

THE EGO'S COOPERATION WITH OR OBSTRUCTION OF THE REAL SELF

Greetings, my dearest friends. May blessings and strength, understanding of truth, and vital flow of universal energy fill and sustain you as you hear these words and as you take them with you - perhaps more as an inner effect on your psychic forces than as an intellectual memory of the words.

Many of my friends on this intensive path of self-realization have come to a crossroads where they see the old inner landscape, which is fear: fear of life, fear of death, fear of pleasure, fear of giving up control, fear of feelings -- fear of being, as such. It takes considerable self-confrontation, as you all know, to be aware of these fears. They are usually covered up, but they exist nevertheless.

Many of my friends have come to the point where, to their surprise and dismay, they suddenly begin to see how they fear all these aspects of life I just mentioned. As awareness of these fears increases, one gradually and automatically also becomes aware of the effects these heretofore unconscious fears have on one's life: what they make one do and how they make one withdraw from living. One then begins to understand those vague feelings of missing out on life that one usually has without quite knowing why, and one begins to realize how much one misses. My friends, you do miss out on life itself. You miss the creative process of living by fearing this process.

I now wish to discuss some aspects of these fears, their common denominator, which will indicate to you how to correct an unnecessary condition of fear, frustration, and pain. For even those of you who have not as yet discovered that these fears exist will sooner or later discover their existence, especially when you find yourself dynamically growing and moving on a path of development and self-realization. When you thus become aware of how you were hiding from life because of these fears, my words -- retrospectively and retroactively -- will become very helpful. They may create a seed in your psyche now, which will come to fruition when the whole of you is ready to see the problem and resolve it. To cope with these fears is truly the main problem of life.

The nature of all these fears is a misunderstanding of the function of the ego and its relation to the real self. This relation is extremely subtle and difficult to put into words, for, as all truths of life, it is full of apparent contradictions; at least as long as you find yourself thinking and living in a dualistic way. The moment you transcend dualism, two opposite and apparently mutually exclusive aspects become equally true. This applies to the ego in relation to the real self. It is true when one says the ego's predominance, its exaggerated strength, is the greatest hindrance to productive living. And it is equally true when one says a weak ego is incapable of establishing healthy living. These are not opposites or mutually exclusive facts, my friends.

Before we go into greater detail, let me, first of all, stress that humanity's unhappy condition is due primarily to ignorance about the real self. At best, the more enlightened human beings accept

its existence as a philosophical precept, but this is completely different from the experience -- the living, dynamic experience -- of its existence. If people were educated with the idea and the goal that they contain something deep within themselves that is infinitely superior to the ego self, they would be given the opportunity, by experimentation and exploration, to seek communication with this nucleus. They would become able to reach their true inner being.

Since this is not the case, people become more and more limited in their concepts and goals. They ignore that there is anything else alive in them besides the ego. Even those of you who have, for years, formed a concept of the real self, of the creative substance that enlivens every human being, forget in ninety-five percent of your daily lives that this creative being lives and moves in you and you live and move in it. You forget its existence. You do not reach for its wisdom. You stake all your reliance on your limited outer ego self. You neglect to open yourself for the deeper self's truth and feelings. You go blithely ahead as though there really were nothing else but your conscious mind, your ego self with its immediately accessible thinking processes and will force. With that attitude you shortchange yourself greatly.

