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THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT OF DESIRE FOR, AND FEAR OF, CLOSENESS

Greetings, my dearest friends. I bring blessings for this meeting and for every step and effort you make toward growth and development. May this lecture be another stepping stone on your road to selfhood and self-realization.

The greatest struggle for human beings is between their desire to overcome isolation and loneliness and their simultaneous fear of close, intimate contact with another being. Often the desire and the fear are equally strong, so that people are pulled and pushed in opposite directions. This causes a tremendous strain. The pain of isolation will always push people into attempts to escape from it. When such attempts look like succeeding, the fear of closeness induces them to pull back again and push away the other. And so the cycle goes on with human beings first erecting and then destroying the barriers between themselves and others.

All individuals who find themselves on a path such as this must sooner or later see their own predicament from this perspective. All their disturbances, disharmonies, and sufferings can finally be brought down to the struggle between the desire and the fear of closeness as the simple common denominator. Your destructiveness and your insistence on holding on to both feelings are the barriers which keep you separated from others.

Your relationship to another person can be successful only when you are motivated by your innermost being. If the relationship is determined solely by the outer intellect and will, these faculties cannot find the delicate balance of allowing your self-expression and also receiving the other's self-expression. Since no rule can be made about the rhythm of this mutual interchange, the outer brain is unable to effect the balance. Nor can the ego-mind find the balance between self-assertion and giving in, between giving and receiving, or between active and passive participation. These delicate balances cannot possibly be determined in a prescribed way. Yet the outer intellect is an instrument that prescribes, predetermines, and thinks mechanically; it determines rules and laws. By itself it is not sufficiently intuitive and flexible to meet each moment as it comes and to respond to it adequately. For such a flexible response the core of your being must be activated. Then relationship with another can be spontaneous and mutually satisfying.

Not in contact with your innermost being, you can neither function properly where life requires creative responses, nor can you contact another person's innermost being. But this, after all, is the real relating, the closeness which eliminates isolation. Intimate self-expression and relating flows with the life-stream and brings dynamic peace. Everything else is strain, effort, and difficult discipline, which is not conducive to the great freedom and joy of intimacy.

As you already know, human beings are terrified of themselves. They do everything possible to avoid looking at themselves. When you have overcome a specific difficulty and resistance, you

find that your fears were not justified. You feel relief, along with moments of aliveness, because at one particular moment you have contacted your innermost being. When this inner you is evaded, real contact with others is impossible. You also know that evasion can exist in many forms. If you have not contacted your true self first, you cannot allow yourself the freedom and lack of control necessary for responding from within.

Why is the fear of self and the fear of contacting others so great? Basically the fear is due to people's destructive aims, and specifically to your aim of refusing to give yourselves over to life. Doing the work on such a path as this, many of my friends have encountered exactly this kind of attitude deep within themselves. If all people were truly willing to give what they are, both their potential and their already realized selves, if they were to willingly offer their best to life and deliberately held this as their goal, they could not be in conflict with themselves or with life. For each one of you has so many wonderful assets which you neglect or only vaguely sense. And even when you do sense them, it does not occur to you to offer these assets to life. Once you deliberately do that, something must begin to happen. A great inner movement takes place which you have no reason to fear, for it must all happen in beautiful order and harmony.

You as an individual can change from being an isolated creature keeping your assets for yourself, sometimes leaving them completely unused, never intending to give these assets for the benefit of life and evolution, except perhaps in a vague way. The moment you change to the new state of deliberately dedicating the best of who you are to life, the change within you and in your outer life experience will be so drastic that words cannot describe it. What was difficult, laborious, fearful, bleak, strained, and lonely will become easy, self-perpetuating, relaxed, safe, and bright. You will feel a deep sense of oneness with the world, with others, with the entire process of creation.

Until this change takes place, you must be eternally in the whirlpool of wanting and fearing the same thing. And this truly is torture. At times you desire more: at other times you fear more. The outcome will be problematic, painful, and fraught with conflict because you pull and push in opposite directions. The moment you change your attitude in the way I just described, everything will fall into place automatically. This is the real key. The struggle of wanting and fearing closeness with others, as well as of wanting and fearing intimate contact with one's innermost self, cannot be settled by making up one's mind to give up one of the two alternatives of closeness or separateness. This can never work. It can be resolved only when negative and destructive aims are surrendered, and the best of who you are is joyfully offered to life. Only then do you experience that there is nothing to fear from life except your own destructiveness. When this destructiveness is given up, the key to life is found.

