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IN A STRANGE LAND

AN EXPLORATION OF NIHILISM

"How shall we sing the Lord's song
In a strange land?"

A Dissertation

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by

Karsten Harries

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IN A STRANGE LAND: AN EXPLORATION OF NIHILISM
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In this dissertation I examine nihilism, in the hope that in laying bare its roots an indication of the road which will lead beyond nihilism will be given.

A. A discussion of Descartes' Meditations furnishes a first suggestion of what nihilism is: the nihilist is one who finds the world either unreal, or accidental, or both. Russell's Logical Atomism is discussed as an example of an epistemology which plunges us necessarily into nihilism as it suggests a world which is accidental in its very core and which seems unreal. The reason for this is found in his identification of reality and atomic percepts. This is rejected; instead I turn to Husserl's description of the intentional structure of consciousness. However, the possibility of proposing an epistemology such as that of Russell, and thus the possibility of nihilism, appears to be inherent in the very structure of consciousness. Reflection tends to plunge us into a world of mere objects.

Next I develope Heidegger's suggestion that value is the product of valuation. Following Heidegger's distinction between Sein and Seiendes, and Buber's distinction between the Thou and the it, I suggest that a value is attributed whenever we see an it as being potentially also a Thou, Seiendes as being potentially also Sein. Value may be said to be the shadow which reality throws on the percept. However, it is noted that this fails to answer the nihilistic predicament. For one, it presupposes an ability to go beyond a world of mere objects; secondly, it does not enable us to accept the universe in its totality, but only its fragments.

B. In the second part of the paper I discuss some aspects of the present situation. Man, it is argued, finds it impossible to bear overt nihilism, and rather than face it, he escapes from it by denying what has led him into the nihilistic predicament: his situation as an individual in the world. Nihilism thus undergoes metamorphoses in the following three directions: (1) Man may seek complete autonomy, thus subjugating the facticity of the given; (2) he may seek complete heteronomy, reducing himself to the status of an object; (3) he may attempt to commit suicide. In this discussion special emphasis is placed on modern art and on some recent political developments.

This discussion closes with an examination of the increasing difficulties man encounters in his attempt to orient himself in time and space.

C. To affirm the world in its entirety it must be possible to see that value manifests itself also in the systematic. Resuming the argument where it was left at the end of the first section, I turn to Nicolaus Cusanus' discussion of the non aliud and to his conception of man as imago Dei. The rejection of Buber's and Heidegger's position is stated more clearly here: man encounters reality, and thus value, not by going in some way beyond the spirit, but in the exercise of his spirit.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> Have you heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly, 'I seek God!' 'Whither is God?' he cried. I shall tell you. We have killed him--you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the while? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? Do we not hear anything yet of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we not smell anything yet of God's decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers comfort ourselves? What was holiest and most powerful of all the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to cleanse ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent?[1]

God is dead, Nietzsche writes. By this he does not mean simply that man has lost faith in God; for such a faith could perhaps be regained some day. But the murdered God remains dead. It is not in the power of man to reawaken him to new life; the process is irreversible.

The death of God implies the rise of nihilism, the lack of belief in an ultimate ground of values. "Everything

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[1]Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science, quoted after Walter Kaufmann, Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre (New York: Meridian, 1956), p. 105.

we believe in has become hollow; everything is conditioned and relative, there is no ground, no absolute, no being-in-itself. Everything is questionable, nothing is true, everything is allowed."[1] Nietzsche was not the only one to foreshadow the coming of the nihilist; we may think of Dostoevsky or Kierkegaard. Turgenev sketches him for us in Fathers and Sons: he is someone who "refuses to bow down before any authority, who does not take any principle on faith, whatever reverence this principle may be enshrined in."[2] The nihilist has lost all faith, save that in the intellect, and applying his critical intellect to the inherited values, he recognizes them to be hollow. He has looked for supports, for guides, for laws, and for love and has found only disappointment. But the nihilist has also gained something, a new freedom which recognizes no law beyond itself, no ties binding it to a larger order. The nihilist is his own lawgiver.

The rise of nihilism raises one question which demands an answer: "But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon?" How was this murder possible? What kind of a God did we venerate if man in his weakness could slay him? Must it not have been a false God, an idol raised by the dreams of the superstitious? And what kind of a being is man

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[1]Karl Jaspers, Der philosophische Glaube (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1958), p. 116. Except where the reference makes it clear, all translations from the German are my own.

[2]Turgenev, Fathers and Sons, tr. Garnett (New York: Modern Library, 1950), p. ix, cmp. pp. 24 ff.

that he was able to rise and to assert his own autonomy? These problems shall occupy us in the first part of this essay, where I shall make an attempt to answer the question: How is nihilism possible?

Turgenev raises a second central question: how is it possible to remain a nihilist? What is there in the life of the nihilist to give it meaning and direction? Turgenev found no answer. Basarov dies because he is careless, a carelessness which springs out of a fundamental inability to care sufficiently for life to protect it. Basarov's final insight is not much more than Kierkegaard's summa summarum: I do not care at all.[1]

What matters has been lost; the following passage may help us to understand better what is implied by this phrase. A writer describes here his reaction to the destruction of Hildesheim in the last World War:

> I have not yet been able to understand that Hildesheim was destroyed. When I visited it in 1944 for the last time before the end of the war, it had still been untouched; when I returned in the late autumn of 1949 the essential was no longer there; the core of the town was in ruins, torn down as was Carthage after the Third Punic War. What remained were only the dull and characterless edges of town, miserable, ruined, decimated by flames, and blackened by November wetness. That I have never understood this is a capitulation to the mystery of the age. Still today, when I leave the station in order to enter the town, my subconscious expects the millennium-old glory and every time the same whip-like terror comes over me. My imagination plays restlessly and puzzled with

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[1]Soren Kierkegaard, Either/Or, tr. D. F. and L. M. Swenson, rev. and int. H. A. Johnson, vol. I (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1959), p. 20.

> the name 'Hildesheim' as with a coin, the two sides of which bear different messages: one side reads being, the other not-being, and one is no less true than the other. Upon closing our eyes we can conjure up the town once more; it seems to be stored forever in our memory like a constellation on the nocturnal sky or like a beloved woman of whose presence time, fate, and our own guilt have robbed us. But for him who opens his eyes the coin turns.[1]

The destruction wrought by the Second World War is here only a catalyst for the nihilistic experience; its essential structure is independent of these particulars. If read in this way, Holthusen's statement reveals to us an outline of the spiritual situation of our day. Modern man, too, upon opening his eyes, may find himself confronted by a loss of what matters, by "not-being." Let us recall here Camus who in the Myth of Sisyphus pictures man surrounded by mute walls, shouting for meaning, but receiving as an answer only the echo of his own words. Or his Stranger, who doesn't shout any more, who has accepted the silence of the world and moves in a shadowy realm which has lost all importance, a phantom among phantoms. Man can of course attempt to close his eyes when he knows he can see only the opaqueness of the world. He can dream and return in his dreams to a past in which he once felt at home; but the dream is accompanied by the dread of awaking, of being once again alone in a world poisoned by the decomposition of what was once holy. "Do we not smell anything yet of God's decomposition? Gods, too, decompose."-- In the second part of this paper I shall attempt to show what it means to live in a nihilistic age.

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[1]Hans Egon Holthusen, Ja und Nein (München: Piper, 1954), p. 279.

An important aspect of the nihilistic situation is the inability to comprehend that the value of the past has disappeared and the reasons for its disappearance. Once there was meaning and now it is gone; but what has come in between? Some catastrophe for which man feels responsible and which he yet doesn't understand. Only dread of the present and nostalgia for the past remain.

This leads us to the third and most important question: "What was holiest and most powerful of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to cleanse ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent?"--In the last part of this paper an attempt will be made to point out at least the direction in which we must go to find a way beyond nihilism.

The nihilistic situation is like a swamp. There is an omnipresent possibility of surrendering to the forces which threaten to swallow us, an inability to find something stable, something which doesn't yield when sufficient weight is put upon it. This essay represents an attempt to show a way out of the swamp. A first prerequisite of this is that we discover a dry place where we can stand, a place which can furnish us with an indubitable point of departure. Like Descartes and Husserl we have to demand certainty. Whenever the reader comes to a thesis he should ask himself whether he can give his unqualified assent to it, and, more important, if this is

not the case, in what way a qualification is necessary. Nihilism cannot be overcome by another "likely story." "Truths which are not coercive do not provide a world orientation."[1] We have to claim once more the certainty which is claimed by myth and religion on one hand and by the sciences on the other.[2] And as nihilism rose only when the former had lost their force, we must appeal to the critical intellect which brought about the rise of nihilism.

Once a place has been found which will support us, an attempt can be made to draw the map of the swamp in which we find ourselves. We shall discover why we lost our way and why it is no longer possible to retrace our steps. We shall explore some roads which were taken and which only led further into the swamp. We shall also attempt to point out the path which will lead us out.

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[1]Karl Jaspers, Philosophie, vol. 1, Philosophische Weltorientierung (Berlin: Springer, 1932), p. 93.

[2]Hermann Broch, Gesammelte Werke, Essays vol. 1, Dichten und Erkennen, int. Hannah Arendt (Zürich: Rhein, 1955), p. 12.

CHAPTER II

THE STRUCTURE OF NIHILISM

I. IRREALITY AND THE ACCIDENTAL

A. We likened the nihilist to someone who, awakening suddenly, discovers that what matters has been lost. And although Nietzsche may have rejoiced in this awakening which lets man see that God has died, preparing him for the coming of the superman, it is an icy world in which man finds himself. Man may have awoken from deep sleep, but now that he is awake he shivers and is alone. Only the memory of a dream burns in him and forces him to continue his search. Cor meum triste est, donec requiescat in te.

Let us examine the nature of this awakening. Just a few minutes ago, my attention was suddenly caught by a piece of music. For a moment I forgot what I was doing and listened. Then I recognized the melody and almost at the same time noticed that I had stopped working. I became conscious of listening and soon I went back to work, while the song receded into the background. The magical moment had passed.

One could give more striking examples of such an experience. We may recall how in the midst of a party we sometimes seem to step outside ourselves; suddenly we are no longer a part of the party; we have become spectators and what a moment ago seemed witty and entertaining, now appears shallow and unreal. We may still be smiling, still talking

in the same manner, but our own words sound hollow, meaningless, almost as if we were not the one speaking. Or one might think of the stammering of love which is magical only as long as one does not reflect.

But let us return to the first example. At first I was not aware of listening to the music. I simply listened. Only later, after naming the song, and in naming it, becoming conscious of my listening, could I say that I was listening, that there was an "I" engaged in an activity which had as its object a song. In naming the song I singled it out and in so doing I became aware of its being just one object among others. My interest was no longer absorbed by the song alone. It diffused itself over the entire situation. With this the experience changed. One aspect of this change was that I became conscious of the polar structure of the experience: the object is object for a subject. I certainly was not aware of this in the beginning. There was just the experience in its unity. But more important is another aspect. I found that once I had become aware of my listening to the music, it had lost its magic. It had ceased to speak to me. Although I still heard it, it had become a silent object. I found that I was really listening only to myself. Reflection, as Buber points out, is always a monologue.[1]

The original experience was destroyed by what may be called the revolt of subjectivity. As Heidegger points out,

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[1]Martin Buber, Die Schriften uber das dialogische Prinzip (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1954), p. 157.

> man has risen into the selfhood of the ego cogito. With this revolt everything becomes object. Being becomes objective and as such is drowned in the immanence of subjectivity. The horizon no longer shines with its own light.[1]

The root of this Nietzschean awakening is the realization: ego cogito. I become aware of myself by becoming aware of the other being object for me. Our example suggested that in becoming object for me the other ceases to speak to me; it ceases to matter. Nihilism, the belief that nothing matters, seems to be intimately related to an awareness of subjectivity. But what is the relation between the cogito and nihilism? Is the latter a necessary result of the former? Is to pronounce the cogito to say that nothing matters? In that case to reject nihilism we would have to reject the cogito. The only answer to nihilism would then seem to be the sacrifice of our selfhood and thus of our humanity. But is it not perhaps possible to escape from nihilism and yet to affirm the cogito?

B. Already with Descartes we find an awareness of the nihilistic threat inherent in the cogito. His decision to begin with the cogito forces him to raise the value question. His Meditations may be construed as an attempt to demonstrate the presence of the divine in human experience, which enables us to attribute value to our life, in the face of the subjectivism brought about by the affirmation of the ego cogito. Descartes not only sees here the threat of nihilism, but makes an attempt to go beyond it in his proofs of the existence of

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[1]Martin Heidegger, Holzwege (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1957), p. 241.

God. These have become necessary to help him escape from the predicament into which his methodological considerations--that is his decision to begin only with the self-evident cogito--have thrown him. In so far as this basic assumption of Cartesian philosophy is that of modern philosophy, perhaps we can say that of modern man, the predicament of Descartes is still a predicament today; and the proofs which are adduced to combat the resulting nihilism should be of interest today, even if we may not be able to accept them. At the worst they will point out a path once taken which led nowhere. This, too, is instructive.

At the heart of the Cartesian approach is the distinction between formal and objective being. My world possesses objective being in so far as I am aware that it is world for me. It is the world which appears as object to a subject, who is conscious of being a subject.

The question now arises: is my world also the world, or at least an appearance thereof? Is there not a world public to all? By formal being Descartes refers to this underlying reality which is what it is regardless of my own subjectivity. As I look at this room I am aware of the fact that it might appear different to someone else, but that we would still be looking at the same room. What I see depends only partly on my point of view; it depends also on the real room. Objective being represents formal being. It is essentially a mode of being which points beyond itself. The distinction between formal and objective being presupposes the cogito, as it in

turn is presupposed by Cartesian doubt. For only when these two modes of being have been distinguished can the problem of correspondence arise; only then can we begin to question whether there is a transcendent reality behind appearances.

In other words, the Cartesian approach implies, as must all philosophy, indeed all responsible thought, that the pre-reflective point of view has been abandoned. The discovery is made that what I think to be the world is first of all only world for me. I have no immediate access to the underlying reality. If there be such a reality at all, it is mediated by the subject. All I ever encounter is such mediated reality. But if all I encounter is mediated reality, if I never encounter reality immediately, how do I know whether the real world bears any likeness to the one I encounter? How do I know that my ideas do indeed point beyond themselves? Progressive doubt in the naive, that is the pre-reflective world view, leads the Cartesian to suspect that life may be nothing but a dream, that the thing-in-itself may not only be unfathomable, but nothing at all. The world appears as perhaps nothing more than an opalescent film of hallucinations. Perhaps there is only a surface and it is foolish to search for anything beneath it. This reflection shakes the foundations of our sense of reality. To understand this danger is crucial to an understanding of the nihilistic situation in which we find ourselves. In an unreal world our actions cannot have any real consequences. It does not matter what we do. Life seen as a dream is the absurd life; the world of the

dream is a world which does not shine with its own light, but receives whatever light it may possess from the dreamer. What speaks to me in dreams is my own voice. It should not be forgotten that such a world may be meaningful as long as one is completely in the dream, as long as one remains in the pre-reflective state, but as soon as one awakens the meaninglessness of this world is apparent.[1] Here lies the relevance of the Cartesian discussion to the modern situation. Unlike Thomistic philosophy, it is born, not out of the confidence that man is at home in the universe, but out of a dread that he may not be.[2] Descartes is haunted by the spectre of a world in which there is no reason other than his own speaking to him, telling him why anything is this way rather than any other way.

Descartes tries to chase away this spectre with his proofs of the existence of God. It may be useful to take a look at some of the features of these proofs. Descartes begins by observing that ideas, in so far as they are viewed as mental phenomena only and not as representations, are not essentially different from one another.[3] There is no reason to

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[1]Cmp. Wilhelm Dilthey, Die Philosophie des Lebens, Eine Auswahl aus seinen Schriften (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1946), p. 37. ...Dann wird der Geist, des Allgemeingültigen und Beständigen in seinen philosophischen Erzeugnissen beraubt, zu einer Kraft, Begriffsdichtungen zu entwerfen. Diese aber muss sich selbst zerstören, da das Ergebnis des Aufwandes nicht verlohnt.

[2]Marthinus Versfeld, An Essay in the Metaphysics of Descartes (London: Methuen, 1940), p. 41.

[3]Cmp. Descartes, Philosophical Writings, sel. and tr. N. K. Smith (New York: Modern Library, 1958), p. 199. "If

give preference to one rather than to another. As a matter of fact, however, we attribute a value to some things, and shun others. Either these values are imagined, in which case they should disappear upon reflection just as the bread which appears to the hungry in a day-dream cannot nourish the fully awake, or reflection cannot destroy the values, in which case the ideas must have a referential status. It is our ability to ascribe values to ideas, Descartes argues, which permits us to relate these ideas to an ontological ground, the underlying formal being.[1] I can only attribute values if I live in a real world, or at least believe that I do. To call something valuable the subject must not be conscious of having constituted the valuable thing. It may indeed have done so. Thus as long as I am dreaming the images I encounter may arouse my terror or my pleasure. Only when I awaken are

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ideas are taken in so far as they are certain ways of thinking I recognize among them no differences or inequality... When, however, they are viewed as images, of which one represents one thing and another some other thing, it is evident that they differ from one another. Cmp. also Principles I, XVII.

[1]Cmp. Descartes, Philosophical Writings, p. 199. "Those which represent substances are without doubt something more and contain in themselves, so to speak more objective reality (that is to say participate by representation in a higher degree of being or perfection) than those which represent only modes or accidents." Here we have the crucial notion on which the Cartesian proof of the existence of God ultimately hinges. Regardless of how we interpret this passage in detail, it is evident that in speaking of degrees of reality, being, or perfection Descartes ties together the categories of being and value. Ideas, in so far as they possess only formal being, that is in so far as they are considered to be merely modes of thought, are devoid of value. I cannot choose between them. But they do not present themselves to my consciousness as such. If they did my world would seem unreal; it would be the absurd world of the dream which bears no reference to anything outside itself.

pleasure and terror equally overcome. Thus one may find oneself, upon awakening, trying desperately and in vain to hold on to the fading pleasures of a dream. The consciousness of the dream being my dream defeats the attempt.

Our ability to attribute values enables us to argue for more than the mere existence of things-in-themselves. This alone is not a condition strong enough to defeat the absurdity of life. For is it not possible that a world of things-in-themselves may be as accidental, and thus as shadowy and dreamlike, as a world of appearances, or even more so; for, in the latter case, I in my freedom might be able to impress my order on the world? In such a world there would be no reason why anything should be the way it is rather than any other. It would not matter. The accidental, too, is the absurd. If, with Descartes, we assume that our ability to attribute value is completely justified, this allows us to argue for the existence of a principle which defeats the accidental. The world in order to be valuable must be both real, that is independent of the perceiving subject, and not accidental. Either property alone is not sufficient. Descartes could answer the question, "Why this world and no other?" by pointing to God. God is the greatest value as he guarantees that there are values at all.

But Descartes' argument offers very little to the nihilist. For Descartes the world is given to us as possessing meaning, in spite of all doubts which may attack us. All appearances possess a value component. Objective being points

essentially beyond itself. Value cannot be divorced from fact. But the problem of the nihilist is that he is unable to discover values which will bear reflection. The world has ceased to answer the question: What is important? The crucial issue here is whether the given is given to us as valuable or not, whether it is possible to arrange facts according to "degrees of perfection." Descartes, without really analyzing the problem, thought that it was, and almost everyone, even the convinced nihilist, will act in everyday life as if he agreed with the Cartesian position. But in all likelihood he would tell Descartes and himself that he is not yet fully awake, but only awakening. He would challenge Descartes to take a close look at what is given and to show him where he finds this value component. Once Descartes has affirmed the cogito as his starting point, can he avoid seeing that objects are merely facts? A subject confronted by objects can always ask what would never occur to the naive: Why these and no others? There seems to be no obvious answer to this question. The facts do not seem to point beyond themselves to a reality in which they are grounded. The accidental has taken hold of the world. To be sure, Descartes might answer as Cleanthes answers Philo,

> And if this argument for Theism be, as you pretend, contrary to the principles of logic; its universal, its irresistible influence proves clearly, that there may be arguments of a like irregular nature. Whatever cavils may be urged; an orderly world, as well as coherent, articulate speech, will still be received as an incontestable proof of design and intention.[1]

[1]Hume, Selections, ed. C.W. Hendel (New York: Scribners, 1955), p. 317.

But is this more than an expression of a need to live by values? We do not wish to answer this question at this point. Let us just keep in mind the rather devastating arguments against the teleological argument. It seems as if it would always be possible to criticize the Cartesian position along Sartrian lines and argue that there is nothing in experience which suggests a transcendent guarantee of values other than the subject itself.

> But instead of seeing that the transcendences there posited are maintained in their being by my own transcendence, people will assume them upon my surging up in the world; they come from God, from nature, from my 'nature,' from society...These abortive attempts to stifle freedom under the weight of being (they collapse with the sudden upsurge of anguish before freedom) show sufficiently that freedom in its foundations coincides with the nothingness which is at the heart of man...Human nature cannot receive its ends, as we have seen, either from the outside or from a so-called 'inner' nature. It chooses them and by this very choice confers upon them a transcendent existence as the external limit of its projects. From this point of view...human reality in and through its very upsurge decides to define its own being by its ends. It is therefore the positing of my ultimate ends which characterizes my being which is identical with the sudden thrust of freedom which is mine.[1]

The force of this statement is apparent when one reads it in the light of the Constructivist tendency of modern art. Such an art, as we shall see later, is the art of an autonomous subject. But as Sartre is the first one to realize, an existence in which values are determined by the choice with which the individual determines himself is a precarious one. For if I am truly free, what drives me to fix my value to this

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[1]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, tr. and int. H. E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), pp. 440-443.

rather than to that object? There is an everpresent threat that in a moment of clarity I might ask myself, "Why am I really choosing this way?" and be confronted by the desert of meaninglessness. I find myself paralyzed, unable to choose, because of a complete lack of motivation.

C. As was pointed out, the Cartesian proofs of the existence of God assume that our ideas possess a value component. Yet Descartes himself, in conjuring up the spectre of the wicked demon, has cast doubt on these assumptions. Once one has begun to see the given as a mere collection of facts, it is no longer convincing to shout that these facts have a value component. Do we find such a component when we examine these facts? Descartes' analysis is not precise enough to give a definite answer to this question. It seems to owe more to the philosophy of the past than to the clarity and distinctness of the ideas involved. It can therefore hardly surprise us to find that the Cartesian notion of objective being gives way to the brute facts of the Empiricists. To see what happens when the value component is eliminated let us take a look at Hume. The point at which the conflict between Descartes and Hume usually receives discussion is the question of causality. But the sources of the conflict lie deeper. They are rooted in the fact that Descartes does not draw a sharp line between a purely epistemological investigation and one involving values, while Hume makes such a distinction, abstracting value from experience. For the Hume of the Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding the basic facts are

ideas (as Descartes would say, mere modes of thought) which properly speaking cannot be considered true or false, as they do not refer beyond themselves. It is true that these ideas are associated and yield certain patterns, but there is no assurance that they may not suddenly turn into unintelligible chaos.

> These implications of Hume's philosophy, which he himself clearly perceived and insisted upon, amount to saying--although he himself does not put it that way --that there is no reason why anything happens as it does and that the universe is totally irrational and senseless in its proceedings. We can ask <u>what</u> happens, but to ask <u>why</u> it happens is to ask a meaningless question...all we can say is what happens happens. It is just so and this is the end of the matter. Everything is just a brute fact. We live in a brute fact universe ...Science can never, on this view, do anything except describe what occurs... This then, the vision of a world without a purpose, sense, or reason, is the inner substance of Hume's philosophy.[1]

Stace may have failed to do complete justice to Hume. What he describes as the inner substance of Hume represents perhaps but a side of his work. Passages in the <u>Dialogues</u> suggest this. Here Hume seems to be aware of some of the difficulties which are implied by his approach. But these warnings went unheeded. Philo's arguments have seemed more convincing than those of Cleanthes. That they imply an absurd world was disregarded.

Philo's descendants are still with us. Thus Logical Atomism speaks with his voice. The universe of the Logical Atomist is necessarily unintelligible, as the logical atoms are not related to each other in any necessary way. It makes

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[1]W. T. Stace, <u>Religion and the Modern Mind</u> (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1952), pp. 164-165.

no difference whatsoever that these facts are interpreted to be real, so that Logical Atomism argues, unlike Descartes, that in perception we have direct access to formal being. Their world is still absurd, for this being is a completely accidental aggregate of facts. To be given any one logical atom tells me nothing about any other. The fact that I find a coherent universe in which, for example, causality reigns, is taken to be an inexplicable fact which is in no way prejudged when I look at the individual sense datum. The world is opaque; it is as likely to plunge as in the next moment into absolute chaos, as it is to persevere in its old patterns.

