

Summary of God and Evil, Episode 5

Neuroplasticity | How To Be The Change You Want To See In The World | Change Your Brain, Change Your Life

—Evil is something that exists in every one of us as part of the human condition.

—By identifying it, we can partner with God to get rid of it.

—But because we start out acclimated to negative tendencies, and because of the complexity of our spirits and the feelings we have, the transition has to happen slowly.

Reflection exercise - the steps of repentance:

1. Identify one problematic trait or habit you wish you could get rid of.
2. Acknowledge this as a problem that causes harm to yourself and others.
3. Pray to God for help to overcome it.
4. Go forward each day making an effort to resist this habit. If you fall into it again, start again the next day.

If it helps, keep a journal about how this is going. Trust that God is with you in the process, giving you the strength and ability to change. Remember that change can only happen gradually. Make an effort to notice any improvements, and not only “failures.”

Related videos to check out on YouTube

Repentance: How to Be in Heaven Now - Swedenborg and Life

The Day-to-Day Process of Our Salvation - Swedenborg and Life

Quotes from this lesson in fuller context:

Mahatma Ghandi quote

We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. This is the divine mystery supreme. A wonderful thing it is and the source of our happiness. We need not wait to see what others do.

Matthew 7:1-5

“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.”

Divine Providence 279:4-5

A second popular misconception is that the state of our life can be changed instantly, so that we become good instead of evil. This would be leading us out of hell and transporting us instantly into heaven, all by some direct mercy of the Lord. This is the misconception of people who separate charity from faith and attribute salvation to faith alone. That is, they think that the mere thought and utterance of a statement of that faith, performed with trust and confidence, will

justify and save them. Many of them also think that this can happen instantaneously, either before the hour of death or as it approaches. They cannot avoid believing that the state of our life can be changed in an instant and that we can be saved by direct mercy. We shall see in the last section of this book, though, that the Lord's mercy does not operate in this direct way, that we cannot become good instead of evil in an instant and be led out of hell and transported into heaven except by the ongoing efforts of divine providence from our infancy to the end of our lives.

At this point we may rest the case simply on the fact that all the laws of divine providence are aimed at our reformation, and therefore at our salvation, which means inverting the hellish state into which we are born into its opposite, a heavenly state. This can be done only gradually as we move away from evil and its pleasure and move into what is good and its pleasure.

People who hold this kind of belief have absolutely no idea of what evil and good really are. They do not really know that evil is the pleasure we find in the urge to act and think in violation of the divine pattern, and that goodness is the pleasure we feel when we act and think in harmony with the divine pattern. They do not realize that there are thousands of individual impulses that go to make up any particular evil, and that there are thousands of individual impulses that go to make up any particular good tendency. These thousands of impulses are so precisely structured and so intimately interconnected within us that no single one of them can be changed without changing all the rest at the same time.

If people are unaware of this, they can entertain the belief or the thought that an evil that seems to be all by itself can be set aside easily and that something good that also seems to be all by itself can be brought in to replace it. Since they do not know what good and evil are, they cannot help thinking that there are such things as instantaneous salvation and direct mercy. The last section of this book will show that this is not possible.

New Jerusalem 43

The Lord has foreseen and arranged matters in such a way that the more we derive our thoughts and intentions from heaven, the more our inner spiritual self opens and takes shape. This is an opening to heaven all the way to the Lord, and a taking shape in accord with the priorities of heaven. In direct contrast, the more we derive our thoughts and intentions not from heaven but from the world, the more our inner spiritual self closes and our outer self opens. This is an opening to the world and a taking shape in accord with the priorities of this world.