

The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

Evil in the Light of Spiritual Knowledge

GA 63

One needs to be aware that the evil powers should also be incorporated into earth development. When the time comes that we will have to overcome these forces again, human beings will have to exercise great strength to transform the evil and demonic into the good. However, his strength will thereby grow, because evil exists to strengthen the power of the human being through his victory over it. All evil must be melted down and transformed into the good again, and it is so placed by Providence to develop strong activity in humanity, much stronger than if he should never have had to transform evil into good.

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Basically, what we have to deal with today is an ancient issue for mankind: the issue of the origin of wickedness and of evil in the world. And though in our time many people are of the view that, fundamentally, this question cannot be defined any further, yet the human soul feels compelled to bring it up time and again. For this question is indeed not one that rises up to our soul just from theoretical or scientific viewpoints; it is far more of a question that human souls are confronted with step after step in life, because their lives are embedded in goodness, in doing good, but also in evil and wickedness. On the one hand, one might say, the whole history of human thinking and reflection unfolds, in order to fully persuade us that our questions have always been issues for the deeper spirits in human development. On the other hand, we can study significant and prominent thinkers of the nineteenth century and of our time, and we will find that even with these prominent thinkers a halt was called to all philosophy, to all striving towards knowledge, precisely when faced with this issue. So today, we wish to try and consider what arose from the lecture cycle this winter about Spiritual Science, as the basis from which perhaps we can approach some way to finding an answer to the riddle of evil and wickedness. I say advisedly "we can approach," since I have often expressed that this significant question must be addressed in a wholly particular way: Spiritual Science does not only open that existence to our sight which cannot be reached by external science, but in a certain way it also makes it decisive. And we may perhaps be able to feel about such a question, that it is one that easily throws up the highest questions, as they are usually thrown up, when one is at the start of striving for knowledge in a certain way. That leads to real striving for knowledge, and often it only shows the initial steps on the path, through which one can gradually approach a solution to the major riddles of life.

First of all, permit me to raise one point in advance, that should make clear how deeply this question has occupied the hearts and souls of significant thinkers throughout long ages. We can go far back into human development; but first we would like to refer to thinkers in the last centuries before the foundation of Christianity in Greece: to the Stoics, that group of remarkable thinkers

which, following the views of Socrates and Plato, tried to answer this question: how should human beings behave, so that their behaviour corresponds to their deepest being, to their previously prescribed and recognisable purpose? This can be designated as the fundamental question for the Stoics. And as an ideal for humanity, that strove to insert its purpose in the universe accordingly, the ideal of the wise surfaced before the soul vision of the Stoics. — It would take us too far, if we were to exhaustively portray the ideals of the Stoics, and how this all is connected with the general stoical world view. But one point at least must be raised, that in Stoicism an awareness came into play, that human development was going towards an ever clearer and clearer self-aware human being, in order to work upon the human consciousness of the I. This was said in the stoic manner: this I, through which humanity is enabled to insert itself in full clarity in the world, this I, can be darkened, and can at the same time deaden itself; and this deadening happens if a human being allows feeling life to enter too strongly into the surging wave-play of imagination and perception. To the Stoics, if a human being were to allow the clarity of the I to be submerged, to be befogged by the being of pain and emotion, this seemed a kind of spiritual impotence. For this reason, for the Stoics, holding back the pain and emotion within the human soul, and striving for peace and equilibrium, led to freedom from the spiritual impotence of the soul.

We can see what must often be raised here, as the first step on the path to knowledge of the spiritual world, which also consists of this: that the wild waves of the being of pain and emotion, that at the same time create a spiritual impotence, are held back, so that the clarity of soul vision is extracted from the full experiences of the soul. What is here set out as the first steps on the path that leads into spiritual vision, all that swirled around before the Stoics. As regards Stoicism, I have tried to bring to the fore precisely this side of Stoic being in the new edition of my "World and Life Views in the Nineteenth Century," since it is still only little worked upon in the history of philosophy. In the matter just described, conquering pain, conquering sentiment appeared as an ideal before Stoicism. And that which inserts itself as wisdom in the development of the world, recognises in the meaning of Stoicism, that the development of the world was able to take it up. That world development was also shot through with wisdom, so its wisdom must also reach up into the flowing of cosmic wisdom.

Always, when the question surfaces: how does the human self position itself in the whole structure of the cosmic order? — Another question then arises: how does the cosmic order permit wisdom, (which humanity must assume, if it wants to embed itself into the cosmic order) to unite firstly with that which rules as evil in the widths of world experience, and secondly with what wickedness has set up in opposition to human striving for wisdom in the world?

Now, before the soul vision of the Stoics stood what was later called divine providence. How did a Stoic find himself then, with regard to this assumption of evil and wickedness? Something had already surfaced within Stoics, which even today can be put forward as a kind of justification of evil and wickedness, (if we do not want to penetrate into spiritual science itself, but only go up to the doors to the same). This arose before the Stoics as the need for human freedom. And now they could say to themselves: if a human should strive through his/her freedom towards the ideal of wisdom, the possibility must be offered to him/her also not to strive.

Freedom must reside in striving for the ideal of wisdom. But with this it must be allowed, that one can also remain behind with those features, from which one strives upwards; it must be granted that at the same time one can plunge into the being of sentiment and pain. Then, as the Stoics thought, they plunge down into a kingdom that is not their own human kingdom, but really a kingdom below their true humanity. And to want to reject the wise cosmic order, so that a human can plunge down into such a kingdom that is beneath him/her: doing that is so clever, as if one were to reject the wise cosmic order, since under humanity there is a kingdom of animal, plants and minerals. The Stoics

knew that there is a kingdom into which a human being can plunge down, from which his wisdom is far removed: but if he/she can drag himself out of it, but it must be from his/her own free choice, his/her wisdom.

