

BASIC ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES TO OPEN THE CENTERS -- THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD FRUSTRATION

Greetings, my friends. May my words reach your deepest understanding and become a blessing for your road in this life. This lecture continues the preceding one, in which I started to talk about the significance of the life energy centers. These centers are physically invisible but nevertheless distinct areas in the human life-system. The opening of the centers creates a full capacity for living and feeling. Their closed state is responsible for unhappiness, negativity and lack of feelings. How closed the centers are determines exactly the degree of living in unreality and therefore in a state of strife and numbness. Joyful, fruitful, meaningful living implies a commensurate degree of openness of the centers.

Many spiritual philosophies discuss these centers and give practices that foster awareness of them and help to open them. Usually these practices are more or less mechanical, such as concentration and breathing exercises. As I have indicated before, if you put more emphasis on such exercises than on your underlying attitudes -- your current attitudes, not those that would exist in a perfect person -- these exercises at best bring few results, and those are only momentary. At worst, they can be harmful in effecting an opening in an individual who is not in harmony with spiritual reality. If you are not strong and independent -- self-responsible in the deepest sense -- the power of the energy flowing into the system is too much to bear. This is why our main emphasis is always on the general development and growth, for in that way you cannot go wrong. Our predominant approach in the pathwork must be to confront the true state of your feelings and concepts, then to eliminate the false ideas, which create fear and other negative emotions as well as the fear of feelings themselves. This is the absolutely fundamental approach, but once you have practiced a certain degree of self-confrontation without clinging to the old patterns of self-delusion and illusion, and therefore have attained a certain degree of liberation and self-realization, additional methods may be used.

In the last lecture I spoke about two aspects: what determines the functioning of the centers of energy generally, and the specific functioning of each center. In tonight's lecture, we shall discuss the third aspect: the practices and attitudes that help to open the centers. I want to emphasize once more, however, that it may not be possible quite yet for many of you to effect a real opening. This should not discourage you. When you are inwardly ready, you will know, and the opening will come naturally. In the meantime, even the apparently unsuccessful attempt will have an indirect value and benefit: It will loosen up some hardened psychic substance; it may make contact with the greater wisdom in you more accessible; it may facilitate your capacity to concentrate and meditate; and it will increase your general awareness of yourself and others. All of this is a precondition for effecting a more profound loosening up and a new awareness.

So, even if you cannot immediately follow or understand my suggestions, it does not matter. Many times the topics I have discussed were fully comprehended and used only much later. But even the fleeting intellectual understanding may indirectly help to make the deeper perception more quickly accessible. When you relate in a natural, spontaneous, organic way to the topics under discussion, it is because something in you has worked its way toward this state of mind. Many things determine the natural organic process of this path. After the first hurdles have been overcome, the path becomes a self-perpetuating reality, producing its own needs and messages, if you are attuned to it. Thus, I cannot possibly foresee when you will be able to apply, truly and lovingly, what I say here. But you certainly can use some of it in your own way, which you will find by trying and through meditation. Some of my words you will certainly be able to assimilate, no matter where you find yourself at present on your individual path.

As you will see, the practices I suggest are never merely mechanical. They always have a direct relationship to your own attitudes and to your innermost concept of yourself and of life, and to the feelings, thinking processes and actions that your attitudes and inner concepts generate. Thus a meaningful and safe procedure will be established.

When the centers are open, the person is completely -- inwardly and outwardly -- in a relaxed state in which there is no cramp. Let us examine what the words "inwardly and outwardly" mean. These words may easily be taken for granted and glossed over. It is extremely important, my friends, that you understand them precisely. I have mentioned in other contexts that every function and organ in the personality exists in the physical body as well as in the invisible body, which is the model after which the former is fashioned. I will skip an elucidation of the fact that several such subtle bodies exist. For this discussion, the terms "inwardly and outwardly" are sufficient. There exists an inner and an outer consciousness, which is not as crassly definable as the conscious and the unconscious mind. There is an inner knowing and there is an outer knowing -- the former not necessarily being unconscious at all. There is an inner faculty of sensing, and there is an outer one. There is an inner reasoning process, and there is an outer one. Thus you have inner functioning and outer functioning, which can best be explained by the voluntary and the involuntary physical responses. Much of your physical functioning occurs on a voluntary basis. Your directly accessible brain can send forth commands that make other areas of your body respond. You decide to move your hand, to get up, to move your legs in this or that direction, to utter a sound with your vocal cords -- or not to do any of these things. These functions are determined by your outer direct will. Then there is an inner functioning that cannot be influenced directly by your will: the heartbeat, the bloodstream, the digestive system. But they, as well as all other inner functioning, can be influenced indirectly.

