

## THE SELF-REGULATING NATURE OF INVOLUNTARY PROCESSES

Greetings, my dearest friends. May you once again find blessings through the help, strength, and enlightenment that these lectures can give you. This last lecture of the season will be a summary and will also shed light on the next step you need to take -- if not immediately at least as preparation -- in understanding where you are going and why you are stuck in certain ways. While rounding up the season behind us, it will also anticipate the work in our next season together. An attempt to understand -- not only with your mind, but with your heart -- will make what is to come on your path to self-discovery a lot easier.

To summarize once again, and perhaps with a different approach, the meaning of self-realization: self-realization means to bring out into reality all dormant potentials. It means to integrate the ego with as yet involuntary processes. The ego consists of the outer reasoning faculty and the will faculty. The involuntary processes comprise feelings, intuition and, what is more, certain manifestations which operate according to the most meaningful and lawful foundations of life. One who has not approached the threshold of self-realization cannot grasp the wonder and beauty of this part of creation.

The perennial human battle is holding on to the outer ego-faculties because of a desperate fear of the involuntary processes. You fear everything about them -- either consciously or unconsciously, or both. You fear the spontaneity of your feelings. You may ignore this fact because you believe something is a feeling when you merely register a sensation or a reaction to your surroundings. Something that is not spontaneous and involuntary, something that is directly rather than indirectly governable by the ego processes, cannot rightfully be called a feeling.

Why do humans fear the involuntary processes? Why, indeed, do you often fear them more than practically anything else in life, when the best in life is a result of the involuntary creative process? Nothing that is really worthwhile, meaningful and fulfilling, of lasting value, can ever be a product of ego function, of direct ego control. Why is humanity bent on destroying, dominating, denying and manipulating creative life -- that is, the involuntary processes -- and substituting them with the ego faculties? These ego faculties are much less adequate, much less wise, resourceful or creative. They are but separated particles of the greater consciousness, operative through the involuntary functions.

Before answering this question, let me point out -- also for the benefit of some new friends here for the first time -- that the overexertion of ego control and denial of involuntary processes create a tremendous imbalance in the personality. To a greater or lesser degree, depending on how much the ego controls the creative life within, it creates sickness or -- if one prefers the expression -- neurosis. People proceed from the premise -- often quite consciously, or at least semi-consciously, not ever completely unconsciously -- that the healthier they are to be, the more control they ought

to exert over their involuntary processes. This misconception makes them go off in a direction that is opposed to inner balance -- to the realization of their best potentials, to rich fulfillment of life on all levels of their being, to healthy well-being. If you are to attain all that, you must reverse the direction.

The more you are bent on overcontrolling and dominating the inner involuntary processes and the more you fear the latter, the more conflicted and unhappy you become and the emptier your life must be. In fact, you become a shallow, lifeless shell, held together by rigid guards you dare not ever relinquish. You get into a vicious circle: the more you press in the wrong direction, the more you lose yourself and your life. The more problematic your life becomes, the less capable you become of coping. Since you believe that this is a result of insufficient ego control, you try to increase rather than decrease it, thereby getting deeper involved in the vicious circle. The only way to reverse it is, as mentioned, to let go of the rigid vigilance which rules out all inner creative life and use the ego faculties in another way, which I will explain shortly.

The involuntary functions, which must be called into play, are operative at all times. Returning to the question why humans fear the involuntary processes, we have to consider it on two fundamental levels. When people are involved in the vicious circle, it is because they base certain assumptions about life and their relationship to it on false ideas. These false ideas are often unconscious and form the images we have talked about. The misconceptions, deeply lodged in the soul substance, compel people to act upon these premises. Since the premises are false, the ensuing actions and emotions are bound to be destructive and are geared to defend something that does not exist. Hence, the results must be opposite from what people really want. In short, they act against their interests.

The soul substance is a powerhouse of energy, of infinitely greater power than you are even remotely aware of. When an individual is driven to act according to the images, the power is used negatively. When you are free from illusion and misconceptions -- and therefore, in contact with your real self, with a level of cosmic reality -- the power that is operative is constructive and positive. This power is so highly charged that anything can be molded with it. It is the creative force itself. But it is neutral in the sense that it can only be used, or flow, in the direction which the mind, with its concepts, sets. Thus the power operates automatically. It seems as if it happens by itself. In this way the ingrained ideas work as the motor force of the power, and the ideas become self-perpetuating. They find their outer manifestation in the events the ideas create.