Such forgetfulness inevitably has various consequences. The first one is the question of identification. When you identify yourself exclusively with the ego or outer conscious self, when your sense of self is predominantly associated with the ego functions, you become completely imbalanced and your life becomes emptied of substance and meaning. Since the ego cannot replace, or in any way come near, the resourcefulness of the real self, it is inevitable that such people -- and they comprise the majority of human beings -- become tremendously frightened and insecure. They must feel inadequate, and their sense of life, of living, of self must become very flat and unenjoyable. Substitute pleasures are then -- often frantically -- looked for, which are hollow and leave you exhausted and dissatisfied. The ego cannot add deep feelings and a deep flavor to living. Nor can it produce profound and creative wisdom. The ego can only memorize, learn, collect other people's creative knowledge, repeat, and copy. It is equipped to remember, to sort out, to select, to make up the mind, to move in a certain direction -- outward or inward. These are its functions. But it is not the ego's function to feel, to experience deeply and to know deeply, which is to be creative. When I say creative, I do not merely mean artistically creative. Every simple act of living can be creative, provided you are activated by the real self. Every act is uncreative when you are cut off from the real self, no matter how much effort you put into it. In fact, the real self is effortless. Wherever it manifests, effort exists, but it is always effortless effort. This, too, may appear a contradiction.

Let us come back to those fundamental human fears I listed before and consider them in the light of this information. As I said, these fears come into being as a result of cutting off from the real self and remaining in ignorance, living with false ideas. Let us begin with the fear of death, since it is this particular fear that casts such a shadow into everyone's life. If you predominantly identify with your ego, your fear of death is really quite justified, for the ego dies indeed. This may sound like a frightening statement for those who have not experienced yet the truth and reality of their inner being. It is frightening precisely for the reason I just mentioned, namely that a sense of being, of existing, a sense of self, exists for so many by identifying only with the ego. This is why no human being who has activated his real self and experiences it as a daily reality is ever afraid of death. One feels and knows one's immortal nature, one is filled with its eternal quality; it can only be a continuum, for this is its inherent nature. This cannot be explained by the logic the ego is used to; such logic is much too limited to comprehend this.

A vicious circle comes into existence when the ego is given undue importance in one's sense of being alive. If one cannot conceive of any other reality of thinking, feeling, and being in oneself but the reality of the ego, one cannot, of course, experience the higher faculties and the greater reality of the real self. Therefore, hearing that the ego-faculties, which one considers the only real ones, cease to exist must seem frightening. But for those of you who have experienced the stark reality of the real self, this statement can never be frightening. You then know perfectly well how inferior, fleeting, and insufficient the ego is as compared to the reality of the inner eternal being, which you will experience as eternal whenever you encounter it. Therefore, fear of death must exist only when one's sense of self is exclusively attached to the ego self.

I want to add here that an intellectual acceptance of the real self as a philosophical precept will not alleviate fear of death because it cannot give a sense of reality and true experience of the real self. This requires more. It requires an actualization of the faculties of the real self. This, as you know, necessitates certain very definite stages of development. I will say more about this later.

The next fear on the list would be fear of life. You have heard me say innumerable times that whoever fears life must fear death, and whoever fears death must fear life, because they are really both the same. This statement can also be truly understood only when one experiences the real self, which reconciles all apparent opposites. Then one sees that life and death are the sunny and the shadow sides -- if I may put it this way -- of a certain manifestation of consciousness, nothing more nor less.

Now, the fear of life is justified when one's sense of identification is exclusively attached to the ego. For the ego's capacities to cope with life and to live life productively are extremely limited. In fact, they are downright insufficient and must leave the individual uncertain, insecure, inadequate. The real self, on the other hand, always has answers, always has solutions, no matter what the problem is; it always makes any experience, regardless of how unnecessary and futile it may seem at first, a deeply meaningful stepping stone toward further expansion. It increases the experience of life and the realization of one's inherent potentials. It therefore has the capacity to render you more alive, more fulfilled, and steadily stronger.

Certainly, none of this can be said about the ego. The ego is constantly ensnared in apparently insoluble situations, problems, and conflicts. The ego is adapted exclusively to the level of duality: this versus that, right versus wrong, black versus white, good versus bad. As you know, this is inadequate for approaching most of life's problems. Apart from the fact that no truth can be found if one looks at one side as black and the other as white, the dimensions of these problems include many other considerations. The ego is incapable of transcending the dualistic level, of bringing into harmony the truth of both sides, as it were. Therefore it cannot find solutions and is perpetually trapped and anxious. Thus, an ego identification brings fear of life automatically in its wake.

