

## SELF-LOVE

*In this lecture there are one or more comments on homosexuality. The Guide's words on homosexuality have been a source of controversy in the Pathwork community. These words can cause pain, especially given one's sexual orientation and experience of historic and present-day bias. We remind everyone that on this topic, as on all topics, the Guide invites us to find our own inner authority (IPF Board of Trustees September 2022)*

Greetings, my dear friends. God bless all of you, God bless this hour. God bless our work. Now that I will part from you in physical manifestation for a short time, we in our world wish to express our thanks to each one of you who tries so hard, who battles and overcomes, constantly willing to summon his or her strength to overcome inner blocks and resistances. You who have the noble courage for this path of light should realize that every one of your efforts helps us in turn, and for this we are grateful. For without your good will we could not execute our task.

I also wish to make a suggestion to all my friends in the three groups. When you resume your activity in the fall, the first time meet jointly. A few changes may develop out of this three-group meeting. You might discuss how best to eliminate frictions; what you could do to learn from them individually and collectively; and also work on each participant's contribution to the friction even if he or she is convinced that it is positively another's fault. Try to build your concept of unity of purpose. Try to become aware of the responsibility and the wonderful obligation that each one of you has by participating in this work. Try to become clear, each one of you, what the group work is supposed to be, what it should accomplish, and how you should go about it. Everyone should have their say. In this common meeting every objection should be freely voiced and intelligently discussed in friendliness, with an open mind to the others' viewpoint. This is my suggestion for opening the new season after vacation. Of course, you have your free will and should take this only as a suggestion, no more. After the joint discussion, you may find that one meeting was not sufficient. So you may want to meet together once more, until everything is cleared up, and then meet in three separate groups again. Work out some plan. You will be inspired. Try to become aware of the Holy Spirit, of the inspiration of the divine world. Reach out for it, especially when disagreements and frictions separate you.

Tonight I should like to discuss the subject of self-love. You all know -- I have said it again and again -- that each truth can be distorted into an untruth. This is, perhaps, the most powerful weapon of evil. Complete untruth is not dangerous. But when something that may be true in some circumstances is misapplied in others, distorted and rigidly set up as an inflexible rule, that is the danger of evil. The truth and meaning of any concept or idea can be distorted to the extreme point of nullification.

It is so with self-love. There is a healthy kind that exists in the mature soul. But wherever unconscious attitudes and currents are distorted, healthy self-love will be distorted as well. Wrong kind of self-love exists in many forms. The crudest is selfishness, putting oneself in a better light or

position than one's fellow, wanting an advantage that is unfair to the other. Then there is a certain type of self-admiration which is of a sickly nature that is obvious. This too can exist on various levels. The outermost level is easily noticed by others and easily detected also by the searcher once self-examination has begun, although its existence is often hidden in the emotions and not displayed in outer deed and manifestation. It may, at times, even be covered by contrary outer conduct that is not genuine. It then becomes difficult to detect by others as well as by the self-searcher. This requires depth work such as you are pursuing on this path. Needless to say that any right conduct, not based entirely on honesty and inner conviction, and not sustained by similar emotions, is not only ineffective but even harmful for the personality -- at least as long as the person believes his conduct to be an expression of his innermost self. For, self-delusion is more harmful than the worst outer conduct or deed.

Therefore, begin to search for your own inner, and possibly hidden currents of distorted self-love. First find the proper concept and see how it works when twisted. Do not, however, allow the right concept to cover up your deviation out of a sense of guilt. Look rather for that in you which causes the wrong kind of self-love. There must always be a reason. As long as you have not found the reason, my friends, no matter how much you know that the distortion is wrong, the knowledge is actually of no benefit. You will not be able to straighten it out. The procedure must always be: First, find out in what way you have the wrong kind of self-love. Until you discover all the hidden, subtle emotions you cannot go further. But after you become aware of them, you can explore the deeper regions and dig out the cause. You will usually find that a lack of self-love in the right sense is the cause of your distorted self-love. When you do not love yourself as you should, you are bound to love yourself too much in another direction. In other words, you unconsciously seek the wrong remedy. For the lack of self-respect -- the proper kind of self-love -- you try to substitute disproportionate self-love in other areas of your being. You must remember the unavoidable connection between these two tendencies. If you would love yourself properly, you would not need to love yourself too much.

