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THE LINK BETWEEN THE MAIN IMAGE, REPRESSED NEEDS, AND DEFENSES

Greetings, my dearest friends. God bless you. God bless this hour. Many of my good friends find themselves in a state of inner struggle and crisis at this particular stage of their path and development. It is no coincidence that this happens at this time, and to many of you. For, with the proper development and work, the nucleus of the inner problem is supposed to come to the surface more and more. Before overall understanding of the entire inner conflict is reached, you are bound to suffer from depression and confusion.

In the past, you may have gathered a considerable amount of partial insight into isolated problems. But you have not yet gained an overall and concise understanding of your life; what is problematic about it, and why. You still miss the main links of cause and effect. Before such understanding can be yours, you are bound to find a part of yourself putting up quite a struggle. Before your entire life, with its fulfillments and frustrations, can take on new meaning, you cannot help but go through renewed confusion, as it were. It is this confusion that is most depressing -- and the first step toward alleviating it is to become aware of exactly what you are confused about, rather than feeling it only vaguely.

The child in you resists growth, desires to remain immature, and is burdened with unworkable wrong conclusions and destructive defense mechanisms. Without the pseudo-solutions and defenses, a part of you believes itself lost and endangered. To let go of that which seems to you the very protection you seek causes the psyche to resist. Yet such states of struggle are not due entirely to the resistance to growth and change and to the fear of letting go of familiar, although defective, behavior patterns.

If you still find yourself in a state which outwardly resembles the fight against change, this is due to discouragement with yourself, with your apparent relapses, for you do not understand why this occurs. The relapses occur not only because it takes considerable time for a new habit to form in your emotional reactions, but also because you cannot form new habits until you have gained a fuller view and understanding of the totality of your conflicts. By this I do not mean a general, theoretical understanding, but a real inner, specific, and personal understanding. Such inner understanding comes only after a great deal of deep insight, growth, and change in particular areas. All this is necessary before the nucleus can be affected.

In order to help you a little from the outside toward the inner understanding of the overall picture about yourself, let me suggest an important link which will lead to the necessary insight and freedom. However, you must realize that any words coming to you from the outside can give you only a theoretical understanding to begin with. It must not remain that. You must use these words as guiding directives, so as to gain personal, emotional understanding from them. The link must be made with your own findings, attitudes, and images.

Let us consider the three major directions of our work so far. At first, we were concerned with your images. As you know, there is always one main image which causes the most important unfulfillment in your life. Because of it you go through repeated disappointments. So we have to deal with the various wrong conclusions and pseudo-solutions which constitute the main image.

The second concern of our work is to deal with the repressed needs, and, in connection with them, repressed emotions, positive and negative.

In the third phase we investigate the defense mechanism you have developed in order to obtain what seemed to you a protection. In this category belong the attitudes of submissiveness, aggressiveness, and withdrawal. These three aspects, as well as the idealized self image, form a part of your defense. But your defense is more than all of this. The basic defense is a general inner climate that you yet have to come to feel. You have to recognize its presence in order to become fully aware of the damage it does to you. You have to acutely feel it, almost as though it were a foreign body, before you can convince yourself of its destructive influence, which causes many unnecessary and unfavorable results.

Let us now see how these three major inner mechanisms connect; how they are linked up with one another. Only if you have a full understanding of how all this applies to your own individual case will your confusion, and then your depression and discouragement, disappear.

Let us review in brief how an image comes into existence. The childhood hurts and frustrations, which every child experiences at least to some degree, cause unhappiness and discontent. The situation that brings this about leads the child to jump to the erroneous conclusion that every similar situation is bound to bring a similar result. Thus, what was once reality now turns into illusion, because no such generalization can be valid. The generalization freezes into a rigid, inflexible mass in the soul substance that should be fluid and dynamic throughout. This, then, is the image, which will later act as a preconceived idea. But the image also always contains the supposed remedy for the hurt. Since the image is unreal, so must be the remedy, which therefore never works. This is all the more disappointing because in reality the very opposite happens to what the "remedy" was supposed to accomplish. It goes without saying that the entire process is unconscious, until you have succeeded in making it conscious.