The next on the list might be fear of pleasure. For those of you whose self-exploration is still not extremely deep, such a statement may sound absolutely incredible -- just as fear of happiness would. You would then say to yourself, "This has no application to me." But let me tell you that everyone, to the degree they feel unhappy, unfulfilled, and empty, fears happiness, fulfillment, and pleasure, no matter how much they strain and yearn for it on the conscious level. It must be so; it is the equation that must come out even. Your life demonstrates the fact, for your life is never a product of circumstances beyond your control, or of causes beyond those you inwardly set in

motion. It is always a product of your own inner consciousness. You know this in theory as well as in practice. At least those of you who have made some self-discoveries come more and more to see that, in one way or another, you have created and are creating whatever is amiss. Don't you ever forget this.

Now then, fear of pleasure, of happiness, of fulfillment, is a reality applicable to all human beings. At first, it is only a question of connecting consciously with this fear. The moment you do so, you will then, at last, understand why your life does not yield what another part of you so ardently wishes. The more the ego cramps up to get what you want consciously, forgetting that it is not the ego alone that can attain it, the less can fulfillment be possible. Yet it is not the conscious ego that necessarily obstructs it, but some other part of your being, which is neither the ego nor the real self. However, the conscious ego is often blindly driven to act the way the unconscious, fearful, life-refusing part dictates. This is then rationalized and explained away. Even when one pays allegiance only to the active ego self with its consciousness, even then the ego self is no more than an obedient agent, whether you know it or not. The question is only whether the ego follows erroneous destructive drives or whether it is activated by the real self.

Hence, it is absolutely essential that you be open to your own inner reactions which shrink from happiness and pleasure. To understand this in context, I should like to say to you now: If you derive your sense of self only from the ego faculties, giving up the ego must seem terribly frightening. And right here is where you are caught in an insoluble conflict as long as you remain stuck in it: unfoldment and pleasure, delight and creative living, fulfillment and happiness, can exist only when the real self is activated, when you do not identify exclusively with the ego, but when you are connected and identified with the real self, with the eternal, creative substance of your being. And here is what is important: this necessitates letting go of the direct ego controls. It requires trust and courage to surrender to an inner movement that is not responsive to the outer thinking and willing faculties.

It is easy to ascertain the truth of this statement when you ponder a minute the heightened moments in your life. Whatever was truly pleasurable, inspired, effortless, fearless, creative, and deeply joyful was precisely due to this letting go and being animated by something other than the usual faculties under the direct determination of the outer self. Then happiness is not only possible but is a natural byproduct. You cannot be the real self without being happy, and you cannot be happy unless you are integrated with, and enlivened by, the real self. This is the kind of happiness that knows no fear of ending or loss or unwelcome byproducts. It is the kind of happiness, as I said elsewhere, that is, at one and the same time, dynamic, stimulating, exciting, vibrantly alive, and yet peaceful. There is no longer any split from separating these concepts and making them mutually exclusive, which is what the dualistic ego does. In the split way of experiencing life, peacefulness excludes excitement and brings boredom. Excitement excludes peace and brings anxiety and tension. You are confronted, as in so many other instances, with a choice that is no longer necessary when you enter the realm of the unified real self.

How can you embrace fearlessly a state that must dispense with the ego faculties when your sense of being alive seems to come exclusively from these ego faculties? This is just where you are trapped. Unless you see your fear of happiness in this light, you will not find your way out of this trap. You will be constantly vacillating. On the one hand, you will be terrified of letting go of the ego. On the other, you will be constantly in a state of greater or lesser hopelessness that may be

more or less conscious. A feeling of missing out on your life, of lacking something essential, will haunt you, because what is necessary to alleviate this condition cannot come about until you let go of the ego's predominance.