In the lecture on the vicious circle, I told you about your guilts, about your revolt against authority, and about your fears of not being accepted and loved. All these attitudes cause self-contempt and feelings of inferiority. You always despise yourself because in some way you wish to shortchange life. You want to get something the easy way, as a child does. This desire must ultimately be at the root of your self-contempt, of your feelings of inferiority. Nothing else really is. All the other things you may find to explain your inferiority feelings are but symptoms and rationalizations. To the extent you feel insecure and inferior there must be a side in you, maybe deeply hidden, which wishes to escape living. It hopes to get a return from life without investment or risk and without "exposure." In other words, you desire to cheat life in some way. When you find this side, you come to the root of your inferiority feelings and your lack of self-respect; not before. Until then, you cannot break your vicious circle. But at the breaking point -- once you decide through inner growth and understanding that you no longer wish and expect to shortchange life -- you will gain a well-founded self-respect. From then on you will love yourself in the right and healthy way. You no longer will need the wrong kind of self-love that in the last analysis only contributes to your self-contempt.

The act of giving up the intention to cheat life will purify your inner vision and understanding, so that you will fully realize that an advantage to you that at the same time is a disadvantage or hurt to another can in reality never be fruitful for you. It may appear so for a time, but it actually never

is. Believing that is the human blindness of this earth sphere, due to restricted sight, to the fact that you only see a small part of the whole picture. Inner self-recognition, however, will reveal more of the picture so that you will convince yourself of the falsity of such an assumption. You are still filled with the untruth that any other's disadvantage may be your advantage; there are moments every day when you react in this way, at least emotionally. Yet by this road you will come to understand fully that any possible advantage gained over a brother or sister who thereby suffers a disadvantage ultimately demands a much higher price from you than what you lose by giving up such "bargains."

There exists also another wrong kind of self-love, whose existence is much more widespread than is usually realized. It is the sickly kind of self-admiration, being in love with oneself. This may manifest in various ways. I shall not even discuss the most obvious case when a person is just in love with his or her outer self. This is a very crass form of sickness and comparatively rare. I want to look at the more subtle region of the same current which is much more prevalent than the crass form. A person may be in love with certain faults, as I have stated. She is pleased about them and feels them to be something admirable, although intellectually she knows that this is not so. Yet, if she were to analyze her reactions, she would find that she was in love with her way of life, with her manner of living. This is subtle, and is easily confused with the feeling of gratefulness and joy of living, which are purely positive. The borderline between the two emotions is very thin. The slightest deviation from the feeling of gratitude and rejoicing in the life-force may bring the reaction of a sickly "being in love with one's life." There is no rule that would define where you may deviate and where not. Only your complete sincerity and self-honesty, listening into yourself, checking out your reactions, analyzing them, and trying to feel out your emotions, will furnish the answer as to where you deviate from the healthy and positive attitude. But beware of the opposite extreme, of feeling guilty when you gratefully enjoy life, because you also detect a slight streak of self-love in this particular fashion. Separate the two without stifling the right emotion in the fear and guilt caused by the possible wrong one that you may find along with it. You can never forcefully tear out the wrong reaction, once you have detected it. You could not succeed and you would only stifle the rightful joy in living. Find rather where you lack self-love in the proper way and it will automatically reduce your distorted self-love.