Ayer, and even Hume, attempt to get out of this unbearable state of affairs by resorting to probability and expectation. Ayer thus attempts to justify induction by calling it a pragmatic necessity. It works and it is necessary to insure our survival and the satisfaction of our desires. To attempt to justify induction further is utterly futile. But such an explanation does not make the universe seem any less absurd. It is rather an invitation to forget this absurdity. Ayer, too, offers us no more than an invitation to dream.[1]

Just as Ayer, to save the credibility of his account, is forced to resort to a pragmatic principle in his account of induction, so Russell, in dealing with the Cartesian problem of a world which is common to all, is forced to resort to

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[1]A. J. Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic (New York: Dover, ____), pp. 49 ff.

"instinctive belief." That there is a public world is called a "truism," an indubitable fact which we cannot question. Perhaps most of us would agree. But this is not an answer; rather it is a decision not to ask any further questions. It, too, betrays a tacit agreement with Camus' charge that life is absurd. For again the other is silent to the demands of the individual for an answer.[1]

But even if Russell could demonstrate that there is a public world, or if Ayer were able to handle the problem of induction, this would still fail to defeat the absurd. In the former case the real might yet be accidental. One might suggest here as a remedy--and this brings us to the latter case--the shift from Hume to Kant, who after all is able to give an account of necessary connections, or from Ayer to Wittgenstein, who, if he doesn't solve the problem of induction, at least shows an emphasis on the formal side of our experience which may seem more promising. We can point here to Kant's Transcendental Deduction and to Wittgenstein's notion of logical space. Yet in both cases the formal element only limits a still infinite number of possible worlds. And even if the formalism were to be so strict as to argue that, given any fact in the world, all other facts are implied, this would still not answer the question: why am I living just this life? Why this world and no other? Everything would merely have been reduced to one immense accident. One cannot

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[1]B. Russell, The Problems of Philosophy (New York: Oxford Galaxy, 1959), pp. 19 ff.

escape by formalism from the accidental and thus from absurdity. The question of value remains untouched. Both Kant and Wittgenstein are quite aware of this. The formalism is not introduced to answer the value question. As Hegel points out, "the spirit can be reconciled with history and reality by only one insight: that everything which has happened and which is still happening, not only comes from God and cannot be without him, but is essentially the work of God."[1] If this view is rejected, the infinite creative music of the universe "changes into the monotonous clattering of an immense mill, driven by the river of chance and swimming on it, a mill-in-itself, without an architect and without a miller, a real perpetuum mobile, a mill milling itself."[2]

Nihilism, it was said, is an awakening which leads man to discover that nothing matters. A first step in this awakening is that I recognize something; I name it, and in naming it put it at a distance from myself. I become aware of its being an object for me. A gulf has opened between the subject and the world of objects. This world, and it does not matter at all whether the objects in it be sense-data or chairs and tables, seems accidental and unreal. Nothing seems to matter in such a world of names. This realization that nothing matters may be the price which the fully awake has to pay for the con-

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[1]Hegel, Vorlesungen uber die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte, in F. Heer, ed. Hegel, Auswahl und Einleitung (Frankfurt/M.--Hamburg: Fischer, 1958), p. 169. Cmp. Ibid., p. 41.

[2]Rehm, ed. Novalis (Frankfurt/M.--Hamburg: Fischer, 1956), p. 100.

scious use of his freedom. And yet, how is it possible to act in such a world? If nothing matters, how can I answer the question: "What shall I do?"

If we have not found the road leading beyond nihilism, at least we can point out a condition which must be met if such a road is to be found. It must be possible to affirm a world which is both real and not accidental.

II. THE AUTONOMY OF THE PERCEPT

A. Thus, before we can make an attempt to suggest how the threat of nihilism may be answered, we must raise the question: what is this world in which I find myself?

Russell's views furnish us with a convenient starting point. Russell is a realist; for him it is a "truism" that the world is made up of facts which are what they are regardless of what we may think about them.[1] To combat this position we could muster all the arguments of the idealist. Yet, while keeping in mind that Russell's truism may be less obvious than he thinks, we must grant that on the surface this seems to be a reasonable statement. The smoke which I see rising to the sky as I look out of the window, the gabled roofs, the tree which has lost its leaves, the wet road, all these seem to be what they are regardless of my own thoughts about them. This sense of reality cannot be reasoned away, and any adequate epistemology has to account for it.

The facts which make up the world, Russell argues, are directly accessible in perception. The world is the totality of facts and these facts are sensibilia.[2] Here we might become dubious: we might remember the questions designed to shake the naive belief in this position. Does the color blind man see the world as I see it? Clearly not. But who sees the world as it really is? Is the blue actually in the sky

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[1] B. Russell, The Philosophy of Logical Atomism (Dept. of Phil, Minnesota/Monist 1918-1919/), p. 3.

[2] Ibid., pp. 32 ff.

or is it due to the way I see the sky, dependent, among other things, upon the particular constitution of my eyes? Undoubtedly it is possible to launch an attack on Russell's position using these or similar arguments. However let us again refrain from doing so and follow him in the development of his position.

With some qualifications it is true to say, according to Russell, that if a thing cannot appear to your senses it is not there.[1] However, if some sense datum appears I cannot possibly doubt its reality. Beliefs are about these immediately accessible sense data. Thus a belief is true if a reference to such sense data is possible. It should be noted here that Russell draws a sharp line between the perceiving act and the object of that act, the perceived. The perceiving act constitutes in no way the perceived. This is a consequence of two points made above: things are what they are regardless of the perceiving subject and they are directly accessible in perception. In perception, being other than my own is given to me directly. We hear here an echo of Moore's Refutation of Idealism. When I see blue, Moore argues, I have a perception of blue, not a blue perception. The "of" here refers to an independent existent. The act of perception and its object are not internally related. Both are what they are regardless of the other.

A further consequence is of special importance in this context. If the fact is essentially sensible, that is, if it

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[1] Ibid., pp. 32 ff.

may be given adequately in sensation, it follows that it is futile to look for a transcendent reality beyond that fact. The pink smoke which I see slowly dissolving in the sky is not a symbol of some reality beyond itself. Indeed there is no beyond. It is not as if what I am seeing were but the curtain hiding a more profound reality. There is just the fact. (We can see how, according to such a view, an artist like Marc, who in his art searches for indivisible Being behind phenomena, is only deluding himself. What he takes to be revelations of Being can be nothing more than his own hallucinations. If, on the other hand, we receive one of Marc's paintings as a revelation of Being, it may force us to reject a theory which tells us that this is impossible.) For Russell, however, sense data exhaust reality. To ask why a sense datum is, is to ask a meaningless question. It just is. It is also impossible for any given fact to be internally related to any other given fact. For this relation is not a sensible aspect of the fact. If two facts stand in a certain relationship this must be considered accidental. This is expressed by calling the fact atomic. The being or not-being of any such particular is completely independent of the being or not-being of any other. The world, on this view, may be likened to a mosaic which just happens to be there and which just happens to make sense. A life in such a world is necessarily absurd. Man himself appears only as a stone in this mosaic, partaking of its accidental nature.

B. This epistemology, it seems to me, rests on a basic

confusion: reality is confused with what is seen. We begin by questioning Russell's thesis that the facts which make up the world are directly accessible in perception. Is the tree which I see in the courtyard, its bark glistening with wetness, adequate to the tree itself? It seems to me that it clearly is not. As I reflect, there seems to be an awareness which informs me that this is not so. Thus, I know that as I step closer or as the light changes what I see will change. But not only these external circumstances determine what I actually see. My past experiences or my present intentions are equally important. Does the fisherman see the same fish as the person who has never seen a fish before? Will they not look to the latter much more alike? He really does not see some of the differences which the fisherman sees. Or is the tree of the painter that of the lumberjack or that of the botanist? Where one sees a tapestry of green and grey surfaces, the other sees something to be cut down or a member of a certain plant family. It seems to me that these are not different interpretations of the same phenomena, but that the phenomena themselves are different in each case. Is the face which we see upon first being introduced to someone the same face we see once we have become friends? Are we not aware of more later? This may be granted, yet one may argue that the same thing is being seen, one just is aware of different aspects. But what is seeing without being aware of it? Perhaps we can resolve these difficulties by saying on one hand that different phenomena are involved in each case, on the

other that those who insist that the same thing is being seen, that, for example, the artist, the lumberjack, and the botanist all look at the same tree, are also right. We can reconcile these two statements by saying that the phenomenon seen and the object at which our seeing aims are not the same thing. The real tree is never seen. It just tells us that our attempt to see the tree falls short of its goal. It is a shadow which surrounds what I actually see with the infinite possibilities of what I might also be seeing if the circumstances were different. And yet, all my attempts to see the tree aim at the same thing. Otherwise I could not say that in one case what I see is more adequate to what I want to see than in another. But when I step closer to the tree I see it more adequately than when I am at a great distance. We can conceive of the real tree as being the point where all attempts to see it converge. Contrary to Russell, it seems that what is directly accessible in perception is not reality, but merely a phenomenon pointing to reality. Reality and perception are incommensurable. The world which we see is not the ultimate reality. It is this realization which is at the heart of an art like that of Marc.

Russell's first thesis is that the world is made up of facts which are what they are regardless of what we think about them. If by facts we mean the underlying reality at which perception aims, then I would agree with Russell's statement. However, Russell's facts are <u>sensibilia</u>, they are accessible in perception. Disagreement with this position has

already been suggested. Thus we spoke of past experience and interest influencing what is actually seen. Perhaps this can be made more explicit by turning to the difference between waking and dreaming.[1] The difference is not simply that in one case I take an image to be before me; for the figures of my dreams are also images, they are also seen. Is the difference then that in one case perception is more vivid than in the other? The difference between waking and dreaming would then be one of degree. This generally seems to be the case; yet hallucinations can at times be as vivid as reality. More importantly, the difference between dreaming and waking seems to be one of kind, rather than one of degree.[2] One difference should be sought in the feeling of inadequacy which must accompany our waking perception. The percept must be surrounded by a shadow which it never exhausts.[3] This feeling

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[1]Cmp. Ludwig Klages, "Vom Traumbewusstsein," in Mensch und Erde (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1956), pp. 147-195.

[2]Cmp. Klages, Mensch und Erde, p. 161. "Nicht weniger wirklich /ist/ nach dem Zeugnis unsres Erlebens traumhafte Wirklichkeit, sondern anders wirklich."

[3]Cmp. Heidegger, Holzwege, p. 104. As Heidegger points out, shadow means here not simply the lack of light, although it does mean that, if by light we mean the light of the intellect, that is conceptual knowledge. But it is this shadow which reveals to us Sein instead of Seiendes, formal instead of objective being. The shadow reveals what concepts cannot reveal, the fulness of Being. "Das alltägliche Meinen sieht im Schatten lediglich das Fehlen des Lichtes, wenn nicht gar seine Verneinung. In Wahrheit aber ist der Schatten die offenbare, jedoch undurchdringliche Bezeugung des verborgenen Leuchtens. Nach diesem Begriff des Schatten erfahren wir das Unberechenbare als jenes was der Vorstellung entzogen, doch im Seienden offenkundig ist und das verborgene Sein anzeigt." Cmp. also Walter Hess, Dokumente zum Verständnis der modernen Malerei (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1956), p. 35. "Für Rouault ist die einzige Rechtfertigung des Malers, dass er den Zustand des Menschen sichtbar macht in einer Welt, deren Licht, für ihn die Sonne Satans ist."

is a necessary factor in experiencing something to be real rather than imagined. It is this feeling which leads us to speak of a sensory given, even though we are not directly aware of our sensing. It also leads to the conviction that what I am actually seeing is only an appearance of an underlying reality which is what it is regardless of my own existence. This feeling does not attend my dreams. This is an essential difference between waking and dreaming. The images involved may in both cases be identical. The difference cannot be sought in the objects of which we are actually aware. Rather it must be sought in such latent traits of perception as the feeling of inadequacy. There are other such traits. Thus a feeling of anticipation attends all waking perception, but is not found in dreams. In a dream one is not surprised in the least when an exhibition hall in a museum suddenly changes into one's living room. In waking life this would be so disturbing that we would rub our eyes, suspecting that we might be asleep.[1] Similarly I find a feeling of memory attending my waking perceptions. In dreams one cannot remember; everything is transformed into the present.[2] This absence of anticipation and memory explains why dreams fall into looser structures than waking life. They are constituted as such as

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[1]Cmp. Klages, Mensch und Erde, pp. 162 ff.

[2]Cmp. Ibid., p. 189. "Wir befinden uns nicht mehr im Fluss der Zeit, wo für jedes Jetzt das Einst unaufhaltsam zurückflieht, sondern in immerwährender Gegenwart, mit unbegrenzt beweglichem Jetztpunkt, und wir befinden uns ebenso wenig im Aussenraum, den zu durchmessen es der Zeit bedarf, sondern in einem unbegrenzt beweglichen Hier."

the latent traits which cause me to constitute a coherent world are lacking. Upon reflection it is possible to bring these latent traits to the surface and thus to tell the difference between waking and dreaming. But a person who has remained in the pre-reflective stage would be unable to make this distinction. He would live in a world in which both spheres intermingle. This is also brought out in deep dreams. Here I find myself in a world which for the course of the dream is the real world. But when such a dream becomes too unpleasant, it is usually possible to turn reflectively on it by an act of will. Reflection permits me to see that the traits which would have made this a real experience are lacking. I realize that it is only a dream and awake.

Every percept, then, aims at something of which it falls short. We suggest this character of perception by calling it an intention. It intends something which transcends what is actually perceived. The way in which perception falls short of its goal is determined by its traits, among which are interest, memory, and anticipation. In the background of this account we can still see the shadow of G. E. Moore, but the great difference cannot be overlooked. Moore and Russell have as the objects of their acts of perception real sensibilia. Here, on the other hand, it is argued that "perception is the experience in which on the warrant of something given in sensation at the time, we unreflectingly take some object to be before us."[1] This object, which we perceive, is not real

[1]Brand Blanshard, The Nature of Thought, 2 vols. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1955), v. I., p. 52.

as Russell thought, it does not possess independent being of its own. Rather it is constituted by the intending act out of its ground to which the object itself is in principle inadequate. The object intends this ground; the ground is what we called the shadow surrounding the percept. It is at the heart of the feelings of inadequacy, memory, and anticipation which were mentioned. We may place the "sensory given" into this ground, but we should remember that it is never given to us as such.

It remains to be shown that the percept is not atomic. One sense in which the fact cannot be said to be atomic has already been pointed out: the shadow surrounding each phenomenon relates it to Being extending into the past and into the future. Yet there is another way in which the percept cannot be said to be atomic. All I know in any perception, all my attention is focused on, is indeed an object of perception, a percept--where we define percept as a concept which makes a direct reference to what was called above the ground of the perception. Thus in seeing red I take a conceptualized red to be before me. The conceptual element places what I see into a framework. In this case it would tell me among other things that it is a color I see, that this color is closer to orange than to blue, that it is extended. I may not be aware of these implications. But upon reflection I realize that all this is implied by seeing something as red. The percept is in a logical context which becomes patent upon reflection. This context is the logical space of Wittgenstein

or the eidetic space of Husserl. Every percept defines a place in such a space. To be meaningful it must imply the space in which it functions, just as a word, when taken out of the context of the language to which it belongs is meaningless. Percepts and words, if taken to be atomic, signify nothing. Thus someone who disagrees with me about the properties of red, would either associate a different meaning with the word, that is, he would interpret it in the context of a different logical space--for instance he might be color blind and confuse red and green--or he might assign to the word a different place in a similar or the same logical space. In this case we would say that he is speaking a different language, in which, for example, "red" might mean green. In both cases the word would be interpreted within a context. If he could not interpret it this way, the word would possess no meaning for him. It would not be a part of a language he understood. The same analysis applies if we read concept instead of word. The person who had never seen a fish before was not in the possession of adequate concepts when he really saw one. Consequently he actually saw less than the fisherman who did possess such concepts. What is actually seen depends thus not only on the sensory given and on such factors as memory, anticipation, or interest, but also on the conceptual framework which is brought to the situation. This is just a restatement on the Kantian dictum that intuitions without concepts are blind. Again we find Russell's views untenable.

C. Russell's views are interesting, however, not because they are false, but rather because they are characteristic of a tendency of thought which is typical of the modern situation and which at the same time leads towards nihilism. Repeatedly it was pointed out that a sense of irreality is typical of the modern situation. The dissatisfaction with the irreality of the world is one of the main springs of modern art. A similar lack of a sense of reality may be detected in recent political developments. In Russell we meet a philosopher who gives a philosophical foundation to this feeling by arguing for the autonomy of the percept. Above a percept was defined as a concept referring back to a substratum. This definition needs further explanation. First let us make the rather obvious point that concepts need not be percepts. The concepts of physics such as the law of gravity or the concept of an electron ultimately refer to percepts, but they themselves are abstract. Their meaning is first of all that of a place in a formal context. Less obvious is that any word which seems to refer to a percept, may lose this reference. This does not mean that one does not understand what is being said. On the contrary, one does. But the meaning which the word possesses is given to it no longer by its referential status, but by the fact that it operates within a language, just as the formal context, not its reference to a percept, gives meaning to the concept of an electron. Most of the time, when we are listening or reading, we understand perfectly well what is being said, without

making a single reference to percepts. In this case the word, or the language, has become autonomous.[1] It functions without a reference to an actual or mental image. A language which has become autonomous in this way has also lost much of its depth. In using it we resemble a blind man, who by listening for a long time to others, has been able to learn how to use the names of all colors correctly. In a sense, for him, too, roses are red and the sky blue. However, it is difficult to deny that something has been lost when language becomes autonomous in this way. It has become a shield separating man from reality. With it he protects himself from being too concerned when he reads about an earthquake in Chile, or the starvation of thousands in China. Only the autonomy of language makes it possible to read about pain and not to be concerned. A personal confrontation would usually have a very different result.

Unfortunately we cannot say "always," and we feel uneasy when we say "usually." We just have to look at the people standing around the scene of an accident to become doubtful. How many of those watching want to help? We could have chosen more frightful examples. The history of the last decades would have been impossible if there had not been quite a few who could look at the suffering of others without feeling concern. Otherwise the crimes of these years could not have happened. And this heartlessness is also in evidence when we

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[1] Cmp. Phaidros 275 A.

look without concern at the billboards littering the highways --when man has become indifferent to nature. The percept itself can become autonomous, in the sense we spoke above about the autonomy of words. This happens when the percept is identified with the real, when it is no longer related to an underlying reality--Russell's epistemology is an illustration. The world of autonomous percepts is a world without depth; it is only surface. It is a world which must necessarily seem unreal because the percept has lost its roots in transcendence. Man has lost sight of the latter. His world has become in a very real sense like a dream. There are no meanings in such a world; it is merely a collection of mute objects. --We shall describe the characteristics of such a world in some detail later.

In the autonomy of the percept we seem to have found at least one root of the nihilistic situation. In this chapter I argued that an epistemology which posits the autonomy of the percept is based on a faulty understanding of what it means to perceive. Is nihilism then merely the result of an epistemological error? If it were as easy as this to escape from nihilism, presumably it would never have grown to such frightful proportions. There must be something in perception which suggests the autonomy of the percept.

III. THE TRIUMPH OF SUBJECTIVITY

A. At the heart of the nihilistic predicament is man's realization that he is a subject. The world of the nihilist is one which possesses being only for him; it is an anthropocentric world. Being-in-itself has been lost; being is only for a subject. A question arises here: how is it possible for man to lose sight of the ground of being in an affirmation of his own subjectivity? This is just a restatement of the point with which we concluded the preceding chapter: how is it possible for man to assert the autonomy of the percept?

Let us begin by asking: how is it possible to affirm one's subjectivity at all? How is it possible to even pronounce the cogito? Descartes introduced great confusion into the discussion of subjectivity because he believed the plausibility of the cogito ergo sum to have arisen from his clear and distinct understanding that in order to think it is necessary to be. The objection here is not to the conclusion, but to the argument. Is the cogito ergo sum undeniable because it is based on clear and distinct ideas? An example of a self-evident judgment, which is based on the clarity and distinctness of the ideas involved, according to Descartes, is 2 plus 3 equals 5. Knowledge is conceived to be like mathematical knowledge; it recognizes essences and arranges them in a quasi-mathematical order. Yet, is the cogito ergo sum such a judgment? If so, what are the essences involved which I know clearly and distinctly? In particular, do I have a

clear and distinct idea of what it means to be a thinking subject? It seems to me that Descartes was mistaken in affirming this point. He confused certainty with clarity and distinctness. I can be certain of having a funny feeling without having a clear and distinct idea of what this feeling is. Similarly I can know that I exist, without knowing at all clearly and distinctly what is meant by this statement. It may be helpful to introduce at this point a distinction made by Harald Höffding. Cognition, according to Höffding, is of objects, while feeling is defined as an "inward state which cannot by any possibility become an element of a percept or an image."[1] We can say that the Cartesian cogito lends expression to a feeling rather than to a cognition. The subject does not know "what it is, but that it is, at this present time."[2]

Berkeley shows himself more keenly aware of the difficulties involved in a discussion of subjectivity than Descartes. Realizing that it is impossible to have an idea of the subject, Berkeley introduces the term notion to describe knowledge such as that given to us in the cogito.

> We may not, I think, strictly speaking be said to have an idea of active being, or of an action, although we may be said to have a notion of them. I have some knowledge or notion of my mind, and its acts, inasmuch as I know or understand what is meant by these words.[3]

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[1]Harald Höffding, Outlines of Psychology, (London-New York: Macmillan, 1891), p. 89.

[2]Karl Jaspers, Philosophie, vol. 2, Existenzerhellung, p. 26.

[3]Burtt, ed. The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill, (New York: Modern Library, 1939), p. 573, Berkeley, Principles of Human Knowledge, 142.

But what might have been the beginning of a very fruitful discussion showed up only as an inconsistency in the empirical program. Hume could ask for the corresponding sense datum, and, not finding one, could show the meaninglessness of Berkeley's term. If we grant Hume his starting point, that ideas are meaningful only if they can be related to impressions, this is a just criticism. We must agree with Hume when he writes that he vainly sought an impression of the subject within him. Others have shared this experience, as Earle's example of Paul Valery, who spent years "looking within," and "finally explained in despair that whenever he turned his attention within he could hear nothing but the rumblings of his bowels," shows.[1] In some sense Valery and Hume are surely correct. We will never find the subject, as we find a tree, a fish, or the rumblings of our bowels. If we were to find it in this way, what we would have found would not be the subject, but merely another object. But why must the mode of objectivity be the only one which reveals being to us? The being of objects is derivatory; objects are constituted by the intention. But the being which is expressed in the cogito is not such a derivatory being. As Descartes points out, it is not objective, but formal being. The subject must therefore be thought outside the world of objects. Perhaps we can say, using Wittgenstein's example, that the subject is not in the world, just as the eye is not in the field of vision.

It may be useful to contrast this view with that of

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[1]William Earle, "The Life of the Transcendental Ego"

Ayer who does seek the subject in the world. Ayer takes his clue from Wittgenstein, who relates the empirical subject to the body. But while Wittgenstein knows that in identifying the subject with the body he has not solved the problem of subjectivity, Ayer believes that he has done so. But is my body the thinking subject? Is it not rather object for that subject? Ayer, however, is right in assigning to the body a privileged status. Kant and Wittgenstein seem to suggest that the empirical subject is only an object, just as a tree or a table is an object. This is surely untrue. The body is inhabited by me. I am that body in a way in which I am not the table or the tree. In the body the subject enters the phenomenal world. Wittgenstein's comparison of the subject to the eye fails to do justice to this point. However, Ayer fails to do justice to the fact that I do not know myself as I know other objects, and if he were to see it, he could not account for it within the limits set by his approach. An adequate account of subjectivity must seek to avoid Ayer's identification of the subject with the body; on the other hand it cannot go to the other extreme and argue that the body is an object like other objects.

B. An illustration may help here: What is this thing which I call myself? First of all I may attempt to describe my body: I am the person sitting here, at this time. My passport gives me further clues: grey eyes, brown hair--the

in The Review of Metaphysics, vol. XIII, no. 1, Sept. 1959, p. 9.

list could be continued forever. Ayer, it seems, would like to stop with such a description, but in all likelihood we would wish to go further; we would go on to explore our past and our psychic life. But these descriptions, far as they may go, will always remain descriptions of an empirical subject, that is of a subject which has become object for me, and which is therefore different from me. I, in some way, always remain outside it. And yet, I also recognize myself to be this empirical subject. It is this appearance of the subject within and without the realm of objects which Kant and Wittgenstein cannot explain. The line they have drawn separating the phenomenal from the noumenal sphere is too sharp. And as all meaningful discourse is restricted to the former, this enables me only to speak of the empirical subject, but not of the subject which I feel myself to be. It is evident that only if this sharp division can be eliminated, if the restriction of meaningful discourse to the realm of objective being can be shown to be arbitrary, might it be possible to speak meaningfully of the subject.

According to Wittgenstein the proposition picturing the fact is alone meaningful. The totality of such propositions gives us a picture of the world. Let us say that everything in this world is of order 1. The only facts which language can meaningfully represent are of this order. All other facts, if indeed there be any, are inexpressible. But is not the proposition referring to a fact of order 1 such a fact? Let us call it a fact of order 2. According to Witt-

genstein such a fact is outside the world and to talk about it is therefore meaningless. Thus he calls the Tractatus meaningless because in it he deals primarily with such facts. And if it is meaningless to talk about propositions, it must be at least as meaningless to talk about the subject uttering these propositions.