We can see: the concept that many people have who stand before the door to the answers laid out by Spiritual Science about the meaning of evil, already resided in ancient Stoic wisdom; and one cannot say that the grasp of evil as such has shown any real progress in later centuries. At the same time this can emphasise for us, how to go out and encounter a spirit, who was otherwise an exceptionally significant spirit, who lived in the time since the foundation of Christianity and who had a major influence on the forming of Western Christianity: to Augustine. Augustine too had to think over and research the meaning of evil in the world; and he came to a singular expression: that evil and real wickedness hardly exist, but they are simply something negative in that they are the negation of good. So Augustine said to himself: goodness is something positive; but in the end a human being in his/her weakness is not always able to perform it, so that goodness is limited. This limited goodness needs to be explained as something positive, as little as the shadows that are cast forth by the light, need to be explained as something positive. If one were to hear the Church Father Augustine speak about evil, so one might perhaps find such an answer naïve compared with what one might imagine is thinking that has progressed for a few centuries. But how things truly stand with regard to the question of the meaning of evil, can be set out before us, through the answer an erudite man gave precisely the same answer in our time: Campbell, who described the so-called "New Theology" and whose works in certain circles had created a great sensation. He too believes, that one cannot enquire about evil and wickedness, because they show nothing positive, but are simply something negative. We do not wish to get involved in hair-splitting philosophical deductions to refute the viewpoint of Augustine — Campbell. Since, for anyone who can think with an open mind free of prejudice, this response about the simple negativity of evil stands on the same ground as the answer someone might make and says: What then is cold? Cold is only something negative, namely the absence of heat. Therefore, one cannot speak of it as something positive. But if one turns around when it is cold, with no furs or winter clothes on, so one will then feel this negative as something very positive! This image should make it fully clear, how little one straightens things out with this answer that truly does not go beneath the surface, and which indeed even major philosophers of the nineteenth century have given: that with regard to evil and wickedness we have nothing to do with anything positive. It may be that in this regard, we have nothing to do with anything positive; but this "not positive" is precisely as negative as cold is compared with heat.

Now we could put forward a whole group of other thinkers, who through the preparation of their own soul life, one would like to say, came close to what Spiritual Science now has to state. For an example of such, one could put forward Plotinus, the Neo-Platonist, who lived in post-Christian times and still followed the principles of Plato; and with him also put forward at the same time a large number of other thinkers who have thought about evil and wickedness in the world. They tried to make the following clear: that a human being is put together from a spiritual and a material-bodily nature. By plunging down into the bodily, a human being shares in the characteristics of matter, which from the outset creates obstacles and limitations in opposition to the activity of the spirit. In this plunging down of the *spirit* into *matter* lies the very origin of evil in human life; but therein also lies the origin of evil in the outer world.

That such a view has not just been considered simply in the heads of individual thinkers as a satisfactory answer to this major question about the significance of evil and wickedness in the world, even though it is greatly widespread, can explain a comment that I will not suppress, because maybe it will make our situation more precisely clear. I will refer to a thinker from an entirely different region: to the significant Japanese thinker, who was a pupil of the Chinese thinker Wang Yang Ming: namely Nakae Toju. For him everything that constitutes experience of the world, consists of two

things, of two entities one could say. For him, one entity is this, that he looks up to as to the spiritual, and it permits the human soul to take part in the spiritual: this entity he called *Ri*. Then he looked at what bodily forms a human being, and which permits the bodily to take part in everything through which it is constructed from matter: and that entity he called *Ki*. And from the particular juxtaposition of *Ri* and *Ki* all beings arose, according to him. For this thinker from the East, who lived in the first half of the seventeenth century, mankind is partly made of *Ri* and of *Ki*. But, because the human soul must plunge down with its *Ri* into *Ki* in its experience, from *Ki* the will streams out against it — and with will comes desire. Thus, the human soul in its life is involved in willing and desiring, and so it stands before the possibility of evil.

This thinker from the East, who lived a reasonably short time before us, as was said, in the first half of the seventeenth century, is not far removed from what in Western lands, at the time of Neo-Platonism, of Plotinus for example, one tried to set forth as the origin of evil: humanity's involvement in matter. We shall see later that it is important to refer to this in this way, in order to answer the question of the origin of evil with the involvement of humanity in matter. Precisely this comes to meet us in the most remote circles of human thinking. A thinker of the nineteenth century, who truly was one of its most significant ones, tried to examine evil and wickedness, and I would like to briefly portray the main points of his thinking. He saw in the world around him, part evil, part human wickedness, and he stood before evil and wickedness as a philosopher, who had trained himself in depth about the characteristics of human nature in particular: Hermann Lotze, one of the most significant thinkers of the nineteenth century, whose very significant *Microcosm* for example, amongst others, described meaningful philosophical works for the nineteenth century. Let us try to call up others before our souls, from amongst our most significant contemporaries, who like Hermann Lotze stood before the issue of evil. He said to himself: evil does not try to deny its existence. How have we attempted to answer the question of evil? For example, it has been said, that evil and wickedness must be there in life; since only through learning how the human soul struggles out of evil, can we be educated. Now Lotze was no atheist, but one who assumed God as living and weaving throughout the world, so he said: how should one then put the idea of education about evil and wickedness? One must assume that God has used evil and wickedness, in order to develop humanity and to elevate it to the free use of its soul. That could only happen, if humans were to organise this inner working for themselves, that is organise our working the way out of evil, and only through this, then learn to recognise one's own true being and its true worth.