This brings me to the next very much related fear on the list, and that is the fear of letting go. If, again, one's sense of self derives exclusively from the ego, the personality is unable to let go. Letting go would then mean annihilation. But for those who have begun, first here or there, little by little, to see the truth and reality of the real self, letting go will not only be without danger, it will be life itself.

Only gradually do you become acclimated to the new condition, the new vibrations, the new ways of the real self's functioning. But this is certainly not incompatible with living in a body on this earth sphere. Not at all. It merely means harmonious interaction between the ego and the real self. It means knowing the ego's functions, its limitations, as well as its power. I shall return to this issue.

First, I should like to say that whenever one fears the real self, one must fear life and death, pleasure and fulfillment, happiness and unfoldment, one's feelings and the creative process itself. Second, it is self-evident that feelings cannot be controlled by the ego. Those who attempt this merely deceive themselves. They kill the spontaneity and freedom of the real self. This is why feelings can never respond to any must, issued either by other people or by the self. They come about indirectly and seem to have their own, independent life, their own laws, their own logic and wisdom. You would do better to explore and understand this law and wisdom rather than deny the feelings and superimpose over them your puny ego logic, ego law, and pseudo-wisdom. For feelings are an expression of the creative process itself. Anyone knows that this process cannot be forced either. It can only be encouraged or discouraged, just as feelings can. Feelings and the creative process are inner movements, which I also term soul movements. They have their messages and signs that cannot be heeded too much if the individual is to effect self-realization and to establish contact with the real self.

The real self exudes and transmits a vital flow of energy, consisting of many distinct streams. It is what I usually call the life force. This life force is not only a tremendous power: it is consciousness. It contains deep wisdom and inexorable lawfulness, eternal and immutable. It is necessary to explore and understand these laws. Such understanding enriches life in a most wondrous manner, to a degree you cannot imagine.

Denying the intense ecstasy of this life force which manifests in some areas more intensely than in others on all levels of existence, means courting various degrees of death. Embracing this life force means living deathlessly. The denial of the pleasure supreme of life is death. The fact that the ego came into existence means that death came into existence. I cannot go into details about this now, for this would lead us too far afield. It suffices to say that the ego is a split-off particle of the vaster consciousness, which still remains in all human beings. Unless this split-off part is integrated with its origin, it dies. Therefore splitting off and dying are related, as reunification and living are related and interdependent. Ego existence, pleasurelessness, and death are directly connected, as the real self, pleasure supreme, and life are directly connected. Therefore whoever fears letting go of the ego, who fears and denies pleasure because of this fear, must court death. This is the true meaning of death. It is a denial of the true, original life kernel.

All this, my friends, may lead to the misunderstanding that the ego should be dispensed with. Unfortunately, many a spiritual teaching has made this error and thus brought confusion to its adherents. Nothing can be further from the truth than a disregard or neglect of the ego. Doing this would merely lead to the opposite extreme, and both extremes are always equally wrong, damaging, and dangerous.

People who have throughout a lifetime -- nay, often during several lifetimes -- overemphasized the ego, in the mistaken idea that it is not only safety but life itself, become tired. They become tired because every soul movement based on misconceptions is exhausting by its very nature. It makes people cramp up in order to hang on desperately. The various false ways of relief from a cramped ego always mean the weakening of the ego. If, on the one hand, the ego is too strong, it inevitably must be too weak on the other. I put this in practical terms for you who are working on this path: To the extent you are frightened of letting go of ego control because you believe the false idea that letting go makes you lose strength, to that extent you are unable to assert yourself because you are afraid. The more capable you are of self-surrender, to your feelings, to the creative process, to the unknown qualities of life itself, to a mate -- the stronger you must be. You will then not fear to make decisions, to make mistakes, to meet difficulties. You will rely on your own resources, will have the integrity of your own views, will pay the price for selfhood, will assert your rights as you fulfill your obligations freely and willingly, not out of fear of authority or of the consequences of disapproval. The ego strength of such healthy self-assertion makes self-surrender possible. Conversely, the weakness of an ego that fears self-responsibility makes self-surrender, and thus pleasure, impossible. The person who habitually overcharges and exhausts the ego faculties will then seek false relief. Such false relief can take many forms. One of the more crass forms is insanity, where the ego is completely disabled. In less crass cases it takes the form of neurotic manifestations, where the ego is unable to use its faculties of strength, selfhood, and self-responsibility. Or it can take the form of alcoholism, drug addiction, and all the artificial ways of obtaining relief from an overtense ego that is deprived of pleasure because it is too frightened to surrender to the creative process.

