

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Greetings, my dearest friends. God bless every one of you. Blessed is this hour.

If you have a sufficient number of questions, it would be good, at this time, to interrupt the sequence of lectures. You have received a great deal of material that you could not possibly have absorbed intellectually, let alone emotionally -- not even to a small degree. True, emotional absorption often comes much later, so it would be impossible to wait for that. To overcrowd you at this time with a rapid succession of difficult material is not advisable. So, if you have some questions, I shall answer them to the best of my ability.

QUESTION: I am confused about moralizing with myself regarding certain superstitions. On the one hand, I know that these superstitions are damaging to me, on the other, I now know that moralizing is not good either.

ANSWER: In your work you have found out why you wish to hold on to these superstitions. I do not have to go into the details. The fact that you even ask this question now is interesting from the point of view of your discovery in this respect. You want to hear me say that you moralize so you can continue holding on to a very damaging and useless defense mechanism.

QUESTIONER: You know me very well.

QUESTION: In a previous lecture about emotional growth and its function, a question was asked as to how to handle very wild emotions at a time when one has no helper available. But what does one do if the emotions are so deep-seated, so deeply buried and repressed, for such a long time, that they simply will not come out to the degree one would like?

ANSWER: It is very important indeed to be able to recognize this fact, and it indicates substantial progress. Such recognition, in itself, indicates insight. More frequently, a person does not know that further emotions are buried and demand to come out in spite of resistance. Your awareness of this certainly means insight and progress. The moment this insight exists the way is opened, even if at the moment you are still unable to do anything about it. In the first place, you should rejoice about this self-recognition, rather than feel bad that you cannot accomplish what you want instantly. Instead of pressuring yourself into a state of bad conscience, relax in the knowledge, "I know where I stand, I know that something in me still resists," and then go about finding out why you resist.

Why are you afraid of letting out your emotions to the full extent? Usually you will find that one of the reasons is the fear that you will be unable to control yourself, to handle these emotions, and that you will be forced to give in to them. Another reason for resisting is that the full scope of

one's repressed emotions comes as a shock because it is so contrary to one's idealized self. The moment you can sense and acknowledge these factors, you can handle the situation, because now you know these reasons to be unreal and invalid. You have learned, for instance, that you can be aware of emotions without having to act on them. You also know that if lack of control exists, then certainly you have less control when they are repressed, and you are unaware of their existence, than with clear awareness and understanding about them. With this knowledge and intent, you have nothing to fear in that direction. As to the fear of discovering that you are not your idealized self-image, you also know how to approach this. You have to learn to accept yourself on the basis of your real values, which you can only find once you take the courageous step of giving up the false values of the idealized self.

QUESTION: I feel the emotions, and they are like a stone in the pit of my stomach. I just can't let them out. I know they are there, but it is like a congestion.

ANSWER: I think it is wonderful that you have this awareness, that you do not repress this insight. This is of great value; it is very constructive. It does not matter that it takes a little more time and work. You have nothing to fear. The only cause for worry is to be utterly unaware of these things.

QUESTION: If the conscience is the voice of the higher self speaking to us, how do you distinguish between this conscience and, say, guilt feelings?

ANSWER: In a past lecture I discussed two kinds of conscience, but I will gladly answer you again since it was a long time ago. In the meantime, further insight and understanding was gained, so that now, with some of the new approaches, a deeper understanding can be reached.

As I explained at the time, there are two kinds of conscience: the conscience of the higher self, and an artificially constructed, superimposed conscience which derives from the idealized self. The moralizing I discussed is a part of this latter conscience. Whenever you do not live up to the super-standards you impose upon yourself, it may appear as the voice of conscience.

The only way you can distinguish between the two is by the way you feel about them. There is a very distinct difference as to how you experience the one or the other. Any words I could give you, any rule I could pronounce, would be very misleading. But I can describe the emotional experience of each.

If it is the voice of the higher self, the real conscience, then there will be no destructive hopelessness, despair with oneself, anger at oneself, impatience. There will be no negative feeling. There will be an insight into one's tendency toward childish selfishness or greed or whatever else, but without being depressed about it. Simultaneously, there will be a simple desire to act on a more mature level -- not because one must be perfect, not because of the fear not to be perfect, but simply because one wants to. There is no compulsive anxiety about the issue. It is a clear decision without pressure which makes you feel thoroughly good, even if it does mean giving up a shortsighted childish advantage, even if it does mean the recognition of undesirable trends in one's character.

