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"BUT WICKEDNESS HAS TO BE IN IT TOO!"

By GE0RG STARKE Translated by R. P.

The children were playing gleefully with some puppets they had received for Christmas. What they played was naturally an echo of past experience. Both 7-year-olds had seen a Punch and Judy show, and both knew the story of the Garden of Eden. From these memories their play was formed. The Devil was an important member of the cast, and since there was no puppet for the part, another figure substituted for him. But soon the tussles with the Devil became loud and vehement. The grown-up nearby, wishing to curtail just this element, suggested that they rehearse more peaceful, pleasant scenes. And then there rang out a cheerful and absolutely carefree chorus: "Oh, but there has to be some wickedness in it, too!"

In the child's second 7 years there begins a perceptive-emotional attempt to come to terms with evil. It is still very much on the surface and not wholly conscious - a meeting on the outside, often accompanied by that good companion, Humor.

In his book, *The Education of the Child*, Rudolf Steiner describes three 'births' of the human being. At different epochs of growth the child liberates himself step by step from enveloping sheaths and gradually forms body, soul and spirit according to his own individuality. First, from the physical body of his mother, which for nine months was a protecting sheath, the child frees his physical body. But his growth- and life-forces arc still joined to the protecting sheath of his environment. Through the magic power of imitation he entrusts himself completely to what surrounds him. In this period, up to the age of 7 or thereabouts, he is forming and molding his body, developing habits, and shaping his memory and thought-processes. At the end of this important epoch, signaled by the change of teeth, the life-force organism is liberated, completely his own. Now the way is opened up to begin to shape the child's soul-organism through his feelings.

Up to about 14, the child is joined to his emotional environment as though it were a cloak or envelope surrounding him. Slowly his own soul-being condenses from the larger whole and becomes an integral part of himself. It is at this decisive time of life —which constitutes, after all, the main part of school time — that all emotional, psychological problems and pre-eminently all the valuable solutions to such problems achieved through the course of human evolution, can be brought to the child in immense pictures. From outside, the seeds are planted which in later years will provide him with the right government of his inner life.

Before he is seven, the problem of evil will not touch the child. Even when he sees the Devil in a play or in a picture - and this should not happen too early - the young child will probably be only amused by the creature's wild jumping or beautiful tail. After fourteen the maturing young person will begin to experience evil as part of his own being, and will therefore keep silent about it; it will become the object of intense and secret inner debate.

Before this, in the happy time from seven on, the child begins to be interested in the dynamics of evil. But it has still the distance of a picture, and does not lie heavy within. At this stage of life the child can still find out how to overcome wickedness, and moreover he has confidence in the wisdom of the grownups around him. So at the beginning, he can shout with merriment and curiosity, "But Wickedness has to be in it, too!" He is sure that Punch will triumph over the Devil.

However, before the threshold to adolescence, the child's experience changes. He meets evil, or the possibility of evil, in a totally different sphere: in the realm of natural science. Now the child comes to realize that only the moral attitude of man determines whether inventions and discoveries shall be

for the good or for the harm of mankind. In the last few years children have had quite concrete evidence of this, —have had to have it.

Therefore, to the joyous play of the early years, around seven, let us add quite a different kind of proceeding in class, as contrast, at the end of this epoch, shortly before the 14th year. This antithesis suggests the wide range of feelings and sensitiveness to which the child is exposed at this time.

Whatever the facts of science that are given to the child, he will find the entrance to his understanding first of all through his feelings. He will sense, for instance, that light and air are elements related to his own soul-organism. The feelings that agitate his breast are expressed in the flow of air taken in from the outside as breath and given out again. It is the feelings that determine and regulate the breathing and heart-beat.

Light and shadow, too, are not yet separated from his feelings about good and evil. Therefore, before the child frees himself altogether from the soul sheaths that surround him, we can introduce him -towards the end of the second seven years - to those phenomena of physics that can be taken up by the feelings. Particularly in acoustics and optics can we make a start from the child's soul-world itself and progress gradually towards the objective laws. This is valid and necessary, in order not to harm the child's development through too abrupt or too early an externalization.

A conversation in our Sixth Grade will illustrate this. In such a class there are always a few children who have crossed the threshold of maturity too early. Therefore we can observe clearly the difference in the way of perceiving and understanding before and after the age-change.