Devote a few minutes every day to thoughts such as these:

"Whatever I already am, I want to devote to life. I deliberately want life to make use of the best of what I have and who I am. I may not be sure at this moment in what way this could happen, and even if I have ideas, I will allow for the greater intelligence and wisdom deep within me to guide me. I will let life itself decide how a fruitful interchange can take place between it and me. For whatever I give to life, I have received from it, and I wish to return it to the great cosmic pool to bring more benefit to others. This, in turn, must inevitably enrich my own life to the exact measure that I willingly give to life: for truly life and I are one.

When I withhold from life, I withhold from myself. When I withhold from others, I withhold from myself. Whatever I already am, I want to let flow into life. And whatever more in me can be utilized, still waiting to be brought to fruition, I request, I decide, and I desire that it be put to constructive use, so as to enrich the atmosphere around me."

If such thoughts were deliberately pursued and deeply meant, problems would have to resolve themselves, pain would cease, solutions would appear on the horizon even to problems which had hitherto seemed absolutely insoluble. I can assure you, my friends, that this promise, as well as all other promises I have ever made, will be borne out and will prove to be true.

On the other hand, if pronouncing such words, you feel an inner disinclination, a no-current, or a resistance, then you know what is responsible for the pain you feel in your isolation and for the pain when you are relating to others. They must both be the same. To the degree that you suffer from isolation, to that degree interrelationship must be problematic and painful for you. To the degree you stem against overcoming isolation, isolation must be painful. The key lies in the desire to offer to life what you already are and whatever more you can still be. When you follow this desire, you automatically release and bring to fruition more hidden potentialities than you could possibly visualize in this moment while you are still in your painful seclusion.

To be in harmony with life, first call deliberately upon the powers within you. Knowing that these powers exist, even before you have fully experienced them, must activate them in whatever constructive way you choose, provided you have deliberately stated that you indeed accept their reality.

The second approach to reaching this great harmony with the universe, with your real self and with others, is to cultivate an overall attitude deep within compatible with the higher powers in the kernel of your being. Such a compatible attitude means complete constructiveness in all endeavors, in all desires, and in all aims. If you meet each situation with total honesty fully instead of in the usual superficial way of meeting life situations, unconscious destructive aims must fall away. Paying only shallow attention to the self as it manifests in life situations makes you overlook the fact that you often take for granted a general positive goal that is only secondary, while the primary aim of the personality is in fact destructive. Covering up the more powerful destructive aim can be subtle but it nevertheless has a great impact. Through totally meeting each issue as it comes up and paying full attention to every aspect of it, including what your real feelings and desires are, you will find what your attitude really is and how it could be more constructive, more sincere, more fair. If this approach is cultivated, then the outer you will be compatible with the divine powers within you.

There are those who cultivate only one of these two approaches. Some concentrate only on activating the hidden powers; others concentrate on meeting themselves and their outer destructiveness so as to eliminate the latter. Both approaches have their great value, but if one is pursued without the other, the results must be limited. It is so easy to overlook what is really there: in the first case, the negativity is overlooked; in the second approach, lack of awareness of the positive potentials limits the chances for their realization. The most effective way is to apply both approaches. If both are cultivated, and if simultaneously you truly desire to contribute to life in whatever way possible with all the good that is in you, you will see a tremendous power at work in you. You will truly experience the peace, safety, and aliveness that must follow when one's inner being is activated.

Another barrier against wanting to add to life with the total strength of one's being is the ingrained misconception that if you add to life, you will deprive yourself. Conversely, you erroneously believe that only when you grab and are solely concerned with your own little advantage can you enrich yourself and do justice to your pleasure and your desires. This ingrained conviction governs and motivates all of you, at least to some extent. It is precisely where this conviction exists in your life that you encounter trouble and frustration, because the falseness of the conviction makes you act, think, and feel in a way that is damaging to life, to others, and therefore inevitably to yourself. Since you are unaware of the strength of your wrong conviction and, moreover, unaware of it even being a wrong conviction, you do not understand why your efforts do not work out. You become more and more involved in confusion and negative chain reactions whose nature and significance you cannot understand.