We may attempt to get out of this difficulty by postulating a meta-language which can meaningfully deal with such facts. The language used in the Tractatus is an example. But to discuss this language we shall need propositions which are themselves facts of order 3, and the subject uttering these propositions will again fall outside the discussion. This process can be carried on ad infinitum, yielding an infinite hierarchy of meta-languages. It follows that no matter what language we choose to discuss the problem of subjectivity, there must be a subject which cannot be discussed in it meaningfully, the subject using that language.

A counterpart of this series of languages is Husserl's account of iterated noises. I can think about a tree, I can think about thinking about a tree, I can think about thinking about thinking about a tree, etc. This series, too, can be carried to infinity, and it is evident that the subject for which we are looking cannot become the object of such a thought.

But how can I speak about the subject in this case? To put it very simply, how can I even pronounce the cogito? As Jaspers points out, in this difficulty we have discovered

one root of positivism.[1] This difficulty, however, can be overcome. As we asked in the preceding chapter when we spoke of looking at a tree, is any thought about my self adequate? For instance, when I identify myself with my body, do I not find this identification to be inadequate? I am more than this body. And when we repeat this process, taking as our object our psychical life or whatever else we may please, we will again receive the same answer. Again we can see that whatever idea of the subject we may have, it falls short of its goal, and is informed of this by a shadow surrounding that idea. This shadow also informs one idea of being more or less adequate than another. It points out the limit at which all my ideas of the self aim and which none reaches. This limit is not only the same in each case, but it is also the subject uttering the proposition. It is the latent character of the intention which makes it mine, the Kantian "I" which must accompany all cognition. If this were not so, we could not say that one idea of the self is more adequate than another. We interpret self-knowledge to be analogous to knowledge, let us say of a tree. In both cases the intention constitutes an object. This object refers back to latent traits of the constituting intention. But whereas in perception, a sensory or objective awareness is referred to, this awareness is now subjective.

According to this analysis, in self-knowledge object

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[1]Jaspers, Philosophie, vol. I, p. 213.

and subject are in a sense one.[1] But before they were said to be facts of different orders. If the latter is a fact of order n, the former is one of order n - 1. Now it is asserted that the subject uttering the proposition is the subject referred to in that proposition. The linguistic levels collapse into one language. The assertion that it is meaningful only to speak of facts of a certain order is rejected; instead all facts are held to be of the same order. The meta-linguistic approach cannot in principle do justice to the problem of subjectivity. To do so, a language must cut across all linguistic orders.

C. We are now in a position to return to our original question and show why it is possible to deny the existence of objects in the world, while this is impossible in reference to the subject; why the cogito is indubitable, while the statement "this tree exists" is not. Whenever a statement is made about the formal being of something, a reference is made to the shadow surrounding the idea or image of this object. Thus in the last chapter an attempt was made to show that reality does not reside in the percept, but in the ground out of which perception constitutes the percept. It is the reference to this ground which lets us say in reference to the percept, "this tree," or whatever it might be, "exists." Similarly the reality of the subject is found to reside not in my idea of the subject, but in a latent awareness accompanying

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[1] Cmp. Jaspers, Philosophie, vol. 2, p. 26.

the intention constituting the idea. It is the automatic referral of an object, be this object a tree or the self, to traits latent in the constituting intention, which is at the heart of all statements about existence. These latent traits are the inaccessible goals at which each intention aims, which it never reaches, and which are felt when we know that the intention has fallen short of its goal. When such a referral is absent, doubt in the existence of something is possible. It is always possible to make this reference when the cogito is uttered, but not when I speak about the existence of any other object. Just now I am looking at this sheet of paper. Reflecting about this I become conscious of the polar structure of the original intention. I recognize the intention as being mine; I am the subject looking. The object of my reflecting is the idea of an active subject. This idea fails to do justice to the complexity of the feeling of subjectivity which attended the original intention. This feeling is lost in the reflection, but to compensate for this loss, it reappears in the reflecting act and informs the idea of the self of its inadequacy. At the same time it convinces me of the fact that I am, that the idea of my self refers to a real existent. And no matter how I twist my thoughts, I cannot escape from this feeling of subjectivity. Whenever I think of the self, it is there to assure me that I do indeed exist: cogito ergo sum.

But besides recognizing the original intention as being mine, I also remember that it was of an object, in this

case of a sheet of paper. The image of this paper, which alone was patent in the original intention, is not destroyed in the reflective act. But again we find that the feeling of inadequacy which attended the percept in the original intention has been lost. This time, however, there is nothing in the reflective act to compensate for this loss. The percept has become autonomous; it has lost its roots in Being. Here is one root of idealism.[1] The autonomy of the percept appears thus as the necessary correlate of reflective thought, which, while asserting the existence of the subject, obscures the existence of all other things.[2]

This autonomy is never the goal of a conscious creative effort. Indeed in this case one would betray that one had not really left the pre-reflective stage; the artificiality of the attempt would be apparent, as it was in the preceding example. Nihilism is a real threat only when the autonomy of the percept is accepted without any thought about this acceptance. Characteristic of this state is self-centeredness and the belief that the world is a world of mere objects. To talk about any reality behind objects is considered meaningless. Whoever

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[1]Cmp. Jaspers, Philosophie, vol. 1, p. 222.

[2]We have to remember here, however, that man is rarely, if ever, only a reflective being. Normally he operates simultaneously on both the reflective and the pre-reflective plane. Thus it is possible to look at a piece of paper and, at the same time, to reflect about this. This is not going to lead me to doubt the existence of the piece of paper. Such doubt can arise only when man's interests are completely absorbed by the reflective act; when man operates only on the reflective plane.

agrees with the last statement is a nihilist at heart, although he may never have to confront this fact; for he may not be conscious of having entered the reflective state--this presupposes reflection about this state; his world is the only one which he can imagine. This world seems unreal and shallow only to the outsider who measures it by his own experiences. From time to time a painting, a memory of childhood, or the patterns woven by clouds may awaken our latent nihilist and let him sense that what he thought to be the world was merely the surface. Yet, in all likelihood, these are only a few blissful moments to him, submerged in the monotony of everyday life. There are, however, experiences when this shallow world is suddenly shattered, when it collapses as it did in Germany in the first decades of the twentieth century. Man is forced to recognize the hollowness of his former life and finds himself naked and lost in a world which suddenly seems unreal. Suddenly he has to face the nihilistic predicament and in his anguish is ready to sell his soul to anyone. One reason the United States has been spared such a development as it swept over Germany following the First World War is that it has not known a similar shattering of an accepted world. But one cannot speak of an immunity against such a disease. Even the few remarks made so far should be sufficient to at least warn against this illusion.

In the preceding chapter it was argued that the inten-

tion constitutes its object. Upon reflection the subject appears as the correlate of the object. The polarity of subject and object may be said to be latent in every intention. With the consciousness of the self, the polarity tends to disappear again. The object is reduced to a satellite of the subject. This may seem like a rather Fichtean conclusion. Where Fichte speaks of absolute being, I would like to speak of the ground of being from which the intention rises, out of which it constitutes objects, and a part of which it is itself. The intentional spirit is conceived of here as being nature becoming conscious of itself. However, in reflection, the roots which anchor the subject in Being are cut and the subject becomes aware of its isolation. This isolation is at the heart of the nihilist's inability to find the world real. He is an actor in a play of shadows, whose actions are without meaning and without consequences. Nihilism appears as the end towards which reflection tends and, in so far as being human implies reflection, the end towards which humanity tends.

IV. THE CONSTITUTION OF VALUE AND THE CLOSED VALUE SYSTEM

A. The loss of the shadow surrounding the percept may remind us perhaps of Peter Schlemihl, who sold his shadow to the devil and paid for this with an inability to feel at home anywhere. The loss of his shadow made him rootless and he ended up as a natural scientist, striding across the surface of the earth in seven-league-boots. One curious feature of this story is that the devil who robbed Schlemihl of his shadow appeared to him at one point as a metaphysician who promised to solve the riddle of the meaning of the world. He proceeded to develop an intricate metaphysical system which nearly captivated Peter Schlemihl, but an inner voice refused to be satisfied with the devil's discourse. What was lacking in this marvelously coherent mental structure was a reference to the world. Peter Schlemihl's devil thus turns out to be an old acquaintance of ours, and the man who lost his shadow also bears familiar features.

Above we spoke of the shadow surrounding a percept which relates it to a ground of being. This shadow is lost when the percept becomes autonomous. Perhaps the word "autonomous" is not entirely fortunate, for the percept becomes autonomous only in relation to the reality which it should represent, while it retains its dependence on the subject. Indeed, the autonomous percept is the means by which man asserts his autonomy; it is the shield with which he protects his own insularity, the axe with which he cuts his roots from

a larger reality. The shadow of man is that inner voice which demands the shadow surrounding the percept. Its loss (or perhaps we should rather speak of its subjugation, for the voice is never completely silent) corresponds to the victory of the autonomous spirit.

This victory, it was argued, plunges us into a world which is unreal. At the same time it reveals the world to us as being accidental in its very core. First, what does it mean to call something accidental? Certainly it implies that I can conceive things to be other than they happen to be. Thus I might think my love accidental and mean by this that I can conceive of others whom I might have loved if circumstances had been different. To conceive of the accidental thus presupposes conceiving of an other. But being, in so far as it is revealed to us in concepts, is given to us essentially as one thing opposed to others. Here we have to recall that a concept or a name is essentially something in a context. It points to a "this" in terms of that which it is not. Thus when I call something a tree, I am aware of the inadequacy of this name; it tells me indeed that what I see is not a stone, nor a flower, nor an animal, but the particular ineffability of my just seeing this tree is lost. Of course I may refine my name; I may say this is a willow tree, or I may even compare its branches to flowing hair. Yet the same inadequacy reappears. And though I can go on refining my language, finding ever more evocative attributes, I will never find a perfect name. This ultimate inadequacy of all

names and all concepts is rooted in the fact that they presuppose the context in which they operate; the objects are not seen as they are in themselves, but as being related to things which they are not. In other words, the name or concept describes what I see not in its individuality, but in its universal aspects, as falling into a language or conceptual space. But this implies that I see it as one of many possible instances of these universals. The tree as it is in itself escapes me. The ideal name, that is the one which would do complete justice to the intended reality, is then the one which operates no longer within the context of language, a name which is beyond all languages. Only such a name, and it is evident that this implies a contradiction, could do justice to the ineffable reality which I confront. Yet, although human understanding cannot know such a name, we can recognize the inadequacy of all our efforts to catch reality in the net of our concepts or names. And in doing so, we free our intuition to reach the reality, of which our understanding has fallen short. Suddenly the tree stands before us, not as an instance of some genus or species, but as just what it is. All thought of it possibly being other has vanished, and with it the accidental. The feeling of the unreality and the accidental nature of the world has been overcome. Here one possibility of overcoming nihilism can be seen. If it were possible to use language in such a way that it would exhibit its own fundamental inadequacy and thus dispel the illusion of autonomy, the intuition would be free to en-

counter being. Here the philosopher needs the poet.[1]

However, as I reflect, this becomes impossible. The inadequacy of all concepts is something which must be intuited and cannot be comprehended, for reflection moves within logical space. As soon as I reflect I find only a world of finite objects. And in conceiving of an object as finite, or limited, I imply what lies beyond these limits, the other, that which it is not. The accidental again rears its head. The "why" has again become possible. Why do I attribute value to this rather than to that? Ultimately there is no answer, and there is no argument which can convince the nihilist that the world is more than a configuration of objects, if the intuition of an underlying reality is lacking.

B. Perhaps this discussion will become more meaningful, if we come back to it using a different vocabulary, that of Martin Buber.[2] Buber distinguishes two modes of subjectivity: the I which calls the other Thou, and the I which calls the other an it. When I say Thou to another I do not reduce it to the status of an object; rather it remains subject. The world in which I say Thou to everything is a world of subjects. In such a world I am not alone. I speak to others and they answer; we are engaged in a conversation. In many of the best conversations not a single word is spoken--so we can sit with someone staring into a fire, conversing in

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[1]Cmp. the poetry of G. M. Hopkins or Hölderlin.

[2]Martin Buber, Die Schriften über das dialogische Prinzip (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1954).

complete silence--and we can have conversations not only with people, but with trees, animals, or clouds. Such a world is the world of the fairy tale, where fountains and trees, sun and moon speak. The absurdity of the world is defeated, not because the why with which I confront the world has been answered, but rather, because whenever I pronounce the Thou the why cannot even be asked.[1] In pronouncing the Thou I utter the name which really is no name, but an expression of my intuition of reality. Thus, what was said above about the ideal name, applies here, too. This is most apparent in love. Why do I love this person? If I were to be "objective" I might find this quite accidental; if circumstances were different, I could in all likelihood be in love with someone else. But in that case I would no longer be in love. I would treat the beloved as an object, not as a Thou. The romantic idea that lover and beloved were predestined to meet and to love has its justification. The moment I call someone Thou the world of objects fades into insignificance. This is the exclusiveness of love which takes the beloved out of all contexts.[2] The beloved is no longer one among others which I might equally well have chosen. Again we see how the absurd is defeated. The very idea of accident presupposes the idea of an other. Something could equally well have been different. The world is seen in the mode of possibility. But in

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[1] Ibid., p. 111.

[2] Ibid., p. 101.

pronouncing the Thou, the subject is taken out of this mode; I see it as being simply what it is. Love is the defeat of the accidental and at the same time an indubitable encounter with reality. And I can love nature, man, or God. Where it is possible to pronounce the Thou, nihilism is an impossibility.

Yet reflection can change the Thou into an it,[1] robbing it of its soul.[2] Again reflection appears as the force which plunges us towards nihilism and autonomy. The development towards autonomy may be viewed as the subjugation of ever larger sectors of reality and their reduction to the status of mere objects; and objects qua objects are silent.[3] For the child everything is still potentially a Thou; he can still speak with nature and nature speaks to him. Then stones, later plants, still later animals become reduced to the status of objects. The other human being offers the strongest resistance to these attempts to objectify everything. It is here that the Thou still speaks most frequently to us. And only when this voice, too, has been silenced, when man can no longer say Thou to his fellow human beings, has man become completely autonomous and thus completely isolated. Yet it is also true to say, the stronger man's affirmation of his autonomous self, the greater the shadow which the autonomous spirit casts--the greater the need for communication, although

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[1] Ibid., p. 114.

[2] Jaspers, Philosophie, vol. 1, p. 87.

[3] Ibid., p. 139.

in asserting his autonomy man denies this need. But the voice, although subjugated, is still there, demanding to be heard; and when it breaks the rivets with which the spirit has fettered it, when it suddenly wells up and forces man to utter the Thou, the experience is far more profound than in the case of an individual who has hardly entered the reflective stage. To the child or the childlike everything may appear as a Thou, and yet the bliss which just one encounter with a Thou can give to the highly reflective individual, is not his. For the spirit it is a miracle, a manifestation of grace.

It might at this point seem possible to reverse the development towards reflection and autonomy, and to return to a pre-reflective stage, thus recapturing the lost unity of Being. We may long for a past age when everyone still stood under the protection of the Virgin, or for the apparently simple life of certain natives, or for the security of childhood. Similarly the appeal of all dogmatic positions lies in the fact that they promise to liberate us from reflection. Freedom finds it tempting to will itself to be unfree. But a moment's reflection will inform us that these are not genuine solutions. First of all, they all involve a loss of our humanity, for to be human is to reflect and to bear the isolation which this entails. But is this not a worthwhile sacrifice, if by it we can escape from the absurdity which seems to be implied by our humanity? Yet, even if we are willing to trade our humanity for the security offered by such alternatives, this security is itself only precarious. For it

presupposes a self-deception which any lucid moment must reveal to the individual. It is difficult to will not to reflect, and this is what the alternatives amount to. For in willing, I affirm my own subjective freedom. In deciding to reject the reflective position, I am myself reflective and thus I affirm it. The effort is doomed to failure in its very root. We cannot return to Paradise, and any attempt to force one's way back must fail or be self-deception.

C. Reflection plunges us into a world of objects. If we cannot escape from reflection we cannot escape from such a world. The question which must be answered is therefore not how I escape from such a world--and Buber's account offers such an escape--but how can I lead in such a world a meaningful life. The answer has to be sought in my ability to attribute values to certain objects. To compensate for the shallowness of the world into which reflection has plunged me and to meet the resultant threat of nihilism, I posit values in the world. As Heidegger puts it, "where being has become object, it loses in a certain way Being; this loss is sensed although without clarity and certainty, and to compensate for it a value is attributed to this being which has become object."[1] Value is the result of valuing, not the other way around.[2] But what enables the individual to posit values in a world of objects? That it is possible is evident. Its

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[1]Heidegger, Holzwege, p. 93.

[2]Cmp. F. H. Heinemann, Existentialism and the Modern Predicament (New York: Harper Torch Book, 1958), p. 100.

possibility is shown by the many who, while living in a world of objects, still do not find this meaningless, but find values in it. Are they deceiving themselves, or is it the nihilist who is blind to something which is simply there? Let us remember that objects are constituted by the subject. It follows that value cannot be in the object independently of the subject, but that if something is found valuable it must be constituted as such by the subject. We must therefore answer the question, how is the constitution of value possible? And just as above we pointed out the latent traits which lead us to constitute something as real rather than as imaginary, we now have to point out the latent traits which lead me to constitute something as valuable.

Why do we consider something valuable, for instance the bread which nourishes us? Because it supports life. Its value is thus derivative. It is not valuable in itself, but only in so far it supports something which I consider valuable, my life. The self is in this case the measure by which something else is judged to be valuable or not. My own life is taken to be the central value. Anything which threatens it is taken to be evil, and anything which favors it is found good. In this way it might seem possible to develop an egoistic ethics which would answer the question of what is good and what is evil.

However, this assumes that it is possible to attach a value to oneself. Instinctively this is of course almost always done. Even someone who has just decided that life is

worthless and has made up his mind to commit suicide will in all likelihood jump out of the path of an automobile which suddenly turns around a corner. This again presupposes a pre-reflective point of view. Upon reflection,--what enables him to attach value to this life? This is the predicament of the nihilist. He asks for reasons throwing some light on his own existence and nothing confronts him except the accidental.

> The tiny space which I occupy is so infinitely small in comparison with the rest of space, in which I am not, and which has nothing to do with me, and the period of time in which it is my lot to live is so petty beside the eternity in which I have not been and shall not be ... And in this atom, this mathematical point, the blood is circulating, the brain is working and wanting something. Isn't it loathsome? isn't is petty?[1]

The inability to find himself obviously meaningful makes it impossible for the nihilist to find an ultimate answer to his predicament in an egoistic ethics.

Here, then, we cannot find an answer to nihilism. Let us therefore turn to another question. Why should I marry? or why is this quartet beautiful? What enables us in both cases to call something valuable? Perhaps one might argue that it is advantageous to marry because this furnishes one with a cheap maid; or one might argue that marriage is character-building or that marriage as an institution is necessary to ensure the survival of our society. In all these cases marriage is given a derivative value; it is related to a more central value. The question of value has merely been removed one step; the questioning would have to go on at a different

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[1]Turgenev, Fathers and Sons, pp. 149 ff.

level. But are these even real answers? Do they make marriage seem meaningful? Surely the nihilist could take little comfort from them, although he might agree that they are the only ones possible, that is, that there are no real answers. And yet, is not Kierkegaard right in arguing that there is no finite "why" explaining it; marriage has its own teleology and it cannot be explained to him who does not see it.

The same thing is true in the case of the quartet. Of course I can point out the unusual nature of the development, or compare it to other quartets, or see it in the light of the history of music. But such investigations will not answer satisfactorily why I should find just this quartet particularly meaningful. If it could, it should be possible to state a set of rules which, if followed, would guarantee the creation of great art. Presumably a computer could be built which would turn out consistently great music. But again we can question: why these rules and no others? Again a question to which there is no answer. Either we find ourselves in an infinite regression, or we are forced to say, as Kant did, that the work of art possesses its own teleology which escapes adequate conceptualization. In the end any rules which are set up cannot be dogmatic. They can collapse when faced by a creative effort which does not abide by them and which yet speaks to us. Art is communication, or, more precisely, it is conversation. In the work of art I must confront a Thou. I am not an objective spectator--indeed the magic of art resides precisely in its ability to force us out of the objec-

tive frame of mind--rather I am caught in a dialectic movement. If the work of art remains object, if the quartet, for instance, is nothing more than a place in the map of the musicologist, it does not speak to us; it is meaningless. Conversation is at the heart of value; the monologue is the absurd, and the nihilist is the person engaged in a monologue.

We can thus attach meaning to marriage because it is an objectification of the ability to communicate. It partakes of the exclusiveness which is characteristic of all communication. Thus the fact that it is directed towards one person and that it may not be broken is an objective reflection of the fact that when I pronounce the Thou I cannot conceive of an other. If the Thou is the defeat of the accidental, then an institution such as marriage carries this victory into the objective sphere. I simply cannot ask, why did I marry and why this person rather than another, or why do I not get divorced.[1] These questions betray the loss of the element of communication. In them marriage has ceased to be infinite. It has become finite, a social institution. It is no longer sanctioned by God, but by man. Once this change has occurred, and only then, does divorce become a possibility. Divorce is an expression of the inability to communicate, and divorce statistics are an expression of the nihilism of our age.

If we generalize from these two examples, we can say that when we call something valuable we imply that this some-

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[1] Jaspers, Der philosophische Glaube, p. 78.

thing can appear to me as a Thou. The valuable object is the Thou which has been transformed into an it, and which can yet again become a Thou. The latent trait which lets me see something as valuable is the memory and the expectation of a Thou experience. If we remember that in the Thou we reach Being, we can say that value is the shadow which Being casts on being. In other words, while living in a world of objects, man is still capable of entering into a dialectic relationship with a Thou. As Buber puts it, man stands between the it and the Thou.[1] The Thou appears transformed as a valuable "it" when I have entered the realm of objects.

The relationship with a Thou is at heart conversation; it is dialectic. When this encounter casts its shadow into the realm of objects, the shadow is not only going to fall on the object which I find to be valuable, but also on the subject itself. To attribute value to an object and to attribute value to the subject are necessary correlates. In finding something valuable I ascribe at the same time a value to myself, although I may not be aware of this. One cannot be thought of without the other.

According to Camus' definition of the absurd, the absurd would be defeated if it were possible to establish a congruence between the subject and the object; if the world were more than a mute other.[2] Now we see that this congruence ap-

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[1]Buber, Das dialogische Prinzip, p. 55.

[2]Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, tr. O'Brien (New York: Knopf, 1955), p. 21. "I said that the world is absurd, but I was too hasty. This world itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation

pears necessarily in the objective sphere as the correlate of the unity of the dialectic relationship. In calling the other a Thou, I call it spirit; I see it grounded in the same reality in which I, too, am grounded. Or rather, the object seen as spirit and thus as being like me, is a reflection in the objective sphere of an encounter with a Thou. Value is essentially spiritual. This makes it evident that an ethical command such as : always treat the other person as the infinitely valuable subject he is, is both correct and yet beside the point. If I recognize the other person as a Thou, this demand is unnecessary. It is self-evident. If, on the other hand, I see in him only an object the command will sound unconvincing. For the nihilist there is no "ought," for an "ought" exists only where man finds himself in a relationship which ties him to others, that is, where he sees himself as a member of a community of true subjects. As Jaspers points out, "the Kantian question 'what shall I do?' is no longer sufficiently answered by the categorical imperative (though this imperative remains inevitably true), but has to be complemented by the foundation of every ethical act and knowledge in communication."[1] But where man has asserted his autonomy this has become an impossibility.

D. We began the preceding section by asking how it is

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of this irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd depends as much on man as on the world."

[1]Jaspers, "On My Philosophy," in W. Kaufmann, Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, p. 140.

possible to live a meaningful life in a world of objects. A first attempt to answer this question has been made. At this point, however, a serious difficulty arises. A world of objects is constituted necessarily as system. This is the meaning of such expressions as 'the world is in logical space.' Man can understand only the systematic. Therefore, either he advocates an irrationalism concerning values, or the experience of a Thou must be reflected in the world in a systematic fashion. Value, to be comprehensible, must appear as system. Let us first see what the former alternative would imply. In that case there would be only the experiences of a Thou. These would be the meaningful moments which would make life worth living; however life or the world in its entirety would not be meaningful, not even if every experience were the experience of a Thou. There would perhaps be a very great number of valuable objects in the world, but not one valuable world. But one world, a universe, is the correlate of the thinking subject. To be a subject means to reflect and to confront one world. To affirm the self in its entirety it must therefore be possible to affirm the world in its entirety. This even a great number of encounters with a Thou would not permit me to do. Instead I would fall into a kind of schizophrenia. I would live in two realms; on one hand I would experience an incoherent sequence of blissful events in which reflection would take no part, on the other hand I would live in a coherent world which reflection has revealed to me and which by comparison would seem all the more odious. If we are to af-

firm our subjectivity, and this involves reflection, we cannot take refuge in a few blissful moments. We may not sing Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen, tempting as the thought may be. There is self-deception in the song, for in rejecting this world I reject my ability to reflect, that is my humanity from which I yet cannot escape. The irrationalist is caught in a futile attempt to run away from his own humanity. We can sense the attraction which the thought of death must exert on such a mind, particularly a Wagnerian Liebestod in which the world of objects fades away and all that is left is the eternal present: an infinite relationship to a Thou. But to be human is to be bound to a world of objects. Man has to pay for his ascent to the infinite with his own life.