Against this Lotze objected at the same time: whoever gives such an answer, does not take account of the animal kingdom first of all, into which in truth not only evil but also wickedness have entered comprehensively. How does cruelty rise up to meet us in the animal kingdom, how does everything, that is taken up in human life, and which can become the most fearsome burden, come to meet us everywhere in the animal kingdom! But whoever wants to lead us to the animal kingdom in this field as regards education, can they not also run into the same animal kingdom issues? So Lotze turned away from the idea of education. In particular he drew attention to the fact that omnipotence of God would contradict this idea of education; since it was only possible then, Lotze thought, to extract the best in a being from the worst: once the worst had been given. But that would contradict the omnipotence of God: first we must work our way out of the worst, at the same time as preparing to be able to build goodness thereupon. So Lotze turns around to say: maybe one should consider more like someone who says that whatever is evil, what is bad, is wickedness. This arises not through the omnipotence of God, nor through the will of any conscious being; but evil is connected with that which exists in the world, in the way for example that the three angles of a triangle that add up together to 180°, are related to a triangle. So, if God wanted to create a world, he must conform to that which is true without him. So any world that he wanted to create is perforce connected with wickedness and evil. So, he must, if he wanted to create a world, prepare evil and wickedness along with it. — Against this Lotze objected: but then we limit what we can properly

assume is the working and weaving of a divine being through the world. Since, when one observes the world, then one must say: according to general laws, according to which the appearances of the world can be thought through, it is very likely that it could be thought of without evil and wickedness. If we observe the world, we must say at once, that wickedness contravenes real freedom; so it must be from arbitrariness that freedom was called into being by the divine being.

We could add still other matters that Lotze and other thinkers have said on the problem and riddle of evil — Lotze is mentioned here only as being typical. I will only draw your attention to that to which Lotze came to in the end, because that will be important for us later. So Lotze turned against the German Philosopher Leibnitz, who had written a "Theodyssey," that was a justification of God against evil, and had come to the view that this world, even if it also contained much evil, was still the best possible of all worlds. Because if it was not the best one possible, Leibnitz thought, then either God did not know the best possible world — and that conflicts with his all-knowingness; or else he must not have wanted to create it, which conflicts with his all-goodness; or he must not have been able to do so — and that conflicts with his omnipotence. Now, Leibniz says, since in thought one cannot conflict with these three principles of God, one must assume that the world is the best one possible. — Now against this Lotze objected: in any case one cannot speak of an omnipotence of God, since in the world, where evil exists and the wicked reigns, this would be held to be outflowing from God. Therefore, one must say, as Lotze thought, Leibnitz has limited the omnipotence of God and by doing so won for himself the teaching of the best of all possible worlds.

Now, Lotze thought, there is still a way out. One must say: in general, when we observe the cosmos one can see overall order and harmony; evil and wickedness can only be seen in the details. So Lotze said: but what can a viewpoint give, which depends solely from the vision of humanity? Since about a world, where in general and as a whole, order and harmony command, so as to be able to astound us, and where in details evil and wickedness show themselves as black spots, one could also use the expression: what does it say, when in general and as a whole, order and harmony command in a world, and in details everywhere evil and wickedness is to be found? Here Lotze thought — and this was the culmination of his experience to which we wanted to refer-, one should rather say this one thing: evil and wickedness are indeed in the world. It must be wise that wickedness is there alongside excellence, and evil alongside good; it is just that we cannot see this wisdom. And so we are obliged to accept evil and wickedness beyond the boundaries of our knowledge. It must indeed be wisdom, which is not human wisdom Lotze thought: wisdom we cannot reach and which justifies evil. So Lotze transposed the wise concepts of evil and wickedness into an unknown world of wisdom.

At least I have expressly made these arguments, which for many will seem more or less pedantic, because they show us with what weapons humanity tried to approach the concept of evil and wickedness in philosophical thought, and how here we have found this confession time and again: these weapons have proven themselves to be completely blunt against such an enigma, which we come up against step by step in life; and even as Lotze says, they are completely unsuitable.

Now there is also another thinker, who tried to explore even further than Plotinus did into this, that is, in fact into the underground of being, which can only be reached after a certain development of the soul aimed at uplifting it to higher faculties of knowledge. Such a thinker was Jakob Böhme. And if one approaches Jakob Böhme, one approaches certainly a spirit of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, into which not many nowadays even wish to penetrate, since today he is seen more as a kind of curiosity. Jakob Böhme tried to penetrate into the depths of the world and its appearance up to the point where he felt something like a kind of Theosophy rising up in himself, as a kind of vision of God in his own inner being; and he now tried to make clear to himself, how wickedness and evil are to be pursued into the deepest underground of the world, and how evil and wickedness are not

something simply negative, but are in a certain way rooted in the underground of the world and of human existence. Jakob Böhme saw the divine being as something, that in him, as he said — we must first of all become accustomed to his way of expressing himself — one must enter "amicably." A being that allows its activity to flow out into the world at the same time, could never manage to grasp its own self. This activity must, one would like to say, hit up against something. Basically, each morning in waking up we perceive this to a small degree, and that is what Jakob Böhme put into his imagination. When we wake up, we are in a position so to speak, to unfold our soul-spiritual being to an unlimited extent from our soul-spiritual activity. There we hit up against our environment with our soul-spiritual activity. Through this, that we hit up against our surroundings, we become aware of ourselves. In general, a human being is only self-aware in the physical world, in that he hits up against things. The divine being cannot be such that it hits up against others. It must set up its adversary, or as Jakob Böhme stated in several expressions, its "no" against its "yes" for itself. It must limit its endlessly out-flowing activity in itself. That is...it must "amicably" distinguish, it must at the same time at a certain point create its own opposite on the surrounding circle of its activity; so for Jakob Böhme it was necessary for the divine being, in order to become self-aware, for it to create its own adversary. Now through taking part in the being of a creature, Jakob Böhme thought, not only that which streams out of the diving being, but from what the divine being had to create necessarily as its adversary, wickedness arises: evil above all arose in the world. The divine being set itself up against its own adversary, in order to become self-aware. Therefore, we cannot speak of evil and wickedness, but only of the necessary conditions of the divinity for becoming self-aware. But since creatures arose, and those creatures are not simply embedded in out-flowing life, but take part in the adversary, evil and wickedness have arisen.