I realize this is slippery ground, my friends. Those of you who are not experienced and trained to some degree in the work we are doing can easily misunderstand me. Your intellect will never suffice to understand what I mean. Only your emotions can do so. Don't ever feel guilty because of such discoveries; rather accept them and go on to find out what lies underneath; why you react or feel that way. Find out what rejection must have caused your self-love, this being in love with yourself or with your life, in one form or another. For whenever there is such a wrong form of self-love, rejection, imagined or real, must have played a role. Usually rejection is at the other pole of the current of wrong self-love. When you can find out where you have been rejected, you will not be so severe with yourself. Also, find out how you tried to counteract the rejection by unconsciously withdrawing from life, shortchanging it, cheating it in a subtle way with your inner attitude. This is the remedy. It will not cause you to cut off the good and healthy feeling that lies right next to the distorted reaction. Thus you will be able to retain your gladness, your gratefulness, your joy in whatever good you have, without the element of being in love with it, so to speak.

The proper kind of self-love is the natural attribute of the healthy soul. To the degree you heal your inner sickness, to that degree you will love yourself properly. For a long time humanity has lived under the delusion that to love oneself in any way is sinful. This belief is just as wrong as the

sick kind of self-love. In none of the Holy Scriptures or in any spiritual teaching of truth and value will you ever find that you should not love yourself. Not loving yourself would mean that you do not honor the divine manifestation you represent. Not loving yourself brings self-punishment, masochism, denial of your personality. Not loving yourself prohibits your proper functioning. It prohibits your capacity to love and to help others. So beware of the misconception that to love yourself is wrong. Therefore, distinguish between the sick and the healthy, that is, between self-respect and distorted self-love.

People often agonize about making the proper decision when they have to consider their own selves too. Without being aware of these thoughts, they are filled with the mass image that any consideration of the self is selfish and sinful. This mass image hinders their ability to make a decision at all. Of course, all their personal fears and inferiorities enter in as well. Yet making decisions is a prerequisite to healthy living. The distortion in the mind and soul contributes to the inability to make decisions. Lack of proper self-love on the one hand and an overgrown, sick self-love on the other causes fluctuation between the two wrong extremes. People cannot find a way out as long as they fail to perceive the breaking point mentioned before. Those who were taught that self-consideration is selfishness are completely confused. They assume that something advantageous for them is automatically wrong. Yet it may and may not be so. Again, no rule can be set up.

Realize that you are often called upon to make decisions when you cannot choose between obvious right and wrong, good and evil, white and black. Decisions can hurt people. Realize that the person who is hurt does not always have to be you, although at times it may; at other times, the wise decision is that it be not you. This may seem to contradict what I said before, namely that to cause any disadvantage to another cannot possibly be wise and be truly advantageous for you. But it is no contradiction. Both are true on this earth sphere. When you stand before a decision in which anyone has to be hurt, you or another, you face the final outcome of a conglomeration of deviated reactions and chain reactions from the past. The past you cannot change, and therefore you cannot avoid facing the issue in the present. Least of all do you benefit if you refrain from making any decision. Either you are being selfish or masochistic, because in not considering yourself with healthy self-respect, you are denying to yourself as much right as to the next fellow, and to him you deny as much as to yourself. If you weigh all this with honesty and integrity, you will find the right answer, which will differ in each case.

If you pay yourself the proper respect, you will cease to demand an extra position as, emotionally, you do at present. You are off on a tangent, using the famous "I do not deserve it" that comes up so often in the image work. As a compensation for this so-called humility, you do not seek the breaking point mentioned before, but you go to the other extreme, putting yourself on another plane, separated from others, demanding more than you give, unconsciously, emotionally, psychologically. You rebel against your own lack of self-love, your self-contempt, and choose the sick overcompensation. Actually, your rebellion is never directed toward others, though it may seem so at first. Deep down, your rebellion is against your own low opinion of yourself.

Again, my words are addressed much less to your intellect, where much of what I say seems evident, than to your feelings. They should reach the emotions coming to the surface as you work, which otherwise you could not understand. When the unconscious allows them to come out they appear to you like a big bundle of confused feelings. With the help of my words you will be able to

make something of these feelings. Without understanding them, they would completely suffocate you, depress you more than necessary, and you would see no remedy, no breaking point. Therefore, read these words carefully again and try to feel an echo within yourself.