If we want to escape from this schizophrenic flight from reality only one alternative is left. The values which are found in the world must form a system. A first suggestion of how this might be possible has already been made. All objects are essentially in a context. The valuable object, too, is given to us as related to others. This prevents value from being confined to it; it must spread to other objects, although the value of these objects will be only derivatory. An example was given above. If the self is considered valuable, this gives us the basic for an egoistic ethics. Or if I love someone, everything which is related to the beloved will take on a value. The object which is constituted as valuable becomes the center of a value structure. When challenged why we consider this object valuable, rather than some

other, no rational defense is possible. But a justification is found in the encounter with a Thou which transcends the objective sphere. It implies that man is a citizen of two worlds; on one hand he is in the world of objects, on the other he transcends it in true communication. Let us call a value structure which is rooted in such an experience an open value system.[1] The center of such a system is an object anchored in an encounter with a Thou.

The open value system suggested above enables us only to accept a sector of the world, not the world in its entirety. In this sense let us call the system incomplete.[2] If I am in love with someone I constitute such an incomplete open value system. Often there will be a great number of value calls in a life, each one the center of an incomplete open value structure. Individuals, nature, art, God, anything with which I can enter into a dialectic Thou-relationship can become the center of such a value structure. Thus the family, art, or religion may appear as distinct value sectors in a life, each one without connections to the other. But as long as these value sectors retain their autonomy, only a partial affirmation of self is possible. Man and the world are correlates--the greater the affirmation of the world, the greater the affirmation of self. Someone who refuses to look at something, be it the suffering of another person, or the joy of a child,

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[1]The concept of the open value system was first developed by Hermann Broch. Cmp. Hermann Broch, Gesammelte Werke, Essays vol. 1, Dichten und Erkennen, int. Hannah Arendt (Zürich: Rhein, 1955), especially the essay "Das Böse im Wertsystem der Kunst," pp. 311 ff.

[2]Broch, Essays, vol. 2, p. 57. Cmp. p. 66.

or a work of art, is the less for it. Refusing to look is a narrowing of self.[1] Similarly, if we are not able to affirm the world in its entirety, but only sectors of the world, we are affirming not the entire self, but only fragments. The affirmation of fragmentary value sectors makes only the fragmentary affirmation of self possible. The unity of the self demands one value system. If this cannot be constituted, man is in danger of schizophrenia.

The extension of a partial value system provides at least an inadequate answer. This extension is no longer warranted by experience; still there is an opening to transcendent being. An example would be a life which revolves completely, in every facet, around the beloved. When challenged, the author of such a system can fall back on his experience which gives him the conviction that he is right. On the other hand, the fact that he can fall back on only this one experience shows that there is no other which can rival it. He has denied the possibility of another Thou-experience which could conflict with this one. In other words, his affirmation betrays a narrowness, an inability to accept the world in its totality, although in all likelihood the sector affirmed will be identified with the totality.

Whereas such a value system, inadequate as it is, is at least grounded in an experience of a Thou, there is a value

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[1]Jaspers, Philosophie, vol. 2, p. 58. "Jedes Verlieren und Versagen in Kommunikation ist wie eigentlicher Seinserlust."

system where the central norm is no longer grounded in such an experience. Values are either accepted unquestioningly--the source of authority may be here the Church, tradition, the state, or a leader--or they are posited by the individual. Such a value system may be termed a closed value system in that it is closed to transcendence.[1] One system may of course be closed for one person and open for another. One person may find in the Church or in marriage the reflection of an encounter with Being, while someone else may see in them only inherited institutions. As Hermann Broch points out, "within every value system an identical system is posited, which agrees in every feature with the original system and which is yet its opposite, because it lacks the orientation towards an infinite value goal. It is the mask of the antichrist who appears in a Christian disguise, and who is yet the embodiment of evil."[2]

The maintenance of the closed value system depends on a refusal to reflect, for the closed value system cannot be supported adequately. There is no Thou-experience to which one can point, and no rational defense is possible. It depends on unquestioning acceptance of the central norm; it must therefore be rigidly dogmatic, not so much to convince the other person, but to prevent one's own doubts from arising.

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[1]Broch, Essays, vol. 1, pp. 305 and 326.

[2]Ibid., p. 339. Cmp. also Denis de Rougemont, The Devil's Share, tr. Chevalier (New York: Meridian, 1956), p. 34. The wicked man is he who posits a good instead of the real good. p. 71. The diabolical is not the attack on innocent neighbors, it is the pretext of a new order.

If the individual were to ask himself, why do I choose this particular central norm? the only reasonable defense would be to refer this central norm to a more comprehensive value system. Thus an ardent soldier might say that he serves in the army because it is his duty to society. And why does he have this duty to society? This questioning will stop only when an open value system is affirmed.

The closed value system is the self-deception of the nihilist who is unwilling to face his nihilism and the inability to communicate which it implies. It is an attempt to live in an imagined sphere of values. It is difficult to create such a system yourself and not to suspect the hollowness of the attempt. The matter is very different when the system is inherited. Man has learned to take certain values for granted and he is unwilling to risk a critical examination of these values, for dimly he senses what this would yield. As he has had only a very rudimentary encounter with a Thou, if at all, this would not enable him to lay new foundations for the old system, nor would he possess the strength to create a new one. The destruction of the old value system would leave only a vacuum. Thus he clings to the values of his fathers, unwilling to realize that these values have become hollow. They are a counterpart of the autonomy of the percept. Indeed, they make it possible to live with the latter, by obscuring what this implies. Thus man escapes from open nihilism, but has to pay for this by becoming superficial. The closed value system is also tempting when for some reason it

has become impossible to accept the traditional values, and someone appears promising to substitute a new order for the old one that has been lost. Herein lies the pseudo-religious appeal of totalitarianism and of certain religious sects. Unable to answer the value question ourselves, we simply accept unquestioningly the answers which someone else has supplied. To question these answers would dispel the illusion of security. Humanity and its responsibilities are to be avoided because the burden has become too heavy to bear. Man is under an evil spell, and, as in fairy tales, someone must call him by his true name to awaken him.

E. Values, it was argued, are posited to make finite existence possible. They enable man to maintain his finite consciousness against the infinite surrounding him, which invites him to reject the burdens of his humanity and to surrender to the fulness of Being. Value is thus the force which enables us to maintain life in the face of death, to cope with the predicament into which our inability for total communication, implied by being human, has plunged us.[1] Death means here the dissolution of the rational self. We die when we are no longer able to maintain the self against the pressures of the irrational other which threatens to absorb it. Thus we commit suicide when, unable to cope with the apparent irrationality of the other, we surrender our own rationality to heal the rift which rationality has opened. Not only physical

[1]Cmp. Broch, Essays, vol. 2, Erkennen und Handeln, p. 233.

suicide is meant here, but the more seductive and therefore even more dangerous suicide of spirit.

Between death and the valuable life is disintegration. Not all values are lost, nor all communication, but value has disappeared from certain sectors of the world. Thus the wars of the twentieth century may appear as the absurd; yet this need not lead one to reject the whole world. Marriage, the birth of a child, a frosty winter morning have retained their magic. Here Being still speaks to me. I simply refuse to let the absurdity which I encounter consume my world. I bracket it. Thus when an earthquake kills thousands in Chile, or when millions of Jews are murdered, is this a part of my world? No, my responsibilities do not extend that far, my world is not that large. I refuse to look in these directions.

Ideally man possesses one comprehensive open value system which enables him to affirm the world and his life in their entirety. And yet, how is it possible to affirm such a system? An answer has not been discovered. But even the constitution of the incomplete open value system is endangered by reflection, as it, too, presupposes communication. An answer to the predicament of the nihilist has not yet been given. Our critical examination of Russell's epistemology did enable us to develop the tools for a more complete understanding of the phenomenon, but it has failed to give us an answer to the problem. Nihilism appears with a rift within Being, but this rift is also implied by being human. Reflection leads to an ever increasing isolation of the individual, until he stands

completely alone. This seems to be the consequence of man's awakening. It is not in his power to return to the past. He can be nostalgic, he can recall his childhood, his first love, or some previous age when all was right with the world. If he is fortunate he can still dream. But when he attempts to return to the past while awake, he will not find anymore what he once left. And perhaps, to protect the dreams of the past, he should not even make the attempt to return, just as Holthusen might have been happier, if he had never seen Hildesheim again. If this be the conclusion then the dreamer is the happy man, and we can call ourselves happy if we are but half-awake.

CHAPTER III

THE METAMORPHOSES OF NIHILISM

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Since reflection leads man to nihilism, nihilism is a universal predicament. This does not mean that man inescapably becomes an avowed nihilist; but in becoming himself man cannot escape the watch in the night when all his friends sleep and when even God has hidden his face. In this sense nihilism stands above history. If we were to write a history of nihilism, this history would be co-extensive with the history of man in so far he has become aware of his own isolation. It would be a chronicle of man after the expulsion from Paradise, after he had become aware of his own nakedness.

However, in treating nihilism as universal, we fail to do justice to the f act that it has become a genuine problem for a large number of people only in our own day. Whereas an encounter with nihilism used to be the fate of isolated individuals, it seems to have become the fate of a great number for the first time in history. Society in its very fibre seems to be threatened by it.

But the true problems, one may argue, are still those they always were: food, shelter, sex. Nihilism is and always was only the fruit of an idle hour, when there is nothing better to do than to nod in front of a fire place and to contemplate the Cartesian demon. Just let dinner time arrive and the smells from the kitchen will chase these spectres

away. When I am absorbed by some task, I cannot possibly be a nihilist. Nihilism implies that man is engaged in a monologue, that he occupies himself with his own thoughts. Give him something which fascinates him, be it only a good steak, and his nihilism will disappear. Only there seems to be so little which can fascinate him today. Perhaps he is overfed, one may protest. His desires are too easily satisfied. If we were to starve him, rob him of his shelter, or let the thought of woman tantalize him without finding satisfaction, he soon would know where the real values of life are to be found. But as these desires are too readily fulfilled, the nihilist sits in front of his fire place, bored. While others watch television or drive their car, he creates the spectres which frighten him. If he could deliver our speculative idler from his free time, it might be possible to free him from his melancholy. Nihilism is indeed at heart boredom. A vacuum must be filled, and perhaps it is best to try to fill it with innocent diversions--at least they are innocent. So a friend of mine hailed Adenauer as the greatest of German statesmen because he had realized this simple fact. Instead of letting the Germans fall once more into dark broodings, he gave them the antidote which had already, in other countries, prevented the same problem from arising: he provided them with gadgets, cars, and television sets. And, on the surface at least, the medication seems to have been successful--"was it not panis et circenses that delayed the fall of Rome?"[1]

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[1]Kierkegaard, Either/Or, v. 1, p. 282.

The remedy is here as nihilistic as the phenomenon which it combats. To be sure, the anguish arising from a confrontation of the absurd may be avoided. But the escape implies a belief that man may not be left alone with his freedom but must be led to forget it, that humanity is unbearable. Man must give way, not to the superman, but to the animal or to the machine. He can do nothing more than sleep, work, fill his belly, make love, play--not more than any animal can do.

When we speak of nihilism here, we do not mean merely the open expression of the belief that life possesses no meaning. This indeed will be rare for it is impossible to live by such a faith. A poet or a philosopher may express it, but even he will probably deny it in his actions. Open nihilism is too unbearable, so it is suppressed; it undergoes a metamorphosis and disguises itself.[1] When we talk about the nihilism of an age, we must uncover these disguises.

B. We found nihilism to be rooted in man's striving for autonomy. Far as man can go in this direction, it seems that ultimately he always meets with defeat. He must finally see that there is something which is given to him, and this given confronts him as a brute fact. It is this given which causes us to see the world and our own life as accidental. It is then not only striving for autonomy which is responsible for nihilism, but also the other which refuses to be subjugated by this striving; and although reduced to the status of an

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[1]Jaspers, Der philosophische Glaube, p. 122.

"it," it revenges itself for this subjection by appearing as an "it" which, in the final analysis, seems accidental. If man could achieve complete autonomy, if like God he could become causa sui, then the problem of nihilism could not appear, for the "why" could be answered: why is the world this way, why was I born when I was? In both cases the answer would be the same: because I chose it. That such complete autonomy is inconceivable needs no explanation. I have not chosen myself nor the world in which I find myself. If I had, I probably would have made a different choice. Nihilism presupposes the confrontation of a world of objects by a questioning subject. It presupposes the rift which the spirit has opened within being. To heal this rift is to escape from the threat of nihilism. At the same time, as this rift is implied by our humanity, this flight is a flight from humanity.

Three escape routes suggest themselves: We may reduce the polarity to a unity by affirming either one of the poles. We obtain thus the following two alternatives:

(a) We may affirm the spirit and deny the world. We may call this the sacrifice of the world or a striving for complete autonomy.

(b) We may affirm the world of objects and deny the spirit. We may call this the sacrifice of the spirit or a striving for heteronomy.

A third escape is obtained when the polarity is rejected in its entirety: (c) we may reject both the world and the spirit. Let us call this suicide.

It is evident that these formulations point out extremes which may be impossible to realize. This impossibility has already been suggested in the first case: man cannot achieve complete autonomy. The other is there to confront the subject in its brute givenness. Similarly man finds it possible to achieve complete heteronomy. This would imply that man could fetter himself so completely that he would cease to be a free subject. He would become an object. And again we find that death, although it seems to be an answer to the nihilistic predicament, it usually countered by a dread of death, sufficiently strong to make suicide an impossible exit, too. Yet the extremes point out the directions in which the nihilist moves to escape from his predicament. We should therefore expect this threefold movement to be characteristic of our age, if it is to be called nihilistic.

II. THE SACRIFICE OF THE WORLD

A. The devil appeared to Peter Schlemihl as a metaphysician who proceeded to develop an intricate philosophic system and claimed that it provided an answer to the problem of meaninglessness. The devil is here the spirit which seeks to systematize and thus to subject the world in order to escape from the absurd. Yet, no matter how cunningly I fight, the brute givenness of the other reasserts itself. In his striving for autonomy, man is like an artist dealing with a very sluggish material. To succeed he needs a medium which is completely passive, ready to assume whatever form the artist wishes to impress on it. The more unreal and the less substantial the material, the more likely the artist is to succeed with his constructions. Similarly man can hope to achieve autonomy only if he finds himself the only real thing in an unreal world which is just a foil for the creative spirit. The striving for autonomy tends therefore to be coupled with an effort to reduce the other to irreality and to build an ideal order out of this irreality. Already in 1812 Jean Paul wrote in his Vorschule der Aesthetik of the spirit which, in its egomania, was destroying the world and the universe in order to create room for its free plays in this nothingness.[1]

In particular it is mechanistic science which spearheads this destruction. The scientist does not describe nature,

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[1]H. Friedrich, Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1956), p. 102.

but rather dissects it; he strives to dismember the organic unities encountered in the world and constructs a new order with them.[1] The world of the scientist is no longer the world in which we live; rather it is a constructed world. We can conceive of two alternative scientific theories, both consistent and adequate to the same observed facts. The danger here is that man, blinded by the successes of his science, identifies his scientific order with the world. He has to pay for this mistaken identification with the loss of a sense of reality.

The claims of mechanistic science have never gone uncontested. Kant laid the philosophic groundwork for a mechanistic science in his first Critique, but he was also one of the first ones to see its inadequacy clearly. In the Critique of Judgment he limits the scope of such a science by arguing that it is impossible for the mechanist to do justice to the organic side of nature. He cannot in principle understand what it means to be a flower or a blade of grass. Goethe is even more violent in his rejection of mechanism. His scientific writing is an extended attempt to show the possibility of a science which does not follow the "papacy of a one-sided natural science which pretends with sign and symbol to change error into truth."[2] "I take care to prevent my thought from

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[1] G. Benn, Gesammelte Werke, vol. 1, Essays (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1958), p. 188. Quoting Dove: "Das Experiment ist die geistige Geburt des Gegenstandes, den wir erst zertrümmern mussen, um seine gelösten Glieder zu einem neuen Ganzen zu verbinden."

[2] Ibid., p. 182. Quoting Goethe.

divorcing itself from the object, to have the elements of the object, the intuitions, enter my thought, be penetrated by my thought, so that my intuiting be itself a thinking, my thinking an intuiting."[1] One should compare and contrast this conception with the one described above. Here a meeting of world and scientist, there a mechanistic dismembering of the world. The latter is possible only if man is possessed by a passion to abstract from reality, the former only if he is possessed by a sense for reality which warns him against such an abstraction.

The victories of mechanistic science led to the rejection of Goethe's speculations as the interesting dabbling of an amateur. For the scientist of the nineteenth century "there is no knowledge other than the mechanistic, no scientific form of thought other than the mathematical-physical."[2] Today science is far less dogmatic. Not only is it very difficult now to overlook the hypothetical nature of science; but the inadequacies of mechanism as a heuristic principle have been made more and more evident by scientists like Planck or Troll. And yet, the past successes of mechanistic science have been and still are an ideal for the striving for autonomy.

Of all human disciplines mathematics and formal logic seem to come closest to this ideal. Here the material factor has become so insignificant that some logicians seem to believe today that mathematics and formal logic can be estab-

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[1] Ibid., p. 188. Quoting Goethe.
[2] Ibid., p. 191. Quoting Du Bois Reymond.

lished as purely formal sciences. Their laws are not held to be laws of nature, part of the givenness confronting man, but rather part of an apparatus with which man chooses to confront this givenness. Be this as it may, in such mathematical constructions man feels himself least bound to the material given. Here he comes closest to achieving autonomy.

We should then expect the striving for autonomy to result in an attempt to structure the world, including one's fellow human beings, in the image of mathematics and mechanistic science. If our age is indeed nihilistic it should show a pronounced tendency in this direction.

B. Perhaps this is most readily apparent in modern art. As a first spokesman of this tendency we may choose Paul Valéry. Valéry speaks of poetry as being an "effort of man in isolation to create an artificial and ideal order by means of a substance of vulgar origin."[1] The order is supposed to be artificial, that is created by the artist; it is ideal not in the sense that there are ideals beyond himself for which the artist strives, but rather it is the artist who has posited these ideals. The "substance of vulgar origin" is everyday language, which, in so far as it is not subjected to an ideal order, is without aesthetic value. The premise of such an art is that the medium with which the artist works is aesthetically neutral and it is only in the work of art that it assumes aesthetic

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[1]The Creative Vision, Modern European Writers on their Art, ed. H. M. Block and H. Salinger (New York: Grove, 1960), p. 27.

value. Poetry is conceived to be a calculus, the poet is likened to the mathematician.[1] We find traces of this theory already in Novalis, Poe, and Baudelaire; today it seems to have become one of the dominant forces in modern poetry.

This point of view is sharply opposed to one which holds that the substance of vulgar origin, in this case everyday language, is itself full of meaning, and that the artist must draw on this medium if his art is to be viable. Wordsworth, in the Preface to his Lyrical Ballads writes thus,

> The principle object, then, proposed in these poems, was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as possible, in a selection of language really used by man.[2]

Only if the totality of language is considered aesthetically valuable is poetic language related through it to the totality of experience; only then can poetry call forth a total response on the part of the individual. In our own day it would seem that the strength of the poetry of Robert Frost stems precisely from an acceptance of this view.

Valéry's aesthetic can be applied to music as well as to poetry. Thus we can oppose a musical formalism like Stravinsky's to a theory such as that of Janáček, who claims that the thematic material must stand in an intimate relation to the cadences of everyday language. In an age characterized by a widespread barrenness of thematic invention, Janáček was able to write music particularly strong in this respect--which

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[1]Cmp. Friedrich, pp. 30 ff.

[2]Wordsworth, Poetical Works, ed. Hutchinson (London: Oxford, 1959), p. 734.

still speaks to us. Bartok and Kodaly have achieved similar results in a less self-conscious way by a reference to folk-song.

And yet, when we look for the premises of such theories, it is immediately evident that someone like Valéry cannot honestly accept a position like Wordsworth's or Janáček's. For what are their premises? They assume that man finds himself in a meaningful relationship to his environment, and it is just this which the modern artist finds so difficult to accept. For him language is no longer obviously meaningful because it mirrors life; it is no longer obvious that life itself is meaningful. The magic of a piece like Janáček's The Virgin of Frydek must escape him. His art is born in isolation. The traditional value system has broken down. There are no longer guiding perspectives. His art, if he is not to be dishonest--and in this sense most appeals to folk music in modern music are dishonest--must be fundamentally different from that of an artist like Janáček. For Janáček can still accept the traditional value system without self-deception, as he shows with his Slavonic Mass. Yet, although listening to Janáček's music we may realize the barrenness of our own artistic utterance, it is Valéry who is the truly modern artist in that he works out of the modern predicament. Modern art is necessarily art created in the fog.[1] In this sense the art of Janáček or Frost is an anachronism, part of an age for which

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[1]H. Broch, Massenpsychologie. Schriften aus dem Nachlass (Zürich: Rhein, 1957), p. 391. "Wo der Nebel festsitzt da herrscht Ordnung, die Nebelordnung der Laterne."

we may long, but which for most of us has passed.

This difference between "traditional" and "modern" art becomes still clearer when we turn to painting.[1] For an example of an art which is rooted in the knowledge that man is part of a larger whole, we may turn to the landscapes of Jacob van Ruisdael (1628-1682). He does not impose his concepts on nature, but elicits them from nature. In the work of art the artist and nature meet--we are reminded here of Goethe's view of science. Nature appears as natura benigna encompassing man and his rationality which cannot exhaust it and is yet meaningfully related to it. In Ruisdael's landscapes man seems small, but not insignificant, and not a stranger. If we compare the landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) to Ruisdael's we find that this conception has changed. Friedrich pictures nature as an incomprehensible, ominous other which surrounds and threatens man. A rift has opened between man and nature. Later in the nineteenth century we find this rift disappearing again, for instance in the paintings of the Impressionists. Man became a part of nature, but at the cost of losing his humanity. Thus Cézanne wanted people to look like apples. Man appeared in nature only as an object among others. Modern art gives us numerous examples of a further development in this direction. Nature and the human being are reconstructed in the image of the artistic spirit. A consequence of this is that the portrait has ceased to be an important form of art,

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[1]Cmp. Hans Sedlmayr, Die Revolution der modernen Kunst (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1956),

as it presupposes a respect for the humanity of the portrayed. Similarly it has become impossible to paint a "portrait" of a landscape; for the portrait is dialectic in nature. It implies a bond between the artist and the other, both of which possess their own autonomy. The Platonic vision of the world as supplying meaning and order itself has been lost. Instead much modern art suggests a distorted Kantianism in which man prescribes the laws to which nature must conform.[1]

It may be well to be more explicit at this point and to take a closer look at some modern artists illustrating this tendency. Let us begin with Matisse. For Matisse, art which attempts primarily to portray an object in the world, such as a tree, an animal, or a man, is a relic of the past. Realism, be it that of the Academy or the very different realism of the Impressionists, is based on a misunderstanding of what art is all about. The world in which we live is aesthetically valueless. Therefore realism must be rejected.[2] Or perhaps we would want to say that the artist must strive to discover a reality beyond the shallow reality which the artist of the nineteenth century attempted to portray. The artist must seek the essential by eliminating what the Impressionists sought,

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[1]Cmp. Hess, pp. 37 ff.

[2]Cmp. Benn, Essays, vol. 1, pp. 247 ff. "There was no style in Europe between 1910 and 1925 other than the anti-naturalistic style, for there was also no reality, only its caricature." As Benn points out, realistic art has become impossible today, because the sense of reality has been lost. "Reality, that meant allotments, industrial products, mortgages, everything that could be given a price...reality, that meant war, hunger, humiliations, power. The spirit knew no reality. It turned to its inner reality." The spirit does not turn to reality, but to its reality.

the ephemeral, and by subjecting his material to a conceptual order.[1] The artist is conscious of bringing order to nature. Nature appears as a hostile other which must be subjugated.

This tendency is more readily apparent in Braque. Like Matisse, Braque finds in the world with which his senses confront him a lack of structure; therefore it stands in need of correction by the structuring spirit. "I love the rule which rectifies feeling," he writes.[2] Spirit is opposed here to nature and accorded a higher value. The consequence of this is that a purely spiritual structure, such as mathematics provides, will be given precedence over an organic form; nature is re-interpreted by the artist and in the process loses its incomprehensible organic character. Instead it appears as inorganic, as crystalline, or metallic. Legér thus confronts us with a metallic world which is populated by a race wrought of iron. Very different, and yet related in its underlying attitude, is the cool, glassy world of Feininger, still different the geometric world of Picasso. A surprising anticipation of such art is found in Swift's account of the people of Laputa. It is difficult to believe that Swift did not have a peek at modern art; he realized that the art of a rootless, literally floating race, would tend to be geometric.[3] Less

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[1]Cmp. Hess, p. 38.

