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BEING VALUES VERSUS APPEARANCE VALUES -- SELF-IDENTIFICATION

Greetings and divine blessings for all of you, my most beloved friends. This last lecture of our working season continues and summarizes your inner path so far. Your growth is heartwarming and a most joyous sight to behold. You have grown much more, my beloved friends, than you can realize.

The key to happiness and abundance is changing over to a new level of operation on which the old attitude of taking, wanting, demanding and not giving is transformed into an attitude of love, giving, devotion and sincerity. There is no other key. But to talk about it before one is even aware of the non-giving attitude is superficial and pointless. You have to recognize such attitudes before this key can become useful. In this lecture I want to show you on a yet deeper level how understanding that there is a different way to exist relates to the problem of values and self-identification.

Fundamentally, two value systems govern human beings. One system is that of being values and the other is that of appearance values. We have talked about them in a more superficial and cursory way in the past. I will now attempt to show you the ramifications of these two value systems.

Most human beings function on the level of appearance values. Only the most evolved, who have already gone through an extensive path of self-purification and transformation, function according to real values -- for the sake of what is, and not for the sake of appearance in the eyes of others.

Here, too, as in so many other areas, it is not an either/or. There are degrees. A person can function in some areas of life with the true values and in other areas still be bound to the importance of appearance. Only gradually, in the course of this pathwork, will the former take over more and more where the latter had prevailed.

Before such an extensive path is undertaken, and for some time after it has begun, humanity functions in most areas with the appearance values. Now let us see the difference.

Appearance values always aim to create an impression. Such false values may have crass manifestations, such as craving approval and selling out one's truth to impress others or to be thought of in the highest terms. This tendency can be quite obvious and overt, but it can also be quite subtle and covert, not so easy to detect. Inwardly, in many activities and directions you subtly focus on secret, semi-conscious expectations and concerns about "what will I be thought of." The fear of negative reaction from others causes a tremendous amount of anxiety. Therefore the

appearance value system is insidious and poisonous. It is much more harmful, my friends, than it may seem, for it truly disconnects you from your inner reality, from your higher self, from the truth of the situation and from the sincerity of your involvement and investment.

If you start observing yourself from this point of view, you will discover many areas that at first appear very subtly in your field of vision. Yet when you become more conscious of them, when you tune in to them, you find they are not so subtle. Actually the value system of appearance, as opposed to the value system of being, makes all the difference in the world. Appearance values, no matter how strong and apparently loving or creative the effort and goal may be, always connote an insincerity. For what you do is done for effect: either directly through the activity or to attain power and money for the sole sake of proving your value.

When you operate with being values you do what you do for the sake of the truth, for the sake of being. This may simply mean to do the best you can, regardless of others' opinions, so that the activity fulfills its innate purpose. Or it may mean offering whatever you do up to God, contributing love, beauty, goodwill, comfort, something constructive to the world or to another person -- again regardless of others' opinions or even their noticing the effort and the effect. Whether you make an important humanitarian contribution, a work of art, a scientific project, or the smallest, most insignificant daily chore makes no difference. It is just as important to do every daily activity in the spirit of being, not appearance.

When you act for the sheer sake of what the act itself represents, rather than using your work and accomplishment to substitute for your sense of self-value, this always finally amounts to an act of love, to spiritual sincerity, to giving and enriching life. What you give to others, you give to yourself. Not giving to others deprives you even more than it deprives others. It makes you incapable of receiving what is available for you.

When you operate on the being level, some very drastic changes occur. These are byproducts of the integrity of your motive on the deepest level, though you may never make that connection. Let me give you an example: When you are attacked or judged or criticized or rejected, as long as you operate with the value system of appearance, you will feel totally devastated. How can it be different? If you attach your self-worth and your self-esteem to how you appear in the eyes of others, you must feel annihilated when anyone sees you in a bad light, however small the issue. You feel you lose your inner ground; you are no longer centered in yourself. Of course, you are never really centered as long as you are governed by appearance values, but you are unaware of it when you are not being criticized. You seem centered when you receive praise and admiration because you feel gratified at the moment. You are unaware of the anxiety that eats you up, even in moments of success. As long as you receive your worth from others, you must constantly worry about your ability to maintain the uncentered state of receiving self-value from outside yourself. You have no real control over your sense of self-value.