This predicament results in further negative chain reactions. The defense mechanisms become stronger and stronger in every possible respect. The more this is so, the less is it possible to avoid the hurts that you have unconsciously labored so hard to avoid. And, as long as it is unconscious, you have no way of stopping this destructive process, which is entirely opposed to your own best interests.

Very soon after its first impact, you begin to repress the original hurt that caused you to form an image. You not only repress the hurt, so that you are no longer aware of it and experience it only as a vague, general climate, but you also repress many of your needs. This happens because the experience leading to the formation of the image was so painful and so humiliating that you did not wish to face it. Also, the experience made you believe that these needs cannot be fulfilled, and therefore you believed that you could tear out your needs simply by not acknowledging them.

Your pseudo-solutions are supposed to bring you the fulfillment without having to take a risk of being hurt or humiliated again. Since this cannot happen, your defenses become stronger and fulfillment becomes even less likely. But you go on repressing your needs, your hurts, and your disappointments. Perhaps you experience them to a certain degree, but rarely with the full impact, and almost never with the understanding of what really hurts you and why.

The repeated pattern not only proves the image right, but it also proves that your defenses against it do not work. This increases the original hurt of the experience which brought the image into existence. This is all the more confusing, because a part of the image works. The best way to explain this is by way of an example. Of course, the example can only be a simplified one, as we cannot include the many side effects and details that are relevant for an individual human personality. But the example may clarify a little better what I mean than a description in abstract terms could.

Let us suppose a male child has had a cruel mother, or maybe not even really cruel, but it seemed that way to the child, because she might have been inhibited, undemonstrative, or conflicted, and she therefore lacked understanding and imagination. In any case, the child experienced an acute lack of affection, warmth, and understanding and was therefore frustrated. In a situation like this, the image will form that women are ungiving, rejecting, and do not give love. Therefore the child feels apprehension and anxiety toward women when he becomes an adult. This may outwardly be denied, but if the emotions are examined, the mistrust will be found. But since the basic need for the opposite sex, and for warmth, love, and affection cannot really be torn out, he will seek a remedy against the image. As I said before, due to the unreal premise that all women are the way the mother was, the remedy must also be false and ineffective.

Let us further assume that this same mother was quite demanding as far as work in school was concerned. She expected a high standard from the child. And when the child was actually successful, she approved of him and was liberal with her praises. Thus, the child could experience some kind of gratification, provided he struggled hard enough to be successful. This situation will add to the image the following conclusion: "Although women do not give the love and comfort my soul really craves for, I may get the next best thing; I may have some importance by being successful in my work."

Needless to say, such thoughts are not really uttered, even unconsciously. For in the unconscious of the child there is no clear-cut distinction between receiving love and receiving approval. He has only a vague memory that something favorable came forth when he was ambitious, while nothing favorable happened otherwise. When the approval came, the boy was not consciously aware of something lacking. It was rather an inner climate telling him that what he yearned for he could have to some degree if he made efforts in certain directions. The real need for being loved was already repressed by the time the image came into existence.

The main image, in a case like this, would be: "I have to be successful in order to be loved." And: "Approval for my professional work is one and the same as being loved." Images of this sort are quite frequent. But let us now examine a little further, with our new understanding, what this means. Due to such an image -- if there is no strong second image counteracting the main image -- such a person will actually be very successful. He will be ambitious and will use all his resources to satisfy the image-claims to have success and receive approval. This image-claim will be granted. But

the underlying claim, that approval is tantamount to love, cannot be granted, because here lies the wrong conclusion. Striving for success is not in itself wrong. It may be a waste of too much energy on one aspect of life at the expense of another, which might have been more important for happiness and peace. It may appear as an imbalance when the entire life and its needs are considered, but, in itself, it is not based on a wrong assumption. Therefore it will work out. The claim for success will be fulfilled and will bring approval. Whether or not the overemphasis brings an imbalance to the life of the person, in the claim for success itself there is no logical error.

