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THE ILLUSORY FEAR OF THE SELF

Greetings, my dearest, dearest friends. Blessings for every one of you. Blessed be each and every step on your road to liberation and fulfillment.

Your greatest joy and freedom comes when you give according to your potential. Conversely, your greatest pain is not giving to life and to others according to your potential. All other pains and frustrations derive from the pain of not giving out what is within, just as all other satisfactions and pleasures flow from giving oneself to life without restriction. The refusal to give yourself freely, the involvement in a pattern of compounded pain, stems from your fear of your innermost being -- the part of you that you do not yet fully know and acknowledge.

As long as you keep part of yourself hidden, you cannot possibly be free. You then must constantly be on guard, and you must pretend. Therefore, where you harbor distortions, you live a lie -- a needless lie that you live because of false fear of yourself.

Some individuals meet that private, hidden part comparatively quickly, and despite their fear overcome it and evolve as free creatures. Many others -- even those who have the best outer intent to find themselves -- skirt the issue. Vaguely they hope that they can accomplish the goal without fully exposing every last bit of themselves.

The fear of the self is the basic fear behind the fear of life and even the fear of death. Neither could the fear of others possibly exist without the fear of oneself. A number of my friends are now approaching the point where the "big lie" of the mask and the pretense must be given up. A battle rages in the face of this decision. It is exceedingly important now to discuss where your fear of self comes from and what it does to you if it is coddled instead of overcome.

Fear of self can end only in self-alienation. It therefore cheats you of your birthright to be a happy, free, unfolding creature who gives and receives in full measure. As the inner processes become inverted, you lose contact not only with your innermost being but also with the cause and effect within yourself and with that inner mechanism that affords you relaxed self-government and thus the capacity to build your life in a rewarding, realistic way. Being alienated from yourself, because you are still unwilling to expose yourself, you come to a crossroads where you seem to be confronted with one good and one bad alternative. I have discussed this before in other connections. Let us now look at it again in this context.

When you fear yourself, it is because in some way you cannot be what you want to be. What you want to be is an ideal, which you pretend to be or to become. But this ideal is unrealistic and unrealizable because it is outside of yourself. The ideal is the apparently "good" alternative; the "bad" alternative seems to be that which you are at the moment. Your concept of your present self

is also unrealistic because it is as exaggerated and distorted as the goal you feel you should accomplish. The problem is not merely that your goal is unrealistic because it is better than what you can be, or that you see yourself now as worse than you actually are. What you judge unforgivably bad in yourself will no longer appear that way when it is out in the open and you understand cause and effect. Conversely, when you give up the inner lie, you will discover negative trends in yourself and you will understand more deeply their undesirability -- without, however, feeling diminished by your awareness. Whenever you are crushed by what you are, or fear what you are, you have no realistic perception of yourself. Similarly, your idealization of yourself, when investigated closely, often proves less desirable than it seems. A flat, unliving quality constricts both the good and the bad alternatives and thus deadens the rich life substance.

A negative chain reaction is triggered by your refusal to give up the inner life and look at your whole self. The first link in the chain reaction is a narrow choice between good and bad, which forces not only the self but many other aspects of life into the same narrow mold. Almost every issue turns into a narrow "either/or" choice. The choice is impossible to make, because even the so-called goodness is problematic. Since the ideal has always been unrealistic, it becomes unattainable - even undesirable. The whole of life, starting with the self, seems to be divided between a rigid, sterile good and a flatly bad alternative. The self cannot feel at ease in either alternative. Both are a strain and both feel distinctly unreal.

The next link in the negative chain reaction, following self-alienation, is that these apparently good and bad alternatives turn into two equally undesirable alternatives. We have discussed this phenomenon in the past, on many occasions. However, it is important that you see it in this sequence. When you feel you are confronted with two equally undesirable alternatives, your sense of truth and beauty is distorted. Even the most desirable aspects of life turn sour or hold elements in them that you may feel as undesirable, although you may also feel that you ought not to feel them as such. You become more and more confused.