Operating with being values, on the other hand, brings a deep inner security. This is not to say that you would not be hurt by hostile judgments, unfairness and the intent to put you down. But there is a world of difference between the kind of hurt that can never shake your foundation and the hurt that does shake your foundation.

If you operate with appearance values, your foundation is shaken and even seems to crumble when your appearance is negative. This does not happen when you operate in the deep security of being. Given your total integrity and knowledge of your real motives on the most hidden levels, the truth of your giving, the sincerity of your investment, the pursuit of your goal for its own sake without hidden thoughts and ulterior motives, your security in your own value will be so grounded in reality that no matter how you are judged and how it may hurt you, you experience the unshakable truth of your core. Then your sense of self-value is not dependent on the opinion of others, on their knowing your assets and ignoring your liabilities. This creates a centeredness, a security, and an awareness of your eternal values that cannot be described in words.

When you operate with appearance values, you have no identity. You make your identity depend on the opinion of other people, on how you appear in their eyes. So when you are praised and honored, you derive a great momentary sense of gratification and confirmation of yourself -- you might even feel a temporary exhilaration -- but that is built on a shaky ground. When that admiration and approval is withheld, or perhaps even reversed, the ground shakes and you become lost; you cease to feel your identity. The false sense of your identity has been crushed and the real sense of it has not yet been established.

As long as appearance values hold sway underneath the surface, you constantly eat away at your self-esteem. Deep inside, you know you are not in truth when you put so much emphasis on the level of appearance. You cannot connect with your higher self. Since you know that you only appear to give, doing it for ulterior motives, for something you want to gain in a prideful way, you doubt yourself on a very deep level. So when others doubt you, distrust you, criticize you in any way, on the surface you may be very indignant, defensive and argumentative, but inwardly cannot find your center since you doubt your integrity about the way you operate generally, even if you do not lack integrity concerning the specific issue.

Your ability to perceive truth in others is a profound and important aspect of the value system you adopt. When you function in your giving mode in a deeply committed sincere spirit, then whatever you do is a wholehearted investment of your best faculties. But when this spirit is not there and appearance values reign, you can never really answer questions such as these: Am I right or wrong? Are others right or wrong? To what extent am I right or wrong, or are the others right or wrong? In what particular area am I right and in what area are the others right? In what particular area am I wrong and in what way are the others wrong?

All these questions plague you -- although you may succeed in denying your awareness of them -- as you unfortunately succeed in stifling awareness of how appearance values undermine your integrity. The denials are the very cause of confusion. They create a fog over such issues and questions when you would need clarity to know who you are. So you flounder, you grope, but not in a healthy way. You are truly confused and the struggle is painful because it is a struggle that covers up the inner lack of a security that can come only from the deep sincerity of commitment and giving. The lack of giving and commitment eats away at your psychic guts, if I may say so. It makes you doubtful of everything you do, of everything you think.

You may adopt an artificial brittle security that is not built on sound and deep self-esteem. However, the groping that is healthy, that is necessary, that is the doorway to security takes on a very different form. It feels different. Honest searching need not be covered up. It is a beautiful,

growth-producing struggle. I can only hint at the difference in self-experience here, for words cannot convey the enormous difference between the hurt of being misjudged when you do not lose your being from it and the hurt that destroys you -- or the difference between the struggle of real growth and search and the false struggle of covering up your hidden insecurity.

Decide, again and again and again, every day and every hour, in all your activities, to give your very best in truth whether or not you get admiration, whether or not it is recognized. Do it for the sheer sincerity, truthfulness, beauty and love of God, love of yourself, love of life. Then, little by little -- almost as if it were a byproduct -- a deep, secure and intuitive inner knowledge will arise about issues and matters where you were uncertain before, where you needed to defend your uncertainty, where you were truly groping in the dark in an eternal either/or, in an eternal duality.

Even if your intellect already embraces the unitive system, in which one is not versus the other, it does so only in theory. This is very different from the live experience of being connected to your innermost center from which comes the intuitive certainty of what is right, a certainty about yourself, about others, about life. This certainty is a relaxed inner knowing, a deep peace and clarity that no one can take away from you. It is free from all defensiveness. It comes only as a result of true self-esteem that is built on sincere giving and commitment, on the being values we are talking about. What an illusion it is to hope for self-esteem and security on any basis other than the inner truth of real giving for its own sake!

