause, people lose the link and therefore become unable to see their interrelationship. If they nevertheless attempt to make judgments, such judgment must be faulty. Cause and effect are often far removed in time. In other words, human beings may experience the effect of a cause from way back, while the new causes they institute have not yet taken effect, but will do so later. With increasing spiritual development, inner health, and oneness, cause and effect come closer together. As long as they are separated in time, an inner division of the soul must exist. The overall development of the soul, its potential for growth in particular areas of development, is still limited when cause and effect are removed from one another. Only when the soul's potential is greater than its actual development, and therefore it can become actualized, are cause and effect closer together.

Moreover, when motives are split, the effect is influenced accordingly. For example -- as I pointed out in a recent lecture -- if people are still so crude in their spirituality that they have no conscience, nothing will interfere with the bad motives, which will, therefore, be unified. Because there is no split, the bad motives will have an apparently favorable effect. Only later, when the conscience has grown, will the retroactive guilt have an effect and manifest as though it were punishment from the outside. When someone's motives are already split -- which in this sense is a positive development compared to the person who can have destructive motives without inner conflict -- success does not come. One side of the personality has acquired much higher standards than another side -- and I do not mean superimposed standards, but real, inner standards. When such is the case, destructive motivations, even though they may be quite conscious, will not bring the desired result. On the other hand, constructive motives, no matter how conscious, will not bring the good results either if they are undermined by unconscious, destructive motives. Hence, a ruthless person may not attain his ruthless aims because an inner voice, that he may be completely unaware of, hinders the impact of his will. His own inner development, still hidden, and very contradictory to some facets of his being, prohibits an unsplit will. Therefore, a conscious determination to be ruthless will have no effect because the soul has already gained a new potential.

Similarly, the person who tries very hard to be good, but is unable to cope with his hidden selfishness and cruelty due to repression, is unable to attain the desired positive result. It is always the split motives -- especially that part of them which one is not conscious of -- that hinder the will and subsequently influence the outcome.

QUESTION: How do you explain the function of drama, myth, and fairy tales in the personal development of the human being?

ANSWER: If the questioner has in mind the effect that myth, drama, or fairy tales have upon a human being, the question has already been answered by this lecture. The assimilation of any input from outside depends on the impressionability of the soul. As to whether fairy tales or myths have a good influence on a growing person, and also on an adult person, cannot be generalized. It depends on the material and on the interpretation. A grown up person is no longer dependent on interpretation by others, but a young child is dependent on the interpretation given by adults. Such interpretation may not even occur in words, but in the atmosphere that emanates from the telling of the story. The adult's feelings have a much stronger influence on the child than the words. Whatever the child's mind really takes in will have its effect. If an apparently cruel fairy tale or myth is taken literally, a soul-particle that is already afflicted will be negatively influenced and impressed. The healthy soul-substance will not even have a negative reaction if the story is misinterpreted. False myths will not have a negative effect either. For not all myth is truthful. Untruthful literature, or other influences, as well as misunderstood and misinterpreted truthful influxes, will take effect only where the soul is already afflicted. When an afflicted soul receives a truthful interpretation, or other truthful messages, it is given a chance to assimilate such helpful influences. Whether or not it does so, depends on the person.

QUESTION: I should like to hear your differentiation between feelings and emotions.

ANSWER: There is a difference between the two. One way of describing the difference would be that a feeling is deeper-rooted and more permanent. By this I do not wish to imply that feelings do not change. I do not mean that feelings are permanent in time, but they are so in quality, in consistency, in character, in being. A feeling may truly change faster than an emotion, and yet it is permanent in essence. This is very difficult to explain; in order to understand, you would have to perceive what I mean with your own inner faculties. An emotion is more superficial, even though it may be retained longer in the soul substance. An emotion comes from superficial conditions in the soul. Reactions and responses that are based on superimposed modes of coping with life, not originating from the real person, are emotions. The real self sends forth feelings. Hence, a feeling is something much more substantial. This cannot be evaluated by the apparent worth of the feeling or emotion. You may have an unpleasant feeling, yet it is based on truth, on reality. An emotion is based on a subjective inner condition.

Here is an example: Let us suppose you sense a detrimental, negative quality in someone else, or in yourself. If this quality is true, you are dealing with a feeling, even if highly unpleasant. In another case you may have the same perception; however, you do not sense the negative quality because, instead of merely observing what is, you become frightened, suspicious, guilty, and resentful; because some image or pseudo-solution is at work. You have, again, a correct perception, in this instance though of an emotion. When you do not push the feeling aside, you will come to see that you have a valid intuition, be it about yourself, or about someone else. When you do not push

the emotion aside -- and you should never push aside an emotion, a feeling, or anything else, for that matter -- you will come to recognize factors within yourself that cause you to be subjective, distorted, and out of touch. In short, you will see all the blocks in you that prohibit feelings and intuition. A feeling always reacts to reality, however temporary this particular reality may be, as it exists now.

Let us now examine a favorable emotion. Gratified vanity, greed, or pride may produce a pleasant emotion. Or, to go a step further, a situation, even if truly perceived, but utilized subjectively, produces an emotion and not a feeling. Feelings are based on objectivity, emotions on subjectivity. In both instances, they may be pleasant or unpleasant. The language is often confused. One speaks of emotional maturity or emotional involvement, of expressing one's emotions when feelings too, are meant. But the words do not matter that much as long as you understand the essence.

QUESTION: Am I correct in understanding that anything can be either feeling or emotion? Fear, for instance?

ANSWER: Yes. That is right. But, my friends, my advice is: Do not try to label it. Labeling is always a dangerous procedure. With it you somehow close a door to further understanding. Try rather to deal with the feeling, or emotion, as it comes up. Try to understand it, to see whether or not it is based on objective factors, or on personal, colored, and subjective notions.

May these words help you again toward a deeper and broader understanding. My love, my help, go to all of you. The blessings and the assistance is accorded to each one of you who has the great courage and dignity, the human dignity, to want to develop, to grow and to change, and face the self in utter candor, so as to make growth possible. The dignity of this endeavor becomes evident when it is pursued regardless of the cost of facing negative aspects, of shattering one's cherished ideas about oneself. When this is done, the fruits must be yours. If you tend this beautiful garden now, by weeding out that which does not belong, the spiritual help along the way will always be yours. Be in peace, my dearest friends, be in God.

Edited by Judith and John Saly

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