It is therefore of primary importance to comprehend what the ego faculties are, how to use them, and where the ego's limitations are. We shall go into greater detail in the future; all I want to say at the moment is this: the ego must know that it is only a servant to the greater being within. Its main function is to deliberately seek contact with the greater self within. It must know its position. It must know that its strength, potentiality, and function is to decide to seek contact, to request help from the greater self, to establish contact permanently with it. Moreover, the ego's task is to discover the obstructions that lie between it and the greater self. Here, too, its task is limited. The realization always comes from within, from the real self, but it comes as a response to the ego's wish to comprehend and to change falseness, destructiveness, error. In other words, the ego's task is to formulate the thought, the intent, the desire, the decision. But its limitation is in the execution of the thought, the intent, the desire.

After it has fulfilled its task of deciding for truthfulness, integrity, honesty, effort, and good will, it must step aside and allow the real self to come forth with its intuition and inspiration that set the pace and direct the individual path. The ego must, again and again, select, decide, intend, in order to follow this development. It must be willing to learn from within and to comprehend the deeper language of the unconscious, which is first quite obscure but later becomes increasingly more obvious. It must learn to interpret the messages of the destructive unconscious, as well as of the still

more deeply unconscious real self, with all its wonderful creativity and constructiveness. The ego must lend its wholehearted support, its one-pointed effort, its most constructive attitude and undivided attention to the inner path. It must know its limitation as to the deep wisdom, the individual rhythm of the path, the timing, the strength to persevere in difficult times, and call upon the unlimited resources of the real self. It must develop a finesse to sense the subtle interplay between the increasingly alert ego and the increasingly more manifest real self, so that it may learn when to be strong and assertive in overcoming resistance, in disclosing excuses and rationalizations, and when to step aside in a more passive, listening and learning attitude. The ego can be likened to hands and arms that move toward the source of life and stop moving when their function is no longer anything else but to receive.

May you all truly benefit by this lecture. May you study it deeply, meditate about it. Study sentence by sentence as it applies to you. Meditate with the wish to make use of it, not only by understanding it theoretically, but by truly seeking that part of yourself that is eternal, that is truly adequate, and that is always in wonderful, ecstatic delight. For this is your birthright. The price is some effort of overcoming laziness, resistance, and false safety devices.

It also includes exploring the conditions that make a connection with the real self possible. The ego self must be compatible with the real self. The real self transcends the flat laws of outer morality, therefore you must have the courage to be in your own truth, rather than paying allegiance to public opinion, to an authority, to society at large. Such submission only happens out of fear and greed, cowardice and opportunism. Thus outer morality is not necessarily a sign of real, inner morality. However, the real self has extremely exacting standards of real morality, of a far deeper nature than the former kind. One must see where selfishness, cruelty, self-centeredness, greed, dishonesty exist, if only in minute form, in the soul. Every such particle, no matter how diluted by genuine goodness, stands in the way -- particularly when it is not recognized, when denied or excused. If you cheat yourself by trying to cheat life, you make yourself incompatible with the laws and power of your own innermost creative being. So discover the areas where you cheat. They may be hidden, indeed, but they always exist to the extent of unhappiness and discontent, hence to the extent you are separated from your real self. Be in peace, be blessed, be in God!

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