[2]Hess, p. 54.

[3]Cmp. Voyage to Laputa, ch. II, In his description of the inhabitants of Laputa Swift has drawn for us a caricature of autonomous man. The Laputians display a particular fondness for mathematics and music. "If they would, for example, praise the Beauty of a Woman, or any other Animal, they describe it by Rhombs, Circles, Parallelograms, Ellipses, and other Geometri-

surprising, although equally significant in this connection is a poem like Baudelaire's Rêve parisien in which the poet is led by a disgust with reality to invent a dream-like city, "without place, without time, without sound."

> Here a constructive spirituality has become picture, announcing its victory over nature and man in mineral and metallic symbols, and projecting its constructed images into empty ideality, out of which they gleam back, glittering to the eye, deeply disturbing to the soul.[1]

The nature of such an art becomes even clearer when we turn to Apollinaire's "Manifesto of Cubism." Proudly Apollinaire points out that the artist in his striving for "purity, unity, and truth," has finally subjugated nature.[2] The word purity suggests poésie pure and Hanslick's pure music. In all these cases art strives to become independent, to break the ties which tie it to the totality of experience. Apollinaire's assertion that in striving for purity we humanize art and make man divine is significant.[3] Art is created by the human spirit according to his own laws; it is allowed to unfold free of the restrictive forces which the outside might impose. Ideally it is the creation of a free spirit in the void. Only then are we truly free of God's creation and in our creative free-

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cal Terms." The phrase "other Animals" suggests here that in such a description sight is lost of the humanity of man. Swift also realized that the striving for autonomy must lead to a loss of the ability to communicate. "It seems, the minds of these people are so taken up with intense Speculations, that they neither can speak, nor attend to the Discourses of others, without being roused by some external Taction upon the Organs of Speech or Hearing."

[1]Friedrich, p. 41. Cmp. also Jean-Paul Sartre, Baudelaire, tr. Mohring (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1953), especially pp. 19, 86, and 89.

[2]Hess, p. 54.

[3]Hess, p. 55.

dom like God. Only then have we achieved complete autonomy. Apollinaire seems to possess an unusual image of man when he speaks of humanizing art. Man is identified with the free, creative spirit, not with a spirit fettered to a body and to a world. The artist becomes the superman, while the other human being fades into insignificance.

Braque pointed out that things-in-themselves do not exist at all.[1] Suprematism draws the last consequences of this belief. Kasimir Malevich expresses them concisely when he writes,

> The things and objects of the real world have disappeared like smoke for the nature of art...I did not invent anything, I only sensed the night and in it I saw the New, the New which I called Suprematism.[2]

Similarly Mallarmé writes that he had found beauty only after he had found nothingness.[3] Nature has become like smoke to the artist; peering into it he finally sees the New, a creation of his own spirit, which in Malevich's case turns out to be a white square.

C. The striving for autonomy seems innocent enough when we confine ourselves to art. The artist who strives to conquer the all-too-human in himself is not likely to strike us as a harbinger of terror and blood. Perhaps we will show him a friendly interest, perhaps we will turn away shaking our heads, doubting his or our own sanity; or we may even

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[1]Hess, p. 54.

[2]Hess, p. 98.

[3]Friedrich, p. 88.

smile at his aberrations. One reason for this is that the artist's striving for autonomy is counteracted by a more fundamental urge to communicate. The artist wants an audience which understands him in his striving. Art, even an art striving for autonomy, implies the belief in the community. Even in asserting his autonomy, the artist communicates an aspect of a predicament in which many find themselves.[1]

It becomes impossible, however, to overlook the sinister aspect of this development when we look at the same tendency to sacrifice the world in order to achieve autonomy translated into the political sphere. Again we find an artist working with a medium which to him has become meaningless in itself. But there is no urge for communication counteracting the striving for autonomy. The medium of the political artist is man, who is no longer considered to have intrinsic value.

A quotation possessing a familiar ring illustrates this tendency.

> What our people with its good and bad sides is we know --we do not know mankind and we refuse to care for it or even wax enthusiastic over it. Where does it begin and where does it end? What are we expected to love as belonging to mankind...? Is the dirty and half-bestial Russian peasant of the Mir, the negro of East Africa, the mulatto of German South West Africa, or the insufferable Jew of Galicia or Rumania a member of mankind?...Thus one may find it possible to believe in a solidarity of the Germanic people--what lies outside this circle does not concern us.[2]

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[1]Or are there perhaps artists who do not need such an audience, who address their art to the nothingness surrounding them, as Benn seems to think? Cmp. Benn, Essays, vol. 1, p. 547.

[2]Hannah Arendt, Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1955), p. 382, Footnote. Quoting Claas.

Lest we think that this is a voice of a monstrous, but unique aberration, let us listen to another voice, that of Leon Bloy.

> France is so much the first of all people, that all others, whoever they may be, must feel honored when they are allowed to eat the bread of her dogs. If only France is happy, the rest of the world can be contented, even if it has to pay for this happiness with slavery and extinction.[1] But if France suffers, God himself suffers with her.

The idea of man as the image of God and hence as infinitely valuable has been lost. It has become meaningless to speak of man as endowed with certain inalienable rights. Rather a new standard is set up. Right becomes what is of advantage to a certain individual or group of individuals. Recht ist was dem deutschen Volke nützt, or "my country, right or wrong." The loss of a transcendent guarantee of value makes it possible to regard a human being as something to be used and to be thrown away once its use has come to an end. "Human rights have become mere talk."[2]

A similar disregard for individual rights can be found in the attitude of the white man toward the African native even before the twentieth century. One could point here to slavery, to the virtual extinction of the Hottentots by the Boers, or to the decimation of the population of the Congo under the Belgian king.[3] To condemn those responsible as murderers is to oversimplify the matter, for in their opinion.

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[1] Ibid., p. 393, footnote.

[2] Ibid., p. 434.

[3] Ibid., p. 306.

> one did not murder a human being when one killed a native, but a shadow in whose reality one could not believe anyway, and one did not act in the world, but in a 'mere play of shadows.'[1]

Just as in the artistic sphere the constructivist tendency presupposes that the world, at least aesthetically speaking, has become unreal, like smoke or fog, so there is a corresponding tendency in political life to presuppose that the idea of man has become unreal.[2] It is in this sense that

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[1]Ibid., p. 313. Cmp. Conrad, Heart of Darkness.

[2]Cmp. Karl Kraus, Auswahl aus dem Werke (Frankfurt/M. Hamburg: Fischer, 1961), p. 175.

The following report of an airman of World War I illustrates what is meant here by the loss of the sense of reality. "This morning I had a fine flight, my third, over Verdun...I flew never higher than at eighteen hundred meters. It was a curious feeling for me to fly, like a king, laden with bombs, over the same area, where my father had already fought forty-six years ago and had earned the iron cross. I could see very clearly the houses of St. Privat and every tree on the chausee to Sainte-Marie. The old famous battlefield lay like a toy beneath me. If I had thrown my bombs I could have destroyed half of the village...I threw down all my bombs and saw how they exploded below. Then I counted the bridges across the Meuse and flew happily home. Never in my life had I had such a wonderful experience! Elevated above everything on the earth, flying along quietly and safely, one feels like a god. A wreath of smoke surrounded the town deep below. Nothing but exploding grenades. The fires flamed to heaven, the entire earth was dug through and torn up--a horrible sight! Otherwise the earth looks like a toy, green meadows and woods alternate with brown fields, in between the villages, like white and red spots. Here everything is desolate and grey, as if a river of lava had flown over the land...In the villages columns of smoke, the flashes of bursting grenades, following the glow and the roar of the large cannons, and everywhere steam, smoke, and fire.--A hell!--And one thinks of the soldiers fighting below, who have to earn every meter in bloody combat, of the losses,--and I? Like a God one glides over these showers and hurls one's lightning bolts on the enemy. One thinks of no danger, follows quietly one's course, and does one's duty." (Italics by Kraus)

Cmp. also Franz Marc, Briefe aus dem Felde (Berlin: Rembrandt, 1959) "Battles, injuries, troop movements, they all seem so mystical, unreal, as if they meant something completely different from their names; only everything is still horribly

Holthusen charges the Nazis with a criminal lack of a sense of reality.[1] Man has become a neutral medium which is given value only by the demagogue, the leader, the political artist. He organizes and structures the medium; man is considered valuable only in so far as he is organized.

The most obvious example of this is Nazi Germany. However, it would be dangerous to think that the belief in the intrinsic value of the individual is not threatened in the United States. One should remember here that the rights which citizens of Japanese descent should have had as citizens, and more important, as human beings, could be taken away from them in World War II. By the internment they became de facto stateless and rightless.[2] This would have been impossible if there had been a widespread and genuine respect for the rights which man should possess simply by virtue of being man. In this

silent (p. 9)...The courage with which the infantry advances, and the equanimity with which the men face death and injuries has something mystical (p. 43)...Everything seems more and more dreamlike (p. 76)...The life of a soldier is entirely dreaming action..., as if I stood in Cæsar's legions...Thus the inhabitants of this area appear to me as people who have already died, as shadows (p. 77).(Italics mine).

Cmp. Arendt, p. 560 "Die Durchschlagkraft der Propanganda beruht darauf dass die Massen an die Wirklichkeit der sichtbaren Welt nicht mehr glauben." and p. 702, "Was so schwer zu verstehen ist, ist gerade der Umstand, dass diese grausigen Verwirklichungen sich nicht weniger in einer Phantomwelt abspielen als jene Phantasien, in einer Welt nämlich in der es weder Konsequenzen noch Verantwortungen gibt, so dass schliesslich weder Peiniger noch Gepeinigte und am wenigsten der Aussenstehende begreifen können, dass es sich um mehr handelt als ein grausames Spiel oder einen dummen Traum." (Italics mine)

[1]Holthusen, Ja und Nein, p. 203.

[2]Arendt, p. 461.

connection one may also think of the dropping of the first atom bombs. Would this have been possible if those responsible had been possessed by a genuine sense of responsibility for their fellow human beings, not only for their fellow Americans? And if we think how widespread agreement with the decision to drop these bombs is, even today, one cannot but fear that the belief in the value of the individual, although superficially still adhered to, is in danger of being lost. One may interject that these were times of stress. But only in such times does the hollowness of our traditions show itself. However, we do not have to look this far afield to find this lack of responsibility for our fellow human beings, be they the victims of an earthquake in Chile, or the thousands starving to death in Communist China, or be they simply the victims of an accident in the next street.

Only when the belief in the value of the individual has been lost can the political artist use man as a medium for his art. A certain structure is singled out as valuable, what falls outside this structure is rejected.[1] One is a member of the SS, the SA, the party, or the state. Without the organization man is nothing. Thus when Hitler knew that the war had been lost, his propagandists promised that the Führer "in his goodness had prepared a gentle death in his gas chambers for the entire German people."[2] And it would be to misjudge the psychology of nihilism not to take this statement at its face

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[1] Ibid., p. 410 f.

[2] Ibid., p. 555.

value. From the point of view of the leader, the people are indeed nothing without him. They are an epiphenomenon of his inflated ego. This is demanded by the autonomy of the leader. Therefore, when his end comes, so must the end of the people. This alone can make the end bearable; it can go some way towards maintaining the leader's dream of autonomy. If they refuse to accept this and the will for life reasserts itself, the leader has failed. His dream collapses. The superman has been defeated by another will which he thought had been subjected.

We spoke about a Constructivist tendency in art. Similarly we can speak about a constructivist tendency in politics. What is important here is that the leader constructs the value system, even if he speaks of providence or of the laws of life. For, in his striving for autonomy, the leader cannot bear to discover the maxims by which he should rule; he himself must be the law giver. The leader appears essentially as someone positing a closed value system. However, a difficulty has to be pointed out. There seems to be no limit to the number of artists; but, if everyone were to desire to become a leader the result would be anarchy. To be successful the leader must find a demand for order which he can utilize. We shall have to come back to this point in the next chapter.

D. The tendency to achieve autonomy is also apparent in our attitude toward nature. Already in the discussion of Constructivist art we spoke of the subjugation of nature. Unfortunately this is not confined to art. We just have to look

at the industrial deserts surrounding endlessly spreading towns, to see that here nature is being subjugated in a far more real sense. Baudelaire's dream of a nature made by man almost seems to have come true here. He would have appreciated the beauty of today's industrial landscapes, let us say of the New Jersey flats between Perth Amboy and Secaucus. Nature has ceased to be something which demands reverence. Rather, it, too, has become something to be used, valueless in itself, endowed with value only by man, who may choose to set some stretch of land aside to create a park or a factory. We can contrast these landscapes produced by our industrial society with those produced by a past age. In the United States one might turn to New England, in Europe to Tuscany or to Franconia. As in a Ruisdael painting man does not clash with nature in such a landscape. Rather he is an integral part of it. These houses with their red roofs, these churches and castles have grown out of the soil just as have trees and flowers. One has to hike through such an area. The car, the railroad, the plane all have become tools of losing contact with the environment. We are no longer in a landscape when we race through a valley, receiving a fleeting succession of impressions, while we are listening to the latest news. The world becomes unreal when we drive. In driving man asserts his autonomy. Is it not true that kind gentlemen may turn into inconsiderate bullies on the wheel? This is their dream of autonomy: more innocent than that of Hitler, but not without its frightening aspects. Such experiences, too, have to

be remembered if the phrases "sacrifice of the world" or "the striving for autonomy" are to become meaningful.

There are other areas in which we may detect similar developments. One such area is the study of man. Above we talked about the changing artistic conception of the bond between man and nature. First we found both forming one meaningful order, then a gulf opened between man and nature; the rift was healed, but only at the cost of making man into an object; finally man and nature alike became unreal. A similar development may be traced in the general attitude towards man. For Leibniz, to take just one example, man and nature form one meaningful order. Then the gulf opens; man finds himself surrounded by an other which may be sublime, but which is also ominous and threatening, as in Kant's Critique of Judgment. Later on this rift is healed, but only by seeing man as an object among others, as does Ayer. Again the development ends when the other human being has ceased to possess a life of his own altogether. He has become an object which is subject to the control by the scientist. Fortunately or unfortunately--depending which side one takes--this has not yet become a practical possibility and the voices which pronounce it in principle impossible are becoming increasingly frequent. But the spectre of such a science has been raising its head. Thus Skinner sees a physical state in the psychological state.[1] A neurosis, for example, is the result of external influences

[1] Cmp. B. F. Skinner, Science and Human Behavior (New York: Macmillan, 1953), pp. 367-371.

on the organism, a function of certain variables. To heal a neurosis it is only necessary to change the variables in such a way as to create a more desirable state of affairs. The therapist appears again in the role of an artist manipulating a medium and causing it to conform to a state which he considers desirable. That the individual has a will and freedom of his own is left out of account. Freedom, and thus humanity, is considered unscientific and thus unreal. The example of the therapist controlling other human beings is still remote enough to cause not so much raised eyebrows as a smile. And yet, how often today, especially in the social sciences, do we run across attempts to identify man with a few numbers appearing in statistics or tests, with a function which can be controlled by changing a few variables. Both such a science and totalitarianism aim at the subjection of the individual. Thus it cannot surprise us when totalitarianism hails every step which makes it possible to exert a greater control over the individual, which makes man into a more pliable material, so that the machine of the state might run more smoothly.

III. THE SACRIFICE OF THE SPIRIT

A. Even more dangerous than the dream of power is the second alternative to the nihilistic predicament: the denial of the spirit and the attempt to lose oneself in the world of objects. Instead of striving for autonomy man seeks heteronomy. It should be noted here that the pole which corresponds to the autonomous spirit is not simply the world, but a world of objects, that is, a world which has been conceptualized and schematized. It is what was called above a world of autonomous percepts, a shallow world in which objects are held to exhaust reality and in which the accidental reigns. In losing himself in this world man reduces himself to the status of an object. Denying his roots in the infinite, he chooses to see himself as finite.

This desire complements the desire for autonomy. One thrives on and reinforces the other. Not only the autonomous leader is the nihilist in disguise, but the heteronomous follower as well. The sadistic desire to reduce man to the status of an object is met by the masochistic desire to be an object.[1] Both represent alternative answers to the same predicament. Without men who desire to become objects, the leader could never succeed.

This does not mean that one must answer the nihilistic predicament in an either-or fashion; that either one becomes a leader or a follower. On the contrary, in almost all in-

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[1]Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 377 ff.

dividuals we find both desires mingling. The countless functionaries in the Nazi hierarchy are an example. On one hand they led, and in their role as leaders they proceeded to reduce the individuals under their power to the status of objects; on the other hand they were not members of the ruling clique. They felt safe, because they, too, were only wheels in the machinery of the state.

Perhaps this example is too far from most people's experience to permit them to see its application to everyday life. Yet it is not difficult to find examples closer to us. The individual who all day has meekly performed his task at a desk may become a tyrant at the wheel or when he joins the local fire company. Or we may think of some teachers and policemen.

The second alternative has its roots in a desire to "become finitized," to become "just one man more."[1] Above we spoke of the attempt of the social scientist to reduce man to a function assuming a certain value depending on biological or social factors. This attempt is met by a willingness to see oneself reduced to a marionette rather than to have to face up to what one really is. Man can take a certain measure of comfort from this; it frees him from all responsibilities of his own. An example of this is the changing attitude towards crime. Today criminals seem to benefit from an understanding public which is increasingly willing to accept their

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[1]S. Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling The/Sickness unto Death, tr. ed. W. Lowrie (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1955), p. 166.

criminality as something like a disease and to treat them accordingly. But what does this mean? In attributing the evil in man to factors over which he has no control, be they social or biological, we take the burden of guilt from him. We do not condemn him as a free, responsible subject, capable of guilt; rather we see him as a causally determined object. In this case we cannot call the criminal guilty. We do not call ourselves guilty when we contract scarlet fever or measles. In adopting a similar attitude towards crime we frequently flatter ourselves by saying that our penal system is becoming more humane. However, it certainly does not enable us to see the humanity of the criminal more clearly. Rather, calling him not responsible is a denial of his humanity, of his freedom to act.

And yet, the criminal would in almost all cases prefer to be considered not responsible rather than guilty. His desire to see himself reduced to the status of an object springs here from a fear to accept his own guilt. He lacks the courage to be himself because he is unwilling to assume responsibility for his past actions.

This problem assumes gigantic proportions when we realize that today the German people must accept a horrible guilt or escape from it by pleading a lack of responsibility. The latter is an inviting possibility, for in an important sense the vast majority of these people cannot be said to be guilty. They followed not to perpetrate a crime, but in order to follow or because they lacked the strength to act differently.

The latter is due to human weakness which lets man make the decision not to use the freedom which he has been given. Perhaps out of fear, perhaps out of laziness, man chooses to see himself as unfree, and only this decision makes him into an object which the leader can manipulate. We can understand this and yet we should take care not to make out of this weakness an excuse or even a virtue. Especially after what has happened, the following statement by a German writer seems irresponsible:

> The poet is as little obligated to interfere with politics, as the sculptor or the composer; and if he does not do it at all, out of a love for his work, no shadow may fall on him, nor on his work.[1]

This is an attitude which is at least partly responsible for the rise of Hitler and thus indirectly for the crimes which this regime committed. We have to agree with Hans Mayer when he points out, in answer to this statement, that "no writer," indeed no one, "can avoid asking himself what consequences his actions will have. And every decision, including the decision for non-engagement, is a decision."[2]

In this case the unwillingness to assume responsibility is due to weakness. The guilt is greater when man rejects responsibility in order to follow, and then discovers, to his great surprise, that he is involved in a monstrous crime. Those who fell into this category are like someone who committed a crime while intoxicated. They danced around the

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[1]DIE ZEIT, (Hamburg) April 1961, Nr. 16, p. 3.

[2]Ibid., p. 3.

golden calf because God had hidden his face. This dance stems from the desire to cease to be a thinking "I," to escape from the emptiness the spirit has created by denying it and by submerging oneself in the mass. As long as one is part of the dance there are no questions. The follower of a totalitarian regime is not one who coolly embarks on a career of crime, although criminals may exploit this desire to follow, but one who seeks intoxication. There is no deliberation, but only the desire to be swept away, to let one's individuality be absorbed by a greater order. The burden of humanity has become too heavy. Only if we consider this side of the totalitarian appeal can we understand how it was possible for perhaps 80% of the German people to at least sympathize with the Nazis, while after the collapse hardly one convinced Nazi could be found.[1] As Hannah Arendt points out, the reason must not be sought in the insincerity of the people, but rather it must be understood by considering the nature of the totalitarian appeal. The golden calf can function as an idol only as long as the individual does not reflect. As soon as its authority is questioned it collapses. Let us remember here the supreme principle of the SS-man, formulated by Himmler: "my honor is faithfulness."[2] Faithfulness is here at odds with responsible intelligence. It is a faithfulness in spite of reason, a perversion of reason. A Nazi, questioned by Jaspers about his allegiance to Hitler answered, "no, I don't

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[1] Arendt, p. 577.

[2] Ibid., p. 523.

believe it, but one must believe it...What matters is not what one believes, but that one believes. This is the curious perversion. Belief becomes belief in belief."[1] Intelligence, once it reawakens will find it difficult to believe that this could happen. In which sense then is the individual guilty? His guilt in this case is not so much to have participated in a crime. Even if the regime of the Nazis had been completely benevolent it would have been criminal to join it; the guilt lies in the refusal of the individual to assume responsibility.

There is a third case in which the problem of guilt is more complicated. In which way can someone who is now twenty-five or thirty be said to be guilty? In one sense the answer seems clear: they were too young to bear responsibility. There is no one who can judge them guilty. And yet, they, too, should choose to see themselves as guilty. Perhaps we can bring this problem into sharper focus by turning to a letter in which the guilt of the fathers is rejected.

> You write that we should feel ashamed of all these atrocities as 'Germans,' without qualifications, simply because of our being German. You appeal here to a sense of nationality which the youth of today does not share anymore (I am 32 years old). It is only a logical consequence of the fact that 'being German' was misused in the time of the Nazis until it became disgusting and that the most infamous crimes were committed in its name, that every sense of nationality has died in us. We love our violated land, but we do not feel like Germans.
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> It was the overbearing national consciousness of our parents which drove them blindly into the arms of the Nazis. And they not only burdened themselves with guilt, they also bear the burden of shame, of disgrace, and of severe punishment. But it would be unjust and stupid, even backward, for us, the heirs of this guilt, to be ashamed of these atrocities as Germans. (Only because

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[1]Jaspers, Der philosophische Glaube, pp. 135, 136.

> we happened to have been born in Central Europe.)
> Our relationship to these matters is far more human, a deep, agonizing compassion with the victims of the Nazis, and also horror and shame about the deeds of which human beings are capable.[1]

The girl thus feels shame, but as a human being only, not as a German. Presumably her feelings would not be very different if these crimes had been committed by some other nation, at least if we are to believe her words. And yet, she escapes from choosing to see herself guilty as a German only by choosing to see herself as accidental--"only because we happened to have been born in Central Europe." But if this is an accident, and there is no doubt that I can look on it as such just as I could consider the fact that I married this and no other girl accidental, then all the bonds which tie me to a greater whole are accidental, as is my own life. As Jaspers puts it, "I betrayed myself when I betrayed the others, when I did not will absolutely to take upon me my people, my parents, my love, for it is to them that I owe myself."[2] In choosing myself absolutely I must choose those who made me what I am, I must take upon me their moments of triumph, but also their moments of disgrace. The individual can freely take the sins of the fathers upon himself and in thus willing escape from the accidental.

The choice which confronts all of these people today in different ways is whether to acknowledge this guilt or whether to deny it. Either man chooses to see himself as

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[1]A letter in DIE ZEIT, April 1961, Nr. 17, p. 38.
[2]Jaspers, Philosophie, vol. 1, p. 245.

guilty or he chooses to see himself as innocent, and there are enough sociological and economic explanations which make the latter possible. In this case, however, he "shuts himself up," he "wills in a finite sense" and in thus willing "suffers damage to his soul."[1] Here is an either-or from which the German cannot escape. Perhaps one may see in the sharpness of the issue a hope for achieving true humanity; and yet it is only a hope. For the presence of this guilt also makes it more inviting to forget and to reject it. The descent into superficiality is the greatest danger which confronts Germany today.

