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FAITH AND DOUBT IN TRUTH OR DISTORTION

Greetings, my dearest beloved friends here. Divine blessings pour forth, permeating all that is within and around you. Your path is a blessed one. In tonight's lecture I would like to speak about a particular phase on the path, for that phase must come sooner or later for everyone. Actually, many of my friends have already arrived at that juncture.

After having invested considerable effort, time and energy, as you go through the spiral movement of your inner being, you finally find that which obstructs you. You find that which prohibits you. You find that which is negative. When you go deep enough and look astutely enough, you also find out that what really obstructs you is the sum total of everything that is negative and destructive in you. The mind does not want to accept this. The mind has concocted all sorts of other explanations for unhappiness. Some of these theories may be valid as far as they go. The mind has created theories about sickness, or neurosis which, though quite correct in themselves, disregard the fact that it is the negativity that creates illness and neurosis. Rejecting the "punishing deity" concept, humanity had to tend toward the opposite direction and embrace doctrines that exonerate the individual from all personal responsibility. Thus you find yourself a victim.

When you look deep inside you, after having removed your reluctance to do so -- when you no longer justify and rationalize and see without any embellishment those aspects of you where you hate rather than love, where you separate yourself in your defense rather than openly trust, where you look away rather than face, where you deny rather than affirm, where you distort truth rather than are in truth, then you see the place where you create unhappiness and frustration. It cannot be any other way.

The human mind has known this for many centuries, but has misused this knowledge and made it into a punitive, authoritarian judgment that elevates those who judge and puts down those who are being judged. Religions have been particularly guilty of this distortion. A counter-reaction had to set in to reestablish the balance. However, any counter-reaction will first go beyond the truth into the opposite extreme, so all concepts of sin, evil, and personal responsibility for human unhappiness were being denied. But now your human condition has advanced sufficiently to see again that distortion of truth, denial of love, negative intentionality are what ultimately create suffering. And perhaps now, without the authoritarian punitiveness, this fact can simply be seen for what it is.

There is no pain that is not in some way the result of some denial of truth and denial of love. There is no pain that is not, in the last analysis, caused by a violation of spiritual law, a basic dishonesty, and somewhere an ill will. Once you fully understand this, you approach a crossroads. Many of you on this path have by now come face to face with your basic negative attitudes, the

negative nucleus, the negative cluster that is one comprehensive whole. Or perhaps it is a series of negativities strung together. It is an ongoing chain reaction -- really a vicious circle. You may start out with the concept of finding your "problems." But when you speak of problems you really only deal with the manifestations, the results, of this inner negative nucleus. When you go beyond the surface manifestation -- the problematic life situation -- you find, embedded within a wall of protective covering, the lower-self attitudes, intents, feelings, thoughts and actions. It is not easy to see the negative nucleus in its entirety, its connectedness, its cause-and-effect chain-reactions. As I said, this requires dedicated, committed, wholehearted work, the utter will to be truthful with the self. But once you arrive at this juncture and fully comprehend this negative nucleus, a secondary phase needs to follow.

Many of you have experienced seeing and becoming fully aware of the negativity, even taking full responsibility for it and no longer projecting it outward. You are losing your self-deception. Yet you find yourself strangely unable, as it were, to really wanting to give it up. And this is a specific phase that everyone following a spiritual path to unification must encounter sooner or later.

For fear that you may not want to, or not be able to, give up what distorts love and truth in your inner universe, you must also, to a certain extent, not even want to fully see it. For a part of you may say, "I know I cannot, do not wish to change. So why should I want to see it? I would rather go on deceiving myself." This is a very typical obstruction. It is very important not to allow it to barricade your way.

