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## THE CONCEPT OF EVIL

Greetings, my dearest friends. May this lecture prove helpful, and thus a blessing. May these words shed light and clarification into your groping search for liberation.

I should now like to discuss a topic that I have, so far, touched upon only indirectly: the concept of evil. Traditional religion postulates that evil is a separate force. According to this concept, people have to cope with making the decision between good and evil. Some philosophies postulate that there is no such a thing as evil: it is only an illusion and in reality it does not exist. This statement is often misunderstood even by the proponents of this philosophy. The denial of manifestations of evil is as illusory as the belief that evil represents a separate aspect in the universe.

In this lecture I would like to present a deeper understanding of evil, which will be extremely helpful for all my friends who are deeply involved in the processes of self-finding.

Evil is, or results from, numbness and a confusion about the execution of control. Why is evil numbness? When you think of the defense mechanisms operating in the human psyche, the connection between numbness and evil becomes quite clear. Children who feel hurt, rejected, and helplessly exposed to pain and deprivation often find that numbing their feelings is their only protection against suffering. This is often a useful and quite realistic protective device.

Likewise, when children are confused because they perceive contradiction and conflict around them, equally contradictory emotions arise in their own psyche. Children cannot cope with either. Numbness is also a protection against their own contradictory responses, impulses, and reactions. Under such circumstances, it might even be a salvation. But when such numbness has become second nature and is maintained long after the painful circumstances have changed and when the person is no longer a helpless child, this, in the smallest measure, is the beginning of evil; this is how evil is born.

Numbness and insensitivity toward one's own pain in turn means equal numbness and insensitivity toward others. When examining one's reactions closely, one might often observe that the first spontaneous reaction to others is a feeling for and with them, a compassion or empathy, a participation of the soul. But the second reaction restricts this emotional flow. Something clicks inside and seems to say no, which means that a protective layer of unfeelingness has formed. In that moment one stands separate -- apparently safe but separate. Later this separateness may be overcompensated by false sentimentality, dramatization, and insincere exaggerated sympathy. But these are only substitutes for the numbness. The numbness, instituted for oneself, inevitably spreads to others, just as every attitude toward the self is bound to expand toward others.

We might differentiate between three stages of numbness. First, numbness toward the self, a protective mechanism. Second is the numbness toward others. In this stage, it is a passive attitude of indifference that enables one to watch others suffer without feeling discomfort oneself. Much of the world's evil is caused by this state of soul. Because it is less crass, in the long run it is more harmful, for active cruelty induces quicker counterreactions. Passive indifference, however, born out of numbing the feelings, can go unnoticed because it can so easily be camouflaged. It permits the person to follow the most selfish impulses without open detection. Indifference may not be as actively evil as cruelty acted out, but it is just as harmful in the long run.

The third stage of numbness is actively inflicted cruelty. This stage arises from fear of others who seem to expect such acts, or from an inability to cope with pent-up rages, or from a subtle process of strengthening the protective device of numbness. At first, this may appear incomprehensible. But when you think about it deeply, you will find that people may occasionally, almost consciously, find themselves on the brink of a decision: "Either I allow my feelings to reach out in empathy with the other, or, in order to deflect this strong influx of warm feelings, I have to behave in the exact opposite way." The next moment such reasoning is gone, the conscious decision forgotten, and what remains is a compelling force toward cruel acts.

In these instances, all harm, all destructiveness, all evil results from denying the spontaneous real self, and substituting secondary reactions that in one way or another are always connected with fear.

The borderline between passive numbness and active cruelty is often very thin and precarious, very much dependent upon apparently outer circumstances. If people understand these processes not only intellectually but within themselves, they are adequately equipped to cope with the world's cruelty, which so often gives rise to despair, doubt, and confusion.

Active cruelty numbs the person who perpetrates it to an even greater extent; it not only prohibits the influx of spontaneous positive feelings but also wards off fear and guilt. The act of inflicting pain on others simultaneously kills off one's own ability to feel. Hence, it is a stronger device to attain numbness.

You must always distinguish between the active deeds of either indifference or cruelty, and emotional tendencies. The indifference or numbness may not be actively executed; it is possible to experience this nonparticipation and numbness but not act upon it. You may do all you can to help another, perhaps sometimes even overdo it, just because you do not wish, on the conscious level, to be so indifferent. The desire to hurt others may exist merely as an emotion, without ever being acted upon. However, when you feel guilt, you do not differentiate between these vital manifestations, so it makes no difference whether you feel or act in destructive, harmful ways. Hence, the entire trouble area is denied, pushed out of consciousness, where it can no longer be corrected. Admitting, acknowledging, facing an emotion, no matter how undesirable, can never harm the self or others and is eventually bound to dissolve the negative feeling. Confusing the impulse with the deed and therefore denying both, results in extreme disturbance for the self, indirectly affecting others, with no hope of change as long as the process remains unconscious.