B. I turned to Germany because the issues are so apparent here that it is difficult to overlook them. It is more difficult to see that what was just said about Germany applies also to the United States. Here the desire to be rid of one's humanity takes very different forms, forms which seem much less obviously evil and which are therefore all the more insinuating and difficult to combat. The order which suppresses individuality is here not the totalitarian order imposed by the will of the leader, but an impersonal order which, however, threatens to swallow the individual just the same. The machine is the symbol of this order; indeed, more than a symbol, it is centrally related to it. On one hand a tool of subjugating nature, the machine can itself become a lawgiver. Man can fall under the heteronomy of the machine. The person

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[1] Kierkegaard, Either/Or, v. 2, p. 225.

who punches the identical hole thousands of times every day, who is forced to go through the same motions in unending succession, tends to be reduced simply by what he does to the status of an object, of an automaton. He himself becomes an extension of the machine, another wheel spinning around. However, it would be false to see in the machine the sole cause for the objectification of man. Far more important is that man himself is willing to accept this machinelike organization. A minimum of friction between the individual and his human environment will permit the machine, society, to run all the more smoothly. This is achieved by assigning each individual to a track which he is expected to follow. He plays certain roles, sometimes so well that the actor forgets that he is acting. His personality is lost, he becomes the role. Many cocktail parties, for example, seem like a play of marionettes; somebody pulls the strings and the wooden limbs move. Whether they like or dislike what is being said or the people with whom they associate is immaterial. To let this shadowplay proceed as easily as possible, everything is avoided which might cause the actor to fall out of his role. Thus anything approximating true communication is in bad taste because this would force the individual to drop the mask and to become truly himself. This may not happen if the play is to continue. It is antisocial.[1]

If only cocktail parties were such plays of shadows

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[1]Cmp. Jaspers, Philosophie, vol. 2, p. 98. Also Denis de Rougemont, The Devil's Share, pp. 107, 112.

there would be little reason for concern. They could be dismissed with a smile. However, we must be concerned when life in its entirety tends to become such a farce; when birth, background, and environment have set us on a track which we cannot leave; when the constellation which ruled our birth has determined our friends, the schools which we attended, the kind of life we should lead later, including even the time of the train which should bring us to work and the woman we should marry. And when we threaten to cast off this mask counselors are ready to help us to "adjust." Perhaps he is a psychiatrist, or a minister, or just one who in a golden hour set down the rules for happiness. One of the warning signals of our age is that books are written on how to be happy in marriage, and even more frightening, that such books are taken seriously. The very idea of marriage becomes ludicrous when the element of communication is taken out of it, when one distributes roles and invites the partners to forget themselves and to learn their roles well. No wonder that man becomes tired, irritable, and fundamentally dissatisfied. Adjustment is not the answer for this dissatisfaction; complete adjustment is the death of the individual. This dissatisfaction is a shout to be released, to be stripped of all these masks, to awaken even if the awakening should be painful. But only a minority is chafing under the weight of their masks. The majority bears them willingly to be rid of their own selves. They have chosen to live in a "petrified objectivity," "a world of materialized contents" which is mistaken for the total-

ity of being.[1]

The corollary of man's willingness to let himself be reduced to the status of an object is that he is treated as such. Some examples of this were given in the preceding chapter. It is particularly true in time of war. The individual becomes part of the human material to be used as those in command see fit. Thus it seems at times as if Red China might be willing to risk an atomic war, knowing that it might bring destruction to perhaps two thirds of her population. But two or three hundred million Chinese might still be sufficient to assume world domination, once Russia and the United States had destroyed each other. More real was the disregard of human life which marked the Chinese war effort in Korea. We could turn to World War II for other examples. But man is used in this way because he permits himself to be used. War, as Denis de Rougemont points out, is man's great furlough from humanity.[2] Only by forgetting his humanity, by seeing himself as just one man more, can man face the probability of death with such equanimity.[3] The soldier's defiance of death is rarely heroic. More frequently it is inhuman.

One last reflection: according to recent reports China is being visited by a famine which may take a toll of perhaps fifty or even sixty millions. Most people will take only passing notice; a few may feel that something horrible is happening; many more will rejoice in the misfortune which has befallen

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[1]Jaspers, Philosophie, vol. 2, p. 91.

[2]Rougemont, The Devil's Share, p. 77.

[3]Cmp. Franz Marc, Essays, Briefe aus dem Felde, p. 86.

the enemy. But sixty millions may be dying, an unending repetition of the same fate: children, mothers, and men. And only a few wish to help, just as so many acquiesced in the slaughter of innocents in the Second World War if they were enemies or perhaps just strangers. That they are enemies is completely irrelevant. That such an excuse is made so frequently in our day is itself a sign of our nihilism. In calling them enemies we just dance around another idol which frees us from humanity and lets us indulge in our inhumanity. In refusing to heed the call for help, no matter where it comes from, we become guilty.

IV. SUICIDE

A. We have discussed two alternatives to the nihilistic predicament: man can choose to see himself either as the autonomous subject or as a finite object. Both of these presuppose the subject-object polarity. In both cases he sacrifices his shadow; in both cases the decision implies a rejection of life in its unlimited fulness. The spirit has defeated the dreaming soul. The spectral bloodlessness of these alternatives reveals a cold unreal world, populated by shadows--an inhuman world which knows neither love nor hate.

Man, by choosing the third alternative, strives to avoid this aridity. He remembers his roots; he listens to the earth, to the voice of the blood within him. This alternative is more radical than the preceding two in that it combats the polarity which is at the heart of open nihilism, not by affirming one of its poles, but by rejecting it in its entirety. It is an effort to return to the realm of the mothers, to the lost unity of Paradise out of which our spirit has cast us.

The decision to reject the polarity may be thought of as being either a positive or a negative act. It is negative if individuality is found to be such an odious burden that it is simply cast off by committing suicide. There need not be hope for a fuller existence. The Paradise to which man returns may be nothingness. The decision is not so much a choice between two states of affairs, one of which is thought preferable to the other, as simply a rejection without regard to

other possibilities. It is not merely a decision that life is not worth living. Rather life is found unbearable while at the same time man senses what it would mean to stand in true communication. This situation is likely to arise only when the ties which enable one to feel at home in the world are suddenly broken and give rise to the despair of loneliness. Thus the answer to being forced to leave what one still considers home or to be left and discarded by someone one loves may be suicide. As Jaspers points out, "the ultimate origin of suicide is the incommunicable secret of the lonely."[1]

Yet this is a difficult road to take. Reason may a hundred times suggest suicide, yet just at this point it becomes apparent that man is not only reason. There is something in him which shrinks back from the thought of annihilation; suddenly man discovers that even in its apparent absurdity life is worth living. Paradoxical, as it may sound, the nihilist is at love with life and it is this love which makes it so difficult to help him. Look, we might say, if it were not for this love, why do you not discard this life? What good is it to you? Do not all your problems stem from your love of life? But it is just because the nihilist loves life that he cannot renounce it. This is crucial to a discussion of nihilism. Undoubtedly an answer to nihilism could be developed which implies the renunciation of life in one way or another. Buddhism is an example. Death is a seductive thought,

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[1]Jaspers, Philosophie, vol. 2, p. 304.

and we like to play with the thought of exchanging this for the farther shore; we like to imagine ourselves following the ferryman until this and the farther shore, ferry and river alike disappear. We, too, know the great other which surrounds us, the great ocean which is both the fulness of being and yet nothing, to be res fascinans; but we do not forget the et tremendum and the latter far outweighs the former. We tremble at the thought of losing life as the lover trembles at the thought of losing his beloved. We know our fear to be unreasonable, but this knowledge is not enough to forsake our love. We want to live--this is the premise. Any discussion which neglects this may fascinate, but it will not convince.

And it will not convince, not only because it neglects our love, but because we suspect the other person to be telling a tale which he himself does not find fully acceptable. Otherwise, why is he telling me the answer which he professes to have found? If it really is an answer, what is he doing still being around? Perhaps he just needed to publish a book; but no, he wants to liberate me from my misery. But who am I? I can understand what moved Christ to suffer for man on the cross. He loved man and this presupposes that he attached significance to my own personal existence. His message is not one of renunciation, but one of everlasting life. But this person who advocates suicide? What could move him to talk to me? Pity is what moves one person to help another. In clinging to pity we cling to humanity. Nobody can thus advocate suicide as a general answer to the woes of humanity.

B. Camus writes that "in a man's attachment to the world there is something stronger than all the ills of the world. The body's judgment is as good as the mind's and the body shrinks from annihilation. We get into the habit of living before acquiring the habit of thinking."[1] Life reasserts itself. Thus Camus confronts us with the thought of suicide to lead us back to an affirmation of life. He praises the "divine availability of the condemned man before whom the prison doors open in a certain early dawn, that unbelievable disinterestedness with regard to everything except for the pure flame of life."[2] The contemplation of suicide and of the absurd leads Camus back to a philosophy of life. Camus' hero no longer ponders the imponderable riddles of human existence. He has shed these fetters; he simply lives, knowing a new freedom, listening only to the voice of life within him. He is in splendid health, disinterested, devoid of all feelings of responsibility or attachment. Camus himself sketches him for us:

> My friend Vincent, who is a cooper and a junior breaststroke champion, has an even clearer view. He drinks when he is thirsty, if he desires a woman tries to go to bed with her and would marry her (this has not yet happened). Afterwards he always says 'I feel better.'[3]

We must agree with Camus when he argues that life tends to reassert itself when faced by the prospect of annihilation and thus makes suicide an unlikely answer to the absurd. And

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[1]Camus, Myth of Sisyphus, p. 8.

[2]Ibid., p. 59.

[3]Ibid., p. 143.

yet, what Camus proposes is also a kind of suicide in that in advocating a return to life he fails to heed the demands of the spirit. He opposes spirit to life and the latter is believed to be more valuable. This time suicide appears as a positive act. It is no longer simply the rejection of an unbearable state, but it implies an affirmation of what is believed to be a fuller reality. Man as the manifestation of life is considered a more satisfactory conception of man than man as the manifestation of spirit. Freedom is identified with the spontaneity of life rather than with the autonomy of the will. This is a more subtle and therefore more seductive form of suicide.

C. Again modern art enables us to see in greater detail what this means. Valéry thought that modern art was art created in a fog; he answered this predicament by striving for autonomy, by populating the fog with his own creations. It is impossible for the artist to solve this problem by following the alternative suggested in the preceding chapter, by surrendering his autonomy and choosing to become a finite object. Art is creation. The artist, simply by virtue of being an artist, must be spontaneous. A creator must be more than a place in a certain order. The artist is thus by his very nature uneasy with totalitarian programs and, when he allies himself with such a regime, we can generally find a misunderstanding of totalitarianism. Thus, when we look at someone like Benn or Weinheber, both artists who at one point or another sided with Hitler, we find that totalitarianism is mis-

taken for a Nietzschean awakening of life, a misunderstanding which the blood and soil vocabulary of the Nazis was calculated to promote. The totalitarian, who desired to make man into a finite object, used the artist, who saw in totalitarianism the possibility of a return to the mother--an affirmation of life at the expense of the spirit. Benn was drawn to Hitler not because he wished to disappear in some predetermined order, but for reasons not too different from those which led Camus to idealize his breast stroke champion who felt better when he could satisfy his biological desires.

This last alternative presupposes an affirmation of life in its unending spontaneity to the spirit which is seen as stifling. Camus and others believe that by denying the spirit we will not only escape from nihilism, but return to the Paradise which we have been denied. The old Adam fell when his spirit awoke and let him see his own nakedness. The new Adam will be born when this spirit is brought as a sacrifice. Man, having suffered the pains of individuation, having emancipated himself from the mother and from home, finds that the price he has paid for this emancipation is too high. His world has become meaningless and he wants to return. It would be a sad misunderstanding to suspect immediately an Oedipus complex, or, perhaps we should say, we should beware of interpreting the Oedipus complex to be simply a biological problem. The desire to return to the origin, to the womb, is the correlate of the pain of isolation which is implied by the very idea of humanity. It is part of the shadow of man. By posit-

ing the spirit we posit this shadow, we posit sensuousness and sexuality. We can also say that spirit by virtue of being spirit confronts and is in dread of the dark other which "alarms and fascinates him with its sweet anxiety."[1] It is the res tremendum et fascinans of Rudolf Otto, tremendum because man trembles at the thought of his annihilation, fascinans because his annihilation holds the promise of being a return home.

In art this desire appears first of all, as did the Constructivist tendency, as a rejection of the reality of the surface. The world in which we find ourselves is rejected as being shallow. However, there is sharp disagreement as to what is to be considered the true reality. The world which the Constructivist artist found to be not spiritual enough is now found to be contaminated by the spirit which veils the true nature of reality. While the Constructivists may be said to seek reality beyond the world in a subjective realm of the spirit, these artists may be said to seek it beneath the world. Thus Kirchner thinks of art as an attempt to force the veiled meaning of the world to show itself, "the great mystery which stands behind all events and things of the world around us, which may sometimes be seen or felt like an apparition, so when we speak with someone, when we stand in a landscape, or when flowers or objects suddenly speak to us."[2] Kirchner wants the "it" to change back into the Thou, which has disappeared

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[1]Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, tr. and int. Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University, 1946), p. 55.

[2]Hess, Dokumente, p. 48.

behind the veil of concepts which the spirit has thrown over the world. The artist tries to draw this veil aside.

A more articulate spokesman of this tendency is Franz Marc.

> Very early I found man ugly; the animal seemed more beautiful, more pure. But in it, too, I discovered so much which disgusted me, so much ugliness, that instinctively, due to an inner force, my representations became more schematic and abstract. Trees, flowers, earth, showed me more ugly, disgusting aspects every year until suddenly I became fully conscious of the ugliness and impurity of nature.[1]

Marc, too, is led towards abstraction, and the word "schematic" may once more suggest the dominance of the constructing spirit. But the rejection, first of man, then of animals, then of trees, flowers, and the earth points in a different direction. This is born out by other quotations: "I sense in pantheistic empathy the trembling and streaming of the blood in nature, in the river, in animals, in the air."[2] To Marc the organic pulse pervading nature is ultimately what matters most. Marc wants to return to the heart of creation.

> The longing for individual being, for freedom from the deception of our ephemeral life is the basic mood of all art. To show an unearthly being which dwells behind everything, to break the mirror of life, so that we may look into being...Appearance is the eternally shallow, but draw it away, entirely away, entirely out of your mind, think yourself and your image of the world away--the world remains in its true form, and we artists see this form. A demon allows us to see in between the fissures of the world and in dreams leads us behind its colored stage.[3]

We only have to recall Braque's statement that the thing-

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[1]Quoted by Sedlmayr, Verlust der Mitte (Frankfurt/M: Ullstein, 1959), p. 124.

[2]Hess, Dokumente, p. 78.

[3]Ibid., p. 79.

in-itself does not exist, to see how different, at least in its aims, Expressionist abstraction is from that of the Constructivists. Common to both is only the dissatisfaction with man as he is and the world in which he finds himself. Constructivists are engineers, but Marc is a magician, shouting magical formulae to force hidden reality to show itself. The spirit which before was supreme is rejected, at least in theory, for it has broken the unity which the artist strives to regain in his art. The animal is closer to this unity, but still not close enough. Marc's art suggests Camus' statement that if he were tree among trees, or an animal among animals, the problem of meaning could not arise. "I should be this world to which I am now opposed by my whole consciousness and with my whole insistence upon familiarity."[1] Marc's art is a play with the thought of suicide. "There is only one blessing and redemption: death, the destruction of the form so that the soul is freed...Death leads back into normal being."[2]

The antithesis between such an art and that of the Constructivists is particularly clear in Klee's parable of the tree. We likened the Constructivist's striving for autonomy to cutting one's roots from the earth. Klee, on the other hand, insists that the artist must possess roots. The artist is the trunk through which the strength of the earth passes into the branches, into the works of art. The strength of the work of art is in the last analysis the strength of the earth.

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[1]Camus, Sisyphus, p. 51.

[2]Marc, Briefe aus dem Felde, pp. 81, 147.

The artist collects what is sent to him and sends it on. His task is

> neither to serve nor to rule, only to mediate. He thus occupies a truly modest position. And the beauty of the branches is not his own. It has only passed through him.[1]

Art here is not an imitation of nature; rather nature takes hold of the artist. He creates like nature which, in its infinity, is not bound to the familiar forms. He senses in the worlds which the paleontologist, the microscope, and the archeologist reveal the same essential force. He studies all these worlds in order to rid himself of the everyday world in which he finds himself, to come ever closer to the forces which pulse through everything.

> Klee was an analyst; with his signs and symbols he dissected the visible world into single elements, which then, in the play of fantasy, he put together again. He reduced reality until it became absurd and out of it he built something entirely new. He used everything which occurs in the wide realm of creation as material for his free plays: plants, animals, men, architecture, landscape. He took up suggestions everywhere, he imitated everything, and in this imitation created it anew. Thus he created a parody of reality, a poetically transformed fantastic reality.[2]

This passage suggests a difficulty which the artist meets on his way to the "mothers." I may envy the child and I may strive to be like a child again, but is it childlike to wish to be like a child? Or I may go to Tahiti to recapture a paradise which in Europe has been long gone, if it was ever there. But again I must ask myself, can this search be suc-

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[1]Quoted in G. Di San Lazzaro, Paul Klee, Leben und Werk (Munchen-Zurich: Droemer, 1957), p. 122.

[2]Ibid., p. 130.

cessful? Never again can I be a tree, an animal, or a child. In willing to return to such a previous state of existence, the spirit has already frustrated the attempt. It is not easy to escape from our humanity. Klee realizes this and proceeds more subtly. He plays a game in which the spirit brings itself as a sacrifice to free man for the mysterious depth.

The analysis of this game was given by Hermann Hesse in his description of the game with glass pearls. This game is a playful juggling with whatever the spirit in his unending attempt to cope with his situation in the world has produced.

> Whatever mankind has produced in its creative ages, its insights, its noble thoughts, and its works of art, whatever subsequent periods of scholarly investigation have reduced to concepts and added to our intellectual treasure, this immense material of spiritual values is played by the player with glass pearls as an organ is played by the organist, and this organ is of a perfection which is hardly imaginable; its manuals and pedals touch the entire spiritual cosmos, its registers are almost innumerable. Theoretically it is possible to reproduce the entire spiritual content of the world in the game.[1]

Before it is possible to play such a game, all facts must be equally accessible to the player. He must be equally at home everywhere, or perhaps better, nowhere. Highly developed sciences have made this objectivity possible and have thus led to a loss of the sense of belonging somewhere. A second related requirement is that the material of the game must have ceased to be overly important to the player. One does not play this way with something one really cares about.

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[1]Hermann Hesse, Das Glasperlenspiel, Gesammelte Werke, vol. 6, (Berlin-Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1957), p. 84.

How closely Hesse's speculations reflect an aspect of the artistic situation today: not only are we reminded of Klee; the poetry of Eliot, Benn, or Pound is also frequently a playful juggling of the contents of history, though I do not mean to imply that it is only this. Here, too, we find that the sense of belonging has been lost. The artist stands no longer in history, but above history, with all of history at his finger tips. He is equally enthusiastic about pre-historic sculptures from Sardinia and about Central American clay figurines.

But how is such a game an answer to the absurd? So far we have talked about the material of the game, now we must pass to the rules. In the game the contents are arranged in a certain order; this order, however, and this is of central importance, is not based on objective relationships found in the world. Rather, it is an order which from the point of view of the material must seem accidental. Thus Hesse suggests that we might try to relate the formula expressing the course of a planet to the growth of a plant or to the structure of a certain poem. A new order is created which is in no way an image of reality. Hesse knows this and objects;

> You measure the weight of the vowels in an old poem and establish a relationship between its formula and the formula symbolizing the course of a planet. This is delightful, but it is a game.[1]

And yet, the players strive to find once more the reality which has been distorted by conceptualization, but which

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[1] Ibid., p. 273.

must still be beneath the objects with which our spirit confronts us. They lead the spirit into a position where it must negate itself. The spirit seizes such an accidental relationship and searches for an underlying concept explaining it. But, as there is no such concept, the spirit, meditating on the nature of the relationship, confronted by its own limits, is enabled to see beyond these limits, free to intuit the reality which transcends the spirit. Common sense will tell us that this is absurd, but the magic of this art lies precisely in leaving the sphere of common sense. What is absurd to one, may be the fulness of being to the other. This method is related to that of the Zen Buddhist when he asks: two hands clapped together make a noise; what is the noise which one hand makes? The attraction of such riddles today, is again a sign of our nihilism.

We encounter such games most frequently in Surrealist art. By this I do not mean to imply that all art which calls itself Surrealistic is such a game. Some of it strives to make a reference to dreams, some stems from a fascination with the obscene. Yet a significant part of the Surrealist program is an attempt of the spirit to destroy itself. Dali said once that if someone cannot imagine a galloping horse on a tomato he is an idiot.[1] In their paintings the Surrealists confront us with such images. Percepts are brought together in a way which forces us to forsake the perceptual space with

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[1]Sedlmayr, Revolution der modernen Kunst, p. 83.

which we normally operate. We are forced to relinquish the reality associated with that space; thus we are freed for an encounter with a more profound reality. The same effects can be sought by playing with perspective or color. Perhaps some light is cast on this discussion by Dali's phrase that Surrealism is the systematization of confusion.[1] By this he does not mean to subject confusion to a system; he is not a Constructivist. He does apparently create an order, but only so that the idea of system may itself become suspect in the association. Surrealism is destructive, but it destroys only what it sees as chains restricting our vision. It is doubtful if this vision can be more than a vision of nothingness. It is certain, however, that in rejecting the world of the spirit, the Surrealist rejects man.

D. An age betrays its character in its art. The tendencies which we can detect in art are not confined to it. In modern philosophy, too, we encounter the contrast between spirit and life. The latter is described as an infinite stream; any attempts to exhaust this richness must be inadequate. Life and concepts are incommensurable. There are no universals in the stream of life; to seek them is to hack the fundamental unity of life into pieces. Perhaps the most vehement statement in this direction was made by Ludwig Klages in Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele. But whether we turn to Dilthey, Bergson, Nietzsche, James, or Klages makes little difference

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[1]Sedlmayr, Verlust der Mitte, p. 107.

in this connection. In all of them we feel a distrust of the spirit which is threatening to desicate and petrify the richness of our existence. After Husserl's attempt to emphasize the spirit again, the distrust of reflective consciousness has reappeared in a slightly different disguise. Wittgenstein and Heidegger can be seen moving towards a trans-conceptual intuition of being. In Heidegger we find the fulness of Being (Sein) opposed to the conceptualized world of objects (Seiendes). Heidegger's philosophy is an attempt to lead man to an encounter with a deeper reality. The notorious obscurity of Heidegger's language is a necessary consequence of this striving. He attempts to use language in such a way that it cannot possibly become autonomous. Like the player with glass pearls Heidegger ultimately wants no longer conceptual truth or clarity, but an intuition of Being which cuts beneath all concepts.[1] Language is to speak again of the mystery of Sein. Seen in this light Heidegger's curious etymological adventures are in some way justified. They are tools with which he fights against the autonomy of language. Heidegger wishes us to hear again in everything the eternal Thou. It will be remembered that Buber's emphasis on the Thou could not be considered an adequate answer to the threat of nihilism. The criticism which was made then, namely, that to be human is to deal with

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[1]Cmp. Karl Löwith, Heidegger, Denker in durftiger Zeit (Gottingen; Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1960), p. 15. "Heideggers Sprache ist, was er selbst mit Hölderlin von ihr sagt: 'das unschuldigste aller Geschäfte,' ein Glasperlenspiel mit Worten, und zugleich 'der Güter Gerfährlichstes.'"

a world of objects and it is this world which must be found meaningful, not something beneath or above it, applies also to Heidegger, indeed to all solutions possessing a similar mystical tinge. Kierkegaard's aversion to all mysticism which forgets the world is justified. To seek the "dusk of evening" and to "melt with vague movements into one with God" cannot be an answer.[1] Neither Heidegger nor Buber can tell me how to find life in a world of objects meaningful. They rather offer us an escape in suicide, albeit a very well disguised suicide, That Heidegger had found only an escape and not a genuine answer was demonstrated when he supported Hitler, as if the fulness of being were going to reveal itself here.[2]

The desire to free oneself from the fetters of the spirit tends to lead to a victory of the chthonic forces in man. Once the dams have been destroyed, the organic wells up and submerges whatever restraints may be left. The political consequence of such a return to the earth would be the anarchy of the jungle. In denying the spirit man leaves codes and obligations behind, giving free reign to his desires, attempting to revert to the status of an animal which knows neither good nor evil. At heart, however, he will always remain a human being, perhaps a perverted human being, but a human being nevertheless. Again we find, as we did in the discussion of art, that his humanity prevents man from returning to the bosom of the earth. Artists can develop innocent looking games

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[1]Kierkegaard, Either/Or, vol. 2, p. 252.

[2]Cmp. Löwith, Heidegger, pp. 49 ff.

to make this easier. The Satanism of Baudelaire comes to mind. As Friedrich points out, Baudelaire attempts to outdo the banal everyday evil with evil contrived by intelligence, in order to find here, in

> this maximum of evil, the jumping-off place into ideality. This is the source of the cruelties and the perversities of the Fleurs du Mal. Out of a thirst for infinity, they degrade nature, laughter, and love to the diabolical in order to find here the point of departure for the 'new.'[1]

These games become odious when play with artistic forms ceases to be exciting and is transferred to real life, when these perversities contrived by intelligence are not only described, but lived. Baudelaire himself, Rimbaud, or Verlaine may come to mind, but the list is endless.

All three alternatives to open nihilism represent attempts to deny the true nature of man. They all result in some kind of inhumanity. Yet, if the threat of nihilism is not met in some way, the flight into inhumanity is all that is left.

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[1] Friedrich, Moderne Lyrik, p. 34.