Certainly, such an answer cannot be satisfactory to those who attempt to penetrate through spiritual science into the secrets of existence. This is set out here solely in order to show to what depths a sensible thinker goes, if he researches the source of evil in the world. And accordingly, I could also add much that could show us more than what we have found shining back from the world as an answer, when we try and draw close to enigmas, amongst which are wickedness and evil. If we now try and relate to what at the same time arises before us as a confession of one of the most prominent thinkers of the nineteenth century, as a confession by Lotze, we can say something like the following. Lotze is of the view, that there must be such wisdom somewhere, which justifies evil and wickedness. But mankind is limited in its capacity for knowledge; it cannot penetrate to that wisdom. — Are we not standing before, what we have often been forced to mention: that it is a beloved prejudice of our own time, to take our capacity for knowledge as it once was, and to hardly to reflect upon the fact that something could come out of the objects which are in our daily lives; something that could rise above itself, in order to have insight into other worlds, more than the simple world of the senses and the understanding related to the senses? Maybe it has already arisen before us, so that we are unable to find the answers to significant questions such as the origin of evil, because with regard to knowledge that turns to the senses and to the understanding that is related to the sense world, it spirals upwards above and away from this knowledge towards another knowledge. Along the path a way must be found, of which I have often spoken here, a way along which the human soul triumphs over that which is our everyday and usual scientific viewpoint. We have often spoken of the possibility that the human soul struggles to release itself from its bodily nature, that it really can perform a spiritual chemistry, that even releases the soul-spiritual element in mankind from the bodily, just as in outer chemistry, hydrogen is released from water. We have spoken of this: when a human being so releases his/her soul-spiritual nature from the bodily-corporeal one, so that it can rise up to the spiritual and that its bodily nature stands over against the soul-spiritual, so when the soul-spiritual is outside the body and is able to perceive in a spiritual world, then it can see into the depths of the world through direct experience, not within but outside of its body, as far as this knowledge is accessible to him/her. Maybe we should ask ourselves here: what then comes to meet us, when we truly try to walk along this path of spiritual research, the path

that has often been described here, and which is set out extensively in my book "How does One Achieve Knowledge of the Higher Worlds?" What are the experiences one arrives at, when one really follows this path, in order to become a participant in super-sensible worlds? Now it will specially interest us, how what we usually call evil in everyday life positions itself on this path. We only need to look somewhat into everyday evil, what people call evil in everyday life. There it emerges, when a spirit researcher begins on his/her path, in order to rise up to soul-spiritual worlds, in order to truly come out of the bodily with his/her soul-spiritual being and to perceive free of the body, that everything that he/she must look back upon as evil, yes even upon imperfection in life, sets the hardest obstacles on his/her path. The most difficult hindrances come from that which one must look back upon as something imperfect. With this I do not want to say that the arrogant teaching follows logically: that anyone who achieves vision in the spiritual world as a spiritual researcher must be called a perfect human being. This should not be understood at all through saying this. But it should be repeated, what was once very forcefully emphasised: that the path to spiritual research is martyrdom in a certain sense, and it is so precisely on the basis that in the moment in which one comes out into the soul-spiritual from the bodily and takes part in the spiritual world, one looks back upon one's life with its imperfections and now knows: you bear these imperfections with you as a comet bears its tail. You bore them in yourself in other lives and must compensate for them in later lives. What you have stepped over until now, without having an awareness of it, now you can see. — This tragic insight into that which we are in everyday life depends on how a human being seeks out the way upwards to the spirit world. If it does not depend upon this, then it is not the true path to the spirit world. Of this act one must say: a certain seriousness of life starts, when one steps up into the spirit world. And if man gains nothing else, at least one conquers this one thing: that one can see one's own evil and one's own imperfections with endless clarity. So, one might say: one conquers an experiential knowledge of evil and imperfection with the very first steps that one takes upwards into the spirit world.

Where does this come from? When we look closer to see where it comes from, we find in this the essential feature of all human evil, so to speak. In my last book "The Threshold of the Spiritual World" I tried to refer to precisely this essential feature of evil, as far as it proceeds outwards from mankind. The common essential feature of all evil is none other than selfishness. — If I wanted to prove this in detail, what I will now set out here, I should have to speak for several hours; but I will only set this out and each person may then follow up for themselves with the further run of thoughts that follow as a consequence. They will also be followed up on in the next lectures, where we shall speak of the "Moral Basis of Human Life." Basically, all human evil comes forth from what we call selfishness. We shall go and follow through from the smallest details, which we regard as human slip-ups, to the strongest crimes, that are human imperfections and human evil, regardless of whether they are portrayed to us as apparently arising more from the soul or apparently more from the bodily: the common essential feature, that comes from selfishness is universally present. We find the true meaning of evil, when we think of it as bound up with human selfishness; and we find all striving outwards and over imperfections and evil, when we see this striving upwards in the struggle against what we call selfishness. A great deal of careful thinking has been done over some ethical principle or another, over some moral basis or another; but the deeper we plunge into ethical principles and moral foundations, precisely this shows us that selfishness is the common root of all human evil. And so we might say: the more a human being works him/herself free of evil here in the physical world, the more he/she overcomes selfishness.

Now this result leads to another one just behind it; and it is so made one might say, that it is almost oppressive in spiritual investigation, truly oppressive. So what should one then develop, when one seeks to find the way up to the spiritual worlds, to those worlds, that one must look at with the soul-spiritual outside of the body?