Yet another aspect of these two value systems is knowing what you really want. If you do not know your higher self, if you are disconnected from it and cannot identify with it, if all your energy is funneled into appearance values and you therefore lack centeredness, how can you possibly know what you want? Everything is colored and determined by the appearance values. If appearance in the eyes of others takes precedence over what you may want, you cannot even allow yourself to know what you want. For if what you want might reduce honor and esteem from others, it may seem preferable to talk yourself into wanting what you ought to want, whatever you think would earn you praise and admiration.

Therefore, when you operate with appearance values, you actually invest in not experiencing what you really desire, what may be your destiny, what is your real potentiality, your real fulfillment, your true longing. It may not conform to the appearance values you have borrowed. Many systems of appearance values exist, while only one being value exists as far as your own higher self is concerned, with all the infinite varieties of self-expression of all higher selves. Your being value can never interfere with the higher self value system of another person. When conflict arises, at least one set of values is hooked on the appearance level, possibly without your knowing it. Only deep self-confrontation can yield the answer.

By contrast, appearance values interfere with one another and are at the same time stiff, rigid, unvaried in their conformity and dullness. Individualistic as they seem, they lack the flexibility and the breathing life that only being values can have.

If you dare not know what you really desire and long for, you suffer unfulfillment, for the false goals of appearance values can never fulfill you. You hunt constantly for something that can never live up to your expectations. Perhaps even more insidious and painful is the very fact that you do not know what you really want. For a while you may succeed in hiding this fact from yourself by

ardently attempting to produce imaginary desires and goals, acting as if you believed in them. But sooner or later you find out that you are also confused about your own desires, longings and goals. This confusion only adds to your lack of true self-identity and to your despair about it.

Appearance values, as long as you adopt them, always disconnect you from your true desires, from knowing what is essentially you -- in direction, in self-expression, talent, taste, opinions, philosophy, in true feelings, your way of life, in your potentialities to develop, in general trends of life, as well as in little everyday decisions. The decisions of what to do and what not to do, in the most mundane matters as well as in the overall direction of your life, are always determined by whether you operate with being values or appearance values.

So you never truly know what is really you and what you really want when you are governed and polluted by appearance values. You borrow an imagined desire that fits into the appearance value system you have adopted. And when you follow that through, of course, it leaves you empty. No wonder it is a disappointment, even if you do succeed in it at a tremendous expenditure of your energy system. The tremendous effort is only necessary because your energy system functions contrary to your true higher self, to your reality, to who you really are. So despair and a sense of futility and hopelessness about life arise. You say to yourself, "I have invested so much, I have tried so hard, I used so much effort to accomplish this and that and the other thing. Yet I feel dissatisfied, empty, I do not even know who I really am." Most human beings have such thoughts and feelings occasionally, but they do not know why.

The functioning of being values creates a very different situation. Since you are not afraid of finding your desire, your direction, your expression -- whether or not others approve and applaud your choices -- you can afford the luxury of relaxing inwardly and letting out your true self, with its expressions and its desires. And thus you will find what it is you really want.

What a tremendous richness to know what you really want! How rare a phenomenon it is in this world of yours! How hard the struggle of self-purification must be in order to come to this blessed event of finding the treasure of knowing what you really want! It is not something easily discovered. You have to detect and then eliminate the places where you eat away at your true being and true expression by borrowing what you think you ought to want in order to be what you ought to be instead of what you really want and really are.

When you function with appearance values, you cannot trust your perceptions or your desires. They are not trustworthy when they are tainted by the falsehood of the appearance value system in which you live and with which you have disoriented yourself. Something may indeed be desirable, and you do not know if it is right or good for you, or whether you are wrong in wanting it. You flounder in uncertainty.

When you have a deep, sincere commitment to invest your best in all you do, when your integrity makes sure that you do not have other hidden motives but give for the sake of giving -- which is always giving for God's sake -- then you will experience sooner or later the incredible miracle that your heart's desire is God's will.