V. THE LOSS OF HISTORY

A. Nihilism appears as the consequence of a development which leads man to an awareness of his freedom and of his forlornness. It is the result of an awakening. That mankind should reach this point can hardly surprise me. Sleep implies the possibility of awakening. On the other hand, that this awakening should have occurred just now is in the last analysis inexplicable. There is no reason why the development towards nihilism should not have occurred more rapidly or more slowly. However, it is possible to point to some of the proximate causes of this development.

B. Kant spoke of time and space as being the two forms of intuition in terms of which man perceives the world. The objects which I perceive, including my own body are in time and space. By means of these forms I orient myself in the world; I define the place which I myself occupy. By memory and expectation I relate myself to a temporal sequence of events and similarly I discover that I belong to a certain spatial order. This relating preceded self-consciousness. I discover that I am a self standing in a history which possesses me and which I possess and that I possess a home and am possessed by it. The self discovers that it has roots. Another way of saying this would be: man begins to be aware of himself not in his autonomy, but as a member of a greater order. It is only the movement towards autonomy which destroys this sense of belonging.

In the first part of this paper we discussed at some length the relationship between autonomy and objectification. We spoke of the petrifying transformation of the Thou into an it. The Thou engages us in a dialogue, while the it is the silent object of our thoughts. History, too, can be seen in two similar ways. On one hand it speaks to us; it is lived, remembered, intuited. On the other hand it can become a cold order of facts, merely a science. An illustration may help to clarify this distinction. We were walking in the Lahn valley from Limburg to Dietkirchen when a peasant stopped us, glad to find an excuse to interrupt his work for a few minutes, and asked us where we were going. Soon he began to tell us about his village, about the church we had come to see, and about the old priest. He turned to the harvest; the potatoes were bigger than they had ever been, while the wheat was so bad that it had to be burned on the fields. Then he came back to the church.--In a sense we knew more about the church than he did. We knew when it was built and by whom, and our guide book had told us what to look for. All this our peasant could not have known; he only remembered some incidents which his elders had told him. But for him it was a part of life, a center in this curious world which had caused the wheat to rot and the potatoes to grow bigger than anyone could remember. For him the church was an integral part of an order to which he belonged, in which he stood, and which he could not conceive of as being otherwise. For us the church was an illustration of a certain phase of Romanesque architecture; we could have

thought of other examples. History was for him a living experience, for us it was knowledge. He was at home here, while we were but visitors.

History as a science is flourishing today. With every year the past yields more of its secrets. More and more order is brought into the "archives of the past." Mommsen's phrase emphasizes here the point made above: this history is no longer experienced history.[1] An archivist deals with something which is dead. The modern historian arranges and files facts pertaining to the past.[2] This phrase also points out a second characteristic; in an archive everything is equally close to the person using it.

> For the difference between history as science and history as remembrance this difference may be considered fundamental. The latter arises essentially by relating the past to the presence of the remembering and thereby it elevates the time intervening to a central element of consciousness.[3]

This awareness of the time intervening is eliminated by history as a science.

> It does not matter at all how much time there is between today and Hammurabi, Hammurabi is to the appropriate scholar just as Bismarck or Napoleon to another...That the heuristic difficulties usually possess a certain proportionality to the elapsed time follows from an entirely different and in no way logically necessary set of circumstances.[4]

The objectivity of the historian leads thus away from

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[1]Alfred Heuss, Verlust der Geschichte (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1959), p. 34.

[2]The inadequacy of such an approach is, however, being seen by many modern historians. Kahrstedt's Kulturgeschichte der römischen Kaiserzeit may serve as an example.

[3]Heuss, Verlust, p. 43.

[4]Ibid., p. 43.

the experience of time. History as experience gives way to an a-temporal order which often bears no relation to the person contemplating this order. Man is equally at home or not at home in all periods of history. We encountered a consequence of this development in the preceding chapter when we described a tendency in modern art to stand above history, to be equally sensitive to suggestions from all quarters. This availability was related to the rootlessness of the modern artist. We can now extend this statement and say that the rise of history as a science corresponds to the rootlessness of modern man. It is an effort by man in his homelessness to feel at home everywhere. This leads to one more thesis: history as a science implies the loss of history. Man assigns himself a place in the temporal order by means of his history. History requires a consciousness of time. But it is just this consciousness from which history as a science abstracts. It leads to an abstraction of the temporal aspect from history and thus to a loss of history.[1]

An analogous argument applies to space. Again we can oppose geography as an experience to geography as a science. The example used above illustrates this difference as well. The order in which the old peasant stands is not only temporal, but also spatial. For him the village is the only place where he could imagine himself living, while we could equally well have been somewhere else. For him it is in a sense the center

[1]For this discussion I am indebted to Alfred Heuss, Verlust der Geschichte.

of the world, for us it is only one of many possible places.

Just as the historian strives to eliminate the white spots on the map of time, so the geographer strives to eliminate the white spots on the map of the world. Again we can say that for the appropriate scholar India is as close or distant as Mexico or New Jersey. Geography as a science eliminates the sense of space just as history as a science eliminates the sense of time.

Yet, it would be false to see in the rise of geography or history as sciences a significant factor in the rise of nihilism. Rather we have to see the rise of these disciplines in the light of the development of science in general, which in turn presupposes the Cartesian cogito and the resultant objectification and mathematization of the world. The development which leads towards nihilism is thus prior to the rise of these disciplines and causally related to them, although they in turn may accelerate this development.

C. The rise of the scientific attitude, however, is only one root of this twofold sense of homelessness. Far more important is the role which history itself has played. The last centuries have generated forces, many of which arose in complete independence of the nihilistic development, which have led man to lose his sense of being at home in the world. History has forced man to confront his forlornness by loosening or breaking the temporal and spatial bonds which tie man to a large order. These forces have appeared only in modern history, and thus explain partially why nihilism should have

arisen just when it did. Modern history acted as the catalyst for this development by forcing man to awaken.

(1) A first such force is the rapid increase in population. A sense of history can only arise when the child grows up in an environment which transmits this sense. This must be true of the human as well as of the inanimate environment. The tales of the elders are as much part of it as the old city walls, the church, or the fields where a certain battle was fought. The enemy of the establishment of such a sense of history is mobility. But a rapid increase in population demands mobility. New land must be settled, new towns must be built, meaningless new suburbs must surround old towns. The environment becomes a collection of mute objects; the inanimate has become silent. The consequence of this is a lack of identification with a landscape; it does not matter where we live. This leads to an even greater mobility and an even greater rootlessness. As there are no forces keeping people at home, the slightest attraction is sufficient to cause them to move. Ubi bene, ibi patria. The symbol of such an existence is the trailer.

Rootlessness becomes particularly apparent when the change involves emigration to a different society. Here the old traditions are no longer reinforced by the environment. We may imagine someone like our old peasant. Some distant relative might have written him how much better things were on the other side of the ocean. And one fall, when things were particularly bad, he might have decided to follow this call.

Now the old church, the river with its poplars, the bridge, the chats on Sunday morning after the service, all have become memories. At first the change may have seemed unbearable; soon, without reinforcement, the images which haunted him receded into the background. And yet, there was really nothing which could take the place of these memories. He had cut himself off from his country, its history, and perhaps its language. He had nothing to transmit to his children except a few tales which to them must have sounded hollow. What they inherited was his rootlessness. They had lost their history. To realize the importance of this, one only has to recall what role emigration has played in modern society.

(2) A second related force is industrialization. The shift from a predominantly agricultural to a predominantly industrial society demands mobility; it demands the shift of population from country to town. This shift implies a sudden change in the physical as well as in the human environment. The living history of an agricultural society cannot be that of an industrial society. And the more sudden this change, the more severe the loss of a sense of history. We should also remember here what was said about the tendency of the machine to reduce man to the status of an object. These two aspects of industrialization reinforce each other and make it perhaps the most powerful force towards nihilism.

(3) A third force may be sought in the forced mobility attending the territorial changes after major wars, particularly the Second World War. We can point to the millions ex-

pelled by or fleeing from Hitler; to those who were later expelled from East Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia; to those Poles who had to leave the part of Poland which was annexed by Russia and who later moved into formerly German territories. But we could also have turned to East Asia or to the Near East.

How desperately some of these migrants are trying to establish a sense of history may be seen in the former German territories which are now Polish. In Danzig or Breslau the destroyed buildings were rebuilt exactly as they were when these towns were still inhabited by Germans. A desperate attempt is made to identify oneself with the history of the land in which one lives, even if this history is a part of German history. But the need for a sense of history is so great that one is willing to forget this. The history is a part of the land, and only when this history possesses them will these settlers really be at home. One hopes that they will be successful in this and that no new injustice will be added to the injustice which was done to those who dwelt in this land before them.

Common to all three is the mobility which is part of the very structure of our society. Modern man cannot help but be influenced by it.

D. Very different is a second way in which man can lose his sense of history. Whereas up to now its loss appeared as a <u>fate</u> from which man cannot protect himself, it may also be due to a <u>decision</u>. Man refuses to possess a history. This decision may be due to a felt need to assert one's freedom;

man asserts his autonomy from his history. In this case the loss of a sense of history is not so much a cause of nihilism as it is itself caused by the nihilistic development. Thus we find people reacting against the traditions of the society to which they belong, not because these traditions have been recognized to be bad, indeed whether they are good or bad makes little difference, but rather for the sake of revolt. The traditions have lost their binding force, they have become a meaningless burden, as soon as man sees himself in his isolation and in his freedom. This decision has to be seen in the light of what was said above about subjectivity and autonomy.

But the decision to refuse to possess and to be possessed by a certain history may stem also from a genuine desire to reject the history as evil. Thus, whenever we have a revolution, which aims to set up a new order, we find the will to escape the preceding history. The French Revolutionists rejected the kingdom of the 18th century, the Communists rejected the old Tsarist order, the revolutions which accompanied the end of World War I in Germany implied a rejection of the Empire. In all these cases the situation which made the revolution possible implied a disparity between the sense of history and the people. Thus, in the case of Germany, we find in the revolution in modern art an index betraying the fact that the old traditions had ceased to be satisfactory even before World War I. At this point a re-orientation towards history might still have been possible, but the breach became too sharp to be healed when the political and military fail-

ures of the German Empire led to a political revolution. The complete collapse of the old order led to a crisis of the sense of history which is intimately related to the consequent political events. Only the political revolution forced nihilism into the open; and it is only on this foundation, on the awareness of the nothingness confronting man, that Hitler could erect his new order. His Third Empire, contrary to public opinion, is not in any way a continuation of German history; rather it is the result of its total collapse.[1] A similar analysis could be given regarding Russia. In a country like England, on the other hand, tradition proved strong enough to prevent nihilism from coming out into the open. America is fortunate in having been spared the critical developments which have been catalysts for nihilism in Germany and Russia.

Today the will to reject her history is again stronger in Germany than in any other country. Since the history which is rejected is particularly odious the rejection is understandable; it is intimately related to the problem of guilt discussed in a preceding chapter. As Kierkegaard points out, only he who chooses to see himself as guilty has memory of his life.[2] The homelessness of many Germans is aggravated by the fact that they are unable to face the future any more than the past. The reunification of Germany, the loss of the Eastern provinces, the Berlin problem, all these are issues which demand a final solution and yet, there is an unwillingness to

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[1]Cmp. Arendt, pp. 273 ff.

[2]Kierkegaard, Either/Or, vol. 2, p. 234.

contemplate or imagine what will happen. This situation is made still worse by the possibility of another war in the future. Again the future wears the mask of nothingness. This inability to identify oneself either with the past or with the future leads to a flight into the present. The moment becomes all important if man is unwilling to look beyond it. This is reflected in Germany in the economic boom and in an unwillingness to bear children.

Not only in Germany is there a lack of a sense of history and an inability to see how things will go on. The possibility of annihilation due to an atomic war is the most frightening aspect of a general inability to face the future, but it is by no means the only one; the tremendous increase in population, the progressive petrification of landscape, the increasing regimentation which we meet everywhere, the political developments in various corners of the world, all make it difficult to feel at home in the future.

E. It is not necessary to turn very far to observe traces of a crisis in man's relationship to time. Everywhere we find signs of an alarming inability to relate oneself to the past. A trivial example of this: frequently one finds students who have taken one course in history and another in the history of music or art; often they are able to tell exactly who succeeded whom if they stay within the scope of either course; but if one asks them to relate Mozart or Rembrandt to the history of their day they are frequently at a loss. An extreme example of this is a New Haven high school

student who asked his English teacher whether Shakespeare had known Caesar. And this loss of the sense of time is not confined to "ancient" history. After reading an essay on Hiroshima one girl told the teacher, "that was an interesting fantasy," and after discussing the murders committed by the Nazis someone asked for the name of that story.

The great popularity of historical novels and movies does nothing to remedy this situation. It makes little difference whether they are set in medieval England, biblical Palestine, or ancient Greece. All are equally close or distant, and equally irrelevant to the modern situation.

To lose the sense of history is to lose the sense of continuity. The present alone counts. And if normally the present is meaningful only in the context of what preceded it and what will succeed it, it now has to compensate for this loss by becoming something which it was not before, a discontinuous moment of ecstasy. Recognizing this crisis in our attitude towards time, Kerouac has given an extreme formulation to a problem which is at the heart of the modern situation. Restlessly moving across the country, his heroes attempt to submerge themselves ecstatically in time by denying all that is fixed. They are excited about what they see, but their excitement does not leave a lasting impression. In the next moment it is forgotten and they move on. They do not have the urge to stay somewhere and to listen to the voice of the country; to them all areas speak with the same voice; or rather, the voice with which the country speaks is an echo of their

own despair and restlessness. They seek immediacy but they cannot seize it, for the spirit, by opposing itself to the flow of time, annuls it. So they must move on, seeking it elsewhere and in vain. They cannot stop with the immediate, "seeing that in fact it is annulled the instant it is mentioned."[1] The ecstatic moment turns out to be a mere nothing when it is divorced from its relationship to past and future. This leads to a fundamental restlessness which we can sense not only in Kerouac, but just as well in the tourists racing through Europe, eager to see as much as possible, or in a general restlessness which makes it impossible to do nothing or anything.

This restlessness has also found expression in the concern with sex, shown for example in Norman Mailer's work. The orgasm becomes all that matters, the moment of ecstasy where immediacy engulfs man at the exclusion of the spirit. As Kierkegaard puts it, "in the culmination of the erotic the spirit cannot take part."[2] But this blissful moment does not enable man to find life more bearable. For as soon as the spirit reasserts itself, what seemed so blissful a short time ago, confronts man as nothingness. Nothing tangible remains. The ecstatic moment can take on a greater significance only when it is seen as a part of a greater whole, only when it is but a symbol for something which transcends it.

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[1] Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 10.

[2] Ibid., p. 64.

F. So far we have spoken almost exclusively of the homelessness in time. Closely related to it is the homelessness in space. Wherever we find a temporal homelessness we find a spatial homelessness. The history of an area is a part of our own history and our history is a part of its. Most of what was said about the loss of history applies therefore to the loss of home. It is, however, possible, to add one important point.

Above we spoke of the tendency of the science of geography to eliminate the awareness of space. This loss, however, is only to a very small degree due to the activity of the geographer. Far more important is the progress in communication and transportation which has decreased the size of the world. Areas which formerly seemed completely inaccessible suddenly have entered the orbit of my daily life. But this apparent reduction in the size of the world, has made my world far more complex. Our old peasant knew exactly where home was, his world had an obvious center. Our world, on the other hand, has become so complex that it would be difficult to say where its center is; there is no point in it which inevitably attracts us.

The universe of the Middle Ages was oriented around the earth. Man knew that he dwelt near the center. This finite universe in which he knew himself to occupy his assigned place must have given man a great sense of security. But the speculation of succeeding centuries changed this. With Cusanus the universe became infinite; with Copernicus the heliocentric sys-

tem replaced the geocentric. This led to the contemplation of man as the accidental inhabitant of an infinitesimally small speck in the universe, which might itself equally well not have been. It is difficult to feel at home in such a universe:

> Under his feet, too, there was something like a motion--not only one, several motions wavering in strange confusion. He froze with terror: could that be the earth? Certainly, this was the earth. After all, it moved. That had been mentioned in school, though it was passed over in a hurry, and later on they had tried to cover it up; it was not considered good taste to speak of it ...Whether other people felt it? Perhaps, but they did not show it. Probably they did not mind it, these sailors.[1]

G. Perhaps these suggestions are sufficient to show that in the sense of homelessness we have a force which has precipitated the rise of nihilism. Since the loss of the sense of history and home is at least partly responsible for the rise of nihilism, we might attempt to counteract it by striving to develop such a sense; by founding historical societies, by publicizing the values of our ancestors, and by promoting hiking as a national past-time. There will be no harm in such endeavors, but they cannot generate a force strong enough to combat nihilism. For this sense of homelessness has only helped to awaken the spectre; once it has risen it can no longer be controlled by simple-minded attempts to re-establish such a sense. Nihilism is like the ghost in the bottle. Once the bottle has been opened and the ghost has escaped, it does little good to close it again--the ghost is outside. We are like the

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[1]Rainer Maria Rilke, The Notes of Malte Laurids Brigge, quoted after Kaufmann, Existentialism, p. 119.

boy in the fairy tale, confronted by a threatening monster which we ourselves have released, trying to think of a way in which to convince it to crawl back into the bottle.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

A. The subject appears in two different modes: as an ego opposing an it, and as an ego opposing a Thou. If man were only soul, that is only a subject confronting a Thou, the value problem could not arise; but as man is also spirit it must arise. The nihilist need not be spirit at the exclusion of being soul. Usually indeed the ability to communicate with any degree of intensity has been lost, but this by no means need be the case. An individual who has lost the ability to communicate altogether will be rare, in all likelihood nonexistent. Did not even men like Hess or Hitler show human sides which seemed inconsistent with their general behavior? Does not the pettiest bourgeois know moments when he sense the meaning of life? The nihilist, too, will fall in love, he will forget his nihilism listening to a string quartet. But although he may know meaning which arises from such experiences, this will not enable him to accept the world in its entirety. As we said in a preceding chapter, it enables him only to posit an incomplete value system. The correlate of the spirit is the world, not a part of the world. It is the world which must be found meaningful if nihilism is to be conquered. The nihilist may indeed attempt to identify the slice of the world which he finds meaningful with the totality. If he succeeds in this he has conquered nihilism, but at the expense of a narrowing of his self and of the world. More likely is that he will recognize that

his value system is not co-extensive with the world. In this case he will fall into a kind of schizophrenia. On one hand a nihilist, he may on the other hand be in love or like baroque music. There is an inconsistency in such lives, but how can we demand consistency if man himself is a duality, a being trembling between soul and spirit? The soul wills one thing and the spirit wills another. Man is double-minded. This is his despair. He cannot will one thing because the nihilistic spirit and the soul do not demand the same thing. The spirit ridicules the soul in its love while the soul pities the spirit in its despair. Thus man pities and ridicules himself. This divergence between the demands of the spirit and those of the soul can be eliminated only if the two can be brought to will one thing. Only then will man be truly himself in his unity. The soul, however, wills communication, while the spirit wills one system. What has to be found therefore is an all-embracing system which is itself communicative. Only in this way could spirit and soul be reconciled. "Purity of heart is to will one thing."

So far we have spoken of value as being the objectification of an encounter with a Thou. Such an encounter has to precede the positing of values, if these values are not to be hollow. Value is the shadow which the Thou casts on the object which it has become. But is the world an object to which a Thou can possibly correspond? Is it not rather essentially the counterpart of the spirit? It is not one object among others, not an it which may be transformed into a Thou. In this way

it is different from a tree, an animal, or a human being. They can all be encountered by the spirit as well as by the soul. Rather it is a mere idea, the idea of the unity of all I experience which is demanded by the unity of the self.[1] It is the idea that the manifold which confronts me forms yet one system. To possess the idea of the world is to possess the idea of system, and to possess the idea of system and to think it in relation to the totality of experience is to have the idea of the world.

The subject which encounters a Thou is soul. The subject in so far it subjects the manifold of experience to a unity is spirit. The Thou pertains essentially to the soul, the idea of system essentially to the spirit. World, we said, is essentially system. To tie the Thou and the world together is to forget that these terms belong to different categories. It follows that the comprehensive open value system cannot be constituted in the same way in which other values are constituted. There cannot be an experience in which the world appears to us as a Thou and which might thus become the basis of constituting the world in its entirety as valuable. And any other experience can only yield a valuable object, not the world. We can posit a valuable world only if it is possible to establish the idea of system as itself a guarantee of value. Value must reveal itself not only in the encounter with a Thou, but in structure. Such a return to Plato is made difficult by

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[1] Cmp. Jaspers, Der philosophische Glaube, p. 18.

the fact that the premises on which Plato could build his theory of values are no longer ours. Simply to advocate a return to Plato is to overlook the development which has occurred in between, especially the turn to the subject which modern philosophy has taken. We cannot simply ask ourselves questions such as: is murder bad? or is stealing to be deplored? Even if it should be possible to give self-evident answers to such questions, which I doubt, what such an approach will give us is not a value system, but a collection of insights into ethical behavior. This would be useful, but it is hardly a tool with which nihilism can be defeated--is it not possible to conceive of someone who thinks that the world does not form one meaningful whole and who would yet agree that one should not murder? Instead we must make the attempt to re-establish the more fundamental insight that value manifests itself in structure.

B. There is music which speaks to man. But what language does music speak? Over the radio I can just hear Anton Bruckner's Romantic Symphony. William Steinberg is conducting the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. They are just beginning the scherzo. Does this music speak to us or is it perhaps silent? Undoubtedly reactions could be varied. A good friend of mine would be delighted. He loves the hunting calls with which the movement begins, and everytime he hears this piece one can see a gleam in his eyes which see another world, full of horsemen and pageantry, somewhat like a Cecil de Mille spectacle. Somebody else might think of St. Florian, of the organ

which Bruckner played there and of the land in which he lived. A third person might think of Ruisdael and of clouds. He would find in the symphony the rhythm of Ruisdael's Wheatfields, overarched by an endless sky across which clouds are sailing.

But in all likelihood responses would not be that enthusiastic. We would not have to wait very long until someone would tell us that what my friend would call a nice hunting call may indeed be a nice hunting call, but as the main theme of a scherzo it is utterly banal; the person to whom the symphony suggested clouds came closer to the truth. Cloudy, that's what it is; a shapeless mass of tones. Now look what Beethoven or Haydn do with a symphony. --And then he would proceed to enumerate the many ways in which Bruckner falls short of Beethoven.

Yet this symphony does speak to us if we are but willing to listen. And this means that we should not think of hunting calls, nor of clouds, nor of St. Florian, but simply of the music. The hunting call may indeed sound banal if we take it out of context or if we think how it would sound in the context of a Beethoven symphony. But listening to a piece of music implies an effort to understand such a theme in the context in which it appears. The theme speaks to us only by playing a certain role in a formal context. And the more we understand this context, the more clearly it will speak. This may seem to contradict something which was said in a previous chapter when, talking about Janáček, I stressed the thematic aspect of his music. Yet Janáček himself insists that music is far more

than waiting for the intuition of a viable theme. Many good themes are buried in inferior music, and a great deal of good music is based on rather uninteresting themes, uninteresting, at least, as long as they are taken by themselves. The Bruckner scherzo is an example, but some movements by Beethoven, Haydn, or Bach also come to mind. On the other hand, sometimes we wish that a composer had been content to leave a theme which speaks to us immediately alone, instead of chasing it through the prescribed rites. In such cases theme and form are not demanded by each other; their meeting seems accidental.

A piece of music also does not speak to us if we take it as a symbol for something else. In all good program music the music does not symbolize the program, but music and program are integral parts of one structure. This follows from what was said above about the exclusiveness of communication. The Thou is not within a context, but self-sufficient. Consequently I cannot have something else in mind in listening to it.

In music then structure does not seem to be antithetical to the revelation of a Thou, but rather the medium in which it reveals itself. Here the double-mindedness of man is conquered. The spirit is at peace with the soul. Here it is possible to tie the ideas of system and value together.

As I look out of the window I see the Alps in the distance, grey against a sky which is only a trace lighter. I recognize some of the peaks; they have become old friends.

There is the Wendelstein, pointing its nose into the sky, and straight ahead the arched back of the Benediktenwand. It looks a little like the back of a cow which is lying down to sleep. And yet, as I continue to look at it I realize how silly this is, how much has been left out. The image fails to do justice to the elegance of the curve, to the infinite indentations. The more I look at this silhouette, the more clearly I feel its almost infinite complexity. Not only is it impossible ever to give an adequate description, but it is even impossible ever to see it adequately. Even this little grey spot on the horizon is full of mystery, and the more I read its lines, the more apparent this mystery becomes.

Again we find that in such a contemplation spirit and soul are not at odds with each other. In tracing the silhouette of the mountain I become aware of the mystery which dwells in it. It is not that, when I first look at the mountain, the inadequacy of this looking becomes apparent, and I then shift into a different mode, the mode of the soul. What really happens is far less dramatic. In tracing the silhouette, that is in positing a structure, I become aware of the inadequacy of my efforts. These are not too different acts, but part of one and the same act. Again we find that spirit and soul are one. It seems therefore as if the account of the Thou given above was incomplete, in that it left out the relation between value and structure. It created an artificial opposition of soul and spirit.