Nothing could be further from the truth than the conviction that it is you versus the other person. I therefore recommend a deep meditation in which you primarily set out to determine in what respect and to what extent do you hold this erroneous belief. Once you are completely aware of how much this belief controls you on the ego-level, I recommend that you think of these words and try to comprehend them on the level that holds the opposite and truthful view. Confront this egotistic concept with the deeper knowledge that only by desiring to add to life can you experience that no pleasure you can possibly think of need be denied you. Then your whole psyche will be constructively geared; the highest pleasure must manifest for you because you are activated and moved constructively, and not by selfishness or any other destructive attitude. Isolation, and the attitude of "me versus the other," will be replaced by "me and the other."

When your psyche is geared to "me and the other," there is no more conflict between giving and receiving. There is no more refusal to add to life; consequently, deep sorrow and suffering, isolation and conflict, guilt and frustration must cease. Then people do not have to go through the terrible struggle they suffer in their isolation, wanting to reach others and yet, the minute they succeed, pushing them away. And the very moment people eliminate barriers because the pain of isolation becomes unbearable, they already set up new barriers because the fear of closeness overwhelms them. This fear comes from the false negative conviction that they must preserve themselves if they are not to be annihilated. And people hold this false conviction of life's malignant nature only to the extent that their own innermost aims, at least partially, are destructive and malignant. This vicious circle between life's malignancy and one's need to set oneself up against life can be broken only when one wants to contribute generously to life. Then, and then only, will a person find that life is as benign as his or her innermost self -- no more and no less.

The fear of uniting, of meeting, of reaching, of having intimate contact, exists as long as the individual's psyche is negatively geared. In such a case union must be frightening and appear a question of "me versus the other." As long as the depth of your own psyche is frightening -- and it will feel frightening when you pursue negative, destructive aims -- free self-expression is dangerous, contact with others is dangerous, and giving one's self up to the bliss of union must be desperately avoided because it threatens to eliminate control. Without this control, your destructive aims could take over and threaten annihilation. Giving up control must appear as death, as the giving up of selfhood and safety, as long as destructive aims persist and preoccupy the psyche. Therefore, in order to preserve one's individuality, the only available way appears to be building up barriers around the self. Only this seems to keep the self intact. The inherent tragedy is that as long as

destructive goals exist in the psyche, isolation gives one a sense of identity and seems to preserve one's individuality. Yet only in a negative context does loss of control lead to death or to a loss of power over oneself. Ultimately mental disturbance is caused by this conflict.

But when your psyche no longer believes in "me versus the other," but in "me and the other," and when you therefore give what you have and what you are to life, then you will not fear loss of control because loss of ego-control will lead to more control in a better, fuller, healthier sense. With a completely constructive psyche, the personality can trust its spontaneous, unchecked, free expressions. It can give itself up to the inner powers, so that a free-flowing, vibrating unity between the self and the life force exists. This appears like an act which relinquishes direct control. But through this act more constructive powers deep in the core of the self are activated; they make the self forever more adequate and give it more control over life so it can determine its own fate in the best possible way.

Tight gripping and holding on to the self is necessary with negativity in the psyche. Otherwise the destructive aims not only become exposed to the self and to others, but one fears their taking over and manifesting in destructive actions. Hence control seems necessary, a control that prevents union, prevents free self-expression and relaxed, joyful living. The tighter the control, the greater the danger that this false inner movement will become unbearable in its tightness until the exhausted psyche loses itself in a process of extended self-alienation. This explains the apparent paradox that giving up control leads to better control, while tightly holding on to control must finally lead to the loss of control. All great spiritual truths seem contradictory on the surface. In order to perceive the unity behind such contradictions, you need to listen with your inner being and not try to comprehend merely with your intellect. The best way to verify such statements is by living their truth -- and this can be done only by following through the steps on your path.