Seen in this light, it will be clear that numbness in its extreme becomes active cruelty. The difference between these two is only in degree. It is exceedingly important for you to understand

this, my friends. For those who are most shocked, afraid of, and unable to cope with the existing cruelty in the world, and suffer most by the mere knowledge that it exists have inevitably made themselves numb in some way and consequently suffer from guilt. Therefore a correlation must exist between one's numbness and one's approach or attitude toward the evil aspects of life. Some may be overly burdened, some may be overly sentimental, still others may be overly tough and indifferent toward the existence of evil. Any such overreaction must be connected with the numbness that, in some respect, has been instituted in the psyche. At one time this numbness seemed like the only available protection; later it was unwittingly maintained.

The second facet of evil relates to control. We have discussed the importance of relinquishing too tight a control and the failure to use those controls and powers you have at your disposal for attaining a full, rich life. The imbalance this failure creates induces rigidity where flexibility should exist, as well as a helpless loss of self where resilient firmness should prevail. The imbalance is always caused by the ignorance of, and lack of differentiation between, outer and inner self.

All suffering is related to helplessness. The greater the helplessness, the less the person is able to avoid pain. Children are, by their very nature, helpless, weak, dependent. Hence, the suffering they may experience requires some means, such as the numbing process, of weakening its impact.

The helplessness continues to exist in adults whose psyches have remained childish or immature. The trouble spots in one's inner life are always marked by this feeling of utter helplessness, while in the healthy areas this feeling is absent. It is obvious that helplessness and lack of control are very much connected. Since helplessness causes pain, pain causes numbness, and numbness leads to evil, it becomes clear that imbalance and lack of control are also connected with evil.

On a broader scale, helplessness is one of humanity's greatest problems. The significance of this is vastly overlooked. People feel helpless toward their own body. There is a considerable area where you have control. This area broadens to the extent that you have found your inner, or real, self. Where you are distorted and the real self is hidden from your outer awareness, control ends. It is then that you feel helpless, weak, afraid.

The relationship between your body, your feelings, and your personal life circumstances is the same when it comes to control. You have direct control over certain of your bodily functions. You can move your skeletal muscles at will. You can determine with your outer, or ego self, when and how to use certain muscles, when and how to move. In fact, a number of your physical functions are under the direct jurisdiction of your outer will and cannot work unless outer will is exerted. To summarize, all voluntary body functions are under the direct control of your outer ego.

But there is a vast area of your body the outer will cannot directly reach. These functions are not under the jurisdiction of the outer will. They work in perfect order without any deliberate or determined action of your will. They cease to function well without any apparent determination of your outer will. The inner bodily functions are not governed by outer control. This is frightening for you, because you do not understand it. You feel you have no power over a vast area of your body, and are at its mercy.

The same applies to psychic processes. You have indisputable control over a vast area of your actions, over the words you speak, over your choice of thoughts. You seem to have no control over your spontaneous feeling reactions. This, too, can be quite frightening. You may want to feel one thing but you cannot make yourself do so. You may hate to feel another emotion, but you are unable to prevent it. From suppression and repression, as you all know, strange and even more disquieting compulsions arise, with the result that you feel even more helpless in the grip of your own personality. Even though such thoughts may not be put into concise words, the feeling is: "If I do not even have jurisdiction over my body or my own reactions and feelings; and if a frightening power which I do not know and cannot control seems to be at work within me, how much more helpless must I be in the face of life itself?"

Actually, the correlation between the self and life is very direct. You do not have any more control over the faculties of your inner body and psychic processes than you have over your life; nor do you have less. To the extent that you have found the key to your inner processes, you have found the key to the apparently fateful occurrences governing your life.

Unfathomable fate seems to control your inner body, your spontaneous reactions, and a number of outer circumstances. But is it true that you must be separated from your inner faculties? Do you really have no control over them? Or can a connection be established between your consciousness and your inner body, your spontaneous feelings and your life?

The same relationship exists in life as between body and feelings. You have direct control over certain happenings. Your outer, direct will can determine certain actions which you know are bound to produce certain effects. If you do this, it must have that effect. But then, as with the body and the world of your feelings, there is an area where this immediate, direct control ceases. Hence the relationships with your body, your inner world of feelings, and your outer life are all the same. They are divided by a borderline up to which you have obvious direct influence to mold events and results, and beyond which this seems not to be so. There another power appears to be at work over which you have no jurisdiction, a power you do not understand and therefore fear.

