

All the men we have considered have had, strangely enough, to do with relations. They are all people who established a new possibility of human relations, of the power of human beings to relate. We are especially handicapped in this point in our situation. We found that the well related world picture of man, as we have it in the middle ages and still up to Baroque time, until the 19th Century has almost broken down. We find it in minor things – for instance we are not able to become universal beings and we cannot have universal knowledge, as [Hegel](#) still could. Everything seems to have broken up and affected, (influenced?) very much the view we have of our cosmos. [Nietzsche](#) once said, ›From the moment we became dimly aware that the earth is not the center of the cosmos but placed somewhere else, from this moment on we all go with a terrific speed into nothingness.‹¹

The physical picture today is that the universe, or what we call so, is in a state of explosion, of permanent terrific expansion, so to speak, flying apart, like what we tried to imitate with the atom bomb. This is a very uneasy picture to conceive of but our mental universe, namely, this unity of all our performances, all knowledge, is flying apart with the same speed and to establish here new relations – that seems almost to be a task as [Schiller](#) described after the French Revolution. He had been very enthusiastic, but, after the failure of the French Revolution, wrote in his

¹ Most likely referring to [The Genealogy of Morals](#) (3. 25), 1887: ›Since Copernicus man seems to have fallen on to a steep plane—he rolls faster and faster away from the centre—whither? into nothingness? into the ›thrilling sensation of his own nothingness‹.«

letters on aesthetical education, »We must consider that to try a real political transformation is similar to repairing a machine by replacing one wheel with the machine constantly having to be in full action and never stopping for a second lest it break down.«²

This political analysis of the revolutionary aspect has much to do with the task before us. We do not have the possibility of relation any more if we do not go back to an absolute that is beyond us – namely, God or something – except that we have to relate everything to each other by our own strength. Where should that strength come from and do we really have such a strength of being so powerful in making relations that would be the Absolute to relate to? – because there is no relation without an Absolute. Absolute and relative belong together. I can relate one thing to another in a relative way, that is true, but then I do not really relate; I relate them only between the two, I do not relate as to one central point that might hold them both up. That is what we are doing. We are in an age of relativism. We relate one thing to another, but that makes everything piecework and always changing piecework. We do it in our own mental situation, too. We evaluate one thing by another experience and this experience again by another experience and again we are now in an infinite space, not infinite time, in an infinite space of relations where nothing makes sense anymore and the relations permanently change and have to change.

² »[...] the living watchworks of the state have to be repaired while they act, and a wheel has to be exchanged for another during its revolutions.« Schiller: [On the Aesthetic Education of Man](#), 3, 1794.

They are there every day, almost every minute, in a new light.

That again makes for one disease; as the other one made for losing memory, this makes for losing orientation. By this process of always relating things to each other and having nothing really to relate them all to, we lose orientation. We are fumbling around in an infinite space of experiences and we are torn apart. Again, our personality is torn apart, as it was torn apart by being merely in time and being driven on into the future. Both processes change the consistency of our inner world, and finally it explodes. We lose ourselves; we lose the one center that we had not lost yet — namely, our own being. Our own personal being is destroyed and with that the last center would have gone and we would be merely functions in space and in time. So we have the question of what relations are, how man makes relations to things and to the world, how he creates a world of his own in which he can live for a certain time — and this time would be his present; a real present that is not a moment but a present that is really there and can be lived — which we, in a way, do not have. There is the question of how to establish this present, and this present might have something to do with eternity — just this present. Is man able at all to establish his present in time and to establish in the space of the world a center around which all the events in space and his time can be grouped in order to give him the possibility to make his own life a continuity and consistent — because

if he cannot he loses himself, he loses personality. Jesus would have said in this connection, ›What good is it for man to win the whole world if he loses his soul?‹ Socrates would have said much more philosophically, ›If you do not care for your soul first, then you will finally lose not only yourself but everything else, too, because you have lost the center.‹

Now, there have been experiences of lost center where a man could re-establish center and those are just the people we are considering. They were thrown out of an established center which had ruled humanity, mankind and the human mind for thousands of years. In this period of 1000 B.C. to the year 1 it happened that this first world of man that he had established, without knowing that he had established a world – had established dreaming, so to speak, absolutely instinctively – that this world broke down and broke down so completely that an age of destruction set in during which those philosophers arose. They were in a way the first free human beings, free in the terrible sense, in the terrible negative sense of freedom that has been rediscovered by [Søren Kierkegaard](#), that could only have been rediscovered in our time by an absolutely lonely individual, by a lost individual, by somebody who could not even ask anyone else except himself because he was imprisoned in his own individual self and he knew that if one is in such a situation one faces nothingness and that this facing nothingness, facing absolute meaningless-

ness of life, is the terrible indication of the human being being lost, being free – being free in this ironical and deathly sense that nobody and nothing can help him if he cannot help himself.

Søren Kierkegaard was a mental borderline case; he was not insane, he was a heavy neurotic and he was an exception, so we would also have to consider this case also psychologically if we wanted to but that would lead us too far. The philosophical experience is genuine and could not have been better described. There is no better formula for the possible negative side of freedom – which is to be thrown into perfect arbitrariness, to face the possibility that everything is up to you arbitrarily, nothing can hold you, nothing can help you, nothing can sustain you if you cannot do it yourself. Then this fear that Kierkegaard describes sets in, this fear of being lost. All the philosophers we are going to consider in this age must have had the same experience first – otherwise they could not have made their steps to discover, every one of them, a very definite point of positive freedom of man – namely, the discovery of a positive creative capability in man. And every one of those nine discovered one creative capability of man which we still, and we mostly, will have to rediscover and to use if we want to gain back the possibility of orientation in infinite space – not being torn apart – and the possibility of using time for the sake of creative work.