A typical and important example of this state is the dichotomy between desire and fulfillment. In health and truth these two aspects become one, even while they remain separate within you; the free person, not alienated from his or her real self, feels no pang or conflict about either. The self-alienated person experiences both desire and fulfillment as something negative. Healthy desire is a relaxed expansion, a reaching for ever new possibilities and fulfillment; in distortion, the desire becomes frustration. Desire and frustration appear the same in the psyche and are therefore unwelcome. Similarly, in distortion, fulfillment turns into satiation, stagnation -- a dead-end street. The individual then fluctuates between the equally undesirable states of frustration and satiation.

When the self is no longer feared, neither desire nor fulfillment need to be feared, for the self then knows that desire will be fulfilled and fulfillment will be not an end but a new beginning. Distorted and disconnected from the real self, one's outlook is so negative that the fulfillment of desire is inconceivable. Hence even healthy desire is rejected; the person in this state withdraws from desiring. As a compensation, the soul strains in self-willed greed -- from the conviction that fulfillment does not exist as a natural part of life, hence must be fought for and grasped. Convinced that fulfillment is impossible, you cannot dare to desire. When you do not desire freely and openly - which is possible only when you meet yourself equally freely and openly -- frustration is indeed inevitable. Yet partial fulfillment does occur even in the distorted inner state. Why does it then inevitably turn into satiation? Fulfillment can remain vibrant only when the inner being is open and

free. Then all cosmic energies vibrate in the eternal now, where there is no end to bliss, where all universal forces continuously grow and unfold. But when the soul is even partially shut off, it is rigid, and the vital energies cannot reach the secret chamber. Since the self is felt as finite and not as infinite, every activity has a beginning and an end. In finiteness fulfillment is a flat, accomplished end and must become a burden. It also appears futile, leaving a confused feeling of "what for?" -- a feeling that there is no sense to anything if even fulfilled desires turn sour.

For the soul in truth with itself and thus with the universe fulfillment is a vibrant, unending, deeply satisfying continuum and therefore cannot be feared. In the distortion, you fear desire no matter what happens: you fear it when it remains unfulfilled because the frustration hurts the soul. And you fear it when it is fulfilled, for the psyche then does not know what to do with it. You fear and reject both desire and fulfillment to the degree that you fear your own hidden self.

My dearest friends, I think most of you can become aware of how you fear fulfillment because fulfillment is distorted into satiation and therefore is a dead-end street. You can also ascertain how you constantly fluctuate between the two equally undesirable alternatives: frustration and satiation. Only when you are no longer alienated from yourselves will you live in that vibrant experience where desire is never painful and, therefore, where desire and fulfillment become one -- as you become one with yourself.

A further chain reaction of self-alienation is losing oneself in the illusion that one cannot determine what goes on in the self -- believing oneself helpless in the grip of one's feelings, attitudes, and even thoughts or actions. When you fear that your negative emotions are going to control you, you forget that you have something to say about it. You ignore the fact that no act or thought can exist without your allowing it. Your apparent lack of self-government is an illusion. How often you exclaim, "But I feel thus and thus," as though this were all there was to it and this prevailing feeling makes any way out impossible! You overlook the simple fact that you determine your thought, feeling, and action, even how you want to feel and react. This self-determination is not a superimposition or self-deception when you fully meet your self. Since you then know what you really feel, you can desire and determine to feel differently.

This desire has its effect. When it comes to your choice of action or your attitude toward what you find in the hidden chamber of your psyche, you need not even wait for an effect. You can immediately determine whether to give in to resistance and act destructively, or choose constructive ways which call for meeting yourself and determining your course. Your belief that you must go on feeling destructively until something other than yourself liberates you is an illusion. You can be instantly liberated from destructiveness by desiring that which is most constructive at this particular moment of your life. But to arrive at a constructive desire is possible only when you know what and who you are. As long as you keep a destructive part of yourself separated and secret, or hazy and vague, the relevant constructive desire will not even be known to you.