On the other hand, when the voice of the idealized self-image speaks, many of these negative feelings will be present. You will feel guilty about existing negative trends while still wanting to have it your way. You will feel fear and anxiety at the thought that you act according to the child in you. This conflict will create more anxiety, more tension and impatience with yourself and others. Should you then decide to carry out the right act, it will make you feel resentful, rather than at peace with yourself. At the same time, the mere fact that you have faults, that you are confused as to the right or wrong course, that you may make a wrong decision and thereby incur criticism or frustration, will plunge you into despair. All this is proof that you have heard the voice of the idealized self-image. The answer as to which of the two consciences you are dealing with can come only if you account for your emotional reactions.

Of course, both may possibly exist side by side, simultaneously. In this case, the right action should not be stopped because in your self-accounting you have discovered that negative motivations, moralizing, and the idealized self happen to want the same thing as the higher self. You should go on doing that which is right, while working on the negative aspect until you can free yourself from it through understanding yourself. Do not automatically refrain from a constructive action merely because you have discovered a negative motivation or a destructive impulse inverted into a forceful compulsive superstandard.

QUESTION: Why do I feel so exhausted all the time? I have seen doctors and they don't find any physical reason.

ANSWER: This condition applies to many people, indeed. One of the general reasons -- and it certainly is the case with you -- is that a great deal of emotions are repressed. You crush not only destructive emotions which you dare not face and acknowledge within yourself so as to come to terms with them, but also valid and constructive desires and aims. You do not heed them out of a general fear of disapproval and a lack of belief in the validity of your aims. You feel that just because you want it, it cannot be valid. The repression of these two sets of emotions consumes a great amount of energy. The energy you thus lose produces a negation of life. There is a feeling of futility about life, of hopelessness, a fear of coping with life's difficulties. It might be said that the tiredness comes from this, but this would be an over-simplification. The chain reaction goes a little further. In other words, because of repression of negative emotions, as well as of positive goals, a futility, lack of self-confidence, and therefore the fear of coping with life's difficulties exists. The tiredness is a result of it. Also, the futility is a result of the tiredness, the tiredness is a result of the futility -- and both are a result of repression. Do you understand?

QUESTION: Yes. How can I overcome it?

ANSWER: My dear, there is only one way -- and that is an extensive search of self-finding, self-realization, facing oneself, followed by the reconstruction of certain personality traits. This is not easy, but it is the only way. There is no quick and easy answer.

QUESTION: I have a question about killing anything that is alive. I have a little girl and, naturally, I have taught her that it is bad to kill anything. However, what do you do when there are vermin in the house?

ANSWER: Well, my dearest friends, I have answered such questions before and I will again. This view of not killing something, even if it is destructive like vermin, for instance, would be extreme fanaticism, and an utter misunderstanding of truth. There is a lower kind of animal life that is destructive, and if you would all abide by the rigid rule that nothing must be killed, you would destroy yourselves. You would not kill germs either. Germs, too, are life-organisms, only smaller. You cannot see them with your ordinary eyes, but life is there. Now where does it all end? If a small, destructive life-organism is maintained because of such a rule, it would eventually destroy the bigger, more important life-organism. By allowing an organism to live due to a rule not to kill, you would kill just the same, though you would not see the act, since the procedure is drawn out. Here you have a typical example of how dangerous and fallacious it is to follow rules blindly. By doing so, you end up doing the very thing the rule forbids. This applies to any truth. Truth carried too far unthinkingly, necessarily becomes an untruth. Truth is never a rigid rule that can be pursued to the end. It is dynamic and flexible and therefore always requires the middle road which can only be attained by responsible thinking and evaluating.

Rigid dogma is based on such rules. The life has been extracted out of the living spirit of truth, and the letter of the law has been substituted. Because people are too lazy to think and too cowardly to make their own decisions based on their own evaluations, they want to adhere to a dead ruling. Then they feel good about doing the right thing. Truth is not that comfortable. It has to be fought for constantly through accounting, thinking, deciding, weighing. It requires a sense of self-responsibility and courage. This applies to everything, including the subject you asked about.

I can foresee another question. It is: On what level of animal life are we to stop? How do we know? There are so many considerations, so many factors we ignore. How can we decide which animal life is predominantly destructive and which is predominantly constructive? This also depends on conditions of a particular civilization and on environmental factors. There is no easy answer here. But again, fanaticism and rigidity will not be the answer. The answer is evolutionary development. The time has not yet arrived when humankind is ready to give up killing higher animal species, but it is not too distant, at least from our point of view. The time will come when humankind will no longer need to eat meat. However, until such time, many other things will first have to change. The next step will be the strict observation of avoiding unnecessary cruelty. This step cannot be skipped by forbidding meat-eating.