I would also like to discuss the role of punishment in the human personality. I discussed your need of self-punishment at length previously. Yet in the child, as well as in the immature adult, there exists another form of punishment, the wish to punish another. If the other person does not do your wish, you often feel a desire to punish. This can happen in very hidden and subtle ways. It does not necessarily show in actions; it is more a matter of your inner attitude.

It is well known that every human being, as a child and occasionally also later, when experiencing a hurt, disappointment, frustration, or rejection, wishes to die. When analyzing this thoroughly, we find that the hurt is seldom so deep that the wish to die is genuine. The child desires to die most often in order to punish those who have slighted him. The child feels and thinks somewhat like this: "Now they will be sorry, now they will see what they have lost. They will cry at my funeral." You all know these childish reactions, often occurring even in quite adult people. But even if you do not indulge in such fantasies anymore when you are slighted, don't you still carry the same germ with you, manifesting differently? Don't you live it out just the same in other subtle little reactions? Instead of indulging in the death fantasy, you can punish your fellow-creatures in many other ways.

Whenever you feel rejected or slighted, check your innermost reactions where the element of punishment may come in. When you have found it, it is again a victory. View these reactions without guilt, from the wise distance you should have toward the childishness still living in your soul. All human beings carry the children they once were through this life in one way or another. Gain this distance from yourself, smile at it; do not get involved with this part of your being, but see it objectively.

There are many ways of punishing those you love, for instance, sickness. How many people develop an illness to punish their loved ones, to force them to be tender, sympathetic, considerate! Many other forms exist as well. Find them. If you can recognize yourself from this viewpoint too, it will bring light and fresh air into your soul. Nothing but the realization, the ability to recognize such hidden reactions in the proper spirit, will contribute to your mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

Are there any questions in connection with what I said tonight?

QUESTION: In connection with the right kind of self-love, would you care to elaborate on self-pity and egocentricity?

ANSWER: It goes without saying that both are the result of the wrong form of self-love. As far as egocentricity is concerned, I believe this has been answered, although I did not use this particular word. As for self-pity, let us examine what such pity of the self expresses. What does the soul say through such an emotion? It says: "I recognize that I cannot change anything. Therefore, I want the world, my surroundings, my loved ones, God, to see how much I suffer and how little it is my fault, how much I became the victim of circumstances over which I have no control. I want others to change. If I make my suffering clear, they might." No one who truly realizes that nothing

happens that is not self-caused will ever indulge in self-pity! If you are sorry for yourself, you have not accepted the truth that you, and you alone, are the master of your life. This truth is an uncomfortable one and is often averted, but it is the only one that will truly make you free and independent. Self-pity is a complete rejection of self-responsibility. It expresses further the hidden desire to force others, be it people, be it God, be it life, to do the changing instead of the necessary changing of the self.

QUESTION: Where can one draw the line between healthy and unhealthy self-love? What would you call unhealthy?

ANSWER: I think, my dear, that this was discussed in this lecture. Does anyone else feel that it was not sufficiently explained? If others feel that my words were not clear, I will be glad to elaborate them further. But if it is just you who did not quite understand, perhaps you have missed some of my words, perhaps your mind was wandering, and when you read it, the meaning will become clearer. If you then still have difficulty, I shall be glad to help you personally.

As I said, you cannot establish a rule as to where the line can be drawn. You can find the line only by asking yourself, checking your emotions, analyzing them for their meaning, for what they express. The borderline lies within the individual; it is the inner truth of each person. It differs with each human being.

QUESTION: Perhaps you might clarify in what way self-hate keeps one from accepting and loving?

ANSWER: I did not use the word self-hate, I used self-contempt. I explicitly said that to the measure that you despise yourself you feel inferior because in some way you are dishonest with yourself and life. To the measure that you do not love yourself properly you do overcompensate by misdirected self-love.