Suppose you find hate or hostility in yourself, and you fear its effect on you and your actions. Simply state, "I shall fully face these destructive feelings, which will not force me into actions, for I am master over all feelings. I determine actions. I determine what I want to do, think, and feel. I now want to see what is in me. And I desire and intend to change these emotions into truthful and constructive ones. I choose my attitude to meet these emotions. If I encounter an inner distaste for giving up such destructive feelings, I shall neither deny this inner refusal by repression nor give in to

it. I shall meet this, too, and not be vanquished by it. I determine truth in myself, and I choose constructive ways."

Such determination is the first step back from self-alienation. It is the way to achieve relaxed and truthful self-government rather than strained superimposition. This deep inner decision can be made at any moment. But you labor under the illusion that you cannot help feeling as you do, or even thinking and acting as you do. Acting includes attitudes, such as the determination to remain passively controlled by resistance or negative emotions. You labor under the illusion that you are at the mercy of what you feel, think, and will. "But this is the way I feel," you say, setting a period after this, as though this were all there was to it, and nothing further could be done. You wait for some miracle from outside to make you feel differently. It does not occur to you that you must first want to feel differently before you can come out of the trap. And if you do not want to feel differently, you must know that you do not want to, instead of deceiving yourself with the pretense that you want to but cannot. Once you know that you do not want to feel differently, you can find out why you want to remain in a negative, undesirable state.

By denying the truth that you can choose your attitudes, thoughts, and actions, you lose the greatest power at your disposal -- self-government. You confuse this, my friends, with a false control you constantly exert over your guards to keep the secret part hidden. Every vestige of energy is geared to controlling your secret self. When you misapply your energy you lose control over that part that could determine a fruitful, constructive, expanding life.

Imagining that you must keep a part of yourself secret comes from not believing in your real self. Yet, as long as you do not commit yourself wholeheartedly to exposing that which you fear, you cannot convince yourself of your innermost being, which is utterly trustworthy, wise, and good. When you do that, you find out that there is nothing to fear.

Your fear, first of all, is your suspicion that there is no reliable, rich aspect of your inner being from which you can be nourished, from which you can draw. Therefore, you fear that the ultimate in you is the part that hates and nurtures destructive wishes and desires. You begin by hiding it from others but end up hiding it also from yourself. Therefore you lose contact with your total self.

All of you must comprehend this mechanism thoroughly and discover the means you resort to when you make believe that you are honest with yourself all the way, thereby letting go of the last vestiges of control over the secret in you, and meet yourself for what you are. Only then can you get down to the serious business of self and of living. When I say "serious business," I mean this in the positive sense of discovering the ultimate in yourself, which you do not have to hide once you know it. As long as a part of you remains in hiding, you live by proxy, as it were. It is always "as if"; it is never whole and real. Then all goals and fulfillments are, in a sense, make-believe.

The great human struggle for life or death is as illusory as death itself. For no matter how many destructive, undesirable facets you may find in yourself, your fear of them is based on illusion. And the fear of them builds up more fear, more guilt, more pretense, more neurosis, and therefore more loss of healthy control over that in you which can be controlled, namely, what you desire to think, feel, and do -- the inner direction you take. And since you and life are one and the same -- they cannot be different -- you can fear life only to the exact extent that you fear yourself. You can fear others only to the extent that you fear yourself. You can fear nothing if you do not fear the part

of you that you keep secret -- secret even from yourself, or half so. You can easily find the vague feeling of hiding something if you set out to do so. But you jealously defend this secret, and in this defense you alienate yourself more from the vital live energy and meaningful presence within yourself that alone can inspire you and guide you to fulfillment. You thus make yourself uselessly and needlessly unhappy.

Soon you must pretend that you do not believe in the existence of that part in you which you have every reason to trust. This, my friends, is a very subtle pretense. It somehow seems easier to doubt your vital energy than to admit your fear of your secret and give up the lie of your life. Even if that lie exists only in a small part of your being, its pervading effect is that somehow everything seems a lie -- even that which you are truthful about. Your very being alive can only be a truthful phenomenon when there is nothing to hide, when you make the great decision not to be ruled by your negativity, regardless of what emotions, thoughts, and desires you secretly harbor. If you state and restate the desire to, above all else, give up this inner secret, you meet the whole of you; if you cultivate this day in and day out and you mean it, you cannot feel lost, stagnant, or disharmonious with yourself or with others. There will be no anxiety, no befuddlement, no bitter hurt. All this can be avoided only with the simple procedure outlined here -- meeting the whole of yourself without further hiding. To the degree that you were willing to do this in the past, you did experience its effects, but you forget that. You allow yourself to be ruled by unreasonable defenses against the truth in you.