In quite the same way there are states of outer and inner relaxation. As you become more attuned to yourself -- your thinking processes, your emotional responses, and your body state -- you will be able to distinguish and experience quite distinctly both layers of reality. Awareness always begins with the outer layer, of which humans are not naturally aware. In fact, you must pay attention to it for a considerable time before you become capable of ascertaining in a clear-cut, concise way what you consciously think, feel, and experience. Usually all this is so vague and muddled, so habitually glossed over, that if you are asked what you think or feel right now, you must usually confess that you do not know. It is the same way with your body state, unless you happen to find yourself in an unusually strong state of either pain or pleasure. Your states of tension have become such second nature that you are no longer aware that your outer musculature is tense in one

area or another. This is quite similar to the mental and emotional levels: You have become so accustomed to thinking in a certain way, to feeling specific emotions, that you cannot imagine anything else and are unable even to discern what you think or feel. A good part of any self-development therefore always consists of increasing your sense of self -- what you think, feel, and experience on all levels.

After you have attained awareness of the outer thinking, feeling, and physical states, the inner awareness begins to grow. Your faculties have now been trained in a new direction of attentiveness, of "listening in," as it were. So it is no longer quite so difficult.

When you start with muscle tension in the outer body, it is necessary first to feel, be aware of, the tension, in order to subsequently relax it voluntarily. This parallels mental and emotional functioning: There, too, it is necessary first to know that you feel and think a certain thing in order to change it, if the thought is untrue and the feeling destructive. To the degree you have attained outer awareness and are therefore in a position to change certain reactions and functioning, the inner areas of functioning become automatically more accessible.

For the purpose of opening the centers a relaxed state is necessary on all levels. Relaxation does not mean inactivity, paralysis, being slumped in unmoving unaliveness. Quite the contrary: only in a relaxed state can live energy surge through the system. It is therefore one of the more important aspects of practice to observe your state of tension on all levels. Once outer relaxation has become your usual state, your awareness of inner knots and tight cramps will follow quite naturally. You will suddenly detect what you have never felt before: that although your outer body feels well, coordinated, without pains or tensions, there are inner "lumps." They are not painful, but you feel that they exist. You will know that they have always been there, only you have not noticed them.

Concentration exercises to observe your state of tension in order to relax it are therefore extremely useful. Once your outer body has attained the relaxation, feeling healthy and vital, and you therefore gain awareness of inner body blocks, you will know how it would be if these blocks were dissolved. You cannot directly will them to dissolve, for you are now dealing with the involuntary inner functioning, which can no more be directly controlled on the physical level than you can will yourself to feel differently in this instant. You can announce to yourself that you would like to feel different, because your present feelings are based on false ideas and are destructive for you and feel unpleasant. You can search for more understanding so that you can indirectly influence these destructive feelings, until one day you suddenly react in a new way when you least expect it, quite spontaneously. It is the same way with the inner body blocks.

Perhaps the best way to express how you first experience the inner body blocks is to say that it feels as if there were static, congested areas in your body. This awareness is always of the greatest importance. Once the blocks give way, you will feel a pleasurable energy and delight flowing through your entire being. You will first sense and know that this state exists underneath the tense areas, even before you actually experience it. Your inner knowing will tell you this.

Knowing of the two states -- the temporary blockage you find in yourself now and the flowing energy that is potentially yours -- brings you considerably nearer your own potential for being and experiencing. Once again, the same holds true on the mental and emotional levels. When you

become very quiet and listen into yourself, you will find an emotional tension and cramp; you will see how your mind is either overagitated or sluggish -- additional manifestations of underlying tension that has become too unpleasant to bear. Only after you are aware of the tension is it possible to deal with it in a constructive way -- not before.

Quiet self-observation helps you to accomplish this. Such quiet focusing will make you aware of your abnormal state. Let us be clear, by the way, that the overwhelming majority of people live in an abnormal state: their state is not a realization of the human being's natural potential. You will also become aware of the natural, normal state that also exists in you "behind" the unnatural state. The open, free and natural state that does justice to you and your capacity to experience life is not something you must laboriously attain because you are not now in possession of it. It already exists, only you can feel it no more than you could at first feel the cramps and tensions.

This very distinct focusing on yourself is not in the least selfish or self-centered. In fact, it increases your perception and understanding of others and gives you a greater capacity to relate to others. For your relatedness with others can exist only in exact proportion to your relatedness with yourself, which includes the awareness and understanding of your own reactions and states on all levels of your being.