When you take this all together, with what I have referred to as soul exercises in the run of these lectures, and which must be used in order to penetrate into the spiritual world, you will find that they run on, in order to strengthen certain soul characteristics, which the soul has in the sense-world, that make the soul stronger and more powerful, so it can set itself up more and more independently. Now what comes out in the physical-sense world as selfishness, that must be strengthened, must be made more intensive when a human being steps up and into the spiritual world. Since only in a strengthened soul, which strengthens those powers in itself that are its very own, which are in its Ego, and are rooted in its I, only such a soul can rise up to the spiritual world. Precisely that which a human must set aside, who wants to appropriate moral principles for the physical world, must be strengthened on the way to the spirit world. A significant mystic made the following statement:

*When a rose decorates itself,
It also decorates the garden.*

This is certainly true up to certain limits. But in human life selfishness also goes forth, if the human soul is only seen as a "rose" that decorates itself. But for the spirit world, that is perfectly valid. In the spirit world what lies in the expression: "When a rose decorates itself, it also decorates the garden" is present to a higher degree. If the soul rises up to the spirit world, and there it is all the more a useful tool, the more it has been strengthened in itself and has worked outwards on what lies in its inner fullness. Just as one cannot use an instrument that is imperfect, so can the soul itself not use what it has not fully driven out: what lies in it from its I, from its ego.

From this comparison, which takes us away from all facile phrases and leads us into the actual facts that should not be concealed, we now see that this spiritual world stands in relation to the physical sense-world: that the latter must make the former its own task completely. If a human being could only live in the spirit world, then he/she would only be able to develop inner faculties because of the law which must be valid: "When a rose decorates itself, It also decorates the garden"; he/she could not develop those faculties that would bring him/her together with other people, and with the whole world as a benefactor. We must find our abode in the physical world that enables us to overcome selfishness. Otherwise we have no duty to be benefactors in the world, except when we fundamentally educate ourselves away from selfishness, if I may use a trivial expression.

Now the same thing that a spiritual researcher finds to be definitive, namely the strengthening of his/her soul in order to rise up to the spiritual world, that same thing is equally definitive when a human being goes through the gate of death in a natural way, and goes into that world that lies between death and a new birth. There we transpose ourselves into a world, which a spiritual researcher has also reached through his/her soul development. There we must bring the characteristics that the soul has allowed to become strong in itself, which make the sentence true within the soul that runs: "When a rose decorates itself, it also decorates the garden." In the instant in which we go through the gate of death, we enter into a world, in which our I comes to its highest elevation and strengthening. What we have to do in that world, we will hear in the lecture: "Between Human Death and Rebirth." Now reference should only be made to this, that in this spiritual world, in essence only that which the soul has itself sent in arrives into this spiritual world, in accordance with what it has experienced in previous earthly lives, in order to structure the following. It must, to the extent that it corresponds to its destiny, primarily be concerned with itself, in the spiritual world between death and a new birth.

When we observe the human soul in this way, then the following appears to us from two different viewpoints. The way how selfishness can be transformed into becoming a benefactor appears in its meaning for the physical-sense world, since this is the large training ground, where the one must come out from the other, so that it may be something of value for the larger circles of existence. And the world between death and rebirth appears to us as that in which the soul must live with more power, and for which the soul would immediately be useless, it were to enter into this world weak and not empowered in this way.

What follows thereupon, that the soul has these two characteristics?

It follows from this, that a human must in fact protect him or herself from that which in one field, in one world is excellent, namely the lifting up of the inner soul into another world so as to somehow use it at the highest level to achieve the spiritual world; but that must be stricken by evil and by the worst, if a human permits him or herself be penetrated by what he/she must live out of as his/her being in the physical-sense world: what is useful to him/her as worthy preparation for the kingdom of the spirit. Thus we must precisely be strong in the spirit between death and new birth, in the strengthening and empowering of our I, with which we can prepare for ourselves such a physical sense being, so that in outer existence, in the acts and thoughts of the physical world we can be as unselfish as possible. We must use our selfishness before our birth in the spiritual world to work upon ourselves; we must look upon ourselves in such a way that we can become unselfish in the physical world, that is to say, moral.

Here, at this point lies everything that one could name as the most valuable for a person who wants to penetrate into the spiritual world. In fact, one must be clear, that one sees one's own evil and imperfection not otherwise than as a shadowy outline, when one is in the spiritual world. That is what shows us, that we must remain connected to the sense world, and how our karma, our destiny must bind us to *the* sense world, until we have broken through into the spiritual worlds so far that we are able to live not only with ourselves alone, but with the whole world. It shows as if on a screen, how things stand with evil, what is essential in spiritual progress, namely self-perfecting: that must be used on the things of outer life. Trying to make spiritual progress is not something we can allow to cease. That is our duty, far more. And that duty is development for humanity, which is *the* law for all other living beings. But evil is using directly in outer life, that which is fitting for spiritual development. These two, outer physical life with its morality must necessarily place a second adjacent world, next to that towards which the soul strives inwardly, if we wish to approach the spiritual world.