People who are as yet unaware of what they really believe, and also unaware of life's laws, ignore these connections and think events have nothing to do with their ideas. They ignore the creative power in themselves and the fact that it is set up so that it actually works negatively. Such a path as ours is aimed at bringing out the unconscious ideas and images. They are really unconscious to begin with. But once you find that you harbor deep inside yourself equations and assumptions completely contrary to your conscious reasons and intelligence, you begin to perceive that you have instituted, through the erroneous assumptions influencing the creative life energy, involuntary processes that are destructive. Since the energy caught up in the images works according to the assumptions of the images, the involuntary, unconscious process is destructive.

The conscious mind is an instrument of the unconscious perceptions and connections that actually exist, but is only able to translate them hazily. The more a person becomes conscious of the

inner, heretofore unconscious processes, the more exactly will he or she understand the "messages" coming through. When an individual is still driven by unconscious images -- thus also driven by the negatively operative involuntary processes -- he or she cannot help but fear them. So, on one level, fear is explained by the fact that much of your involuntary processes lead you into negative experience, due to the presence of unconscious false ideas. You fear the self-perpetuating, involuntary forces. You are not able to explain why. You ignore that these forces are only dangerous or negative because they work according to your own ideas. You ignore that once the ideas are challenged and found to be untrue, the same self-operative power can be trusted. Instead, your solution is to never trust any involuntary processes and to guard yourself against them by strict vigilance, using your ego-faculties. Furthermore, you ignore how damaging this "solution" is. In fact, the average person has no idea what they are doing and why.

People who follow a path of self-confrontation are bound to discover their ingrained, heretofore unconscious assumptions about important aspects of living. Gradually they begin to dissolve the images through recognition and through installing truthful ideas into the soul substance. They begin to observe the power of the images, the energy involved in them, the automatic, involuntary nature of these energies. Little by little, through understanding and observation, you can reestablish the correct assumptions. They will then begin to work constructively for you. You proceed to set off new energy currents which work according to a vaster law. You never need to fear them.

Nevertheless, when this begins to happen, my friends, when images have been found and dissolved to an extent -- when self-acceptance and observation bring new understanding and harmony into your inner life -- you still, at this point, find yourself afraid of the involuntary processes. At this juncture you may have arrived at the theoretical understanding that the involuntary processes need not be destructive, that they are only destructive according to your hidden misconceptions. Yet, in actuality, you still fear the self-perpetuating, involuntary forces. You still believe you need to guard against them. And this brings us to the second level of the problem. In order to help you to move on from this point where many of you, my friends, now are, the following words can be exactly what you need, provided you work with them.

The résumé of past material, approached in this particular form, was necessary to lead up to what follows. The next step is this: How can you begin to trust the involuntary processes? How can you be sure that -- even after dissolving the false assumptions which formed certain images -- the available free-flowing energy is not leading you into danger and destruction once you let go of the sharp ego control? Unless you trust the involuntary processes, the exaggerated ego control cannot be relinquished and you can never convince yourself of the benign nature of the creative forces within you. Productive, creative involuntary processes cannot become operative as long as you do not encourage them, as long as you do not wish them and give yourself to them. If you do not let go and permit them to happen and get your whole being to want this, you can never prove the reliability of the involuntary creative processes contained in every human soul. To get to this point, you have to consider in a new way why the involuntary processes can be trusted.

The words I will speak now are designed to open up new understanding in this respect. I realize, and I hope all of you realize, that it does not suffice to merely hear these words. They need to be taken very seriously by giving them a great deal of attention with your innermost being, with the best intentions and will. Open yourself completely, let go of the defenses that make you so tight

and rejecting of new ideas that seem to threaten you. When ego control is too tight, such words may indeed seem threatening. That which is salvation appears like your undoing. You have fought against this direction all your life. Now you are being told to do the very opposite of what you thought you needed to do. You cannot imagine that it will work.

Not even those of you who have been engaged in this pathwork for some time and have made significant progress find it easy to cross the threshold and to reach the state of mind that trusts what was hitherto the most threatening thing of all -- life's involuntary processes within yourself. You all have to fight against too tight an ego control where reason and will crowd out the involuntary processes.

My friends, the only way the involuntary processes can be trusted is by realizing that they are self-regulating. They function as perfectly and completely as many of your biological processes which you take for granted and the self-regulating nature of which you never even think about. It would not occur to anyone to want to regulate their blood stream, nervous system, heart beat, the functioning of their liver, or any other inner organ. The organs do their work perfectly by themselves. It would not occur to you to try to control and govern them by your outer reasoning processes and will. If you attempted such a thing, it would only create harm. You would waste your willpower, your energy, to exert a pressure that would eventually affect the good functioning of your body negatively. All wasted energy has that effect. This is the background of all physical illness. Which organs are affected depends on their innate resistance to illness, on their inherent health. People are born with some organs that are more resistant to abuse. In spite of consistent abuse, they continue to function for a considerable time. Other organs are much more delicate and begin to give out as soon as the slightest thing goes wrong.