Many of you, my friends, are quite close to this threshold, to this all-important transition when you leave the isolated life of egocentricity and of greed. You demand the most from others and simultaneously fear that others will not only not comply with your demands, but also that they will demand from you what you believe is dangerous to give. When a person is still in this state, he or she must be deeply troubled. But the threshold to pass over from this alienated state into the new harmonious state described in this lecture is so near and so very easy to cross.

If you can allow these words not only to fill your intellect, but also your inner being and become sincere in your good will to find the truth of "me and the other," you will experience how safe, easy, and joyful life becomes when you dispense with the pseudo-necessity of pursuing negative aims. Wanting to defeat life, others and yourself, out of spite, you withhold the best of you from life for the so-called safety and satisfaction of your negative aims. These negative aims have to become so conscious that they literally stare you in the face. Only then can their futility be comprehended so blatantly that the personality will dispense with them. You will no longer need to fight and obstruct what you want most, namely the deep satisfaction of being wholly yourself, which also means being accepted by another person as being what you really are, without masks and pretenses, without separating mechanisms which you still think you have to use. When you dispense with the masks and barriers you have so ardently put up all your life, you will be free and know that what you are is good. But this knowledge can come only when that which already is good in you is offered up to life.

"Me versus the other" is the whole human struggle. As simple as this is, you as an individual cannot understand these words unless you have made some progress on a path leading deep into yourself. Then you will know what these words mean. As you learn to inwardly assimilate these words, you come closer to passing over this threshold. All of you can make the first step now in a very simple meditation:

"I decide to give up the error of 'me versus the other.' There is really no conflict, therefore I can give all of myself. I not only request help from deep within, but I decide to give the best I am to life, without fear. Any fear that still lurks within me is error, and I decide to rid myself of this error and to give myself over to the divine powers to which I open myself totally. I deeply desire to understand the truth of 'I and others are one' meaning that there is no conflict. I therefore can give of myself the best that I am. I surrender to those higher forces so that this self-giving may occur in harmony, in rightness, without strain and effort."

Anyone meditating in such a way increases the power, the life, the peace, and the light within. All struggle and pain must then, sooner or later, fall away in exact proportion as this attitude is truly felt and lived. Use this key, my friends, and all else will be added unto you. It is the greatest key that many of you are truly ready to use, provided you avoid using superficial words which have no inner meaning. Many of you are now at the point where you can really mean these words and initiate this new attitude. And life for you will then begin, truly begin.

The first steps may be to use this simple, beautiful formula as a general attitude toward life. As you first taste and test this fundamental approach to life, you will be able to apply it to specific problems. When you look at it closely, every problem can finally be brought down to the simple common denominator of fearing to give of yourself and of cultivating a negative, destructive, or at least a denying attitude toward life. That is why you have the problem, and as long as this attitude prevails, the particular problem must remain. You cannot cope with certain life situations precisely because you withhold yourself and because you believe in "me versus the other." The consequences are that through a series of negative chain-reactions you actually are being damaged, so that it appears as though the conclusion of "it's me versus the other" were a correct assumption. The more you adhere to this assumption, the more shortchanged you must become in the problematic areas.

The peculiar fact is that people may be perfectly aware of the truth and have a positive, constructive attitude toward life in certain areas. Hence they are fulfilled and happy in these areas, where there is no struggle, no conflict, and where everything proceeds easily, because the positive chain-reactions are self-perpetuating. At the same time, in their problem areas people respond to life in a totally opposite way -- and yet they are never aware of the difference of their response to life. They do not see that their outlook is the reason for their "good luck" or "bad luck," for their fulfillment or frustration. This is why self-confrontation and seeing what one actually thinks, feels, and does is of such tremendous importance.

When you discover the difference in your attitude toward various aspects of life and see the corresponding difference of manifestation and experience in them, it will be easier for you to change over from "me versus the other" to "me and the other" in the problem areas. It will then be easier to give up the resistance to using the key of wanting to give keenly of the best you are to life.

QUESTION: Can you elaborate on how holding on to control leads to loss of control?

ANSWER: When the conflict exists because you believe in "me versus the other," a strong control must be exerted. You then say, "I must hold on to myself, for otherwise I will be damaged." Such control is based on a wrong conclusion, comes out of a dualistic concept of life, and therefore must be a damaging and limiting control. It puts shackles on your best faculties and prevents the best faculties of others from reaching and affecting you. While you exercise such control, the best in you cannot come out and reach others. The best in others cannot reach you.