However, the unconscious aim and claim for gaining love through success cannot be granted because approval and love are not the same. To believe so, consciously or unconsciously, is a logical error, a misconception, and therefore it cannot work. By gaining the one, you do not gain the other. If you do gain love and success, it is due to a logically correct attitude toward both. So this is where the image does not work. Therefore the constantly frustrated needs grow and are again and again repressed, because the personality is not willing to face either the longing and the pain of the unfulfillment, or the erroneous image-conclusion. The unfulfilled need for love, warmth, companionship, union, is contained in the unexpressed claim contained in the main image. Here you can clearly see one link between the main image and the repressed needs.

The repressed need for love is, in itself, a healthy and legitimate need. But the need for approval, at the expense of gaining love, is an unhealthy need. Now, why do I say "at the expense of?" Because, if you concentrate on being successful, on impressing others, on receiving admiration -- which all fall under the category of approval -- you are bound to pursue the very behavior pattern that will push love away from you. What you need most, but what you are unaware of, what originally caused you to produce your main image, you now reject because of the wrong conclusion you have formed. If the man in the example is loved anyway, a little investigation would prove that the loving person does not love him for the traits that are embedded in the image and that bring him success. She will love him because she senses another quality behind and apart from the traits that are meant to make the image work.

Now let us go on to the next step, continuing with the same example. Such a person may be aware of his drive for success. But he is unaware of why this is so important, where it stems from, and what the frustration and need behind it really mean. Therefore each time he reaps success without the unexpressed inner claim for love being met, it is not only a new frustration; it is the same hurt from childhood experienced all over again, but it increases his inner insecurity and inferiority. He originally deduced that if he had been more lovable, his mother would have given him more of what he needed. As a child, he could not evaluate that his mother might have been incapable of feeling or demonstrating love. Now he is incapable of deducing that he himself forfeits love, not because he is unworthy of it, but because his defense against being hurt is to be arrogant, rejecting, superior, and fearful. All these are traits which do not inspire love.

Only by unraveling this entire process can the painful inferiority feeling disappear. It is the feeling of being unlovable that the soul resists facing. He fears that what he will find will indeed be that he is unlovable, and so he represses. While doing so, he not only represses the painful fear, but he also represses the entire process of image-formation, the needs, false claims, destructive defense mechanisms, together with all the traits of the idealized self-image, and the various pseudo-solutions. Only by courageously going through this process will he find out that he is actually not at all unlovable, except as he makes himself so by his defense-mechanism. This realization is one of the

most important on the path. It holds true for everyone, in some way, whatever the images are, whatever the idealized self-image is, and whatever the various pseudo-solutions are. Even if the pseudo-solution is submissiveness, which seems so opposite to the arrogance of the aggressive success-seeker who denies needs, underneath the submissiveness as much arrogance and superiority will be found as in the other pseudo-solutions. It is clothed in a seemingly more acceptable cloak, but it contains as hardened a defense structure as the extreme opposite. The defense structure is an invisible wall, unconsciously perceived by everyone, which prohibits love at the same time as it begs for it. Only upon close analysis of the various emotions and feelings will it become clear that the submitter rejects as much as the aggressor.

The struggle preceding this important breakthrough is very hard because the very means that are supposed to get love and acceptance actually do not bring it. Therefore the unconscious belief in one's own unworthiness increases, which is even more difficult to face. If you go through the pain of making the confusion and the belief in your unworthiness conscious, you will be relieved to find that it is not you who are unlovable, but the various devices you use for your protection. This recognition is of untold value and will give you incredible strength.

The search in this direction is not easy. There are so many factors, so many simultaneously contradictory aspects to unravel and to recognize. A moment's insight may only elude you again. Remembering a feeling will not recapture it. It is no longer meaningful. The experience of the insight has to be felt again, until its meaning makes a stronger impact on you. Only by repeatedly observing how your destructive defense feels in you, what it makes you do, feel, think, and how it makes you react, and how this affects others, will you see and truly understand. Only then will you gradually let go and become free of it, and only then will your true "undefended self" manifest. This real self may often act completely against your known outer rules, your principles, your established patterns that you have become so used to. It takes a great deal of struggle before you let your real self act, unhampered by your outer levels which are so unreliable, as your life has shown it to you in your troubles. Your innermost self, which knows so well, which will never lead you astray, cannot function as long as it is encased in the hardened, brittle structure of your defenses.

