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THE MEANING OF EVIL AND ITS TRANSCENDENCE

Greetings, blessings to all my old and new friends here. And welcome to all those who have already made progress in their attempt to find the truth of their innermost being, and to all those who have not yet taken active steps. Your being here signifies a conscious and unconscious search for the real meaning of your lives. Although this lecture is a sequel to the one I gave before the summer recess, it also constitutes a new beginning. It should be as meaningful to work back from it as it is to go forward.

Human beings are continually confronted with the deep problem of how to handle the destructive forces residing within themselves and others. This problem seems unending, for ever since the beginning of human existence, theories and philosophies have been built around it. Your search has always been concerned, directly or indirectly, with this great issue. All suffering really comes exclusively from one's own destructiveness, negativity, or evil -- whatever name you give it. The great difficulty you are up against is that you are trying to solve this problem within the system of duality. You conceive of two opposite forces: a constructive one opposed to a destructive one: good opposed to evil. The moment you become involved in duality you are unable to solve the problem. You begin to negate, deny, evade, repress whatever is destructive in you. Consequently, you are partly unaware of your destructiveness and totally incapable of seeing how it manifests. In other words, you are forced to act out the destructiveness indirectly -- with very damaging results. Thus your guilt compounds because the evil you hoped to eliminate only increases when it is repressed and acted out indirectly.

In this dualistic approach you become split within yourself, for you reject a whole part of yourself that is the source of essential, potent creative energy without which you can never be a full human being. Your sense of awareness dims as you repress the undesirable part of yourself. The less aware you are, the weaker you become, and therefore more confused and less able to solve this, or any other problem.

The pathwork is, of course, primarily concerned with facing these undesirable parts in order to remove the self-imposed blindness. You will find again and again that such confrontation, rather than bringing the devastation you fear, wakes up vital energy and makes you a more integrated person. The problem that still remains for all of you, however, is how to cope with the undesirable material that begins to manifest.

Meditation is most important, for without the greater mind, the little mind is unable to bring change. But it is also necessary to have clear concepts and outlines. Your mental concepts must be more accurate, aligned with truth, otherwise false ideas, or even vagueness, will create a block. If, for example, you conceive of the greater intelligence within you as having power to make the

destructive force disappear, your meditation and request for help will remain unanswered. Any vague and hazily misconceived process will set up a stumbling block.

Most religions take a dualistic approach to the great question of evil, seeing it as a force opposed to good. The dualistic approach reinforces your fear of yourself and your guilt; therefore, it only increases the chasm within your soul. The energies of fear and guilt are used to force yourself to be good. The blindness, compulsion, and the artificial concept of life that accompany this forcing create self-perpetuating patterns, with many negative ramifications.

On the other hand, there are also philosophies which postulate that evil just does not exist; it is an illusion. This philosophy is as true as its religious opposite, which recognizes the danger of evil, its life-defeating power, and the unhappiness and suffering it brings. The postulate that evil is an illusion is true in the sense that there is innately only one great creative power. There is union, for all is one in the consciousness of those who have transcended duality.

As is so often true, both of these opposing teachings express great truths, but the exclusiveness with which they are conceived and perpetuated ultimately renders their truth untrue. The denial of evil as a reality leads to wishful thinking, further blindness, and the denial of the self; it decreases rather than increases awareness. A false picture of reality is created -- the reality of the present state of humankind.

I recapitulate. To deny evil on humanity's present plane of consciousness is as unrealistic as to believe that two separate forces exist: one good and one evil. Such a belief implies that the evil force must be destroyed or whisked away, as if anything could be made to disappear in the universe! You must struggle between these two alternatives to find the answers. This lecture is an attempt to help you.

Both views of evil lead to repression; yet acknowledging evil also leads to the possibility of further destructiveness. It might lead to justifying and condoning truly undesirable things, such as self-righteous acting out. In such a case it is the guilt that would be repressed, creating further splitting and duality. Let us now try to find a way to deal with this problem that can avoid either one of these pitfalls. Let us try to reconcile these two general approaches to evil.