QUESTION: What about narcissism?

ANSWER: That is a form of self-love. It can manifest in various ways, not necessarily in the obvious physical sense of being in love with one's outer person. Here, too, I spoke without using this particular expression. Self-love is distorted when the life-force is directed toward the self, instead of being outgoing and finding the bridge to the next person.

QUESTION: Is there any possible connection between excessive self-love and homosexuality?

ANSWER: There may be. It cannot be generalized. Homosexuality has so many different origins. To say that homosexuality comes from this or that is very shortsighted. Spiritually speaking, as far as the law of karma is concerned, the possibilities are as varied and manifold as the psychological factors. The spiritual factors never contradict the psychological ones. They are only an extension. The difference lies in that you cannot so easily find the karmic origin, while you can always find the psychological roots and origins in this life. This, incidentally, applies to everything, not merely homosexuality. Cause and effect in this life, regarding homosexuality, present

possibilities that are manifold. One of the possibilities can be an excessive form of self-love. Other factors also enter.

Another reason for homosexuality may be an excessive fear of women in a man, or of men in a woman. Still another reason or possibility may be exactly the opposite. In other words, if a boy loves his mother very much, and despises and fears his father, this, too, may cause homosexuality, because he wants to emulate and imitate his mother. He wants to identify with her. While in another personality, with different characteristics, the exact opposite may lead to homosexuality. Then it is a fear and hatred of the mother, or female mother-substitutes, rather than love for her and identification with her. So no generalization can be made here either. To generalize is always dangerous. Of course, one should also keep in mind that no single factor can account for it. Various reasons may prevail. The most seemingly contradictory factors may all play a role simultaneously.

Excessive self-love, leading to homosexuality, or at least being partly responsible for it, would work this way: identification with the beloved self, which is substituted by another human being, because the unquenchable desire of the soul to find the bridge to the other self cannot entirely be eradicated, no matter how sick the psyche may be in other ways. Thus, these two currents work together, expressing themselves in choosing a partner of the same sex.

QUESTION: The higher self has a desire for femininity, the state of being. Couldn't that also be the reason? I mean the misunderstood current of this longing?

ANSWER: You mean in male homosexuality? [Yes.] Yes, it could enter into it. But then how would you interpret female homosexuality? [May it be just the opposite?] Yes, because you see, the higher self is male and female, or contains masculine and feminine currents and traits. Of course, this enters into it, but it is not an additional factor, but rather an explanation of the deviations. The misinterpretation of these soul-forces causes emotions to deviate. We know that is so in every other respect as well. Such a misinterpretation is caused by psychological twists. In other words, if a man rejects decision-making activity, everything that is part of the active life, the feminine side of his nature grows disproportionately. On the other hand, if a woman fears the passive and receptive state that, in a healthy way, is part of her nature, she becomes overactive. Such overactivity, above a certain degree, may result in homosexuality. As I have said, usually many factors play a role, not just one, so that all must be taken into consideration.

You also have to distinguish one other factor, and that is the degree of homosexual leaning which too is determined by many elements. If the degree is comparatively small, it may be heightened by guilt and suppression. But by facing it, it will be reduced. In that way one is opened up for further search to understand the various factors. If the degree is karmically stronger, then the inner desire to change may be lacking. Every case is different. I can show you only the broad outlines, the many possibilities. How dangerous it is to say, homosexuality comes from this or that, making one statement to cover all cases! That does not exist.

QUESTION: What about people who are bisexual?