From this idea that a strange, independent power seems to play with you, the concept of an outer God has arisen -- a God who needs to be implored and appeased. Finding the true nature of this power is the ultimate aim of human spiritual development.

The spirit knows that human destiny is to find the true nature of this power, and to extend this power over fate. But this message, coming from the depths of your spiritual being, often reaches the outer regions of the personality in a mangled, distorted way because of all the misconceptions and confusions. You strive toward this end, but in the wrong way. You often attempt it by tensing your outer will and trying to assert it over regions where it has no jurisdiction. You thus misdirect the will faculties of your outer ego.

Those of you, my friends, who have grown through years of effort in this pathwork have occasionally noticed that where you were once helpless, you are no longer helpless at all. You not only discover power, strength, resourcefulness, and adequacy -- qualities you never dreamed you possessed -- but you also begin to see that a remote control seems to be at work, governing your fate and your outer life circumstances. You realize that your control expands. You experience how the

areas where you lack control recede, and the new-found areas of control are not under direct control but work by remote control.

This extension of control does not, and cannot, happen through a rigid tightening of the ego forces -- of will, or mind, or reasoning. It happens instead by an indirect process of remote control, which eventually becomes direct. To be more specific: your ego faculties have to be used, but not in the way this is usually attempted. They can and must be used to diminish the strength of outer will. The idea that outer will is omnipotent must be relinquished, and the outer faculties must entrust themselves to the inner.

At first this may appear confusing, or even contradictory, but when you comprehend it more deeply, you will undoubtedly come to understand, once again, the work we are involved with here. When you understand that there is a vaster intelligence immediately very accessible within yourself -- no faraway deity separated from you, but an immediate and integral part of yourself -- when you realize this, you will know that what I have said here is true. You will see, at first, remote control working where there had been absolutely no intervention, connection, or control. And eventually remote control will turn into more direct control. At first, this cannot be more than a theory you must test with good faith, willingness, and openness. Later, the theory is bound to turn into fact, into experienced reality.

If you wish to exert control over areas inaccessible to your outer will -- for example, inner body processes -- you overexert yourself, weakening your energies and courting disappointment and frustration. If you understand, however, that all inner processes -- inner body, inner feelings, and inner life, manifesting in fate and apparently coming from outside -- can be governed only by the inner person, you will not waste valuable ego energy. Instead, you will use your outer mind to make contact with the inner self, so it does what needs to be done. When you realize this, it becomes feasible.

Now, how can the inner self be activated? It cannot be activated by itself, for it responds only to consciousness. Your outer, as well as inner consciousness has the power to direct this inner being, with all its marvelous resourcefulness, with its intelligence and power. This inner being, in turn, has jurisdiction over the inner processes. People have no inkling about the limitless possibilities, extending far above and beyond what they believe to be natural law. Once they are understood, the true significance of life, and of meditation, will be absorbed, lived, experienced. There will no longer be a problem or confusion about the use of faculties.

What is vastly overlooked is that the limitations of the outer ego faculties exist only as long as you fail to understand that these same ego faculties must be used to directly contact the inner self, which then controls all inner faculties -- including body, feelings, and apparent fate. The outer consciousness must be used to activate the inner consciousness. In spite of the tremendous power of the latter, it responds only to a direct, deliberate effort of the outer mind. It is this two-step, indirect approach to the power of the inner self that establishes what I have called remote control.

This control begins to work more and more as the personality removes distortions and misconceptions embedded in the psyche. These distortions create a barrier between the outer and the inner consciousness. But as more insight is gained, little by little, and the destructive attitudes change, the cooperation between the outer and inner self extends the areas of control.

At first, this appears to be almost coincidental. Occasional certainties are put in doubt again by unavoidable relapses. You know quite well that in the process of growth problems do not vanish in one sweep. Remnants are left that continue to act up, until all distortions disappear. What was once a mysterious and random fate to which one was helplessly exposed, over which one had no control, becomes gradually visible as cause and effect operating by remote control, as opposed to the direct control of outer faculties. And as development continues, remote control becomes more and more direct. Then inner and outer faculties become one. And as this process continues, control -- when to let go of the outer ego faculties, when to relinquish tight over-control, and when to use outer will in the proper way -- is no longer a problem. Nor is it necessary any longer to numb oneself, to cope with helpless exposure to pain; for you are no longer helpless.