You have all experienced how threatened, anxious, and uncomfortable you feel when you are confronted with some of your undesirable attitudes, traits, and characteristics. This reaction must be understood in a much deeper way. Too much is taken for granted and glossed over by simply giving the reaction a name and then letting it go at that.

The meaning of such fearful, uncomfortable, anxious reaction is plainly an expression that says, "Such and such should not exist in me." All the defenses you have so painstakingly erected serve to protect you not only from the evil of others, but primarily from your own. If you examine the cause each time you feel anxious, you will always find that, in the last analysis, you are apprehensive of your own evil, regardless of how threatening another person or an outside event appears. If you then translate this anxiety into clear-cut words, thus verbalizing your inner thought that certain attitudes or feelings "should not exist in me," you can then confront your attitude toward evil in a much better way. For the evil itself is not half as damaging as your attitude to it. We shall come back to this later.

From now on, instead of habitually evading, which breeds emotional illness, problems, and suffering, catch your fear and the thought behind the fear: "I should not be that way." If this fear is ignored, the problem becomes worse.

Our aim on this path is precisely the knowing and acceptance of the evil. The word "acceptance" has been used a great deal for lack of a better one, but the meaning often gets lost behind the word, so we must pay more attention to how this acceptance comes about. For only when acceptance occurs in the right way can evil be incorporated and re-formed in the truest sense of the word. You can then transform a force that has gone awry. Most human beings totally forget or ignore the fact that what is worst in them is essentially highly desirable creative power and universal flow and energy. Only when you truly realize this, my friends, will you learn to cope with every aspect of yourself.

Almost all human beings, with very, very few exceptions, cope with only a small part of themselves. They accept, know, and only want to know, a relatively small part of their total personality. This limitation is, of course, a terrible loss. Not being aware of that within which is undesirable in its present manifestation shuts them off from what is already clear, liberated, purified, good. It also prevents most individuals from loving and respecting themselves because they have no real perception of their divine heritage. Their actual, already manifest goodness seems unreal, even fake, because they refuse to tackle the destructive elements in themselves. But what is even more important and fundamental is that shutting off this undesirable part causes it to remain stagnant and paralyzed so that it cannot change.

The price of recognizing and accepting the destructive, evil aspect of the self seems high, but it really is not. By contrast, the price of denying it is enormous. You may grope in confusion until you find a way to accept your destructive impulses and desires without condoning them; to understand them without identifying with them. You must learn to evaluate such impulses and desires realistically, without falling into the trap of projection, self-justification, self-righteous exoneration while blaming others on the one hand, or, on the other, of self-indulgence, denial, repression and evasion. Such understanding requires continual inspiration from the higher forces within and deliberate requests for help in awakening and maintaining awareness of these destructive aspects and of the proper method to handle them.

Whenever you are in an unpleasant mood, a threatening situation, confusion and darkness, you can be sure that regardless of the outer circumstances, the problem arises from denial and fear of your own destructive attitudes, and your ignorance about how to handle them. Admitting this brings immediate relief and deactivates these negative powers almost instantly. Learn by what steps you can incorporate this power rather than shut it off.

The first step must be applying the theory that destructiveness, evil, is not a final separate force. You must think about this not merely in general, philosophical terms. Rather, you must take the specific aspects of yourself that make you feel guilty and afraid, and apply this knowledge to all that is most distasteful in yourself and others. No matter how ugly some of those manifestations are -- whether it be cruelty, spite, arrogance, contempt, selfishness, indifference, greed, cheating, or something else -- you can bring yourself to realize that every one of these traits is an energy current, originally good and beautiful and life-affirming.

By searching in this direction, you will come to understand and experience how this or that specific hostile impulse was originally a good force. When you understand that, you will have made a substantial inroad toward transforming the hostility and freeing the energy that has either been channelled in a truly undesirable, destructive way, or become frozen and stagnant. Articulate clearly the insight that these ugly traits, whatever they may be, are a power that can be used any way you wish. This power -- the same energy that may now manifest as hostility, envy, hatred, rage, bitterness, self-pity, or blame -- can become a creative power to build happiness, pleasure, love, expansion, for yourself and others around you.