ANSWER: Again the reasons are manifold. The same origins may prevail as for homosexuality, but weakened by the healthy opposite force, which may be stronger. Another reason

may be that the personality is so cramped, so unfree, that he or she cannot let go enough to give himself completely. Therefore, a flatness of feeling will set in after the first period of newness and excitement has passed. If this happens continuously, and new partners of the opposite sex do not bring the desired release and fulfillment, then for the sake of something entirely different, a partner of the same sex is sought, just as other forms of perversity are sought for the same reason. Here again we have a case of seeking the wrong remedy. For such artificial means, sought in ignorance, will eventually cause a complete stalemate of fulfillment. No matter how different, it will cease to be a stimulation. The remedy is in finding the inner fear of letting go, of giving oneself, of revealing the self and seeking the other self. This always seems to entail a risk: the risk of living and loving. To the measure that this risk is avoided, sexual flatness may set in. This may then cause acting out of so-called perversions of all sorts. Or in a different type of character, it may be turned into a virtue under various religious or spiritual masks and into the denial of all sexual experience.

QUESTION: Homosexuality seems to be gaining wider exposure, understanding, and acceptance. Would you consider it good that it is brought into the open? Wouldn't this make it easier for some to fall into the practice?

ANSWER: Yes, that is very true. On the other hand, suppression is bad, and moral self-righteous judgement of another person's sickness is wrong. Yet the other extreme is always so close at hand that it is difficult to find the correct balance. Today's trend does have its drawbacks. It causes many young people to make a virtue out of something that should be looked into and considered a sickness. If a young person looks up to and is influenced by someone who happens to be a homosexual, due to various psychological factors in his inner and outer life, and he is through such a person drawn into an environment where the mass image exists that it is better, and even quite "smart" to be homosexual, he will find it much more difficult to desire a change and a cure of his sick psyche.

Homosexuality, by the way, is also one of the many forms of rebellion against authority. It is also quite true that if a person has no homosexual leaning at all, he will not be influenced by it. But the point is that under existing conditions, a comparatively small inclination will not be considered a sickness. It will be strengthened and justified only by gradually growing mass images -- in certain groups -- regarding this particular subject.

There are comparatively few human beings in whom at least a small degree of homosexual leaning did not exist during the process of maturing. Outer influences may encourage the inclination unnecessarily, while the personality may otherwise grow out of it. This is the negative side of the issue. Many extremes have to be experienced before the healthy middle road is found. This applies to any issue. We have the same problem in educating the young.

QUESTION: I read recently that the spirit or the soul must be both male and female to be complete. So for four or five incarnations one might be male and then one might be female for four or five incarnations. Consequently one might be a homosexual in the first changeover. Is that possible?

ANSWER: It can, but does not have to be that way. Besides, we cannot say four or five. This may apply in some cases. In other cases it is not so. Again, generalizations may lead to error. You see, the original spiritual entity is one being, consisting of male and female qualities. Only after the

fall did the split occur. The split does not always happen evenly, so that one part of the entity has all the male qualities and the other part all the female ones. Since the fall was the product of chaos, the split in the individual entities was also a chaotic one; that is, it occurred at random, according to the attitude and emotions governing the entity when it fell. Thus, in some beings the split is much more uneven, combining male and female qualities in both halves. In other instances the split happened more closely to a male/female division, although never exactly, of course. According to the evenness or unevenness of the split, the incarnations change from one sex to another. If one part of the split entity is more predominantly male or female, the other part will correspond to it and changes of sex occur less often in the cycle of incarnations. In cases where the change has to occur more often, due to a greater unevenness in the split, homosexuality can result the first time one is born into the opposite sex of the previous incarnation. But this does not alter the psychological factors in the least. In fact, all incarnations exist so that you become more healthy and whole. If an entity does not eliminate the wrong psychological factors, he or she may again go through a life where it will be even more difficult to overcome homosexuality. So the roots always have to be found, no matter what the truth of the karmic law is. One never excludes another.

I will leave you for a short while, but only in manifestation. But that does not mean that all your spirit friends are not just as much with you and near you. Remember that. May all of you during this period of rest find new strength in your soul, new willpower, new understanding, and new desire for your inner growth, your inner change. Nothing can be more fruitful, more permanently satisfying and fulfilling than this. God's blessings go with each one of you and wait for you if you open your soul for it and let it penetrate your inner being. Be in peace, my dearest friends, be in God!

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