Watch your evasions. Notice how busy you make yourself with other issues that have nothing to do with this great question. See how you would rather deal with inclement issues even within yourself. When you overlook tell-tale reactions and opportunities for clarification and liberation, you fail to use an important key.

Know that many of you here have been immediately touched by what I said. Some may even feel that this lecture was exclusively directed at them, because it happens to touch their immediate problem. But I speak to everyone here, and to those who are not here tonight. Some need it more specifically at this moment, whereas others are quite vigorously and favorably involved in the process I recommend. But the involvement fluctuates. It is therefore important to remember the simple formula of taking hold of yourself instead of allowing yourself to be controlled by your negativity and thereby compounding fear, guilt, and helplessness. When you let your destructiveness control you, you move further and further away from that point within you where you can change, without strain or unnatural exertion of control. It is up to you to change. Your life can be the most dynamic, rich, and blissful experience imaginable when you do not allow yourself to be a victim of your negativity and destructiveness. Simply declaring your vigorous intent to not let cowardice and fear defeat you will set those powers in motion that will bring you out of this trap. All your fears must then dissolve like fog in the sun.

My dearest friends, the fear of your negativity and destructiveness is so heavy only because you believe that it is final and static, like a hard object made of an unchangeable substance. This fear is justified in a way, but differently from how you feel it, and justified only as long as you cling to it and allow yourself to be controlled by it. For that length of time you cannot come out of it. The negative and destructive substance you fear in yourself is unchangeable only as long as you do not wish to change it, or as long as you avoid looking at it closely, in detail. It is always your choice. As long as you refuse to look at what is and to give up what is destructive, this, as all choices, must be

honored. But once you choose for the positive alternative, whatever negativity exists in you no longer feels disastrous, because then you know that it is not final. No matter how bad it is, it does not seem so bad, because you begin to understand its cause and effect. This makes a drastic difference in your inner experience and climate and determines the course you take. When you are willing to give it up, the worst is not one-tenth as hard to bear as a tiny imperfection that troubles you when the self keeps it secret and is unwilling to give it up. So what is bad about the secret, hidden self is not the actual measure of badness -- if there were such a thing -- but the refusal to expose it, see it, and let go of it.

Meditating on your intent to face it and give it up is an activity of the part in you that is available for self-determination at this moment. Through it you will experience that there is absolutely nothing to fear. You must finally come face to face with that rich, forever renewed, and unchangeably wonderful part in yourself through which you vibrantly live in absolute self-trust. Here all the limitations of life must dissolve. You will find the world such a wide place, with so many possibilities of beautiful experience right here and right now. In this new widening of life there are not just two alternatives, one falsely good and one falsely bad, or in fact two bad ones. In this new reality there are many beautiful alternatives. In reality all good can be had. There is no fear of fulfillment because it supposedly becomes stale. That happens only when you keep a tight check on yourself. When you let go and vibrate unchecked in fearless expansion, fulfillment becomes a state of being in the now. It need not be feared as an end; nor does desire for all the good in creation need to be feared as a beginning without future, a beginning that will end either in disappointment or in a precarious fulfillment that you do not know what to do with or how to keep alive. Hence, oneness is established between the outer and the inner you. You give up the struggle between the outer and the inner you when there is no longer a secret that has to be guarded.

Now it is up to you, all of you, to take this final step. Some of you have begun, and to these I say: Do not let up. Renew forevermore your intent to unguardedly reveal yourself to yourself; nothing needs to be hidden, feared, avoided. And to those who still struggle at this point -- regardless of how long ago they started this pathwork -- I say, try it. Use the meditation I have suggested. Mean it! And when you discover your fear, work on it. Expose it for what it really is. Stop denying it. For only then will you discover that there is nothing to fear, that all your distortions and contortions are useless. For being what you really are, right now, even in your soul's most secret chamber, is so much better to bear than what you now inflict upon your psyche.