Another difficulty in your struggle to come through and see the light results from the following confusion: Since everyone has a streak of submissiveness, you may confuse submissiveness with giving up your false superiority, just as you will confuse healthy self-assertion with this very same arrogance and superiority. The difference is subtle, but very distinct. While you still find yourself so involved with your problems, it is hard to perceive it correctly. You struggle between two alternatives, either of which could be healthy or distorted. You will find the answer only when you have found your point of relinquishing and are completely aware of the hardened mass of your defense mechanism.

Let us examine for a moment the difference between submissiveness, appeasement, and the unprotected, vulnerable real self which should be out in the open. This does not mean more hurt, but less, my friends. When you appease or submit, when you give up or allow others to take advantage of you, you do so only because you cannot relinquish your needs, and because you are still unaware of them. You bow down to your inability to give in, to lose. That robs you of the dignity of your real self. Your real self can lose. It may be painful, but that is never as painful and bitter as the struggle of straining toward the impossible.

You will not forfeit your dignity when you no longer want to fulfill those needs through a pseudo-solution. You do not have to take recourse to that if you can face those needs and see how you have forfeited their fulfillment by the very process I am describing. The stronger your tendency to submit, the more self-contempt you beget, and therefore the stronger is the pull into the opposite direction of arrogant aggressiveness and superiority. Whether you manifest it outwardly, or whether it smolders hidden, your aggressiveness has its effect on others. However, you confuse submissiveness with the dignity that is lacking in you. Your submissiveness is the result of your repressed needs and of your denial and shame of them. Your aggressiveness is a defense, not so much against outer hurts, but against your own submissiveness.

You find yourself ensnared in this conflict. You cannot give up the defense that keeps you chained to both tendencies. Or, if you are too confused between the two ways, you may resort to withdrawing from life, from love, from reaching out toward life and toward others. Again, it is not so much that you withdraw because you fear others, but because you cannot cope, caught between the two artificially constructed attitudes that unconsciously seemed to be the solution at one time.

What I have told you now should not be mere words to you. As long as they are, they will not do you any good. It is necessary that you begin to link up these elements by reconsidering, once again, what your main image is. Some of you have not even found it yet. If you have not, consider your main problem, your unhappiness, unfulfillment, and then proceed to find it. It will now be much easier to do so with all the preliminary work you have done.

Once you see the main image, determine the part that worked out because of its in itself correct premise. Then consider the hidden claim, which did not work. Look at the needs involved with this image. Once you recognize the image with both the fulfilled and unfulfilled claims, you will know that the needs must be there even before you feel them. It will enable you to become aware of them. In due time you will acutely feel the real, as well as the superimposed unreal needs. Simultaneously, train yourself to feel your defensive wall. Observe it in action. Feel its existence. It is there, if only you pay attention to it.

Last, but not least, begin to notice the difference in your behavior and reaction when you feel the defensive wall in you, and when you do not. This will bring into clear focus the effect you have on others. Without the awareness of the difference you cannot know the effect of your defense. When you realize the effect you have on others due to a defense mechanism, you will be able to close the circle and recognize that this defensive wall brings the very unfulfillment you wanted to avoid through the erroneous image conclusion.

Even if you know your main image, you will not really benefit from this awareness without the links I have now shown you. You need the impact of live knowledge which enables you to go through an inner change. In order to do that, you need to see the connecting links in your personal inner history.

If anything is not quite clear, please ask about it.

QUESTION: I realize that at this point on my path I use my defense mechanism and am aware of it. I try not to act upon it. So I am going through a stage of holding my breath. I don't know how to go on. Can you give me a hint?