The list of negative traits could be extended, but that is unnecessary, for they are only variations on the same theme. You all know these things in yourself, or at least you have begun to know them. Still, after all this time, it is not yet possible for any of you to truly understand that what you dislike most in yourself is essentially a highly desirable, creative power. You dislike it because it is not desirable in the form it manifests at the moment. In other words, you have to learn to acknowledge that the way the power manifests is undesirable, but the energy current behind this manifestation is desirable in itself, for it is made of the life-stuff itself. It contains consciousness and creative energy. It contains every possibility to manifest and express life, to create new life. It contains all the best of life, as you experience it -- and much more. So, too, the best of life that has revealed itself to you contains the possibility of the very worst. If you can envisage the possibilities of all life manifestations, because life is a continuous flowing, moving, ongoing process, you can never become fixated on finalities, which create error, confusion, duality.

You will see that by denying the evil in you, you do greater harm to the whole of your personality, to your manifest spirituality, than you realize. For by denying it, you inactivate an essential part of your energies and creative forces, so they stagnate. From stagnation, putrefaction follows. Matter putrefies when it stagnates, when it can no longer move. The same is true of consciousness: it putrefies when it stagnates. Life is a continuously flowing process. When it stands still, death temporarily manifests. Since life is eternal, the death can be only temporary. This applies not only to human beings, to entities, but also to matter and energy. As long as the energy flow is arrested, death takes place and lasts until the energy flow is released again. This is the manifestation and yet another meaning of death on this plane of consciousness.

The principle also applies to an object: when it rots or disintegrates, the energy within it has been arrested. This arrested energy must, at some point, start flowing again -- perhaps long after this particular manifestation.

Matter is always a condensation and manifestation of consciousness and energy. The way the energy flows -- or does not flow -- and the form it takes when it condenses depends on the attitude of consciousness "behind," or, rather, intrinsic to a particular aspect of creation.

By the same token, destructiveness is another erroneous form of consciousness. It must lead, either directly through acting out and giving it direct expression, or indirectly, through denial, that is stagnation, to a negation of life. This is why some supposedly negative emotions are actually desirable. For instance, anger can further life and be directed against the negation of life. Denial of anger turns into hostility, cruelty, spite, self-hate, guilt, confusion between blame of others and blame of self, and is thus a destructive energy current.

Death will become superfluous, will be overcome, when energy is no longer stagnant, when it is allowed to move. This can happen on the level of mind first, when evil is understood to be intrinsically a divine energy flow, momentarily distorted due to specific wrong ideas, concepts and perceptions. Thus it is no longer rejected in its essence but assimilated. This is precisely what you find most difficult to do. In fact, you find it so difficult that you tend to forget even those aspects in you that are already free of distortion, evil, and destructiveness, that are really liberated and clear, that are good and beautiful and divine.

All your striving and goodwill is beautiful. Even your pangs of conscience, notwithstanding the misplaced guilt, spring from the best and most beautiful manifestations of consciousness. You will deny, ignore, fail to experience this best in you as long as you deny, ignore, fail to experience the evil in you. You distort your concept of yourself when you deny any part of yourself, no matter how ugly it may be in its present form.

The essential key to totally integrating the evil is understanding its original nature and the indwelling possibility that it may manifest again in its original form. This must be the aim, my friends. As long as you try to become good by denying evil, by forcing yourself to be what you cannot yet be, and what you can in fact never be, you remain in a painful state of inner split, partial self-denial, and paralysis of vital forces within you. I say "what you can never be," because if your expectation is to destroy or magically whisk away a vital part of yourself and not to accept the intrinsic desirability of all the creative energy contained in even your most destructive aspects you cannot become whole. Cultivate this altered attitude.

