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CONNECTION BETWEEN THE EGO AND THE UNIVERSAL POWER

Greetings, my dearest friends. May this lecture give you renewed insight and strength, so that your attempts to find yourself -- who you are, where you belong, and how to fulfill yourself -- become a little easier. May you find a new shaft of light through these words by truly opening up to new aspects of ideas you have perhaps heard before but that have not as yet become personally experienced truth for you.

The meaningfulness and fulfillment of one's life depend, in the last analysis, entirely on the relationship between your ego and the universal life principle -- the real self as we also call it. If this relationship is balanced, everything falls into place. All these lectures deal with this topic, in one way or another, although I always try to discuss it in different ways in order to help you finally experience the truth of these words.

Let us try to define again what the universal life principle is and how it manifests in you. The universal life principle is life itself. It is eternal consciousness in its deepest and highest sense. It is eternal movement and pleasure supreme. Since it is life, it cannot die. It is the essence of all that breathes, moves, vibrates. It knows all, for it constantly creates and perpetuates itself, because it cannot be untrue to its own nature.

Every individual consciousness is universal consciousness -- not just a part of it, for a part implies only a little -- but wherever consciousness exists, it is the original consciousness. This original consciousness, or creative life principle, takes various forms. When in the process of individualization an entity passes the point of remembering its connection with its origin, a disconnection occurs. The particular consciousness continues to exist and to contain the universal consciousness, but it becomes oblivious to its own nature, its laws, and its potentials. This, in short, is the state of human consciousness as a whole.

When you begin to become aware of the life principle, you discover that it has always been there but you have not noticed it because you were under the illusion of existing separately. It is therefore not entirely accurate to state that the universal consciousness "manifests." It would be more correct to say that you begin to notice it. You may notice the life principle's ever-present power as autonomous consciousness or as energy. The separated ego-personality possesses both, but the ego intelligence is by far inferior to the universal intelligence whether or not you can recognize it and put it to use. The same applies to the energy.

Consciousness and energy are not separate aspects of universal life; they are one. But some people tend to be more receptive to one or the other of them. Both are experienced as part of one's self-realization.

One of the universal life principle's basic characteristics, whether expressed as autonomous consciousness or as energy, is that it is spontaneous. It cannot possibly reveal itself through a laborious process or a cramped, overconcentrated state. Its manifestation is always an indirect result of effort. It occurs when it is least expected. By "indirect" I mean that you must, of course, make efforts. You must overcome resistance in order to face yourself in truth, admit your problems and shortcomings, and shed your illusions. This does require a great deal of effort.

You must summon all the strength and courage you can muster at all times. But the effort needs to be expended for the sake of seeing the truth about oneself, of giving up a specific illusion, of overcoming a barrier to wanting to be constructive rather than destructive, and not for an as yet theoretical process called self-realization that promises to feel good. If self-realization is arduously forced and looked for, it cannot come. It comes as a byproduct, as it were, although it is all that you can ever wish to attain.

Each step toward seeing the truth in the self, with a genuine desire for constructive participation in the creative process of life, frees the self. This is how the spontaneous processes begin. They are never consciously volitional. Hence, the greater the fear of the unknown, of letting go, of involuntary processes in one's own body, the less possibility is there of experiencing the spontaneous life principle in the self.

The life principle may take the form of a previously unimaginable wisdom in solving one's personal problems or in cultivating one's creative talents. Or it may manifest as a new vibrant way of experiencing life, giving a new flavor to all one is doing and seeing. The life principle is always safe, always holds out justified hope that will never be disappointed. There is never any fear in this new life experience. Yet it cannot be pushed and forced. It happens exactly to the degree that you no longer fear the involuntary processes.

Humanity finds itself in the paradoxical position of deeply yearning for the fruits of these involuntary processes, yet fearing and battling them. The conflict is terrible and tragic. It can be resolved only when you let go of the fear.