Now there is something present however, that could appear to be a contradiction. But one would like to say, the world lives in such living paradoxes. It must be said: one must strengthen oneself in the soul; precisely the ego, the I must become stronger in order to penetrate into the spiritual world. But if a spiritual step up were only to develop selfishness, then it would not get very far. But what does that mean? It means: one must enter into the spirit world without selfishness; or rather that one cannot enter without selfishness — which each of us who enters into the spiritual world must painfully acknowledge, so one must have all selfishness so objectively before one, that one sees one's own selfishness, to which one is bound in the outer world. One must also consider how to become an unselfish person using the means of the physical life, because one no longer has the opportunity in the spiritual world to become unselfish, because there one arrives at the strengthening of the soul life. That is only an apparent contradiction. Even when we enter the spiritual world, even when we go through the gate of death into the spiritual world, we must live there with what is present as strength in our inner being. But we cannot achieve this, if we cannot achieve this through selfless life in the physical world. Selflessness in the physical worlds is mirrored as the correct selfishness that raises value in the spiritual world. We can see how difficult the concepts become, as

we near the spiritual world. But now one sees at the same time, what human life can involve. So now let us assume that a human being comes through birth into physical being. In that case, it means, that if that being that was in the spirit world before birth or conception, between the last death and the present birth, is clothed in the physical body, then the possibility is present that the person with this, which must at the same time be the life force of the spirit world, pulls through to its physical body unjustifiably; that the soul strays into the bodily, in that it brings down into the physical world that which is good in the spirit world. Then, what is good in the spirit world becomes evil, becomes wickedness in the physical world! That is a significant secret of existence, that a human can bring down what it necessarily needs in order to be a spiritual being, what in a certain sense can be portrayed as its highest being for its spiritual being, into the physical world, and that its highest and best spiritual nature can become the deepest error in the physical sense world.

Through what does evil enter life? Through what is so-called crime in the world?

It is present through the fact that a human being permits his/her better nature, not the *worse* one, to plunge down into the physical-body, which as such cannot be evil, and to develop those features there, which do not belong in the physical and bodily but belong precisely in the spiritual. Why can we humans be evil? Because we should be spiritual beings! Because we must come into the position, as soon as we live our way into the spirit world, to develop those features, which become bad, if we use them in the life of the physical sense world. If you allow those features which are lived out in the physical world as cruelty, malice for its own sake and others, to be taken out of the physical sense world, and let the soul be penetrated by them and live them out in the spirit world instead of the physical sense world, then there they will take us further, towards perfecting characteristics. That a human being uses the spiritual in the opposite way in the sense world, that leads to its evil. And if he/she could not be evil, he/she could not be a spiritual being. Since the characteristics that can make him/her evil, he/she must have; otherwise he/she could never rise up to the spiritual world.

Perfection lies herein, that a human being learns to penetrate himself/herself through and through with the insight: you should not use the features that make you into an evil human being in physical life, not in this physical life; since as much as you use them here, so much you take away from the empowering characteristics of the soul for the spiritual, so much you need to awaken yourself to the spiritual world. There these characteristics are in their correct place. So we see, as spiritual science shows, that evil and wickedness through their own nature indicate that we must assume a soul-spirit world alongside the physical world. Then why do the human faculties of knowledge of someone like Lotze or other thinkers freeze, when they observe the sense world and say: we cannot penetrate into the origin of evil and wickedness? Because of what is present — a capacity for knowledge that cannot penetrate to the spiritual world —, because it cannot enlighten evil starting from the physical world, because it is a misuse of powers that belong in the spirit world! No wonder also, that no philosopher, who has a viewpoint from the spirit world, can find the essence *of* evil in the physical sense world! And if one has a tendency to penetrate from here into a further world, in order to find the origin of evil, then also does one not come to any knowledge of outer evil, of that which we encounter as badness and imperfect in the outer world, such as for example in the animal world. So, we must be clear, that evil in human behaviour arises from this, that what for a human being is great and perfect in one world, as soon as it is uprooted into another world, it is changed over into its opposite. But when one considers evil independently of humanity in the world, the evil that flows through the animal world, then one has to say: we must then be clear upon this, that not only beings like humans are present, who through their life, bring down what belongs in the spirit world and there is great, and bear them into another world where it is out of place. Other beings must also exist — and a glance onto the animal world shows us also, that apart from humanity other beings must exist, which in the region, where humanity cannot take its evil, now bear their wickedness and so create evil. That means, that we are led by the knowledge of where the source of wickedness lies, at the same time to

recognise that not only can humanity insert itself as imperfect in the world, but also that other beings are there, which can bring imperfections into the world. And so we say that it is no longer incomprehensible, when a spiritual researcher says: the world of animals is basically an outer formation of an invisible spirit; but in that spirit world beings are there, which have done before humanity itself, what mankind now does, in that it inserts the spiritual unjustifiably into the physical world. From this all the evil in the animal world has arisen.

It should be stated today, that people are wrong if they believe one can ascribe the impulse for evil to this involvement in matter, based upon material existence, because the soul is involved in a material existence. No, evil arises precisely through the spiritual characteristics and through the spiritual possibilities of activity of humanity. And we must say to ourselves: where lies the wisdom in the world order, that wished to limit mankind to this, to only unfold goodness in the sense world — and not evil, as we see through it, as we have seen, that it necessarily must take power in order to go forward in the spirit world? Through the fact that we are a being that belongs both to the physical world and to the spiritual world, and that in us not the imperfection, but the perfection of spiritual law lies, we are placed in a position, like a pendulum, that can swing out to one side; and we are placed in the position to swing out to the other side, because we are spirit beings, which can bear the spiritual into the physical world, in order to realize evil there, as others, beings who perhaps higher than mankind are able to realize evil, which they have borne into the sense world, and which should belong solely in the spirit world.

I know very well that in such a portrayal of the origin of wickedness and evil something has been said today, which can only be enlightening to a small number of human beings, but who live ever more and more into the human soul life. For one will find that resolving the problems of the world overall is only possible, when we think of our world as one with a spiritual basis. Humanity may one day finish with the perfection of the sense world — there is also an illusion about such things; but with the imperfections, with wickedness and evil, it will never come to an end, if it does not want to seek, to what extent this wickedness and evil must be in the world. And one has insight, that it must be in this world, if one says to oneself: evil is only displaced into the physical world. If the characteristics which mankind uses unjustifiably in the physical world, and which there establish evil, were used in the spirit world, so mankind would go forward there.