To return to this analogy, the attempt to control something that is not amenable to ego-control can only create imbalance, pressure, tension, anxiety, and will finally manifest negative effects. This applies not only to the body, but to all levels of the personality. When you realize that you do not have to exert any willpower, any pressure with your outer ego faculties, in order to have your biological functions work in their own perfect way, you will then see that the same process applies to other levels. Self-regulation exists in nature in every possible respect. You do have to use your ego so as to nurture and cultivate healthful habits regarding food, sleep, exercise, in order to maintain the involuntary, self-regulating functions. The ego's task is to choose to take care of the body so as to maintain health. It would be utter folly of the ego to control the functions that are not responsive to direct pressure.

The same relationship, my friends, exists between the ego and the involuntary processes of the emotional life, of the creative functions within, of the direction one's life is to take as a whole. These involuntary processes are just as perfectly, meaningfully regulated -- according to lawful procedures -- as the biological ones. If the ego does not interfere, self-regulation occurs effortlessly and naturally. Again, the ego has its role to play. Its task is to choose healthful habits regarding the activity of the mind, so as to set the proper direction. Your mind can nurture brooding thoughts which encourage destructive emotions. Or your mind can choose honesty with the self; it can choose to disclose all previous self-deceptions. It can cast off all the illusions nurtured about the self. It can determine to accept oneself where and how one is now and give up the idealized version of the self one tries to enforce. These are healthful habits, necessary for the involuntary processes to be affected indirectly and to work in a reliable way. Then their self-regulating nature can reveal

itself. The temptation to evade the truth of the self must be as rigorously overcome as the rigor of ego control must be relinquished. This is how balance can be reestablished in the personality.

The cultivation of healthful mental habits chosen by the ego can be paralleled on the physical level. As the body always responds favorably when it is treated constructively, so does the level where feelings and intuition create conditions and experiences of life. When the ego no longer dominates the involuntary processes, intuition will give a new security and help to cope with life. Thoughts will come from the deepest resources of the solar plexus, rather than the volitional, artificial thought processes people use when overemphasizing the intellect. You are used to this imbalance without even knowing what you do and what you miss.

Only when you have experienced the self-regulating nature of the involuntary processes and the involuntary processes are integrated with the ego functions can life be truly fulfilling and rich. A new freedom exists to receive what comes from within. One is being lived from within, as it were. This is self-realization. Then one can see that the involuntary processes are, in their healthy functioning, as trustworthy and self-regulating as a body functioning in health. An integrated full life is absolutely impossible if these involuntary faculties are not allowed to be.

How many times do you, my friends, say, "But if I give in, if I let go of ego control, what will happen? My feelings may want something that is destructive or that I disapprove of." And I say to you, again and again, that this is quite possible. Unhealthy desires and negative emotions exist indeed. They are the result of the distortions, images, misconceptions, misunderstandings of early painful experiences. They do not need, however, to destroy your life just because you have built general concepts around these early experiences. The existence of these desires and emotions is not affected merely because you acknowledge what has actually always been there, only you have never admitted it. Only after you have acknowledged the presence of undesirable material -- wishes and emotions -- can you begin to experience the likewise ever-present, but still deeply hidden constructive feelings, the positive power inherent in your deepest nature. The latter feelings have the self-regulating wisdom built into their very existence, just as the destructive emotions and assumptions become self-regulating in the automatic reflexes they force upon you.

Once you allow the negative material fully into your consciousness, you must soon see the power of constructive material in you. Then you will discover what I keep mentioning, that you are even more afraid of the positive power in you than you are of all the negative feelings and desires put together. Anyone who goes deeply enough in their path of self-confrontation cannot help but find this truth, no matter how preposterous and illogical it may seem at first hearing.

If you fear the constructive forces in yourself, it is because you ignore the self-regulating nature of the cosmic flow that any constructive feeling is. To let yourself be carried by it seems risky -- even dangerous. In this particular phase, your vague or perhaps even distinct fear, once it is conscious at all, is, "Where will it carry me? Where will I go from here? What will it make me do? I will lose my individuality, I will lose control." The good feelings seem to be even more threatening than the negative ones regarding the loss of control and individuality.

The fear may exist that the good feelings may be directed to someone who is not worthy of them, who does not reciprocate in kind, who will reject and hurt and take advantage. These may indeed be valid objections, but only in connection with the object of affection. Never do they justify

the denial of the good feelings themselves. If the choice of the love object is inadequate, it is precisely a result of immaturity, illusion, lack of awareness of self, hence of others. It is a temporary phase of growth.