My dearest friends, the absorption, understanding, the knowing and experiencing of all this is of great importance for every one of you for your pathwork.

Are there any questions now?

QUESTION: I would like to connect what you said with a problem I have. It seems that I have a tendency to feel overburdened by the cruelty existing in the world. Going back to my childhood, I discovered that one of my pseudo-solutions is to withdraw. Now, when I do withdraw, I automatically withdraw my love. Is there guilt involved in this?

ANSWER: Yes, but there are also other ramifications. As I have explained in this lecture, when you withdraw love, you become numb. Although this numbness during childhood was a protective shield against cruelty from the outside, it does not prevent the negative emotions in the inner makeup, such as rage, fear, anger, from arising. These emotions cannot be numbed. They can only be hidden. This, then, increases guilt. If you were to translate into concise words what is taking place in the personality, you would say, "Here I am, fearing the cruelty from the outside, fearing the rage and the indifference of the world. The injustice of others is due to their insensitivity to me. In my fear of this injustice, this insensitivity, indifference, cruelty and rage, I make myself as numb as they must be." The guilt expresses clearly that one resents in others what one feels compelled to perpetuate, in the misunderstanding that a similar, though disguised, trend is a protection. The psyche says, "I stop myself from warm, loving feelings to protect myself. In spite of the numbing effect on certain emotions, I cannot desensitize my own rage and anger." This, then, compounds the guilt.

QUESTION: Regarding the physical functions that are beyond our control: is it this rage and anger, as well as the guilt, that create sickness?

ANSWER: Of course. Let me put it this way: All the destructive emotions that are hidden underground create problems, hazards, difficulties that manifest in the physical, emotional, or mental system, or in the outer life circumstances of a person. It is true that these hidden negative emotions, that come from distorted values and wrong concepts, create illness. But it is also true that the outer self can have access to the inner self to create a state of helpless endurance, instead of correcting, healing, improving and preventing negative occurrences in the future. When one feels one is a victim of fate, of powers outside one's control, one is likely to overlook the most obvious and direct resources.

The knowledge that the outer and inner self have to cooperate to bring order, harmony, truth, and fulfillment will enable people to use their energies in the right direction. It is the inner being that builds, maintains and re-institutes health. Ignoring its presence and its power must make people helpless victims. It is the inner being that can create a constructive life, in which everything is given that is needed from the outside, because no inner barriers exist. It is the inner person who has to be contacted with the outer, ego faculties of will and mind. This should be done very simply and directly. But what stands in the way must be removed. The removal, too, happens faster and more adequately when the inner being is enlisted.

Let us finish this lecture with the following suggestion for meditation. Let us combine control through the inner being with giving up the unconscious deliberate numbness. The way to approach the relationship between the outer ego faculties of mind and will and the inner being for the purpose of eliminating numbness might be the following:

"My outer-directed will cannot reach those areas where I have numbed my perception, experience, feeling, and sensitivity. Therefore, I wish to contact my inner being of higher intelligence and greater power than my outer mind, to take the necessary steps to defrost these faculties: to bring them to life, so that I will become a fully functioning human being. Wherever there is fear and misconception, I wish to understand them so that I may eliminate what stands in the way. It is the useless prohibitions I do not yet quite know that cause me to be only partly alive. I want to be fully alive. To bring this about, I contact the inner self to help eliminate obstructions, bring to my consciousness what I need to know, so that I will reawaken and live in the state of fulfillment, selfhood, and beauty."

You do not need to repeat these words exactly; use your own words, your individual way of verbalizing and expressing the essence of these thoughts. This would be the approach, my friends.

Be blessed, every one of you, in the continuation of your path. May you feel, every one of you, the light of truth and love that life could be if you so choose. When you take the right and constructive steps to integrate the outer and the inner being, through actively establishing contact between them, life can be infinitely more than you could wish for. Life is no more and no less than what you allow it to be, the best or the worst -- or the many grades in-between. Life is no more and no less than what your consciousness expresses. The limits you set on your fulfillment, like the limits you believe exist regarding control, are entirely arbitrary; they depend on your belief. To the extent that you know the powers of your inherent faculties, you will possess the world; but these inherent powers dwell in the inner person, not in the outer ego self.

The extent of the realization of your inner faculties depends on the sum total of your consciousness, on your beliefs, your concepts, your expressions. All this, in turn, depends on how free your inner being is to manifest, or how obstructed it is. When you have numbed your feelings, the inner self is inactivated. It alone is capable of making you and life one -- in the best sense of the word.

Be in peace, be in God!

Edited by Judith and John Saly

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