I have no need to say that it would be entire nonsense, if someone were to draw conclusions from what has just been said: that you portray that only villains move forward in the spiritual world. It would be a complete travesty of what has been said. This is because these characteristics only become evil through their being used in the sense world, and they undergo a kind of immediate metamorphosis if they are used in the spirit world. Whoever wishes to raise such an objection, resembles someone who says: so you maintain that it is entirely good, if a human being has the strength to smash a watch? Certainly it is good if he has that strength; but he does not need to use that strength to smash the watch. If it is used to cure humanity, then it is a good power. And in this sense, one must say: the powers that a human being allows to flow into evil, are only evil in that place; used right in the right place, are they good powers.

It must lead us deep into the secrets of human existence, if one can say: through what is mankind evil? Through its using the powers granted to it for its perfection, in the incorrect place! Through what is wickedness, is evil in the world? Through humans using forces that are lent to them in an unsuitable world.

In our present time one could say at once: for the underlying soul there is a distinct tendency present to incline towards the spirit world. A more precise intimate glance onto the nineteenth century and on up to our present time could teach us this. Against this in the nineteenth century

amongst the philosophers there also came into play what has been called pessimism, a world view that immediately looks at the wicked and to the evil present in the world, and draws the conclusion some individuals have already drawn it —, that this world cannot be seen as good overall, that something other is required of mankind, than being led to its end. I will only refer to Schopenhauer or to Eduard von Hartmann, who both saw the solution for mankind, in that they said: an individual can only find his/her salvation in the rise of world processes, but not in a personally satisfying conscious purpose. But I would like to refer to something else: that the soul in the age of matter is imprisoned in materialism, and that in this time the strongest hopelessness must arise towards the world's evils, towards the wicked; since materialism rejects a spiritual world, out of which light shines upon us, to give its meaning to evil and to the wicked. If this world is rejected, it is entirely necessary that this world is hopelessly covered in filth by evil and wickedness in their purposelessness. — I will not refer to Nietzsche today, but to another spirit of the nineteenth century. From a certain viewpoint I also wish to refer to a tragic thinker of the nineteenth century: from the viewpoint that a human being must necessarily live with their time, in that he/she is inserted into their own time. That is a property of our being, that our being finds itself together with the being of our time. So it was only natural that in the latest times, that deeply formed spirits, yes, precisely those who had an open heart for what took place in their surroundings, we deeply gripped by that world description, which only wants to see the outermost appearance of the alpha and omega of world existence. But such spirits can often give in to an illusion, that one can go through the world inconsolably, if one must look into that world existence which must be portrayed as evil — and cannot look up to a spiritual world, in which evil is justified, as we have seen.

A spirit who, I would like to say, went through the entire tragedy of materialism, even though he was not a materialist himself, was Philipp Mainländer, born in 1841. One could call him a follower of Schopenhauer, if one observes things outwardly. In a certain sense he was a deep spirit, but a child of his time, so that he could only look upward to what the material world exposes. Now materialism worked indeed, enormously to imprison precisely the very best souls: we should not be deceived about this. Yes, the humans, who are not concerned with what is around them, what the times and their spirit offer, and who live selfishly in a religious confession that they have once found pleasant, the "most religious" people are sometimes in this point the most selfish of all; they reject any rising above the things which they love, and do not concern themselves about anything else, other than what they know. One can find this answer again and again, if one refers to the tragedy of numberless human beings: yes, cannot old Christianity satisfy souls much more than your spiritual science? Such questions are put by spirits who do not go along with the times and intolerantly reject everything that should penetrate into cultural development for the salvation of mankind.

Philipp Mainländer looked around him, at what outer science, what our time was able to tell him from its materialistic viewpoint, and there he could only find a world filled with evil and mankind involved in wickedness. He could not deny it, since the pressure of this new world view was so strong that it hindered the soul from looking up to a spiritual world. So let us not try and conceal from ourselves here: why do so few people come to spiritual science? That is because, since the pressure of the prejudice of materialism, or as it is called more nobly, of monism is so powerful, it darkens the soul and prevents its penetrating into the spirit world. If the soul is left independent and to itself and is not dulled by materialist prejudice, then it will surely come to spiritual science. But the pressure is large, and from our time on, one can say: it is connected to the epoch, in which one can represent spiritual science before humanity with a few perspectives, because the desire of souls has become so strong, that spiritual science must find an echo in souls. In the second and third thirds of the nineteenth century that echo was unable to be present. Then the pressure of materialism was so strong, that even a soul striving towards the spirit such as that of Philipp Mainländer was held back. And so he came to a unique view: to the view that nothing spiritual can be found in the current world. We have in Mainländer in the nineteenth century a spirit before us, who only did not make a

major impression on his contemporaries, because the spirit of the nineteenth century, despite its major progress in material areas, was a superficial spirit. But what a soul must feel in the nineteenth century, that Mainländer felt, even when he stood alone, because in a certain way he felt a kind of spiritual impotence regarding the removal of that which must leave one dissatisfied with a materialistic or monistic world view. One does not need to pick up and read the somewhat thick volume of Mainländer's "Philosophy of Salvation," but only the reasonably small booklet by Max Seiling, in order to make a judgement about what I am saying now.