You have begun to experience the presence of a greater reality and intelligence within you, as a result of your development and growth and after having deliberately set out to activate it. This contact becomes forever more real. Its guidance is the most reliable and wisest imaginable. Its voice becomes forever more distinct and discernible. A few of you have begun to experience this contact, at least occasionally. You have learned certain approaches in meditation that facilitate this contact. The difficulty is not that the greater intelligence is not always imminently available. The difficulty is that you forget to use it, or resist doing so. But however that may be, those of you who know it as more than a theory have perhaps come to think of it as being somewhere in the region of your solar plexus. This is so, because, as outlined last time, the center in the solar plexus region is the channel of communication with the inner wisdom of cosmic truth. But this does not mean that cosmic truth is located in the solar plexus.

Your inner wisdom provides down-to-earth answers when you contact it. It gives workable, realistic solutions and inspirations that neither deny your basic dignity as a human being, nor sentimentally coddle you and let you get away with the specialness that your immature desires want to arrogate to yourself. Such answers are the reason why you resist contacting your inner wisdom. For this divine wisdom makes you completely self-responsible, which you erroneously consider a disadvantage, overlooking the fact that only in self-responsibility can you truly live and move and vibrate in joy and delight. Only then will you be secure, for your dependency on others is what creates so much fear in you. It is this fear that creates the tensions. It is this fear that, based on utterly wrong assumptions, induces you to forgo contact with divine wisdom, claiming that you cannot, rather than admitting that you will not utilize it. This hurdle must be overcome under all circumstances if you want at all to open up your life centers and let the living force surge through your entire being.

This question must be confronted again and again. Every disturbance offers the best opportunity, for if you value the truth of the moment, the truth of the problem, more than anything else, and state this, letting go of all other considerations, the truth will make itself known to you, and

you will know that you are indeed both human in your present fallibility and divine in your underlying potential. To understand the layers of consciousness of which you are an expression, it is necessary to conceive of the inner and outer "brains" as one and the same organ. It is only that the outer brain has forgotten its true nature and has lost the contact with the inner. Your conscious willing intelligence must reestablish this connectedness, without which there can be no fruitful, joyful living.

Now, where is the inner, universal consciousness? The more primitive a person is, the more alienated he or she feels from it. Thus, in primitive religion, humans believe the universal consciousness resides outside as a distinct personality, far away "in heaven." A much more advanced state is the realization that God is within. Yet in this concept the universal consciousness is still personalized and localized. It is now supposed to reside in a special area within the solar plexus. This view is no more true than the notion that your ignorant, destructive unconscious resides in a special area within you, even though it may often seem as though the "messages" come out through this center in the solar plexus -- which is, perhaps, no more than a mouth that conveys. You would not say that the mouth that speaks the words is the person, would you? Well, it is the same here. So, consciousness -- separated and individual as well as cosmic and universal -- resides neither in the brain nor in the solar plexus. Where does it reside, then? It is quite important for you to glimpse the answer, which is all you can do at first.

Consciousness resides in every cell, in every molecule, in every atom, in every tiny fraction of living matter. Every one of these infinitesimal units of consciousness functions with exactly the same immutable lawfulness as the human personality does. The relationship of every cell-consciousness to the human being is the same as the human being's relationship to humanity.

To the degree that the personality is in a state of what we call self-realization, or of universal truth, the individual particles of consciousness accept truth and abandon misconceptions and error. Every sick part of your body is a misconception. The body itself, which consists of "dieable" matter, is a result of long-term errors of perception. Conversely, to the extent the whole organism knows truth, the little units will eventually adopt it and will know their origin and connect with the universal wisdom and life that is inherent in every particle of existence, no matter how separated at the moment. Hence, more and more, life must replace death, health must replace sickness, joy must replace suffering, security must replace fear. The ultimate truth of divine law and wisdom always exists "underneath" or "behind" the erring individual, the erring cells and molecules, the erring atoms, and every particle of mind-matter.

As you can perceive in your growing self-awareness, your inner blocks of tension and cramp only cover another state in which you are free and flowing and joyful; you begin to see that behind every sick particle of yours exists its healthy original state. Sickness is a product of the error of your cells, atoms, or other smallest particles. But these errors do not happen arbitrarily or independently of your whole personality. Your wrong ideas, false fears, and unnecessary defenses create the tension and the error in the smaller life matter. Again, every state of emotional strife consists of subtle, invisible life matter being in error. This error was created by the individual and must be eradicated by the individual.