C. Throughout this journey we followed others who had trod these same paths before us, wherever this seemed possible.

Unfortunately it is impossible to find for this last part of our journey a guide who speaks our own language. We have to go back to the late Middle Ages, back to Nicolaus Cusanus. Cusanus, more than Descartes, stood between two ages. He was the first one to see in all clarity that the Thomistic conception of the universe can no longer answer the questions which matter most, because of the modern turn to the subject. But the cardinal does not abandon the old value structure, but attempts to lay new foundations for it.

Whenever an attempt is made to lay new foundations, one should take care not to use too readily what one has inherited, lest the weaknesses of the old structures impart themselves to the new. It is therefore necessary to begin with a critique. Cusanus' critique of traditional, that is Thomistic theology, is rooted in the conviction that the human spirit, the ratio, cannot reach Being. Like Thomas, Cusanus relates mens and mensura.[1] The proper activity of the mens is the mensurare. The intellect applies a measure to things. It is this power which distinguishes man from animal. Thomas and Cusanus further agree in taking counting to be the prototype of this measuring. The primary measure is unity. "One implies the idea of primary measure; and number is multitude measured by one."[2] Thomas refers here to Aristotle who had pointed out that "unity in the strictest sense, if we define it according to the mean-

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[1]Nikolaus von Cues, Der Laie über die Weisheit tr. and int. E. Bohnenstädt, (Hamburg: Meiner, 1954), p. 44 and Der Laie über den Geist tr. and int. M. Honecker and H. Menzel-Rogner (Hamburg: Meiner, 1949), p. 10.

[2]Summa Theologica, I, II, 2 Reply.

ing of the word, is a measure, and most properly of quantity, and secondly of quality."[1] To measure is to constitute unities.

Cusanus follows Aristotle and Thomas in the conception of the mensurare, but he disagrees with them in the sense in which the mens is mensura. To Thomas and Aristotle the mens is not so much measure as measured.

> Knowledge, also, and perception, we call the measure of things for the same reason, because we know something by them--while as a matter of fact they are measured rather than measure other things.[2]

According to this view there is a world of objects by which our view of the world is measured. This world is not constituted, it is what it is regardless of the thinking subject. Cusanus opposes to this view his own conception of the soul as "the living unity" which constitutes the world of objects in its own image, that is, as one world of objects which are themselves unities. Cusanus anticipates here Kant's transcendental unity of the apperception and the Kantian theory of the object. What Thomas would attribute only to God is given here to the mens. The mens is the measure of the world in which it finds itself. The world is consequently not the world, but its world. At the heart of Cusanus' philosophy is the realization that the world in which man finds himself has been constituted by him. With this a main support of the Thomistic theological structure has been taken away. The world is no longer an objective order which will answer the question what man should do. Man is alone. This makes a critical examina-

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[1] Metaphysics X, 1; 1053 b 4.
[2] Metaphysics X, 1; 1053 a 32 ff., 1057 a 8-11.

tion of the traditional conception of God necessary.

That these issues are still alive is shown by Heidegger in his essay Nietzsches Wort: Gott ist tot. Heidegger argues here that the most severe blow against God has been dealt not by the professed atheists who look and find no God, who have shown that his existence cannot be proven, but rather by those who call themselves believers and who, in an attempt to ascribe some meaning to the word "God" speak of him as being the greatest value. In using such language they disguise what the atheists openly proclaim, that there is no God. Not finding God, they raise a bloodless spectre in his stead, and by praising it they blaspheme God.

At a first glance Heidegger's charge may seem bewildering. Surely, if we grant that to say that God is the greatest value is to deliver a fatal blow against him, then we can agree with Heidegger that this blow is not delivered by the atheist, but by those who profess to believe. But why should it be blasphemy to call God the highest value? The answer will be evident when we recall what it means to be a value. As Heidegger points out,

> Only where being has become the object of representation, it loses in a certain way Being. This loss is sensed, without great clarity or certainty, and man compensates for this loss by attributing a value to being interpreted as object.[1]

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[1]Heidegger, Holzwege, p. 93 "Erst wo das Seiende zum Gegenstand des Vorstellens geworden ist, geht das Seiende in gewisser Weise des Seins verlustig. Der Verlust wird unklar und unsicher genug gespürt und entsprechend schnell dadurch ersetzt, dass man dem Gegenstand und dem so ausgelegten Seienden einen Wert zuspricht."

Valuation presupposes the turn to the subject.

> For man has risen into the selfhood of the ego cogito. With this revolt everything becomes object. Being becomes objective and as such is drowned in the immanence of subjectivity. The horizon no longer shines with its own light.[1]

Being, in becoming object, loses its fulness. In Heidegger's terminology, it becomes Seiendes among Seiendem, being among beings, having lost Sein, or Being. To compensate for this loss a value is attributed. God, seen as the highest value, is thus seen as being merely object among objects, as having lost Being. This in turn implies that God has been posited by man, as these objects depend on what man wills himself to be.

> By esteeming being as a value, it is already lowered to a condition posited by the will to power itself.[2]

One has to keep all this in mind to realize how terrible the words mens mensura are. They foreshadow Nietzsche's shout that God is dead. But, as Eckhart said, "all gods must die." To deny this is to cling romantically to something which can no longer fulfill the function we assign to it. If we want to overcome the value crisis which followed the death of God we have to lay new foundations, we have to discover a new God.

D. The mens according to Thomas is not so much mensura

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[1] Ibid., p. 241. "Denn der Mensch ist in die Ichheit des ego cogito aufgestanden. Mit diesem Aufstand wird alles Seiende zum Gegenstand. Das Seiende wird als das Objecktive in die Immanenz der Subjektivitat hineingetrunken. Der Horizont leuchtet nicht mehr von sich aus.

[2] Ibid., p. 238. "Indem das Sein als ein Wert gewurdigt wird, ist es schon zu einer vom Willen zur Macht selbst gesetzten Bedingung herabgestzt.

as mensurata. Cusanus, too, knows that if man is to find himself at home in the world, he must not only be measure, but also measured. Although the subject posits the world, the spirit, in constituting an object, is informed of the percept's inadequacy. Perhaps the examples of the tree and the mountain will help us to understand what Cusanus means when he points out that the inadequacy of perception is as inevitable as that of all attempts to square the circle. No matter what polygons I construct, I can never exhaust the circle. My tools and the goal at which I am aiming are incommensurable. Similarly the percept is essentially incommensurable with its goal.

The reason for this is evident to Cusanus. When the mens in its unity is confronted by an indeterminate matrix, it structures it in its own image. It constitutes objects which are themselves unities. Cusanus follows Aristotle's definition of "to be one" as meaning essentially to be a "this" "capable of being isolated, either in space, or in form, or in thought."[1] This is just a different formulation of a point already made: the object is essentially in logical space and by virtue of this is related to the things which it is not. Here we have the root of the law of contradiction and the idea of nothing. When we think of the idea of being we must place it into logical space, and this relates it necessarily to that which it is not, namely nothing. It follows from this that the polarity of being and nothing is not an ontological structure, but an idea inherent in the nature of thought. The law

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[1] Metaphysics X, 1; 1052 b 15.

of contradiction is descriptive only of constituted being. It has its roots in the mode of operation of the human intellect.

After having shown the inadequacy of all attempts to seize the world, Cusanus proceeds to give a definition of God. Language, perception, and thought, all operate by means of a logical space. This is the root of their inadequacy. But cannot language refer to its own inadequacy? We must find a name which forces us beyond the law of contradiction, beyond logical space. This is what the poet tries to do. Cusanus gives a very different and deceptively simply answer. If man cannot reach God because he operates within logical space, Cusanus would say within the mode of the aliud or the other, could not the non aliud be the name of God.[1] The ideal name we imagined for the tree was the name which fell in no way short of the tree we were actually looking at. It is the object, not as it is in logical space, but as it is in itself. When I see an object in its ineffable particularity, I see it in the mode of the non aliud. The non aliud is what was called above the Thou; it is also God and the beautiful. Rephrasing Kierkegaard's dictum we can say: purity of heart is to see one thing: the beautiful. Whenever I look at something and see it as one object among others, I see it not as it is in itself, not in the mode of the non aliud, and its beauty escapes me. It follows from this definition of beauty, that anything can become beau-

[1]Cmp. Nikolaus von Cues, tr. and int. P. Wilpert, Vom Nichtanderen (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952).

tiful if I look at it in the right way. A tree, a cloud, or an old roof can appear to me as nothing other than what it is. Without the notion of another, I can no longer think of possibility. But "where I touch on reality without its transformation into possibility, I touch on transcendence."[1]

The non aliud is a reality which is the "limit of empirical reality, only to be grasped as such, but itself inscrutable as it reaches beyond it...It meets me as a reality without possibility, as the absolute reality, beyond which there is nothing. I stand before it in becoming silent."[2]

Man reads the chiffre of the world, its secret meaning, in the inadequacy of his perceptions. There is no argument which can prove that there is chiffre. Chiffre must be encountered and man can prevent such an encounter by willing the autonomy of the percept. But whenever the spirit is coupled with a will to lead it to its limit, man in sensing its fundamental inadequacy will encounter transcendence.

In spite of the use of a different vocabulary, we have not gone significantly beyond what was said about the encounter with a Thou in the discussion of value. Then it was argued that nihilism is defeated only for a moment in the encounter with a Thou. Such an encounter does not enable man to constitute one valuable world. It is necessary to go further.

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[1] Jaspers, Philosophie, vol. 3, p. 9.

[2] Ibid., pp. 7, 9.

E. We spoke of an encounter with a Thou or the non aliud. But an encounter is normally thought of to be between two different entities, two persons, two armies, two minds, whatever these entities may be. The number two, like all numbers, presupposes the mode of the aliud. There cannot be an encounter, strictly speaking, in the mode of the non aliud, as there cannot be two distinct entities. The ratio, in informing itself of its inadequacy, also eliminates the object-subject distinction. Instead of a sharp division between the two related entities, there is a dialectic relation which makes it impossible to separate one from the other. In seeing the tree as chiffre, I become chiffre to myself. One is implied by the other; or rather, both are aspects of one and the same experience. In constituting any object as valuable, I constitute myself as valuable. Man is able to attribute a value to himself when in constituting the world, he is informed of the inadequacy of this constitution. Here Cusanus comes back to Thomas' assertion that man is measured, but he does greater justice to the category of subjectivity. Man is measured not by nature, not by God's creation, but by the non aliud, by God. Another way of putting this would be to say that in constituting the world man is not creating, but only re-creating. Man does not create the world ex nihilo, but God creates the world anew in every human being. Whenever an object becomes chiffre man is reminded of this. Cusanus expresses this by calling man imago Dei.[1] One should, however, take care not to

[1]Cmp. Hermann Broch, Essays, vol. 2, p. 208.

interpret this phrase in terms of the conception of God as object which has been rejected. As Eckhart emphasizes, man is a creator, not only of the world, but even of god.

> I was at the same time my own and all the world's cause. And if I willed it, neither I would be, nor all things. But if I were not, god, too, would not be. --It is not necessary to understand this.[1]

Man appears here as causa sui. God depends for his being on mine. Such passages recur throughout Eckhart's work.

> The soul cannot bear anything beyond it, I believe it cannot even bear that God be beyond it.[2]

The soul is taken here to be prior to God; but this is only the constituted God, the God against whom Heidegger's polemics were directed. It is this God who can and will die. This God is contrasted with the Godhead, the ground of the soul's being.

> For before creatures God was not yet God; he was rather what he was. When the creatures became and received their created being, then God was not in himself God, but in the creatures he was God.[3]

Man emerges from the unity of being into the phenomenal world, into the realm of distinctions. To return to God is to go beyond all distinctions. In eternity there is no number.

> Therefore I beg God, to make me rid of God; for my essential being is beyond God, in as much as we take God to be the beginning of creatures. For in that being where God is beyond all distinctions, there I was myself, there I willed myself, and recognized myself to create this human being.[4]

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[1]Quoted by Backofen in Meister Eckehart (Stuttgart; Truckenmüller, 1942), p. 86.

[2]Ibid., p. 91.

[3]Eckehart, Deutsche Predigten und Traktate, ed. and trans. Quint (Munchen: Hanser, 1955), p. 304.

[4]Ibid., p. 308.

In the ground of his being man is God. There cannot be a distinction between them as we have left the realm of distinctions. Man has forsaken this unity by emerging from this ground, by becoming finite, but in the non aliud he remembers his origin. Eckhart turned away from Thomas before Cusanus. The Thomistic scale of being, suspended between God and not-being is no longer central to Eckhart's thought. God is no longer beyond man, but within man.

> All that lives within the soul is nothing other than God...When the soul thus loses itself in the manner which is described here, it finds this: that it is itself, what she sought for so long in vain.[1]

In Novalis' tale of the Goddess of Sais the adept lifts the veil of the goddess and sees once himself, once his beloved. Both are really the same. Only in the beloved do I find myself; only the encounter with a Thou reveals the self in the ground of its being.

F. We now possess the tools to establish the idea of system as being itself communicative of value. We spoke of man discovering himself to be imago Dei, but not in a mystic rapture which lets him lose the world. Rather in exploring the world, in confronting it, he finds communication. Man has to go out into the world. Only in constituting systems can he discover himself to be valuable. The intuition of inadequacy arises only when an attempt is made to understand fully what is in front of us. Thus the more I follow every twist in the silhouette of the mountain, the more I understand the formal

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[1]Backofen, p. 90;

structure of a piece of music, the more clearly they speak to me. Such an experience does not mean a withdrawal from the spirit, but a willingness to use it. Man is the image of God in the exercise of his spirit, in the knowledge that in constituting his world, he is repeating the creation of God. This is what we mean when speak of the teleology of a certain structure, for instance of the silhouette of a mountain or of a piece of music. The conception of teleology in structure and the conception of man as imago Dei are correlates of each other. The structure which informs the constituting act of its inadequacy has a teleology. It points to a reality beyond itself which can no longer be seized.

An example may clarify this. A school boy laboriously constructs a golden section. This structure possesses no teleology for when I ask myself why he has constructed just this figure, I am not driven beyond the world, but think only of the teacher who assigned the problem.

When the golden section appears in a work of art, we again can ask ourselves why the artist has used this proportion. If his teacher has taught him that if he only used the golden section the proportions would come out all right, and we are conscious of this, we would not find the painting beautiful. It might be the case, however, that the artist using it has himself been struck by the teleology of this proportion as he encountered it in the world. His art might be an attempt to communicate this feeling. If we confront such a work of art and ask why he employs just this form, we would not be able to

give an adequate answer. Rather we would hear an echo of the artist's own encounter with the non aliud. The artist uses here form as a means of communication. In this sense form is not only not bad, but the sine qua non of the artistic effort. It is the necessary medium of artistic communication. When we condemned the Constructivist's use of structure, we did not condemn structure as such; but a structure has to be condemned if it seems obviously contrived or obviously arbitrary. The teleological structure, in driving us beyond itself, strikes us in a way which prevents us from asking why the artist did not do it some other way. The structure must confront us as being necessary, but we also may not be able to discover an obvious principle accounting for this necessity. Otherwise we remain within the logical space, instead of being driven beyond it. The necessity which characterizes the teleological structure can only be represented out of a strong sense of teleology on the part of the artist. The artist must be sensitive to the communicative element in structure. There is no nihilistic art which deserves that name, as such an art would be born out of an inability to communicate. The nihilist produces only pseudo-art which may indeed simulate real art, but which cannot communicate; it can be of interest to the spirit only in so far as it is not bent on transcendence.

A third place we might encounter the golden section is in nature. Thus I might discover that it governs the rate of growth of a plant. The proportion will again seem teleological because I cannot find a set of facts accounting for it, and

yet cannot accept it as being completely accidental. Again I am driven beyond the world. It is of course conceivable that a biologist might come along and explain to me why it is necessary that this plant should grow just in this manner. In this case the structure would cease to be teleological. Instead it would become part of a larger scientific structure. I could now confront this structure with the same question: why this structure? Again I might receive an explanation or at least think such an explanation possible; and this could go on until I arrived at the idea of the universe, the most general teleological structure. But do I have to see the universe in its necessity? Could this not rather confront me as the most inexplicable accident of all? Man could think of the universe as of one of many possible worlds. Then the universe would have been placed into logical space. The thought of the universe as a subset of logical space is the thought of a particular universe, one of several possible worlds. The thought of the universe as co-extensive with logical space is the thought that there is a universe at all. Here I have arrived at a thought which cannot possibly be explained by any other set of facts. There are no such facts. It is a thought which drives man beyond logical space. The mystery is not so much that there is just this universe--this thought reveals the world as accidental--it is rather that there is a universe at all. The idea of the universe as co-extensive with logical space is a limiting idea, just as the idea of the tree-in-itself is such an idea. In thinking it we are thinking the limit and

thus what is beyond the limit. It is the one idea which is necessarily teleological and the only one, as all other ideas can be looked at in the mode of the aliud. In thinking the idea of the universe I constitute one all-inclusive value system. This idea, however, implies that man is able to think the idea of an all-embracing system. But man today rarely seems to have the strength and the ability to think this unity. Our logical space has tended to disintegrate into a great number of splinters. This splintering of the realm of knowledge is a cause of the crumbling of the old value system. Before an all-inclusive value system can be constituted, it is necessary to constitute once more one world, We are in need of a Thomas or a Leibniz who can show us the unity of the world. Only in thinking the unity of the universe can man become imago Dei with his entire being. Only then can he constitute one all-inclusive value system.

Perhaps it should be pointed out in this connection that the sense in which the word teleology is used here differs from the sense in which it appears most frequently. We often speak of a teleological argument for the existence of God as one which points out that the universe seems to possess a purpose, and as it is highly improbable that this should be due to chance, it must possess a divine author who had this purpose in mind. Such an argument works with the notion of probability; it compares the world as it is with the infinite other states which might have been, and concludes from this that it is exceedingly unlikely that this should have happened by chance. There must

therefore be some will, responsible for this. This is of course an invalid argument. When I throw a die six times in a row and get a six each time, this is no more and no less likely than any other sequence of numbers. But if I predict that I am going to throw these numbers and proceed to do so, this should invite some thought. But who tells me that this state of the universe was indeed the desired state? Indeed a look at the world might easily suggest a different answer. The crucial difference between this sense of teleology and the sense in which it is used in this paper is that in the former case it applies to an argument which moves within logical space; it never touches its borders. Something is thought of as being possibly other than it is. Here, on the other hand, of logical space, and in reaching the limit suggests what lies "beyond" it. Something is thought to be necessary in the sense that the thought of it being other than it is is impossible.

It follows from what has been said that there is no sharp division between spirit and soul. The Thou reveals itself in structure. Spirit and soul are thus one. The crucial difference appears to be rather the one between the spirit which wills its autonomy and the spirit which wills to go to the limit. It is the latter which has mistakenly been called soul. This name obscures the fact that in every encounter with a Thou the spirit is active. It thus leads to the mistaken notion that communication is possible without the participation of the spirit, indeed, that in all true communication the spirit does not take part. Communication thus becomes confused with

sensual pleasures or with pre-conscious states.

G. Purity of heart, we said, is to see one thing: the beautiful. To turn from aesthetics to ethics we have to turn back to Kierkegaard's formulation. Purity of heart is to will one thing: the good. We define the good and the beautiful analogously. To will the good is to will the non aliud. Again we find that the non aliud needs structure to reveal itself. To will the good is to will the structure which is the medium of communication. We see from this definition that the aesthetic possesses an ethical component. To see the beautiful implies a will to see it; for to see it I have to will to break through the autonomy of the percept which veils it. Evil is then the will which defends the autonomy of the spirit and thus refuses to communicate.

It is now possible to show why it is both necessary and possible to go beyond the analysis of an ethical problem given previously. In discussing marriage we suggested that it might furnish us with a cheap maid, or that it might be advantageous socially, or that it is character building. We are now in a position to see precisely why to marry for such a reason would be unethical. I would be marrying for the sake of something else, and, as Kierkegaard points out, the person who has the reward in mind is double-minded.[1] I have two things in mind. Thus I will in the mode of the aliud; but in this mode communi-

[1]Kierkegaard, Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing, tr. D. V. Steere (New York: Harper Torch Book, 1956), p. 69.

cation is impossible. Marriage, as was said before, must be chosen for its own sake. It possesses its own teleology.

We said that we can attach a meaning to marriage because it is the objectification of the ability to communicate. Similarly Jaspers speaks of forms which are necessary to tide man through times of weakening communication.[1] If the Thou is the defeat of the accidental, then an institution such as marriage carries the victory into the objective sphere. This discussion presupposed the division between soul and spirit. The institution of marriage, seen in this way, would seem to be only a second best alternative to genuine communication. We are now forced to modify this position, First, the encounter which must precede marriage, that is the meeting and mutual recognition of two human beings, is not itself without structure. Jaspers himself suggests this when he writes, "without the contents of the world existential communication has no medium in which it can manifest itself; without communication the contents of the world become meaningless and empty."[2] Love not only must take place within the world, it also implies the recognition of a structure by the spirit. A first such structure might be the face of the beloved. The human face, as perhaps no other object in the world, forces me to recognize the limits of my autonomy. In the language of Leibniz we might say that man is the brightest monad man encounters. Here it is most difficult to overlook the Thou.

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[1]Jaspers, Philosophie, vol. 2, p. 96.

[2]Ibid., p. 69.

As long as I confine myself to looking at another person my communication is largely aesthetic. It becomes ethical in my actions towards the other human being. I communicate in acting. As in all communication a structure is needed as a medium. I might communicate by talking or buying a present. One should not think in the latter case that I buy the present because I love someone. If I really love someone the buying of the present is not separate from my love. This action is part of the structure which is my love. I do not buy it for the sake of anything, just as in music the structure should not be for the sake of the theme. This would already imply being double-minded.

If we apply this discussion to the institution of marriage we can see now that it is not something separate from my love. It is not as if I married because I loved. I can love very well without marrying. But in willing to marry I will a structure which becomes one with my love, thus making it richer. It is not something to tide me over times of weakening communication; rather it is itself the medium of communication. In marriage communication becomes more intense as I will more continuity and structure, as the medium becomes more adequate.

More generally we can say that the will to incur ties, to subordinate oneself to social institutions can be a means of genuine communication. To choose to see oneself as responsible in respect to one's history is to choose to see oneself in a structure which binds one to that history. It is fundamental-

ly communication with one's history. And I may not say I want to be bound to my history only in so far as it is good, while I repudiate such bonds where I find it odious, as little as I can say: I will stay married as long as my wife pleases me, but I shall get divorced as soon as she is nasty. In both cases I attach a condition to my willingness to communicate. Again I would be double-minded. In willing communication I must will it absolutely.

Our ethical discussion has been confined to structures which are not co-extensive with the universe. Such structures represent only partial value systems. Again it is possible for any individual to look at such a structure and to deny its teleology. Marriage, he could say, is just a social convention; if I had lived in a different society I would have very different ideas. Again we find that it is possible to interpret the structure in the mode of the aliud. Again it is only when we come to the idea of the universe that we confront a structure which forces man to recognize its teleology. In recognizing that this universe, seething and trembling between infinite polarities, between birth and death, spirit and earth, light and darkness, is yet a unity, an order in which man stands, man cannot escape a sense of teleology. The most general ethical demand is to affirm oneself as standing in this order and to affirm the infinite ties binding us to it; to affirm birth and to affirm death; to affirm the past and to affirm the future; to affirm the earth and to affirm man, especially those to whom we are bound, either because we were born with these

bonds, or because we willed them.

The crucial point in this last part is the relation of the concept of structure to the non aliud. It is this relation which makes it possible to avoid nihilism and at the same time to affirm the development of the spirit which has led man into the nihilistic predicament. The great danger in open nihilism is not that man will remain in it, but that in his despair he will deny the spirit which led him into it. Many solutions to the problem seem to be moving in this direction, be it pseudo-religious totalitarianism, a cult of life or of the moment, a hypertrophied interest in sex or in the unconscious, or the so-called religious awakening. But, as Thomas said, reason cannot be at odds with religion. A belief may go beyond reason, but it may not go against it or away from it. Such a belief, in whatever guise it may appear, drives man towards inhumanity. What has happened in the last decades should be a warning not to seek an answer in intoxication. The road past nihilism does not lead away from reason, but through and beyond it.

Mahnung (1946)

Lass Dich das Klare und Reine
Wieder erfreun,
Lerne das Dunkle, Gemeine
Hier unten scheun.

Sei nicht dem Irrationalen
Jetzt untertan,
Engel und Teufel malen
Es ähnlich an.

Wer in dem Pfuhl der Geister
So lang verkehrt,

Findet nicht gleich den Meister
Der ihn belehrt.

Willst du in Treuen dienen
Dem Sinn der Welt:
Sichtbar sind Dir erschienen
Mensch, Tier, und Feld.

Dir ward Vernunft gegeben.
Hüte das Licht!
Die in der Klarheit leben,
Missbraucht man nicht.

I. Grossmann

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