ANSWER: You are in a painful state because you still act out of obedience, rather than recognition. You somehow know that the defense is destructive in general, and you obey this general understanding. But you have not yet seen why the defense is unnecessary and against your own interest. Once you have gained this insight, it will no longer be difficult to prevent yourself from acting out your defense, because you will have no further need for it. The fact that you are suspended, so to speak, in the state you describe, is due to your persistent inner conviction that you still need the defense. Therefore, it now becomes imperative for you to find out why you think that you need it. There is a tremendous anxiety in you that without it you would somehow be threatened or annihilated. Make conscious what it is you fear would happen to you without this defense.

What happens now is that because you no longer wish to use it, you hold it back forcefully. But you are inwardly not yet convinced that you can dispense with it, therefore you still hold on to it. You try to compromise between the old and the new, feeling not quite ready for the new; yet another part of you is eager for the new life. This painful state is one that many of you are now going through in one form or another. Its clear recognition will not only alleviate some of the pain, but will give you a clear directive as to how to go on from here.

Once you have found the need, you will be able to relax inwardly. All this is difficult to explain in words because we deal here with soul movements. Try to follow these soul movements, to visualize them. What you did before the recent findings was to press the energy under in a hard, cramped, downward movement. Then, when the pressure became too much, you let it shoot out, but still in a tense, cramped motion. Both movements were tense and cramped, one pressing down, the other shooting out. The third alternative -- after understanding how superfluous this protective measure is apart from its destructiveness -- will be to relax the hardened mass of energy. Thus it will dissolve, and the relaxation will then bring the relief and release that is constructive and meaningful. The striking-out movement also brought momentary relief, but in the long run it was destructive.

The first few times you try to dispense with the hardened wall, the cramped movement, either pressing down or pushing out, you may feel as though you were falling into an abyss. You will feel yourself defenseless, while before your stronghold, your safe point, was the hardened mass of your defense, which necessitates either of the two hard movements. Without it, you felt vulnerable, exposed to attack. If you realize that this is an error, you will be capable of softening up the hard mass. You are now trying to retain it without repression. But instead of retaining it, you have to dissolve it by this relaxing, softening-up process. In order to be able to do so, you have to ask yourself -- your emotions, not your brain -- the question: "What am I afraid of without the defense?" Find the answer. From there on, you will go further.

QUESTION: I have many of the symptoms you have explained here. On the one hand, I am frightened, and on the other I feel an inner peace. So I don't know what to do. I feel both ways, often at the same time. I can translate my emotions very well, but I still need help in this respect. I think one part of my problem is that there is too much passivity in me and that generates a certain fear, too.

ANSWER: I could really only repeat what I said to you many times before. You have now reached a point where, finally, one part of you is beginning to want to give up childhood. When this movement is predominant, you feel the peace you describe. On the other hand, a part of you still

holds on frantically to childhood and fears adulthood with its responsibilities and what seems like activity to you. The struggle is now coming to a head. Your protection and defense lies in retaining childhood and, as I said, a part of you is afraid of giving up the protection. For you, the key question at this point is: "Why am I afraid of no longer being a child?" The inner peace is the result of your work which makes you, at least partly, prepared to give up childhood.

QUESTION: You said some time ago that the result of the defense mechanism can be determined by the effect it has on other people. I don't know whether I understand that correctly, but occasionally I find that my defense mechanism is perfect, and that the effect it has on the other person is wonderful.

ANSWER: The effect is wonderful for what you really want, or for what you think you want?

QUESTION: For what I think I want. If I follow through with a defense to keep people from meddling in my affairs, they are most happy, everyone is happy, so it is not the other person who reacts badly to my defense-mechanism.

ANSWER: In the first place, outwardly you may be content with the result, but you overlook the inevitable byproducts that make you far from happy. And even if others do not seem to mind how the particular defense you are thinking of affects them, it has adverse results for you, whether you realize it now or not. Only increased self-understanding will make this clear to you. You may be thinking of one separated, isolated aspect, while I talk about the entirety, with all its results, of which you have no inkling as yet. This is something one becomes aware of gradually, after a great deal of work.