Until such time, you can only find within yourself the answer to such questions. Probe yourself. Where do you tend toward rigid fanaticism? Where do you tend to be irresponsible? Every issue demands a different attitude, a new accounting, and a thinking through.

QUESTION: Would you care to elaborate on the distinction between pseudo-euphoric states of elation and genuine elation? The question has been answered by many authorities, but may we hear what you have to say about it?

ANSWER: The first and most important measure in order to establish the answer to this question is to ask oneself what was the motive for wanting such a state of elation. Of course, the first answer will always be "because I wanted to communicate with God. I wanted it in order to develop myself." But do you really develop because you experience this state? Not if it is artificially produced. The only way to distinguish between genuine and pseudo-elation is the honest answer to whether or not an escape from the difficulties of life played a role; whether there is a desire for

pleasure supreme that cannot be attained through healthy means because too much fear and inhibition exist in the soul. A true answer can always, and only, be found if one goes to the roots of oneself and finds these factors.

If you have a particular preoccupation with this subject, this in itself should give rise to suspicion. The predominantly healthy soul will have no particular desire for such euphoric states of elation. Your desire will rather be to procure all the pleasure this life contains by making your soul as healthy as possible. You will find God in that way. You will not need, nor want, to skip a full life-experience under the well-sounding pretext that your aim is communion with God. If you want this, there is a fear in you to meet life full face and you therefore want to avoid it.

True spiritual states of elation come undesired and unexpected. They follow suit after life has truly been lived, and not avoided. They are very rare indeed. They do not represent a shortcut. They are not the result of avoiding life and still desiring development and progress. Many wish this very impossibility. They try to accomplish it by forcing themselves into states of elation that cannot be genuine.

The person who walks the stony, narrow road of real self-facing will, for the longest time, have no such experience whatsoever. He or she will not even crave it. If there is no longing for it, this might indicate a healthy state of mind. The absence of longing means an acceptance of life and a healthy ability to cope with life, or at least a confidence and intention that the ability to cope with life will be gained, in all its favorable and unfavorable aspects, acquiring thereby the ability for happiness, love and pleasure. Super-states of euphoria usually avoid all that. If they are genuine, they come, as I said, only after having tackled life with all its facets.

However, my friends, it is also possible that such a state is a combination of escape and a real foretaste of genuine spiritual experience. A combination of mixed inner trends may have led to this mixture. If the genuine element is there at all, it will lead you away from seeking such experience for the sake of an unconsciously wanted shortcut. You will rather be more determined than ever to give up all inner resistance to face yourself to the utmost. You will recognize that your desire for communion with God existed because you wanted to avoid a communion with yourself. Courage and humility to face oneself with all one's limitations will have increased if only a particle of such an experience were real.

I repeat: To the extent that such experience was genuine, to that extent must the subsequent road lead away from such euphoric states. Does that answer your question?

QUESTION: Yes. But, for instance, in prayer and in meditation one gets, at times, such inner peace and inner happiness, a borderline elation.

ANSWER: Peace, calm, and happiness could not possibly be called a euphoric state of elation. Again, as in the question regarding the two kinds of conscience, you should examine what you feel about this peace. Account for the feeling. In other words, is the peace a result of an unhealthy passivity? Does it contain elements of giving up inner or outer action? Does it mean you now feel that you do not have to do anything further in order to make a go of life? Such unhealthy passivity is as much an indication of distortion as an unhealthy overactivity, haste, pressure, and compulsion. The truth combines activity and passivity in a relaxed way. The knowledge and intent

to live life actively does not include inner unrest. When the feeling of healthy peace exists, strength gathers and results in confidence that you will overcome your obstructions and live life fully. Then the peace is genuine. If, on the other hand, the peace is a momentary, pleasant, relaxed feeling, but after it is gone, no strength remains which is constructively used, then the peace was a false one. Real peace and strength usually follow unpleasant self-recognitions that one has accepted fully.

QUESTION: Isn't lasting improvement also a yardstick?

ANSWER: Yes. What I said before leads to lasting improvement. Such lasting improvement is bound to come if such an experience strengthens the intent and execution of finding one's obstructions and finally resolving them. To expect lasting improvement simply because you have had such an experience is a misunderstanding. The truth is that the experience influences one's actions and attitude to obtain improvement through one's efforts, courage, and humility. There is a subtle but important difference in this outlook. In addition, such an experience is almost always the result of serious efforts in the right direction, and these in turn must produce further efforts.