All psychological problems come, in the final analysis, from this much deeper existential conflict, far beyond the individual neuroses and personal difficulties the child experiences that later cause inner conflicts and misconceptions. All life moves toward resolving it. The precondition of such resolution is that first the individual neurotic conflicts must be found and understood. You need to learn to see and accept whatever is real in yourself, in others, in life. Honesty must prevail to stop one's attempts to cheat life, no matter how subtly. All character defects have to be removed. And when I say removed, I mean fully acknowledging and objectively observing them, without plunging into despair and denying the defects. This attitude in itself removes the defects infinitely more effectively than any other approach.

In other words, it is not a question of first having to remove the defects so that then something else can happen. It is a question of being able to quietly see oneself in the defect. Only then is one able to perceive the existential conflict between the ego and the universal consciousness. The spontaneously manifesting universal consciousness has nothing to do with religious precepts of a removed deity, or a life beyond this physical life. These are misinterpretations that have arisen as a result of sensing this universal life principle. When a person senses it and gropingly tries to convey

this experience to those whose ego is still in conflict with the creative life principle, misinterpretations do occur. They must alienate you from your immediate self and from your practical daily life.

People who are frightened of these alienating processes remove them by creating a vague theory. They wish to find a compromise between their yearning, that comes from the deep sense of the present possibilities available to them, and their fear. This compromise exists in every form of formalized religion that removes God from the self and from daily life, that splits human nature into the spiritual and the physical being. Thus total fulfillment is removed from the now into a life after death. All such views and approaches to life are nothing but a compromise between what one senses could exist and what one fears. This fear goes beyond the neurotic fears that stem from misconceptions and personally experienced traumas.

What is this basic fear of letting go of the outer ego to let the universal processes unfold and carry you? It is the misunderstanding that giving up the ego means giving up existence. In order to get a little better understanding of this problem, let us consider how the ego formed itself out of universal life.

Individualization is an integral aspect of the universal life force. Life is always moving, reaching out, expanding and contracting, finding new areas of experience and branching into new territories. Creative life is no different. Thus it finds forever new ways to experience itself. As an individual consciousness separates itself further and further from its original source, it "forgets" its essence and becomes oblivious of its own principles and laws until it seems to be a totally separate entity. Individual existence is therefore associated only with separate existence. Giving up the ego must then appear to the individual as an annihilation of its unique personal existence.

This is the current condition of human beings. You live under the illusion that life, the sense of "I am," can be found only in your "separate" existence. This illusion has brought death into the human realm, for death is nothing but this illusion being carried to its final absurdity.

The realization of the illusory character of a separate ego-existence is an extremely important step in the evolution of humanity. Any work of self-realization brings the issue into very clear focus. To the extent you look at the immediately available truth of yourselves as individuals, you will find that you and the creative life principle are one. You will then find that everything I say here is realizable and ascertainable right here and now. It is not a theoretical teaching that you can, at best, consider intellectually. The more you look at yourself in truth and shed your illusions about yourself, the more you will realize that individual existence is not surrendered when the involuntary processes of the creative life principle are allowed to take over and integrate with the ego functions.

Some of my friends have begun to experience the immediacy of this greater life more and more frequently. They experience a renewal of energy and find, paradoxically, that the more they give of their energy, the more renewed energy they generate within. For that is the law of the universal life principle. The separated state operates dualistically; it seems "logical" that the more one gives, the less one has and the more depleted one becomes. This comes from the illusion that the outer ego is all there is to individuality. This is the root of the fear to let go of all tight ego defenses.

By the same token, those who begin to experience these powers and energies also begin to notice the influx of an inspirational intelligence that seems to be much vaster than anything they know in their outer intellect as opposed to inner wisdom. Yet it is essentially their "best self." It first seems to be a foreign power, but it is not. It only seems so because these channels had been clogged up due to one's ignorance of their existence and personal little lies and self-deceptions. This vaster intelligence manifests as inspiration, guidance, and a new form of intuition that comes not in a vague feeling, but in concise words, in definite knowledge, graspable and translatable into daily living.