At first, by old habitual standards, you will distrust that your desire is good and right. Even when you already operate with being values, you are used to distrusting your desires. They have

been polluted for such a long, long time -- centuries and centuries -- that even when there is no longer any need to distrust them, you do. You automatically assume that your desire must be wrong, that if somebody disagrees with you, the other person must be right and your desire is not valid. But as you begin to discover the effects of the being values, you also discover the miracle that these pleasurable and forbidden desires which you thought were the expectations of the greedy little child turn out to be the will of God. When you function with appearance values, the will of God actually is, or must at least seem, eternally contrary to your desires. It often is so, because your real self cannot enjoy doing things you do not really want to do.

The superimposed, false desires do not give real pleasure, nor are they the will of God. They are dictated by appearance values. Such desires and God's will are opposites. Sometimes the desires seem pleasurable, perhaps because they seem naughty and rebellious, and are thus contrary to God's will. At other times, they may not even be contrary to God's will, but you will never know that if you are disconnected from your truth.

I want to mention one last aspect of this topic -- which will be the foreshadowing of much of the work we shall do in the next year -- and that is the creating, recreating, and molding of life and soul substance. It deals with the power of the word. It says in the Bible, "In the beginning was the Word." There is a very deep meaning to this.

The word is the first creative impulse. The word is the expression of an intent, and the word gives form to the intent. From the word, action can then follow, creative action, the follow-through process. The word is the first blueprint, it is the plan. There is a tremendous power in the word, whether the word is spoken with a loud voice or spoken in silence with an inner voice, affirmative and decisive. The word is the chisel, it is the tool with which you shape and give form to the soul substance that dwells in you and in which you simultaneously dwell. It surrounds you just as much as it penetrates you.

Every thought and intent is a powerful agent. From the one-pointedness, from the conflict-free attitude behind the uttered word, comes the creative power. Now you can perhaps see quite easily that when you function with appearance values and are consequently disconnected from the truth of your real being and values and desires, you are disconnected from knowing your Godself. In this case many conflicting levels must also exist. Then your word -- uttered with voice or uttered in thought -- cannot have the strength, power and clarity it needs to have to create. The many conflicting thoughts, desires, feelings and intentionalities cause a perpetual flickering of self-defeating, short circuiting actions which interfere with each other and cancel each other out. Thus the word has no true power.

The true power lies in the unconflictedness, the oneness and the wholeness of the utterance. Feelings, desires, concepts, perceptions, knowing must all be one cohesive and compatible fused energy stream. Then the power of the word is enormous. Then no matter what you create, with the word as the first agent of creation, it must take form and shape.

When you discover problems in what you create, look at the disorder and contradictions of your various levels of thinking and feeling. Look at how this emanates from the appearance level by which you function. As you see this, you will make yet another step toward committing yourself to

being values -- not just generally and philosophically, but specifically -- in every daily act that you undertake as well as in the overall direction of your life.

If you do not yet know what the general direction is, you can use the being value system as you grope, ask and wait receptively for the answer. That is also following the being values. The struggle that follows will produce life and light rather than chaos and confusion.

We will deal in the future with other aspects of the power of the word -- the word you speak, the word you think, and the influence you have with every word whether thinking it or speaking. You underestimate your own power when you feel distrustful of yourself because you operate with appearance values. You think then so little of yourself that you cannot possibly consider how powerful your emanations, your expressions and your attitudes are. They can hurt, they can influence, they can harm -- or they can heal, they can help, and they can produce life.

If you think of yourself as nothing, even while you are still in the error and lack of integrity of appearance values, you insult your inherent divine manifestation. This is yet another proof that you are one with everything that is. If you insult yourself because you underestimate yourself and your power, you must harm and insult others. It is very false to imagine that people who think little of themselves are humble and good. One of the many dualistic misconceptions of your world is the equation of self-devaluation with humility and goodness, and the equation of self-value with pride and arrogance. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you know your own value and your own power and you respect yourself, then indeed you must be considerate of others and value them. You cannot devalue yourself and value others or vice versa. It is an illusion that you and others are separate. All is one. These are words, but perhaps if you will look deeper into them, you will truly understand their power.

Be blessed, all of you, my very dearest ones. Go further into the light center of the human race of your innermost being that is the innermost being of all that is, that ever was and that ever will be. Go joyfully, for you are blessed.

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