Philipp Mainländer looked out into the world, and he could only see under the pressure of materialism, what the senses and understanding portray. But he must assume a spirit world. But it is not there, he told himself; the sense world must be illuminated from itself. And now he came to the view that the spirit world of our ancestors was real, that once there was a divine spirit existence, that our soul was within a divine- spiritual existence, and that the divine existence from a former being has gone over into us, and that our world can only be there, because God had died before that spirit world died before us. So Mainländer sees a spirit world, but not in our world; but in our world he only sees a cadaver loaded with evil and wickedness, which can only be there, so that its destruction can be overcome, so that what led to God and his spirit world to die, should not enter into the destruction of the cadaver into nothingness. — Monists or other thinkers may laugh more or less at this; whoever better understands the human soul and knows how a world view can become the inner destiny of a soul, how the entire soul can adopt the nuances of a world view. He/she knows what a human being must experience, who, like Mainländer, was forced to transpose the spirit world into past times and was only able to see the material cadaver of the same left behind in the current world. In order to resolve the evils of this world, Mainländer had taken up this kind of world view. That he was more deeply involved in his world view than Schopenhauer or Nietzsche, than Bahnsen or Eduard von Hartmann, we can see from that fact that, at the time of finishing his "Philosophy of Salvation" in his fifty-third year, the thought came to him: your strength has been used lovelessly, since you more quickly offer what appears as your salvation of humanity, than when you still used it after the middle of *the* life in the body. That Mainländer thought with his world view with the deepest sincerity is shown from the fact that he, when he came to this thought: you now use more strength, when you pour out your power into the world and do not concentrate on the body. He really drew the conclusion, which Schopenhauer and the others did not draw, and died through suicide, and that is, a suicide through conviction.

Philosophers and others may look away from such a human destiny: for our time however, such a human destiny is endlessly significant, because it shows us how the soul must live, which can really pierce down into its depths, to that which as longing can resurrect in our time — how the soul can live and confront the problem of wickedness and evil in the world, and have not any vision into the world where spiritual light spreads out and illuminates the sense of wickedness and of evil. It was necessary that the human soul should develop *the* materialistic capacities for a period. One can also position in a certain future of spiritual life, I would like to say, under a "psycho-biological viewpoint," a point of view of the soul life, and make clear to oneself, that only when lifted up to the spiritual, does what appears in a physical image, for example in animal beings, become valid for human beings. Certain animals can go hungry for a long time and also are hungry for a long time. Tadpoles for example, can bring about their rapid transformation into frogs through long hunger. Similar behaviour is also shown in certain fishes with long hunger, because back-bone building processes come into play, that make it possible to perform what they have to perform; they are hungry because they hold back the forces, they otherwise take in through taking in nourishment, in order to force a way into another form. That is an image that is suitable for use for the human soul: through centuries it has lived through people constantly talking about the "boundaries of human knowledge"; and even many who believe that they think spiritually, are nonetheless entirely devoted to materialistic imaginations — which are willingly called monistic today because people are ashamed of

them —, and even philosophers are devoted to the maxim: human knowledge can do no more than make a halt, when it stands before the greatest riddles. The capacities that led them to everything, had to be trained for a period: that is to say that humanity must undergo a period of spiritual starvation. This was the time of the arising of materialism. But the powers that were held back in souls through this, they will now lead human souls to seek for the way into the spirit world in accordance with a psycho- biological law. Certainly one will find that human pondering had to take the form that we meet up with in Mainländer, who could no longer find the spirit world in the physical world, because materialism had taken him. He was forced to remain before the physical world: there he only had the power to visualise errors, and not that which underlies our world, that indeed gives us the possibility in find something out in our souls, that refers to the future just as the outer world refers to the past. It cannot be denied, that in a certain sense Mainländer was correct: what our world sets out all around us, are the remains of original development. Even present-day geologists have to admit today, that we, in that we wander across the earth, are walking away a cadaver. But what Mainländer could not show, that is, that we, to the extent that we are walking over a dead body, at the same time are developing something in our inner being, which is precisely a seed for the future, as that which is all around us is a bequest from the past. And to the extent that we look into this, what spiritual science is for individual souls, it can resurrect in us, that which Mainländer was not yet able to see, and therefore was forced to doubt.

So we stand at the watershed between two epochs: the epoch of materialism and that of spiritual science. And maybe nothing can prove it to us in such a popular form, as when we, if we correctly understand our soul, must live up against the spiritual epoch, as considering evil and wickedness, when we are able to lift up our sight to the illuminated heights of the spirit world. I have often said, that with such considerations one feels oneself in harmony with the best spirits of all ages, who have longed, as mankind must live in an ever-clearer manner as against the future. If one such spirit, with whom one feels in full harmony, made a remark about the outer sense world, that is like a call for spiritual knowledge, so we should also put together what today has been able to enter into our souls, and this should spark off a kind of transformation of such a remark.

Goethe let something be said in his *Faust*, that shows how a human being can lose their way away from the spirit. Mankind's distance from the spirit world is set out paradigmatically in a beautiful sentence with the words:

*Whoever wants to know and describe the living,
Tries first of all to drive out the spirit,
Then he has the parts in his hand,
Except, sadly! only their spiritual bond is missing.*

So, this is how things lie in a certain way for all knowledge of the world. It was the destiny of mankind, to devote itself to parts for a few centuries. But ever more and more one will perceive the absence of the spiritual bond as not only a theoretical deficiency, but as a tragedy of the soul. Therefore, spiritual researchers must today look into the soul overall, which the majority of souls do not know how to do themselves: and catch sight of the longing for the spirit world. And if we set our eyes upon something, such as illuminating the nature of evil and of wickedness, then perhaps we may extend Goethe's remark, in that we take the following as a summary of what was said.

Goethe thought that whoever wants to strive for a world view, should not stop at parts alone, but must see the spiritual bond above all. But whoever approaches as significant a life question as the riddle of evil and wickedness, he should say based on spiritual-scientific foundations, as a summary

of his/her persuasion in accordance with his findings:

*Whoever does not solve the soul riddle,
Remains in the simple light of the senses;
Whoever wants to understand life
Must strive towards spirit heights!*

Source: https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/ZS2871_index.html



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