Growth is stopped when feelings are stopped. If the feeling is allowed to function by realizing that it has to grow into its self-reliable and self-regulating nature, it is bound to produce fulfillment. The choice of love objects who leave you unfulfilled and frustrated, or even produce pain, expresses the torn state of your inner direction. You want the feeling and you do not want it; you desire fulfillment and you fear it. Precisely because of this conflicting state, experience accrues which seems to warrant the fear of letting go of ego control and trusting the flow of involuntary processes, of spontaneous feelings. The difficult experience should never be taken as proof that feelings are not trustworthy. It only proves the existence of conflicting wishes. It results from ignoring the fact that feelings, intuition, spontaneous thoughts and inspiration, creative processes, undergo their law of growth as does any other part of the human organism. When this part of human nature is fully grown, the self-regulating quality manifests more and more. Then a person is self-realized. Then he or she lives on the level of the real self, where life is all good.

But people fear total surrender to the involuntary processes, so they cannot discover the perfection of the self-regulating law. Most of you, as you are now, still fear letting go, although you long for it. You fear and distrust it, although you theoretically understand the truth. You may recognize quite clearly the tightness with which you do not want to let go. By consulting your emotional, irrational motive as to why you still hold back and distrust the flowing, creative life processes within, you may come up with the feeling that these processes are chaotic, that only your ego is orderly and safe. This feeling is, again, due to ignoring the self-regulating nature of the creative life processes. Recognition of this must help you to come a step nearer to the real life that leads itself from within yourself.

It will help your transition to clearly understand that there is a harmful way of letting go, a distorted version of it, just as there is a distorted and harmful version of discipline. Self-realization - the full bringing out of one's best, the integration of the ego functions with the highly creative potentials that are still dormant and involuntary -- can only come about through the constant weighing and testing of a relaxed discipline, alternating with a proper letting go. Neither attitude can ever be harmful if practiced in an utterly truthful way, by self-revelation and self-confrontation. Nothing dangerous can ever happen, provided all illusions about the self are rigorously given up. This is the perfect way, where discipline and letting go bring a harmony which reconciles these two apparently opposite attitudes.

When discipline is used against letting go because letting go of ego vigilance would mean the recognition of facts that contradict cherished illusions about the self, discipline becomes a rigid constriction of creative processes. The personality becomes stiff, unspontaneous, empty of real feelings, bound to outer rules and regulations, tight and fearful. Discipline is used against truth, not for truth. This is what makes opposites of discipline and letting go. By the same token, letting go becomes destructive when it is used to evade the truth, when it is a result of self-indulgence, of indulging in a destructive line of least resistance, maintaining unhealthy attitudes. Then, letting go leads away from the self and truly becomes as dangerous as the wrong kind of discipline. Both distortions create a heavy defensive wall in the soul substance, for both wish to avoid truth about the self. An inner tension and rigidity exist that separate the personality from the real self which has

all the vibrant energies, creativeness and wealth of healthy strong feelings, and enough resiliency to cope with anything. Instead there is a brittleness and a need to withdraw, to be fearfully separate, over-controlled, and rigid.

When the heaviness of the false discipline imposes too much stricture, some personalities break. The strain becomes too much. Other personality types choose, as a "way out," evasion through indulgence. This is a frequent occurrence, particularly in these times. It often takes place under the guise and pretense of real letting go. When rigid over-discipline no longer works, or when it is rejected to begin with, evasion may lead to drug addiction in one person; another may become a derelict. What at first is merely a weakness takes on forever greater proportions, perpetuating itself until the personality truly loses itself. The personality can no longer stop the process and may even glorify it under various labels and pretexts -- just as the over-disciplined person glorifies his way.

The person who is fearfully overcontrolled and rigid will use the example of the crass opposite -- the weak, self-indulgent person, the derelict, one who negates all discipline, all responsibility -- as a warning to justify his or her overcontrol. They will say, "You see, this is what happens when one does not control oneself. I cannot afford to let go, I might end up the same way." On the other hand, the self-indulgent one, who evades self-honesty as much as the overcontrolled person, will claim the rightness of that course by saying the rigidly controlled person has lost contact with life. The self-indulgent "solution" is no more in contact with the real self than the other extreme.