You have worked sufficiently on the path to admit these resistances, to question the misconceptions, to work on them, to meditate, to make commitments toward a new way of being, to ask the inner grace of God to help you change. And I might add that so much change has already taken place. You know this. Quite a few of you feel renewed in a way you would never have believed possible. Life, inwardly and outwardly, is an entirely new, joyful, rich experience, beyond your wildest fantasies. Wherever this is the case, certain inner processes must have taken place, about which I will now speak more comprehensively in order to make you more conscious of them and to help also those to go through these processes who have not already done so. Those who have arrived at the full recognition of their negative nucleus that creates their unhappiness, their guilt and self-destructiveness, but cannot find the way out, will find this lecture not only helpful but necessary. It is meant to help you overcome this specific hurdle of changing, as you have already overcome so many other hurdles. And, I assure you my friends, once you are in full possession of the tools that I am privileged to give you and that you are privileged to make use of, there is no hurdle that cannot be overcome. So also with this hurdle.

For this larger particular aspect, or hurdle, on your path, I want to talk about the true and false concepts of faith and doubt -- about the duality that can distort faith as well as doubt. This is the topic that should, if fully understood, make the next step much easier for those who have arrived at that crossroads. This is important, because if change is contemplated before the unpleasant, unpalatable truth is fully seen, accepted and dealt with, it cannot work. Such a rush would merely indicate that you don't want to feel the pain of the guilt, that you don't want to accept the consequences of being negative and destructive. It would be a shortcut. So the topic of this lecture can be applied only at a very specific juncture.

The popular concept of faith in this era of humanity's development is that it is a blind belief in something you have no way of knowing, that you will never know. It seems to mean that you just blindly -- and, if I may say so, unintelligently and gullibly -- trust without rhyme or reason, usually out of wishful thinking, laziness and ignorance. Therefore, in today's intellectual climate, faith stands in ill repute. If faith were indeed what it is supposed to be according to this concept, there would be good reason to discard it. If faith were a gullible lack of discrimination, then of course the intelligent person would rightly guard against anything that might resemble faith. For you do not want to be gullible, you do not want to be stupid, you do not want to believe in something that has no substance in reality and cannot ever be experienced as truth. Therefore you stay on an intellectual platform from which only what can be seen, touched, known and proven seems real. And you never leap into the unknown.

Yet, unless you leap into the unknown, no expansion and no change can ever come to pass. For, as you well know, growth and change always imply a momentary anxiety. You cannot accept the anxiety if you believe it to be an end result rather than a temporary leap that will land you on firm ground. The firm ground is a reality of a new kind that you have not known before. But unless you contemplate this new kind of reality from a truly firm ground where you can rest and function, you cannot make the leap.

Faith, according to popular notion, implies a perpetual state of blindness, of not knowing or comprehending, of groping in the dark, floating on a groundless, unreal -- reality-less, if I may coin a word -- way of being. It is therefore extremely important to differentiate between the false concept of faith and the real concept of faith.

What is the real concept of faith? In reality, faith requires a succession of several steps or stages. Each of these stages is highly grounded in intelligence and realism. The first stage would be to contemplate a new way of functioning, as opposed to continuing in the particular negative chain reaction that has been discovered. Let us suppose you have found that a substantial part of your personality functions on defensive negative premises. As you deeply explore your mode of reacting and of functioning in life you find, to your unpleasant surprise, that these modes of functioning are undesirable for yourself and other people. They are destructive and they cut out life. You face and know this, but you do not know how else to function. To give up the only mode that you know, without anything else to go by except a lofty theory, is absolutely impossible for you. Therefore, you need to clearly understand what to expect of the stages you must go through to acquire a new and better way of functioning and to inhabit a new and better reality, expanded beyond the narrow confines of the fenced-in present.

The first step is to consider such a new way as a possibility. You don't know yet what this would be and how you could do it, but you consider that possibilities exist of which you know nothing so far. Unless you extend your thought in that way, you cannot acquire new knowledge, let alone consciously change the deeper processes of functioning. No new idea could ever present itself to a human mind unless that mind made room for this possibility. If the mind is closed to any new idea, none will come. So, the process of making room for a new, as yet veiled, possibility is a substantial first step in the practicing and acquiring of faith. In fact, it is the first step of faith -- the faith that something may exist beyond your present vision. But this is by no means being gullible or unintelligent. Quite the opposite is true. We will all agree that those who accept as real only what they see, sorely lack intelligence, wisdom and imagination. Theirs are indeed narrow, limited minds.