Moreover, it is certainly not easy to judge what constitutes improvement. As you all know, actual change is such a very gradual process that it passes by almost unnoticed and you only discover it much later. A quick change in one's personality is rarely to be trusted. On the other hand, it may mean great improvement if you can begin to accept yourself as you are, for this is the basis on which to work. This may be unnoticed by anyone else. Real improvements are often subtle.

QUESTION: My question has already been answered in part. It has to do with improvement on the path. Does the improvement occur automatically through self-recognition, or is there any value in certain disciplines that call for resolutions, or promising oneself not to repeat certain patterns?

ANSWER: Promising oneself not to repeat certain patterns may be quite risky, because you cannot help these patterns as long as you do not find the reason for them. Once you have found their existence, you have yet to understand their inner, though false, necessity. For you, they are a necessary defense. As long as these factors are not thoroughly understood and you have not recognized that the defense is destructive and ineffective, that in fact it brings you the very thing you wish to defend against, such promises to yourself would be useless. If you stopped the pattern without the necessary understanding, you would experience extreme anxiety. This, in turn, would produce other destructive patterns. Or, if you continued helplessly in the pattern despite the given promise, you would feel angry at yourself and be discouraged. Or else, you may be in such a conflict about the matter that you repress awareness of the repetition. You repeat it in such a subtle way, perhaps in a slightly different way, that you are no longer aware of it and have to make the recognition all over again.

Hence, promises of this sort are not to be advised. However, discipline of a sort is necessary. For instance, admonishing yourself to face yourself honestly, again and again; or resolving that change takes time and needs a great amount of understanding; or not letting up on efforts of self-observation and taking account of one's actions and reactions. Discipline is also needed to be aware whenever the patterns repeat in variations.

The answer to your question is a combination of discipline in the sense I have indicated and of allowing oneself to unfold in one's entire nature. Only this combination can produce growth, and growth cannot be speeded up.

The necessary step before a destructive pattern can be dispensed with is understanding the inner defense and the need for it. The consequence will be mature acceptance of the results of this destructive defense until such time as the psyche is ready to do without it. This is a necessary preliminary. Without it, maturity is impossible. This stage cannot be shortened. Once you are truly ready to let go of the pattern, you will no longer need promises to yourself. You will not wish to do it, or feel it, or act by it. You will quite naturally grow out of it.

You see, my friends, you have so often a wrong attitude in the hurried approach toward your development. This hurry indicates, on the one hand, a strong idealized self-image, that is, "I must be perfect already." This only fortifies the non-acceptance of yourself as you happen to be now. On the other hand, the hurry also indicates this: "As long as I am imperfect, I have to experience imperfect situations, unfulfillment and frustration. Therefore, I must become perfect in a hurry, so as to be perfectly happy." This includes the childish attitude we have discussed frequently of not accepting life as it really is. The child wants heaven on earth. It is true that at this stage you have already evolved from the state of demanding happiness from life and others, resenting it when not given to you, and disclaiming any responsibility for your wants. You have realized at this point that you are the master of your fate. But you still do not accept that life has to be taken as an imperfect business. The ability to derive happiness from it even though it is not perfect, to accept yourself as average, is the greatest sign of growth and maturity.

In a private session some time ago, I said to one of my friends, and I repeat it here publicly: You have heard many aspects of what constitutes maturity and immaturity. One of the great milestones on the road to maturity is the ability to give up being special or grandiose and to accept yourself as being average, living an average life. If you can derive happiness out of the ordinary and out of being ordinary, then you have truly come a long way. If you do accept yourself and life in that way, you will no longer have to whip yourself into perfection. You will no longer need heaven on earth. You will view your own progress with equanimity. You will no longer feel any frustration or unhappiness as a disaster. You will give yourself time to grow. It goes without saying that if the compulsion to be happy and perfect is eliminated, you will be much happier and more perfect than you were before. Thus you will approach your progress with the right kind of discipline -- not by attempting perfect action, but by giving up the resistance to face what is usually right in front of you and yet hardest to see. You may be quite determined to find yourself. You expect some deep important insights of devastating impact, while the little ordinary things that reveal so much about your problems are right in front of your eyes and you do not see them. To see what is right there requires discipline and wanting to see it.

QUESTION: Isn't prayer a kind of discipline to keep oneself in a certain chosen direction?

ANSWER: Yes. Prayer is a good way not to give up one's efforts in the right direction.