The discovery of this new life reconciles the apparent opposites of being an individual and being at one with all others, an integral part of a whole. These are no longer irreconcilable opposites, but interdependent facts. All such opposites, all apparently mutually exclusive alternatives that cause so much heartache to humanity, begin to fall into place when the ego connects with universal life.

When I speak of letting go of the ego, I do not mean its annihilation, or even disregarding its importance, or letting it fall by the wayside. The ego has made itself a separated part of the universal life which can be found deep within the self. It is immediately accessible if so desired, when the ego is ready to reconnect itself to its original source. When the ego becomes strong enough to take the risk to trust faculties other than its limited conscious capabilities it will find a previously undreamed-of new security.

The fear of this new step stems from the idea that the ego will be crushed, it will fall into nothingness and cease to exist. This fear appears to be alleviated by holding on to unmoving, petrified psychic substances. The unmoving seems safe; the moving, perilous. To want to hold on makes life scary, for life is eternally moving. When you find that the movement is safe because it carries you, you have found the only real security there is. All other security -- trust in, or leaning on the static -- is illusory and breeds forever more fear.

The principle is the same as the one that moves the planets, which do not fall into space. At the core of the human predicament there always lies the feeling, "If I do not hold on to myself I endanger myself." And once you are conscious of this feeling, you possess an important key, for you can consider the possibility that it is an error. There is nothing to fear; you cannot be crushed or annihilated. You can only be carried, as planets are carried in space.

As I so often say, the state of humanity's present consciousness creates the world you live in, including its physical laws. You are so used to putting effect first and cause later. This is a result of your dualistic state of mind, which is unable to see the whole picture and tends to think in an either/or manner. You are not relegated to this sphere; rather, this sphere, with all it contains, is an expression of humanity's overall state of consciousness. One of the physical laws expressing this state of consciousness is the law of gravity. It is a special law that pertains only to your dualistic consciousness. The law of gravity parallels, or expresses on the physical level, the emotional reaction to and the apprehension of falling and crushing when the ego is given up as the sole form of individual existence. Spheres of consciousness that have transcended the dualism of this plane have different physical laws, corresponding to their overall consciousness. Human science, even from the merely materialistic point of view, shows this to be so. The science of space proves this. In outer space there is no gravity. Yours is not the last and only reality.

This analogy is more than merely symbolic. It is a sign that could widen your horizon in thinking about, and inwardly experiencing, new boundaries of reality, thus diminishing your fear and your illusory, isolated, ego-existence.

How to apply this, my friends, to where most of you are in your search for your real self? This immediately connects with looking at the various layers of your consciousness. The more you succeed in making previously unconscious material conscious and consequently reorienting the faulty reflexes of previously unconscious material, the closer you come to the reality of the universal life principle within you. The universal life principle then becomes freer to disclose itself, and you become freer from fears, shames, and prejudices, so you can open yourself up to its availability. Anyone can corroborate that the more courage is summoned to look at the truth of oneself and nothing but the truth, the easier it becomes to connect with a vaster, safer, more blissful life within. The more connected you become with something that removes all uncertainty and all conflict, the more you will feel a security and an ability to function that you never knew could exist within you. Here are functions of power, of energy; functions of intelligence that resolve all conflict and furnish solutions to apparently unsolvable problems. All ifs and buts in daily practical living are loosened up -- not through outer magical means, but through your increasing capacity to cope with everything that happens as an integral part of yourself. Moreover, you develop an increased ability to experience pleasure, as you are meant to. To the extent you have disconnected yourself, you must yearn for this way of living.

A few years ago I used the following terms to describe certain overall, fundamental levels of the human personality: the higher self, meaning the real potential in everyone, the universal life in every human core; the lower self, made up of all your deceits, your character defects, your illusions, pretenses and destructiveness. Then I discussed a third component which I first called the mask self and later the idealized self.¹ It is based on a pretense of being what one wants to be, or what one feels one ought to be in order to be liked and approved of.