This may be a new idea. You may never have thought about faith in these terms. But I assure you, my friends, that this is an absolute prerequisite and is part and parcel of the stages of faith. A person's faith undergoes a development in itself. The highly developed, integrated person will have attained the further stages. What I described here is the springboard, the fundamental step on this particular ladder.

For example, you say: "I recognize the old way of functioning as being destructive, negative, undesirable for myself and others" -- it cannot be either the self or others, it can only be both. "I do not know yet that there is another way, and if there is, how it would be. I do not feel such a new modality. But perhaps there is another way. Perhaps I am indeed an expression of a divine reality that dwells deep in me, even if I have not yet experienced myself as a divine reality. If that possibility exists, it has also the wisdom to convey to me how I can find another and better way of functioning in this or that particular area. I will simply be receptive to this as a possibility."

This is a highly realistic approach. It is a most effective meditation. And it has nothing to do with a blind belief in something that can never be ascertained as real, as something that is not grounded in reality. It is an honest, open approach that simply makes room for alternatives not yet experienced.

I have mentioned in many other contexts that this is the indispensable attitude that every serious scientist pursues. Yet it is precisely the scientifically-minded who hold faith in ill repute because they have encountered the false version of it. But the real steps in faith, that make faith a dynamic road in itself, are completely compatible with the scientific turn of mind. To consider alternatives that are as yet unknown is an honest attitude. It is objective. It is humble. So the first leap into the unknown -- and into the new -- takes place in this frame of mind. This is not to say that there will be no anxiety, for all new experience is connected with anxiety, but it is an anxiety that is quickly and easily overcome.

For example, if you find yourself secure only if you issue forth negative judgments, if you hate and put down others, you can apply this first step. You can consider that maybe there is another way and open yourself to new insights. You will find that you can be secure without destructiveness. You may have to work hard to establish real self-respect -- and this approach is a sure way to attain it. But no matter how hard you work, it is always worth it, for you pay literally with your life for the negative kind of "security."

When you sincerely do this, grope and patiently wait for the revelation from within, you will find. Of that you can be sure. The time will come when you will discover the new modality in which you can function in an entirely new way, without conflict between security and self-esteem in the false sense -- by being negative and hating -- and openness, positiveness and love.

To find this new firm ground that is conflictless, you must make a leap into an unknown, new possibility. Merely opening yourself to a new alternative in principle, and feeling ready to abandon an old and accustomed mode of operation, is already a small leap, because, no matter how tentatively, you have then left the pseudo-firm ground of your old security which had seemed the only way possible for you.

The second step in faith requires more of a leap. With this leap you open yourself to the divine ground within you so that it can supply the knowledge your intellect cannot find. I recapitulate briefly: The first step is to make room for a modality other than the negative one you have discovered. In the second step you allow the divine self to supply the answer. If you take this step sincerely, you will catch occasional glimpses into the divine self within, how it is, how it feels, how it operates. Then you will forget again and be hurled back into the old pseudo-security of your negativity. Again and again you will have to grope your way back through these stages, until, in order to make this newly-glimpsed reality your own, and into a permanent home ground, you undertake an even greater leap of courage and honesty.

That is the third step in the venture and growth of faith. It expresses: "Yes, I have experienced something new, but I am not yet able to hold on to it. It is not yet my own permanent ground. To make it my ground, I fully surrender to the greater reality in the universe. I let go of the known safety valves, the familiar ego habits of finding security and self-fulfillment in at least partially negative ways. I surrender to the divine power and let it guide me. I dedicate my life to truth and love for its own sake." That is the big leap -- a leap that must be repeated many times until it is no leap at all, and you realize that it only seemed that way in the imaginary separation of the little ego.