QUESTION: How does a person go about re-establishing an emotional experience about God? I am not speaking about the God of religion, but about the God that is. I know that motives are important. I may want to worship God, which is probably not existent in me. Or I may want it

for the idea of getting something, which is in me. Or I may want it for an intellectual comprehension. I think there might be some need for a father. Those are my motives. I have a few ideas as to where I can get this sense of God. I tried it through my work, from books. Now what do I do, where do I go in order to develop this feeling for God?

ANSWER: As for the motives you cited, they are true, but by no means all. The last one you mentioned is a much stronger factor than you realize and contains many aspects that you still ignore. Moreover, you may not like to hear that you not only have negative motives of which you seem so proud, but there is also a very healthy motive, a real spiritual need which you disregard and do not even want to recognize. But for the moment, the motives are of secondary importance. It is fine that you can enumerate some of them, but it does not matter at this point.

The first consideration is to find out how you attain this inner experience, what to do, where to go. There is only one way -- to attain selfhood. You cannot have a genuine God-experience and trust and belief in God if you do not trust and believe in yourself. To the degree that you do so, you will not only trust other people, but you will also trust God. So my advice is, do not search for God in churches or temples. Do not search for Him through knowledge, books, or teachings. Search for Him in yourself and God will reveal Himself. God is in you. Trust, faith, love, truth -- all these exist in you. No outer knowledge provides you with a genuine God-experience, and, for that matter, you would not even accept it. If you would, it would happen out of unhealthy motives, just as much as the opposite. Learn first to trust yourself, in spite of the many reasons you think you cannot or should not. This path in itself must eventually give you a very healthy trust in yourself. And that is all you need in order to find God.

There are so many people who cling to God just because they do not trust themselves. This is the wrong kind of faith, the wrong approach. This kind of faith is truly built on sand. It is false religion that leads to obedience and fear. It is so destructive, reinforcing weakness instead of strength. That kind of religion you should avoid. Not only is it found in well-known religious denominations, it can also be found in individuals who are not affiliated with any religion. It is a subtle and pervasive poison.

QUESTION: I have noticed that when I confess my faults to another it seems to give them relief and helps them face themselves. Would you care to comment on this?

ANSWER: Yes, this is very true. It is very obvious why this is so. You see in their aloneness and separateness people believe deep down in their emotions -- although they know differently in their minds -- that they are the only ones who have all these weaknesses and faults. They feel themselves ostracized, different, separate -- and therefore it is a great relief to actually be approached by a human being who has the strength to face and pronounce similar weaknesses, faults, or limitations. That gives courage and makes it so much easier to face the self, while the irrational and unconscious belief that you are the only one leads to further repression.

My dearest friends, be blessed, each one of you. May these answers help again to bring you a step forward into the right direction. May a small grain take root in yourselves. May it help you to absorb all the material you have received, even though some of it will be realized only much later. Persevere, my friends, and you will grow into human beings who can love, respect and like yourselves while you are still human, ordinary -- and thus enjoy life without feeling that you have to

be perfect. This will not lead you into the opposite wrong extreme of laziness, without the desire to change and grow. Soon, you will perhaps sense the difference in inner motivation between the urge for development because you use a whip on yourself -- while feeling that you do not deserve happiness but rather punishment because you are imperfect -- and the urge for development because you freely wish it.

Be blessed, all of you and your dear ones. Be in peace. Be in God!

Edited by Judith and John Saly

For information to find and participate in Pathwork activities world wide, please write:

The Pathwork® Foundation
PO Box 6010
Charlottesville, VA 22906-6010, USA
Call: 1-800-PATHWORK, or
Visit: www.pathwork.org

The following notices are for your guidance in the use of the Pathwork® name and this lecture material.

Trademark/Service Mark

Pathwork® is a registered service mark owned by The Pathwork Foundation, and may not be used without the express written permission of the Foundation. The Foundation may, in its sole discretion, authorize use of the Pathwork® mark by other organizations or persons, such as affiliate organizations and chapters.

Copyright

The copyright of the Pathwork Guide material is the sole property of The Pathwork Foundation. This lecture may be reproduced, in compliance with the Foundation Trademark, Service Mark and Copyright Policy, but the text may not be altered or abbreviated in any way, nor may the copyright, trademark, service mark, or any other notices be removed. Recipients may be charged the cost of reproduction and distribution only.

Any person or organization using The Pathwork Foundation service mark or copyrighted material is deemed to have agreed to comply with the Foundation Trademark, Service Mark and Copyright Policy. To obtain information or a copy of this policy, please contact the Foundation.