The control in this case is a tight wall consisting of fear and the dualistic belief wherein human beings must defend themselves against life by withholding the best they are and the best they can be. This belief erects an impenetrable wall of errors and defenses. The stronger the control, the greater the wall, and the further one is alienated from the best in oneself and others from all that is true, real, constructive, alive, and blissful. Behind the wall one suffers separation from the best of life, which includes the best of oneself, too.

When energy is constantly being used in a fruitless and futile way, such as building up walls that keep out the best of life, the moment must come when you lose control and are therefore not capable of coping with life as it unfolds. You are then unable to make use of your personal assets because you are almost too frightened to find them. Finding them and being aware of them leads to a natural flow of union that allows others to partake of your assets. This is the nature of anything good. Good cannot exist by itself. It must communicate itself to others; it always includes others. Hence, when you fear to be included with and by others, you are forced to deny the best in you. This can be verified by all of you when you detect a slight feeling of anxiety and discomfort at the very idea of allowing the best in you to unfold. There is a mechanism which holds it back, which makes it appear safer to be unproductive, barren of aspects naturally oriented to include others and to unite with life. The irony of course is that without these assets people cannot adequately live and cope with anything they encounter. Therefore, the control which prohibits people and guards them from life must lead to a loss of control, to an inability to cope, in whatever fashion this may manifest for an individual.

When you are in the unity of being, there is no either/or, for it is always "me and the other," and then there is no conflict between giving and receiving. There can be no conflict of control. If you do not fear giving, you can fully receive; you can never be shortchanged. When you fear giving, you cannot be open to receive. It is impossible. Therefore you are constantly being shortchanged. The wrong conclusion is thus strengthened, so that you will close yourself up even more. But when you are in the truth of unity, using your freedom to offer what you are to life, it will make you completely comfortable about receiving. You can easily determine this fact.

To the exact measure you fear giving of yourself, you must be uncomfortable when you receive, even though you do want to receive. So you subtly push aside what is given you. Even though your childish, selfish aim is to receive as much as possible and give as little as possible, it cannot happen -- not only because others refuse such an unfair deal, but because you close yourself against it. Your psyche cannot respond to the truth and to the spiritual law -- hence it cannot open itself to receive when it refuses to give. It is more than guilt, more than the deep knowledge that you do not deserve to receive when you refuse to give, more than atonement for this guilt that makes you refuse to receive. It is a simple mathematical equation, or a law of physics. These laws cannot be broken; they contain their own order. It is a question of psychic compatibility.

Only the psyche that is in truth and can therefore comfortably and painlessly give its best -- and there is a difference between giving what one has and giving what one is -- will experience the great safety and joy of this act. In exact proportion, such a person can consequently receive comfortably, painlessly, and joyfully, until the aspects of giving and receiving truly become one. When there is no effort in giving oneself, there will be no effort in receiving and therefore no frustration. The person will no longer feel cheated because he or she does not cheat life by withholding from it. Hence, tight, anxious control becomes utterly superfluous.

The control which prohibits your giving your best must perforce also prevent you from using the best and highest powers for your advantage. These powers remain unused; they are covered up to a degree that their very existence is ignored. That aspect of all human beings which alone is competent to guide and inspire them cannot activate those powers as long as people remain in the condition of hanging on to anxious control.

I will leave you now with the request and the wish and hope that all of you who are present here and all who read these words use the formula I gave you. Use it as much as you can. Do want to use it! It will be such a healing power. It will change what is dull and dead into a dynamic lifestream. It will change what is hopeless into bright hope, what is fearful into deep security and confidence. It will change your life from constriction into limitless possibilities. It will change darkness and isolation into light, union, companionship, intimacy, and the knowledge that you are loved as you are, because you love as you are. It will change your state from aloneness and emptiness to abundance in every respect. My friends, these are not mere words or theories you can vaguely believe to be meant for a distant future. They are verifiable for each one of you whenever you choose to test the truth of these words.

Be in peace, be in yourself, in God!

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