First of all in acoustics, with no special explanations, the children are led to experience how an audible tone arises when two objects are struck together. Now, when a whip cuts through the air, there is a whistling sound. Are there two objects, in that case, that strike together? Immediately the question springs up, whether the air is an object. A lively discussion begins. Air can't be an object because we simply can't shovel it together into a heap! Still the defenders of the 'object' return —we can very well pump it into and out of a tube. "Of course we can," say the others, "but air can't be left to itself. It always needs something or other around it, a boundary or vessel, or else it escapes into space."

Strangely enough, no child hit on the liquefaction of air, even though most of them knew of this possibility. After various pros and cons, a boy finally brought out: "Air can't possibly be an object, for I'm in it altogether, and it goes right through me." Now just this boy showed in other things a certain prematurity and had an acquaintance with much that was not fully suitable for his age. But here in this remark he showed how young he really was. He still experienced the enveloping quality of air. With the conviction, too, with which it was spoken, the remark points distinctly to the part that the soul and also the understanding play at this stage of life. The child's world of feeling is not yet abstracted out of its protecting sheath. The air is sensed as an element closely allied to the life of feeling. The child does not yet separate his own being from the air –it is not yet an 'object' for him.

It seems a long way from the discovery with the puppet theatre to the beginning of physics, but it is hurried along in the relatively short space of a few years. An inner thread binds together the two seemingly unrelated happenings. In both, the child illustrates his relationship to a sheltering soul sheath. Earlier, this shows itself in the complete trust that the child feels in his environment. Later, it is the sensitivity to the natural element of air, that with light seems to stand closest to the feelings (as earth is close to the physical body and water to the growth- and life-forces).

The task of the teacher is not to keep the child sheltered within this soul sheath, but rather to assist in the process of emancipation and the forming of an individual soul-world within. Towards the end of the second seven years, these steps are taken faster and faster, with ever-increasing consciousness, at moments quite perceptibly. It is in the study of science especially that the child has to develop his

capacity for thinking. It is here that he must experience the transformation of soul-dependence into thoughtful knowledge, a change which does not always take place without pain.

It was necessary, for example, after the above-mentioned discussion, for the teacher to bring the children to the realization that air in the physical sense is an object. With this knowledge, however, the child falls inwardly out of his soul-shelter and finds himself in an objective world which exists without any emotional connections. A bond is ripped asunder - and an intellectual interest in the object is awakened.

With the greatest possible care the teacher has to direct these processes, for it is just at this point that the very foundations of human morality are approached. As long as the child feels sheltered and a part of the unity of the world which arises before him in the colorful pictures of stories, he is satisfied by the facts themselves and does not inquire into their purpose. But when he separates himself from the objects and confronts them, there appears not only an intellectual interest but also the curiosity as to what one can do with them all.

A further question will arise. There now will come — precisely in connection with natural science — the question about evil, in a new form: Why do men use scientific knowledge for so much destruction? This is spoken about with reserve and with some anxiety by the children, many of whom are remembering their own experiences (*the bombing of Germany, etc. Ed. note).* Now they no longer can shout, with gleeful conviction, "There has to be some wickedness in it, toot" - but rather, "Oh, if only wickedness were not in it at all!" Can the grownups really be trusted to know that Punch will triumph over the Devil?

Our science teaching is concerned not only with the objective world of matter; a strong moral impulse must be contained in it. Therefore it is important to bring science to the child at a time when it can be taken up by the child's feeling-life, —when it can still be taken up by the feeling-life. The teacher must draw from his own living core for inner certainty in answering questions. Decisive will be the teacher's insight as to the meaning of human evolution and the deed of the Saviour of humanity. For even into the study of science an ethical-Christian impulse can shine. If the teacher can bring this impulse, without a trace of dogma or of his own world-conception into all his teaching material, right up to the sciences, so that it meets the feelings of the child, he will be giving the child an inner support in his soul nature. This support will not save the young person from inevitable inward encounters with evil, but it will be of the greatest help when this occurs.

With this support, the young person with his more and more critical intelligence can now transform his sensitiveness to the meaning of evil into true knowledge. Then he will find direction and strength in his inner development for a courageous coming to grips with the force of wickedness.

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