The new attitude of acceptance does not mean condoning, excusing, or rationalizing your undesirable aspects. Quite the contrary: it means fully acknowledging them, giving honest expression to them, without finding excuses or blaming others, but not feeling hopeless and self-rejecting about them either. This seems like a tall order, but it is certainly possible to acquire this attitude if you make a sincere effort and truly pray that guidance be given to you for this very purpose.

When you no longer negate your ugliness, you will no longer have to negate your beauty. There is so much beauty in every one of you that is already free. You actually manifest beauty that you totally negate, ignore, fail to perceive and experience! And I do not mean only potential, as yet to be developed beauty; I mean beauty that is really present.

You can think of this and pray for awareness, as you pray for awareness of the ugliness. When you can perceive both, not just one, exclusive of the other, you will have made a substantial step toward a realistic perception of life and of yourself that will enable you to integrate what now tears you asunder.

By keeping both your beauty and your ugliness in mind at all times, you will also see both sides in others. You tend to completely reject and negate people whose destructiveness you perceive, and react to them exactly as you do toward yourself. Or you emotionally react to their goodness and inner beauty, while unrealistically overlooking their ugly side. You cannot yet grasp the presence of duality in yourself, and therefore neither can you see it in others. This creates continual conflicts and strife. Only by accepting the duality can you truly transcend it.

No expansion of consciousness, no integration and transcendence is possible when consciousness is dimmed, when awareness is blocked. Awareness of the evil must be blocked off when it is viewed as if it were totally unacceptable, when you fail to realize that evil is only a distortion of a divine creative power current. Such distortion and lack of awareness cause you to deny and paralyze the creative process itself.

Every once in a while I refer back to the main sources of distortion and destructiveness: selfwill, pride, and fear. Offhand, it may appear odd to claim that these three traits are more responsible for evil than the evil traits themselves, including spite, cruelty, envy, hostility, and selfishness. How can pride, selfwill or fear be more destructive than, say, hate? The answer to such questions is really simple. The overtly destructive attitudes are never the real evil. If you truly acknowledge them, you remain in the flow. The greatest hatred, the most spiteful vindictiveness, the worst impulses of cruelty, if honestly and squarely admitted, neither acted out irresponsibly nor repressed and denied, but fully accepted, will never become harmful. To the degree they are seen, faced, and admitted, such feelings will diminish in intensity and must sooner or later convert into flowing, life-giving energy. Hate will turn into love, cruelty into healthy aggression and self-assertion, stagnation into joy and pleasure. This is inevitable.

What I say is no mere theory. Many of you have experienced this conversion of emotions whenever you chanced to hit upon the right blend of self-acceptance. But you have to grope for this realization again and again until it becomes second nature and is no longer forgotten. When you blindly and self-righteously act out destructiveness, you do express evil. By denying its existence, you stagnate vital creative energy, which putrefies in you. By squarely recognizing the evil, you neither act it out, nor deny it. This releases your creative energy flow.

Pride, selfwill, and fear are all forms of denial and are therefore more dangerous than the evils they deny. My friends on the path have experienced how true this is: To the degree evil is properly faced, self-acceptance, self-liking, new energy and deeper love and pleasure ensue. But pride, selfwill, and fear make this healing attitude impossible. Selfwill is too bent upon its own insistence that it is unwilling to accept present reality. It wishes to be already in a higher state of consciousness; it wants to be better than it is now. But it fails because it is impossible to grow out of something one is too self-willed to admit. Selfwill creates rigidity and rigidity is contrary to the flow of life. Selfwill says, "I do not accept reality as it is now; it must be my way, and I insist that it is." This attitude makes admission of the momentary truth impossible.

Pride says, "I do not want to have such ugly traits in me." Truth, however, requires both flexibility and humility. It also requires courage. Fear assumes that acceptance and acknowledgement of the ugliness will make this ugliness overwhelming. So fear also denies the justified faith in the benign order of Creation. If truthful admission of what truly exists would mean doom, annihilation, danger, chaos, the logical sequence of this assumption would then be that the world is built on deceit, pretense, negation. Even though such thoughts are hardly ever actually articulated, for they are senseless, many individuals unwittingly build their lives on these assumptions. Their attitudes express this underlying life-orientation.