To the degree that you are capable of the kind of self-observation that recognizes both the sick state and the healthy and joyful one that already exists underneath, you move from one sphere

of consciousness and existence into another. The pathwork must bring you to this. Much of what we have done in the past concerned paying attention to all the errors that create negative feelings and destructive actions. You know already from so much that you have worked out that every state of fear creates tension and is a result of error. Every state of hostility is a result of error and creates other negative feelings, thus again tension. When you are tense, for whatever reason, you must be in error because you must be in fear. And every slightest tension closes the centers.

Every exercise -- physical or otherwise -- every meditation, every self-examination and self-confrontation, should always aim to eliminate false concepts and illusion, and the unworkable pseudosolutions and behavior patterns they generate. Ever since we started together on this path, I have asked you again and again: What are the misconceptions that make you close up against life, that make you adopt unproductive and often even destructive attitudes? Tension must always be related to error. In all your approaches and practices, whatever they are, observe this erroneous state and keep it in mind. Look at yourself from this point of view. Wherever you feel a congestion -- be it a painful state in your emotions or body, or merely a neutral state in which you know that something hardened in you prevents you from living fully -- set out to find the underlying error. The error may have gone into your physical functioning, so that it tenses up as a conditioned reflex. The error may now sit in the tiniest particles of consciousness, but this is always a result of an overall idea that can be traced and unearthed by you. You may simply try to connect the physical responses to your inner erroneous state. This effort will prove extremely enlightening and liberating. It is one necessary condition for opening up the life and energy centers.

Fear of frustration is an important example of error creating tension and negative emotions. What human being is not, to begin with, afraid of frustration? This fear must be overcome, for it is an error in itself. The state of frustration always implies something that makes you want to fight unnecessarily against the frustration. This forces you to remain in a state of mind that says, "I must not have this in order to avoid that," or "I must have that in order to avoid this bad thing." These musts are fear-tension currents. To the degree that you are fixated on this either/or duality, you are in error and tension. Since life cannot flow into you in this state, you must rid yourself of the error. That is, you must first crystallize it out of your vague thinking and feeling processes.

Frustration is not dangerous or disastrous. Heed and recognize this, my friends. Observe your reactions to frustration. How do you react to anything undesirable that comes your way? Many people gravitate toward metaphysical and spiritual teachings for precisely the wrong reasons. That is, they hear that true self-fulfillment means the end of frustration. Now, although this is true, you cannot ever end your frustration by fearing it and thus cramping up against it. You have to learn first to accept it without exaggerating its impact on you, without feeling threatened by it. As long as you want to attain the ultimate unitive state because you want to skip the stages that lead there, you have not understood the basic principle of unity versus duality. You can transcend duality only when neither of two alternatives unduly intensifies your functioning. Frustration will cease to exist exactly to the extent that it no longer upsets you. You will find a new realm of reality in which you are fulfilled only when you accept in a realistic and constructive way that frustration is an integral part of the present reality. The childish desire for omnipotence which bans frustration cannot actualize the human being's divine powers where true omnipotence ultimately lies. True omnipotence comes not from need, desperation, greed, pride and self-will, but from having met and successfully overcome the illusions behind them.

We can roughly indicate an individual's development from the point of view of his or her attitude toward frustration by observing the following stages:

1)The most childish and therefore troubled state is one in which frustration appears to be disaster. Hence fear and tension; hence closed life centers; hence unhappiness and unproductivity in every respect.

2)The state of emotional maturity that accepts not having what one wants while using one's best faculties to eventually overcome or diminish the frustration. The mature person accepts this level of reality for what it is, knowing that limitations are present reality and that therefore frustration must also exist. This attitude holds true for the self and is also applied to others.

3)Once a person with this mature attitude has learned to encounter and deal with frustration, she or he can reach the ultimate state where every alternative or possibility in life contains an equal amount of potential for unfoldment, therefore pleasure. It does not have to be merely this one way. Serenity and joy, which come when the constantly open centers through which the energy of the universe flows freely have the power to create and recreate circumstances, to fashion them. This shaping of circumstances is not done by magic, by exerting power and control over others so that they do one's will. It results from the person's enhanced faculties and resources, through which forever greater possibilities for happiness manifest.