During our discussions we have come face to face with many aspects of this triad. Once I spoke of a frequent phenomenon, that you are often ashamed of your higher self -- of the best in yourself. For many personality types it seems shameful to display one's best, one's most loving and generous impulses; it seems much easier and less embarrassing to show one's worst.²

Today I can speak a little more about this topic on a deeper and more subtle level. For this is a very important point, immediately connected with the fear of exposing the real self. Some of my earlier lectures merely described certain features of one kind of personality on a relatively superficial level. The specific personality I then discussed feels this shame primarily about good qualities, about giving and loving. Such people believe they give into society's demands and they thereby lose the integrity of their individuality. They fear their submission to and dependency on the opinions of others and therefore feel ashamed of any genuine impulse to please others. They therefore feel more "themselves" when they are hostile, aggressive, cruel.

¹ Lecture #14

² Lecture #66

All human beings have a similar reaction to their real self. This does not apply only to their actual goodness and loving generosity, but also to all other real feelings and ways of being. This strange shame manifests as embarrassment and a sense of exposure about the way one really is. It makes one feel as though one were naked and exposed. This experience can be registered by everyone -- and it is not the shame of one's deceptions and destructiveness, nor of one's compliance. This shame is on an entirely different level, and of a different quality. The only way I can describe it is to say that what one really is feels shamefully naked -- regardless of your good or bad thoughts, feelings, or behavior. This is extremely important to comprehend, for it explains how artificial levels are created. These artificial levels do not exclusively result from misconceptions in the usual sense. When the naked core of oneself, as one is now, is exposed, the personality is less frightened of annihilation or danger, but more ashamed. The element of danger comes in when the ego yields to the involuntary processes. The shame is felt most acutely when it comes to being what one is in the moment.

Because of this feeling, people pretend. This is a different kind of pretense than the one that covers up lack of integrity, destructiveness, and cruelty. This different kind of pretense is deeper, more subtle. You may pretend things you actually feel. You may really feel love, but to show this real love feels naked, so you create a false love. You may really feel anger, as you are now. But this real anger feels naked, so you create false anger. You may really feel sadness, but you feel mortified to acknowledge this sadness, even to yourself, so you create false sadness, which you can easily display to others. You may really experience pleasure, but this, too, is humiliating to expose, so you create false pleasure. This even applies to elements like confusion and puzzlement. You intensify and dramatize your emotions, as I explained in the last lecture, and so you falsify them.

Because the real feeling seems so naked and exposed, so you create a false one. This falsification functions like a protective garment which no one but one's deepest, usually unconscious self knows of. This "protective garment" anesthetizes one to the vibrancy and buoyancy of life. All such imitations build a screen between you and your life center. This, too, separates you from reality, for it is the reality of your own being that you cannot stand and feel compelled to imitate, thereby counterfeiting your very existence. The moving stream of life seems dangerous, not only as far as your safety is concerned, but also as it affects your pride and dignity. But all this is stark and tragic illusion. As you can only find true safety when you unite with the source of all life within you, so you can find true dignity only when you overcome the shame of being real -- whatever this may mean at the moment.

Sometimes annihilation seems a lesser evil than the strange sense of shame and the exposure of one's real being. When you recognize this shame and do not push it away as inconsequential, you take a tremendous step, my friends. Feeling this shame is the key to finding a numbness that causes despair and frustration, because it leads to self-alienation and disconnectedness of a particular kind. It is not translatable into rational language because there is nothing you can possibly say in mere words that distinguishes the real from the false -- only the flavor of experience and the quality of being are different. The imitation feelings are often subtle and so deeply ingrained that they have become second nature. Therefore it takes a deeply sensitive letting go, letting yourself be, and letting yourself feel, as well as wanting to be discerning about your discoveries. All this is necessary before you become acutely aware of the apparent exposure and nakedness the real feelings cause in you. The subtle imitation not only reproduces other, or opposite feelings from those you register,

but also, and just as frequently, the identical ones. Their intensification then serves to make the false appear real.