My dearest friends, this lecture can indeed be a key if you find yourself stuck. If you are not, it will help to make the phases that are to follow much easier.

Are there any questions?

QUESTION: For the longest time, I have had difficulties with meditation. Now that I have overcome some of them, the results have been nothing short of miraculous. I would like to ask what this miracle is.

ANSWER: The miracle is a law of life that you just discovered. The law is that whatever concept you hold must manifest in your life. The truth of life, the reality of life, is unlimited good. To the extent you can embrace this possibility, even in an attitude of honest questioning, to that extent this truth -- in whatever area you conceive it -- must unfold itself to you. This unfolding of

goodness appears miraculous to the person who has hitherto embraced only negative possibilities and therefore could not see beyond them. One's concept and expectations of life are fences around the possibilities of experience and unfoldment. When more possibilities are discovered, the fences recede accordingly. The greater the scope of the mind to grasp blissful, joyful experience, the more of it must come into being, because in reality it is all there, available in unimaginable abundance. The narrow fences are always a result of personal distortion.

You cannot experience more than what you conceive of the possibility of experience. If you believe that happiness is impossible, how can you experience happiness? This is as logical as any physical law. For instance, if you move your body from here to there, your body can be only at the spot you have moved it to, not at any different spot. This is no more and no less miraculous than the laws of the mind. As far as you can move it, this is where you find yourself with it. If you find yourself in a dingy, narrow little room, you need not remain there. You cannot convince yourself of this fact unless you walk out of it and discover that there are a lot of nicer places outside this little room. If you resist any attempt to help you out of it, on the grounds that maybe there is no other room or space for you, you cannot come out, regardless of how long you argue about it. You must make the actual move.

This is what you must do with your mind. When you discover that the room beyond actually exists, it will appear miraculous. Spiritually, mentally, emotionally, you so often remain in a dingy little hole, with no possibility to stretch, to unfold, to experience beauty. When you finally test it and discover the beautiful world outside the room, and see how safe and satisfying it is, you experience it as a miracle. You then stretch and stretch your mind to more and more possibilities to unfold and experience good, to give and receive good. That is the miracle of creation, as natural as your moving from one place to another. As long as your limbs are healthy, that possibility is given to you. And if you have allowed your limbs to atrophy too long by unnecessary incarceration, through exercise and treatment they will heal. This is what you do with your psyche after it has lived too long in a climate of negativity, limitation, and isolation because of your misguided fear of yourself. Once this limitation is given up, the "miracle" must come to each and every creature in the universe. It is as logical a law as any law you no longer find miraculous. The reality of creation is that there is unlimited freedom and possibility for experiencing the good. That possibility is given to everyone. The healing of the "limbs" of your psyche to take advantage of that unlimited freedom and possibility was the topic of the very lecture I just gave: giving up the frantic struggle to guard your inner secret chamber. As long as you struggle to keep your secret, you cannot experience the wide-open possibilities of living and of your innermost being. I beg of you, do not close your eyes to the fact that you struggle against exposing the secret part of you. Understand that this struggle is a useless pain you inflict upon yourself and that you can get rid of today, if you so desire!

With these words, I bless all of you, my friends. With these blessings I give you greater strength to activate the resources within you that will help you in your efforts. Go on, do not let up in this beautiful, deeply meaningful and rewarding undertaking. Do everything possible in this direction. Realize that the area you most fear and are unwilling to see is the one you most need to focus on and where you will feel most rewarded and liberated. The freedom and safety you will experience cannot be conveyed in words. These are not empty promises. Those of you who have experienced to some degree the truth of what I say, please help those who are momentarily stuck in a state of denial and limitation. Those who are stuck, please do not separate yourself from those of your friends who can help you overcome the hurdle. Do not be too proud, even if they outwardly

have not done this work for as long a time or are less knowledgeable. Please help each other. You will not regret it. Much help can thus be exchanged.

Be in peace, know how wonderful is the peace of truth by not shirking this truth. Be in God!

Edited by Judith and John Saly

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