Moreover, what may happen here is just what I discussed in this lecture. You are aware of a part of your image-claim which is fulfillable because in itself it is not based on an erroneous assumption. But you are still unaware of the underlying claim which leaves you unfulfilled. Find the unpronounced claim and desire, the repressed need that you have neglected, and you will see how your defense-mechanism prohibits the attainment of your deepest goals and desires. You will understand how you inhibit yourself from bringing out all that is still dormant in you, all your potential that cannot unfold with the defense mechanism that you think works so well for you.

QUESTION: Would you also give an example of how to relinquish a need, as you indicated so clearly by the example of how to get the real needs fulfilled?

ANSWER: Let us take the case I used tonight. The real need of this person is to be loved and to love; to have a real, meaningful relationship. He is unaware of this need. The childhood experiences with their effect on this particular man have prohibited the unfoldment of the personality which would bring about fulfillment. He has repressed the knowledge of this need. Instead, he pursues success, approval, impressing others. This then has become a superimposed, false need, covering up the real need.

To begin with, he would not be fully aware of his need for approval. But let us assume such a person follows a path of this sort. He will first become conscious of the tremendous drive for success, surpassing his rational explanation for it. He will slowly realize that a stronger force urges him on and on. At first he will not understand it, but as he is more willing to examine his emotions,

he will see that the need for approval exists. To stop at this point will not yield relief and liberation. It is only a part of the way. But by going on, he will ask himself why he needs success so badly. The answer will be that approval is very important for him. Why is it so important? By consulting his emotions very honestly, and without resistance, he will finally see that his need for love has been denied as a child, and that he has gone on denying it himself by way of the image, with all its byproducts.

The awareness of the real need, once it is truly felt and experienced in its full impact, will automatically diminish the drive for ambition, success, approval, impressing others, being glorious, special, and so on. He will do what he really wants and will distribute his forces and resources in a more harmonious way. This does not by any means imply that he will, all of a sudden, neglect a healthy interest in his work. But harmony will gradually establish itself, and the inner aim will be directed toward that which he had neglected for so long. He will come to see how he sabotaged the fulfillment of his real need by the pursuit of the false need. He will clearly see the behavior pattern caused by the false need and how it damaged the real need. Therefore he will begin to change in that respect.

This is relinquishing in the real sense. One grows into it by insight, by full understanding of all the angles. This leads to the awareness that one no longer has to hold on to the false needs and the destructive defenses. But the change can never happen by an act of will. If you find yourself beginning to recognize that similar trends exist in you, and try forcefully to relinquish the need, it will do you no good. You will either not succeed, or the anxiety may be so great that you produce other destructive trends and remain unaware of them. But if you go through the slow process just described, organic growth occurs and the relinquishing happens in a natural way.

QUESTION: Now, let us say, a person has a number of real needs, as everybody does, and a number of artificial, or false needs. They may not even be very strong. But how to go about it in a particular direction?

ANSWER: This has been answered tonight already. But let me add this: When you observe your emotions with their inner, unpronounced claims, and see the resulting behavior pattern; when you observe your reactions to others and how you affect them, notice which of your needs are fulfilled and which remain unfulfilled. You will gain a clearer picture about the process we discussed. Become aware of your emotions, your needs, and your defenses -- how they make you behave inwardly, and therefore also outwardly. You will come to see the answer, be it ever so subtle.

However, for this a great deal of inner awareness has to be cultivated. This is best done by working on the path I advocate and along which I steadily lead you. Allow your emotions to come to the surface and learn to cope with them. Understand their deeper meaning and their origin. Use also the group work in which, among other benefits, you get more understanding of how you affect others and how others affect you. When your defense comes up in one instance, and not in another, you will learn the difference between functioning with, or without the defense. This will reveal your inner life to you. It will help you to relinquish false needs and replace them with constructive behavior patterns that fulfill your real needs.

My dearest friends, may these words find an echo in all of you, if not immediately, then after you have surged on a little further. Be blessed, each one of you. Rejoice on this path to freedom. Do not let yourself be discouraged when you temporarily find yourself in a seeming impasse, where the path is thorny and involved and it takes all your effort to work yourself out of the thick shrubbery and see the light again. The light will come. It is bound to come. Receive our warmth and our love and our blessings. Be in peace. Be in God!

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