Thus, a very important facet of self-observation is to focus on your real attitude toward any kind of frustration. It will give you a good gauge of your state of fear-tension. If you can then verbalize the fear, you will have made an important inroad. You will also see that by tensing up against frustration you cause much more frustration for yourself, for the very tension is a denial of life as it now comes to you. Never, never could any condition outside you create anywhere near as much frustration as you inflict upon yourself by tensing up against it. The flow of your feelings, your life force, is the ultimate source of all fulfillment, without which no outer occurrence can truly be meaningful. Only when your life force flows freely can fulfillment with others also come in a truly deep way, without rendering you helplessly dependent on anyone else. Thus you avoid a great deal of fear and possible hostility. When you turn off your life centers because of your defensive fear of frustration, you perpetually frustrate yourself. A great deal of hopelessness is rooted in such self-frustration.

Now let me give you two specific meditation exercises for opening your centers. The first I described in a recent answer to a question, but I shall briefly repeat it.

Sit down in a very relaxed way, in the posture of this instrument. Do not slump down, yet sit without tension, completely contained within yourself, without stiffness. The spine should be straight, not needing to lean against the backrest of the chair but held up by its own balance. Close your eyes and feel every part of your outer body. Relax it deliberately. Then try and see what happens when you do not think. Do not force yourself not to think, for this would only make you tense. Rather attempt it in the spirit of "I would like not to think, but I know that I am not capable of doing so without some involuntary thinking processes taking place almost all the time. Therefore I shall calmly observe my thinking processes, to what extent they penetrate my mind without my being able to control them." In that fashion, in unpushing, unresisting observation, you will eventually succeed, for perhaps a fraction of a minute, in not thinking. You will in that moment be

so still, so untense, yet so poised and "there" with your attention and awareness, that the agitated mind processes will be calmed down. This state is not at all an unaware rambling and drowsing. It is extremely alert and awake, a sharp concentration without the least bit of tension. You will then find yourself seeing the thinking process as it wants to rush in on you. You will feel as if you were standing on the threshold of an apparent nothingness or void. Do this in an untense way. Give it a minute or two -- perhaps before or after the meditation that you use for self-discovery or reorientation of your negativity. Breathe calmly but distinctly through your abdomen. Feel your lower stomach rhythmically lift up and down, in as calm and regular fashion as you can. Every inhalation and exhalation should express a harmonious mind attitude of the most positive nature, until gradually the volitional mind ceases to work and merely observes the involuntary mind.

This exercise will help you calm the busy, agitated mind. Therefore the center at the solar plexus will open. Through this exercise, a channel to this center will begin to loosen up and finally open. Thus an inner connection to your higher wisdom will be established. You will not get a direct, immediately noticeable result, but by doing this practice as untensely and calmly as possible, you will suddenly find yourself poised on the brink of an apparent void. This is the beginning of a new opening, which you will experience only retroactively and indirectly, as though it happened quite independently of these practices.

The other practice I suggest is very much related to the topic of this lecture -- the observation of outer and inner body blocks. Sit down in the same way. In this exercise you may also lie down flat. Again relax and tune in to your body. Let every part of the outer functioning deliberately relax. Then you will find tense areas of which you have not been particularly aware before. See to what extent you can deliberately loosen them and where this is not possible. This will show you whether the area belongs to the outer or inner system. Once you can clearly distinguish the area and feel the block, or the lump, or the congestion, question the meaning of it. Connect it to the mind and the feelings that create it. What is the fear that creates this tension? Ask yourself: What is the direct relationship between the specific body tension and fear? Send the thought into these cells, which have their own consciousness. "What is the misconception behind the tension?" Answers will come to you. You will probably first notice the outer blocks only. But the more you progress, the greater the awareness of the inner reality becomes. You will then use the same approach on that level -- only it will be easier then.

By connecting more and more with your own system and becoming aware of states you have never paid attention to, you not only will recognize body tension, but will do the same in the area of mind and feelings. There, too, a fluid, loose state gives pleasure, aliveness, constantly flowing currents of pleasure and energy, as opposed to the block that hardens and prohibits the flow. The block can be distinctly felt when you pay attention to it.

The oneness of the feeling with the mind and the body will become more closely knit and firmly established. The mind carries the misconception; the feeling responds to it by negative, destructive emotions; and the body expresses all this with contraction, tension, stiffness, rigidity -- which are also behind the flaccidity of unhealthy forms of apparent relaxation. Once you can bring these three levels of functioning together to where the disturbance exists, you will come to the next stage of dissolving it. I will help you when the time comes.

I leave you with blessings for every single one of you here. Do not believe that this is an empty word. It carries a strength that can become an incentive and a door opener for you, should you so desire. Be in peace, be what you are, loving yourself as you are, no matter how fallible at the moment. For then you will truly be God.

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