To give up selfwill does not diminish the free spirit of self-expression. Neither does it diminish your genuine dignity when you give up the pride that hides the evil. Evil does not

overwhelm and take you over when you choose to abandon the fear of it. Quite the contrary is true on all these counts.

It is never a destructive impulse itself that presents the real damage and harm, but always the attitude toward it. This is why people who incorporate and accept their negative aspects find to their immense surprise the contrary of their apprehensive expectation: their self-respect and self-liking will increase.

So this is, my friends, what you have to learn. A lot of ground must still be covered by every one of you, even though the words sound all too familiar. So far you are nowhere near actually putting these words into effect. The more you do, the more joy will increase in your life, the more instrumental you will become in shaping your fate -- not through ego control but through your real capacity to create with the life-energy at your disposal. The key is learning to encounter the destructive force so that you can transform it back to its original nature, thus incorporating it into your whole being.

Are there any questions?

QUESTION: As this lecture says, there are things in me that I feel are wrong, evil. Yet I enjoy them; they feel pleasurable. But I feel guilty. For instance, I overspend money. I negate that aspect of myself completely. Can you help me?

ANSWER: This is a good example. I hope to hear many more personal problems like this, so I can help you specifically with them.

Now, what you describe is so typical. You negate everything about your destructive impulse. You are thus confronted with an insoluble predicament: either you give up all pleasure connected with overspending and irresponsibility in order to become decent, mature, realistic, self-responsible and safe, or you take pleasure from the negative trait but at the tremendous cost of guilt, self-deprivation, insecurity, and fear of not being able to run your own life.

Once you see that behind the compulsion to overspend and be irresponsible is a legitimate yearning for pleasure, expansion and new experience, this predicament will cease to exist. In other words, you must incorporate the essence of this wish without acting out the destructiveness of it. You will then have much less difficulty putting the wish into effect in a realistic way that will not defeat you in the end. You are now stuck in battling with one of these typical either/or problems. How can you really want to give up irresponsibility if responsibility implies living on a narrow margin of pleasure, and confining your self-expression? Since you do not really want to give up the irresponsibility, you feel guilty. Thus you reject that vital part of you which rightfully wishes to experience the pleasure of creation at its fullest, but does not yet know how without exploiting others and being parasitic. If, however, you can fully accept the beautiful force striving for full pleasure underneath the irresponsibility and value it as such, you will also find how to give it expression without infringing on others, without violating your own laws of balance. You will not have to pay the needless cost of worry, anxiety, guilt, and inability to manage well. You only pay that when you sacrifice peace of mind for a short-lived pleasure.

The pleasure will be deeper, more lasting, and totally free of guilt when you combine its rightfulness with self-discipline. If you can reconcile desire for pleasure with self-discipline and responsibility, you will express the inner knowledge that says, "I want to enjoy life. There is unlimited abundance in the universe for every contingency. There is no limit to what is possible. There are marvelous things to be experienced. There are many beautiful means of self-expression. I can realize them and bring them into my life if I can find another, not self-destructive way to express and obtain them. The very need for self-responsibility and self-discipline in their most profound sense will make increasing joy and self-expression possible. Without these traits, I must remain deprived and in conflict." The discipline will be much easier to acquire, the willingness to do so will grow, when you know that you have a perfect right to use it for the purpose of increasing pleasure and self-expression.

My dearest friends, I have given you new material that requires a great deal of attention. Bring it to bear on your own specific situation. Opening up your innermost being to applying this material. Do not apply it only theoretically, in general terms, but see really where you deny what is in you out of fear and guilt, thereby paralyzing the best in you.

To those of you here who are discouraged and feel hopeless about yourselves, I can say only, you are in illusion and error when you feel that way. Realize this and ask for the truth, which is that there is no reason for hopelessness, and difficult periods need only to be understood and worked through to make them stepping stones for opening your lives further and bringing more light and self-expression into them.

Receive the love and blessings, my dearest friends, be in peace.

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