At this point you are no longer in the total unknown, because you had gained glimpses of reality in the course of the second step. If you truly question yourself with all the logic and reason at the disposal of your mind, you will see that you are not really taking so much of a risk. If there is no such thing as a divine reality, what do you have to lose trusting in it? You would find nothing but what you already know. But should you indeed find that it exists, if its manifestations are no illusion, then surrendering to it is indeed the only wise and reasonable thing to do. Then surrendering to it will only temporarily appear as an abdication of your selfhood. Soon you will discover that what you always perceived as constituting your selfhood is the most dependent and weak of all imaginable ways of existing. Do you not constantly discover your dependency on other human beings who are as ignorant and floundering as yourself? But surrendering to the divine life will make you aware that in this is your real identity in which you will find new security, new joys and pleasures, new creativity of which you know nothing so far. Only then do you find true and full selfhood -- after you make that leap in self-surrender to a larger Self that is truly you in the best sense.

Since divine reality is truth and is love, truth and love must be the motto to which you totally surrender all of your being. When you come to this point, you will see that the alternatives are simple. Your not surrendering to truth and love as divine attributes, to divine will, is based almost exclusively on self-seeking and vanity -- in other words, what others will think of you precedes consideration of truth and love. You do not abandon the little immediate advantage for the sake of truth and love. Thus you do not make the leap in faith -- that by being true to the divine will, to truth and love, more profound "advantages" on all levels will accrue. Of course, you may not notice the results immediately. For you must make that leap into the unknown for the sake of truth and love, for the sake of the will of God.

Dedicate all your life, all your actions, all your directions, all your goals to the truth and love that are essentially divine attributes and expressions, inside and outside of you. That is the greater leap that will land you on new ground -- the divine ground. It will bring you into a new reality so widely expanded that it defies your present imagination. You cannot even conceive yet of what it

means to function without conflict because you are so used to living in perpetual conflict that you unconsciously take conflicts for granted and know nothing else. You suffer from so many conflicts when you do not abide by truth and love. They tear you apart, but only as you gradually grow in self-awareness do you become attuned to seeing this -- at first without knowing exactly what the trouble is and how your life could be changed. I now give you a key. Those conflicts pull out your life force and strangle it. That need not be if you make the leap to truth and love as the ultimate reason for being in your own life.

When you do this consistently, you arrive at the fourth step, where faith becomes an experienced reality, where it is already a proven fact that is so securely anchored in you that no one can take it away. The difference between this state and the first glimpses gained on the second step is that those glimpses are known to be real -- very real -- while they happen to you, but when you sink back and lose this "state of grace," as it is often being called, you doubt again and think that perhaps it was illusion or imagination or coincidence. Or you imagine you have dreamed the whole thing and the tangible things that happened would have happened anyway. Here the false doubt comes in, about which we shall speak shortly.

In the fourth step you do not experience this at all. What you have gained remains your reality. You know it is more real than anything else you have ever experienced and known. Even if you lose this good state temporarily and must revert in the spiral movement to the residues of negativity, at this stage you always know that which is real and that which is false. There is no longer any confusion. You now know the glory of the truth of God.

This newly revealed reality defies the narrow confines of the little mind. It stands on much firmer ground than that. If the whole world confronts the outer reality you experience, you may begin to doubt that, but you cannot doubt any longer the reality of the inner universe you have gained as your home ground, as a result of your consistent surrender to it. When you have arrived at the fourth step in the venture of faith, you can never doubt this reality. The proofs and the experiences are too real; they tie up all loose ends in a way imagination could never accomplish. Do not shy away from the momentary anxiety that the leap into an unknown new reality induces. Do it for the sake of truth and love. Or, if you will, for the sake of God -- your own, inner Godself.

Now let us look at the other side of this dichotomy: the question of doubt. Doubt exists in the real and constructive sense, of course, for if you lived without doubt, you would indeed be gullible. That would fit into the category of the wrong and distorted version of faith. Also, gullibility, the lack of right doubt, contains many negative aspects. It contains wishful thinking, not wanting to accept and deal with any unpleasant aspects of the self or others, or life in general. This comes from laziness. The person who does not doubt in the right way wishes to avoid the responsibility of making decisions, choices, and of establishing autonomy.