It is important for every one of you, my friends, to become very much aware of this internal see-saw. Realize the extremes of the heavily guarded, overcontrolled, rigid, unspontaneous, unfeeling, overwatchful person as opposed to the one who is running away from the self by abandoning all discipline. The cohesive factor that makes all danger impossible, that removes all threats, that combines the apparent opposites of discipline and letting go is the ever-renewed will to be truthful with the self. Face whatever the self is, give your very best self to life -- all your honesty, integrity and constructiveness, all your most sincere and total attention. The more this becomes ingrained, the less there is to fear in letting go and the less you need to guard against anything. A relaxed, spontaneous being is at one with the cosmic flow of life.

To the degree fear still exists of the unvolitional processes of inner life and to the degree they are still distrusted and their self-regulating reality ignored, self-deception must still exist. A will to be destructive and negative must still exist. A desire to cheat life must still exist. Conversely, to the degree a person cultivates the attitude, "I want to look the truth in the face, whatever it is, under all circumstances at all times, whatever the momentary difficulty may be," fear of the good life must vanish. When this truthfulness, this courage and humility are practiced and gradually become second nature, there is nothing to fear and all unfulfillment ceases. By humility I mean that you know you do not know all the answers. Do not always assume, do not say so readily, "It is this or it is that." It is not -- and even if it is, there is more to it than you now know. If you knew it all, you would be in harmony with life, there would be no anguish, no bitterness, no fear, no emptiness.

When you cultivate truthfulness, not just once in a while, but every day, when you take into consideration that you may be overlooking many aspects of yourself, even your relationship to yourself, to others and life; when you extend and expand yourself in a relaxed search for answers coming from inside; when you use your ego faculties, your will faculties, your discipline, to involve your total being in whatever you do in this self-search -- for example, in finding the answers to

whatever issue is in question -- when you involve yourself constructively with attention and honesty by giving always the best of yourself: when this discipline is cultivated, then you have nothing to fear of letting go. When you really want to give your best total self to everything you do, you have nothing to fear of the involuntary processes. For then you will convince yourself of the deeply meaningful lawfulness of their self-regulating nature that just takes care of itself. You will be able to flow in the great cosmic stream. You will detect the wonder of life and the wonder of your innermost self.

Once you focus your attention on it, you will see to what degree you still refuse this honesty, this integrity and, also, the desire to give your best, positive self to a situation or an aspect of life. In fact, precisely in the areas of unhappiness, the will to be negative and destructive -- to cheat, to defy, to pretend, not to give but to take, to harbor hostility and self-pity -- exists. Your discovery of this will facilitate your further progress greatly. You will see that there is a lawfulness involved here that does not make you an innocent victim, that does not make you helpless to construct your life well. The power to create your life is all there, my friends. It is an immense power, once you stop pushing it away with ego control.

When you begin to sense the richness and treasure locked up in you -- in everyone of you, my friends -- when you bring out this richness, you will begin to live. Only then will you begin to live. This is possible, indeed, for each and every human being who is willing to follow these steps. Find that in you where you not only refuse to give your best, but secretly even wish to give your worst to living, and you will have a key. You will have a freedom of choice you never possessed before.

The words given tonight, provided you truly and deeply feel and work them through, will prove indeed a gate, a threshold through which you can move. You can move into a new life where everything is different and vibrant with joy and meaning, where fear and emptiness have no more room. You can approach the threshold through your understanding. For this understanding will release more willpower in the right direction, more energy, more outlook, a deeper sensing of what life could be. This is not only a theory but a directly available and accessible experience deep within yourself, once you reestablish the balance between the involuntary processes and the ego functions.

Be blessed, my friends, be in peace, be in God!

For information to find and participate in Pathwork activities world wide, please write:

The Pathwork® Foundation  
PO Box 6010  
Charlottesville, VA 22906-6010, USA  
Call: 1-800-PATHWORK, or  
Visit: [www.pathwork.org](http://www.pathwork.org)

The following notices are for your guidance in the use of the Pathwork® name and this lecture material.

#### Trademark/Service Mark

Pathwork® is a registered service mark owned by The Pathwork Foundation, and may not be used without the express written permission of the Foundation. The Foundation may, in its sole discretion, authorize use of the Pathwork® mark by other organizations or persons, such as affiliate organizations and chapters.

#### Copyright

The copyright of the Pathwork Guide material is the sole property of The Pathwork Foundation. This lecture may be reproduced, in compliance with the Foundation Trademark, Service Mark and Copyright Policy, but the text may not be altered or abbreviated in any way, nor may the copyright, trademark, service mark, or any other notices be removed. Recipients may be charged the cost of reproduction and distribution only.

Any person or organization using The Pathwork Foundation service mark or copyrighted material is deemed to have agreed to comply with the Foundation Trademark, Service Mark and Copyright Policy. To obtain information or a copy of this policy, please contact the Foundation.