You first come in contact with the center of the universal life that you are only when you are real -- whatever this may mean now. But before this experience is possible, you need to encounter the phenomenon of shame and nakedness. When you meet this momentary real self, it is far from "perfect." This is not a dramatic experience -- yet it is crucial. For what you are now contains all the seeds you will ever need in order to live deeply and vibrantly.

You are already this universal life power. Every conceivable possibility is contained in it. What you are now is not shameful because of your faults; it is much more shameful, as it seems to you, because of its immediate, existential reality that seems so naked. When you have the courage to be your real self, a new approach to your own inner life can begin, after which all pretenses fall by the wayside.

This applies to the obvious and crude pretenses that can usually be seen by all but oneself, as well as to the subtle pretenses I just described. These stand between the ego and the universal self. They form a thin but firm screen that blocks out the life-giving force. They are responsible for your alienation from the universal life principle. They create the apparently dangerous and unbridgeable chasm between the ego and the universal power. They are responsible for your illusory fear and shame. This shame is just as basic as all the fears responsible for the misconceptions and the splitting of the individual. It originates from some fears and creates others, but it is not exactly the same as the fears themselves.

The shame of one's own nakedness in showing one's self, as it is in the now, is explained by the deep symbolism of the story of Adam and Eve. The nakedness of reality is paradise. For when that nakedness is no longer denied, a new blissful existence can begin -- right here and now, not in another life in the beyond. But it takes some acclimatizing after one has become aware of the shame. It takes a path within the path to become more conscious of the ingrained but subtle habits with which one covers up one's inner nakedness. How easy it is to revert back to the shame out of long-standing habit! But once you pay attention to it and elicit the powers available in you, again and again, so that you notice your shame and your hiding and learn to uncover yourself, you will finally step out of your protective shell and become more real. You will be the naked you, as you are now -- not better than you are, not worse than you are, and also not different from the way you are. You will stop the imitation, the counterfeit feelings and ways of being, and venture out into the world the way you happen to be.

Are there any questions in connection with this lecture?

QUESTION: How can you determine whether your feelings are real or put on?

ANSWER: The only one who can determine it is you, by seriously probing and, first of all, considering the possibility that your feelings may be put on, and by not being frightened of this. For people are terrified of the thought that their feelings are fake -- even in a subtle way. They fear that if these feelings are not real then they have no feelings. They fear their own emptiness. And this fear is devastating. It exerts a subtle pressure to go on pretending. But there is always a point inside where you say, "No, I do not want to feel." Whether this stems from childhood and personal

traumatic experiences, or connects with the deeper human problem applying to all individuals that I discussed in this lecture, there must always be a resolve not to feel. This resolve is often totally unconscious, so that one is disconnected from it and helpless about the result -- which is, of course, no feelings. The terror is infinitely greater when the conscious self that wants feelings is ignorant of the side of the self that fears feelings. The terror of being unable to feel cannot be compared to any other. It is therefore of enormous help to realize that no one is really without feelings and these feelings cannot ever die permanently. Life and feelings are one; where there is one, there must be the other, even if one is inactivated at the moment. Knowing this makes it possible to search within and ask, "Where have I decided not to feel?" The moment you become acutely aware of your fear to feel, you will cease to fear that you have no feelings. It is then possible to reactivate your feelings with the help of reason, through realistic and rational evaluation of the circumstances.

I have given you a lot to think about. This is quite a bit of material, which you can fruitfully use in the continuation of your pathwork.

Be blessed, every one of you. May your endeavors succeed to become real, to find the courage to be nakedly real without any false covers. You cannot help but succeed if you really want to. Those who do not move and grow and liberate themselves do not want to -- and it is important to know this -- and find in you the inner voice that refuses to move. May all your false layers fall away because this is what you really want and decide. You will then discover the glory of living. Be in peace, be in God!

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The Pathwork® Foundation
PO Box 6010
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