The person who doubts in the right way moves toward faith and is in faith. But the person who doubts in the wrong way creates a tremendous split. The question here arises not only what you doubt, but also how you doubt and why you doubt. What are the real motives for doubting? For example, you doubt the existence of a supreme intelligence, of a creative universal spirit. With this attitude your claim is that you doubt, but you really mean that you "know" it does not exist -- which of course is impossible, for you cannot know this. It is also dishonest because you take your very limited present perceptions as the final reality. Moreover, such a statement always contains a

further dishonesty -- and that is the hidden stake in such a belief. It is as personally tinged by wishful thinking as the wrong kind of faith is. There are numerous reasons for this personal stake, as for example the fear of having to face one day what the personality frantically avoids facing now. There is wishful thinking in believing that life ends, that nothing has any rhyme or reason, because then nothing matters anyway. So "faith" in a non-God exists in order to hope for no consequences.

When people deny the value of a spiritual path of self-confrontation, although possibly not the existence of God, this too harbors the hope that such confrontation can be avoided, is unnecessary. Doubt of this kind is seldom doubted. It is always justified with "this happens to be my belief, which is as good as yours," and is presented as if this kind of assumption were arrived at truly honestly and deeply.

If you doubt something that you do not want to know -- for whatever reason -- then your doubt is dishonest. This wrong kind of doubt has a lot in common with the wrong kind of faith. Both are governed by wishful thinking. Very often those who are proud of their doubting because they do not wish to appear gullible in the eyes of others never doubt their doubts. So you must question your doubts. Do you have a stake in what you doubt? What are the honest reasons for your doubts? On what real considerations do you honestly base these doubts? If you doubt your doubts, if you question them, you will arrive at the truth that governs you in this respect and thus you approach faith.

If you doubt others -- rather than your own motivations, distortions and opinions, your subjective judgments and negativities -- you deny the truth in yourself. Only when you are in your truth can you lose the self-doubt that gnaws behind the suspicions and doubts you harbor about others. This projected self-doubt must not be confused with true intuition and perception, which feels very differently and leads to a very different expression and interchange. If you use pseudo-intelligence to substantiate your doubts, distrusts and suspicions, in order to avoid the discomfort of self-confrontation, you create a greater split between you and reality, and therefore between you and truth. Thus you manufacture suffering and discontent and a vague unease that you cannot pinpoint.

We have here a typical dualistic picture. We have apparently two opposites -- faith and doubt. Religion will glibly say faith is "right" and doubt is "wrong." Intellectually-minded people will say equally glibly that faith is "wrong" and doubt is "right." The two factions quarrel. Each believes it is right; it has the truth. Yet a real and a false version exists on both sides. In the real version, faith and doubt are not mutually exclusive opposites. They complement each other. The real kind of doubt selects, weighs, differentiates, gropes for the truth -- not shying away from the mental labor of dealing with reality. This leads to the various steps of faith. In each of these steps the right kind of doubt is necessary. For example, when you hesitate to leap, you must doubt your fear and your assumption that this fear may be the ultimate reality. When you tend toward the lazy kind of faith, doubt must awaken you into mental activity. When you tend to doubt in the destructive way, faith must protect you from being submerged in it and blotting out the moments of truth you have already experienced.

There is a key to how you can always find the unity, the right faith and right doubt, and thereby come out of ill-placed faith and ill-placed doubt. That key I have given you. It is your dedication to truth and love. Long before you experience and therefore believe in a divine spirit that governs and dwells in all that is, you can safely use truth and love as your guideposts, as your

directives to govern your life, to surrender to, to let go of something untruthful and unloving into that which is truthful and loving. As you make truth and love the center of everything you do, you will experience the living God within, the strength, the health, and the know-how to solve all your problems and to get out of the negativities you seem locked into, unable to give up. That venture in faith is the movement that combines faith and doubt as one complementing whole in the service of truth and love.

Now I shall leave you with the blessings of the divine spirit that dwells within each one of you. Believe in this spirit, have faith in its existence, and it will make itself known to you. For it is the greatest reality that exists. Nothing could be more real and more immediate. You are all blessed, all of you.

Edited by Judith and John Saly

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