

12/3/80
Partial Transcription
(Concerning the demonic)

Now, let me address the problem of the demonic for awhile. We generally think of the demonic as simply "bad;" until, through reaching into depths, we discover that it exists. Therefore, either the demonic is good, (that would seem to be a contradiction), or the demonic is a condition of a being. And if I believe it's a condition of a being, then I don't have to worry about giving it a nature. It's only a condition.

What does it consist in (namely, the demonic)? The demonic refers to a condition of being in which, within the process of coming to be and passing away, energy has become frozen. Has become particularized in isolation. Has become immune to interpenetration; and on that account, stands in the greatest need of becoming freed - while at the same time puts up the greatest opposition to becoming freed. Since, above all, it fears freedom. Since to become freed would entail a change in its condition. And it makes this mistake in perspective: that it identifies with its condition. Therefore, it cannot abide any threat to what it mistakenly understands to be its being. There is a difference, then, between the naivete and ignorance which typifies the child, and the childishness of a protracted naivete. There is a distinction that we must make between those characteristics that we see in persons, and the demonic. The demonic has made, for itself, a system unto itself. And it has invested its security in that. It is, therefore, of all being, the most closed, the most opposed to the possibility of transformation.

And that is the reason for its uncanny opposition toward any effort, whatsoever, to engage it in genuine communication and community. Because both feeling and intellect can serve the demonic. Everything about the demonic,

whether on the feeling level, or the intellectual level, or both is kept by the demonic being precisely in the service of UNchange. Therefore, the immense effort that ~~it~~ is released to enlist one who is willing to change in serving unchange. It will go to no end of devious activity to confuse, entice, threaten, terrify any being external to it that appears not to serve its own self-enclosed end. And it will rationalize to itself, (sometimes with great subtlety - depending upon the intellectual power), that the imperative of its own existence ~~is~~ depends upon this activity. And it should never, ever, ever be taken lightly!

It even has the power to produce new forms. Just as we procreate, it, too, procreates. And I'm speaking on another level than just that of existence as human, as we know it. Because this is not the only condition of being that exists. There's a long history in Tibetan magic, for instance, of the capacity to generate a being whose essential existence is in what is called "the subtle world." And as soon as attachment is the condition between the maker and the made, that being completely takes over. It takes control of the maker. And it takes some doing to break that up. That is nothing to fool around with. (So, the recent rash of movies and novels about the demonic is nothing to laugh about. Unfortunately, the drastic majority of them is profoundly mistaken in its emphasis that the good in relationship to it is without resource. On the other hand, the good in relationship to it is limited. Because the good is essentially non-coercive, whereas evil is always coercive).⁹ Now, let me just close by saying something that perhaps we can explore a little more next time. There's a profound relation between good and evil. Whether it be good and the possibility of evil, or good and the possibility AND actuality of evil; there's a profound relation between that and consciousness. And the power to generate awareness.

We ought to be prepared to have a long thought about old Heraclitus (who, by the way, was called "the dark philosopher"), in his fragment where he says "War is the father of all things." He doesn't say what the mother is; but only that "war is the father of all things!" What he means by that is that at the heart of things, encounter, confrontation, engagement is the case. And we're only sentimental if we turn our backs on that. And the good even risks, at times, necessarily, a coercive relationship to evil - but never in principle. This is seen when the surgeon operates. Isn't that right? A lot of blood is lost. A lot of cells die. Now consider then, this third part of your assignment: it might be the case that there could be no such thing as awareness - awareness - unless that fundamental encounter obtained. Now, perhaps, you can see why St. Paul says, so apparently out of hand, "we rejoice in tribulation." Well of course! Because he's on to the nature of that encounter. He's on to the necessity of it. Because, it is within that encounter that growth is possible. BUT, it's also within that encounter that everything ~~x~~ is lost. One is equally possible as the other.

And I want, simply, to underline everything I've said with one sentence: if I will not make that pause (that I referred to before the break), I haven't a prayer of discovering anything. So, it won't do any good to go back and reread your notebook. (I don't think I've ever known a class that was so proficient at taking notes). It won't do any good to go back and read ~~xix~~ your notebook if you don't become increasingly proficient with that pause. Because everything that I've said depends, for its understanding, upon the execution of that pause. But once you make that pause, you meet the demonic. It isn't a pause that's made in paradise. You've come right up against old snake. And he can be pretty handsome. He can look like a fun cat. And you

won't see his claws - at first. But they're there. AND, (praise God), God doesn't trim them back! Everything necessary for our growth is present upon every instant. Every LETHAL element that we require is there.

So, regardless of the mythology of the whole thing, is there such a thing as the devil? Ho, ho, ho! I'd better believe it. And Job learned (in the last chapter) to be immensely grateful for it. Because without the devil, he would never have been able to say "heretofore I have heard with the hearing of the ear," I don't need the devil for that - but then what did he add? "Now," Now what? "Now my eyes see thee. Therefore I repent!" And he didn't do anything sinful - except, as Ortega would remind us, he had the wrong perspective. He needed a new one. And he couldn't have gotten it without that (smacks palm and fist together) "up-against-it" stuff. As the Spanish say: "between the sword and the wall." And one thing about the demonic has to be respected. It cannot be wheedled. You can make no deal with it. Oh, it'll make a deal with YOU, but it's conditions are absolute. There's no "we'll get together on it." If you don't think that's so, just go back and read that marvellous German story Peter Schlemiel (?). He lost his shadow.

Long pause. ...

Well, in praise of shadow!

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