What broke up in their time was this first wonderful and still, mentally speaking, richest world that man ever created – the world of myth. The world that men had created involuntarily without consciousness, instinctively dreaming things, one of the richest mental worlds ever created, this world broke down the moment it could not give any political guarantee for the life of society of that time any more. It broke down by nomadic tribes that came into those great empires. And speaking of mythical empires we had some still in America until the time of [Cortés]. They were mythical empires. They had been left alone and developed. The Indian society, the Chinese, the Babylonian, the Egyptian – all great cultures, cultures ruled entirely by myth and by mythical thinking.

So we have to see that mythical thinking became impossible in that time we talk about when those philosophers had to come, and it did not serve mankind any more. We will first have to know what mythical thinking is. We know since Kant – we should have known since Socrates, only we had forgotten – that the basic human activity is reason, the ability to reason – or rather, reasoning; let's talk rather about verbs than nouns. Nouns are always misleading in philosophy. Verbs are the beginning of concepts. Since Socrates we should have known that this capability of reasoning depends on one, so to speak, ontological predicament of man, on one very significant predicament – and that is that he is a questioning being, he is a being that can and does

question constantly, questioning and answering means that man is a being questioning beings and questioning being itself. The ability to question being itself, not only all beings including himself, but being itself, the all of beings which being is. That makes a strange indication: being able to do that could only be a being that is somehow apart from all other being, that is somehow not absolutely involved in all other being, that can find a point of observation which seems to be outside – it could also be inside, namely, in the center, of all being – something that sets him apart, something that distinguishes him absolutely. He is able to question, to answer and to question again, and by this engage in a process of reasoning, which means a process of judgment of things, and making decisions according to judgment. If he is able to do that then he cannot be absolutely of this world – because if he were absolutely and only of this world he would be thoroughly determined – but he himself seems to be the only being about which he cannot find out that it is thoroughly determined – he seems to be indeterminate. The very fear of nothingness of which he is capable in a situation of absolute isolation indicates already that he is not contained, that he can be absolutely lost, that he is not thoroughly determined.

The question of determination and indetermination has here to be handled first on one typical example. Since [Spinoza](#) and the development of modern naturalistic philosophy

– what I called naturalism and starts about with Spinoza and develops through all our scientific thinking – the question of man, of man's being has been handled in a negative Christian way. The definition of man that he is spirit and body both, but the spirit is the main, was put negatively. Man is entirely contained in the cosmos again, in nature; he is not beyond nature as the Christians think with their hereafter, but the distinction between spirit and matter, spirit and body is maintained in this naturalistic thinking. They try to find out what this distinction might be, and there is the famous formula of Spinoza against freedom. He said, ›Man is not free. If man were free then he would have to be apart from the cosmos (which is impossible to think for him); If he is part of the cosmos only, then he cannot be a whole, he cannot be an entity and only an entity can be free.‹³ So only the All, which is an entity in his opinion, could be free – not a part of the whole. Every part of the whole including us would be thoroughly determined in all his actions, and his thinking of freedom must then be an illusion.

That is the argumentation. He illustrates it and says, ›My dear friends. You speak of the free will. If a stone that falls through free space would have consciousness, this stone would think exactly as you. It would think that it acts out of free will.‹ With this formula up to now, everybody, except a few philosophers like Kant and Nietzsche, [Heidegger](#) perhaps, and to a certain degree at least, [Bergson](#), has been fooled by this straight line of argumentation. So

³ Blücher is most likely referring to Spinoza's [Ethics](#), 1677.

we have to find out what is wrong with it. There is something very funny wrong with it and I will show it by the counter thesis. A stone that falls through free space and has consciousness would think that it falls according to the laws of gravitation, not out of free will. Why? Because if it would not think so it would not have consciousness. It's the very definition of consciousness that it must be right. There is no such thing as wrong consciousness. If consciousness is wrong, it is not consciousness, it is free guessing, it is reasoning, it is a process of thinking. But consciousness is by definition the ability to be aware of something absolutely clearly – that is consciousness. If nature could be conscious of itself, it would not need us because then we would be the ones who would not be able to be conscious of nature because we will always have wrong consciousness because we do not have full knowledge. Consciousness means full knowledge. The whole line of argumentation is fundamentally wrong. The stone could not commit an error. The fact that there are beings that can commit errors means that those beings are never fully conscious, but just by not being fully conscious, not knowing clearly, they are able to think, to decide and to act freely. Nobody who was not free, but was conscious, could act erroneously – nobody. He would always act according to facts. That is what consciousness means.

All that happened once before when myth broke down. Myth is a very strange phenomenon. We could possibly have a

hard time to discover how thinking, taking position, will, decision, even questioning, could develop out of myth because in the mythical world, as long as it stood, there never was any questioning. The fact that the people living in this world were not free, not only politically not free but mentally not free, in a way, is shown by the very fact that they did not question things. So, for heaven's sake, those philosophers who turned up after myth broke down and all people including us who are questioning beings, we are the offspring of those people. Have they been apes? Have they been some inferior race? Have they been non-human? And how did we suddenly then after myth broke down become human and become able to question if those people had not been able also to question? The question is, 'Were they able or did they just not question?' Then why?

If we observe children, we see that all children in their early age live in the world of myth. We repeat evolution apparently not only in the womb of the mother – as modern scientists tell us, in a certain abbreviated way the embryo repeats certain states of biological evolution – not only that, but we apparently repeat also, as far as the history of the human mind goes and the development of the human mind in every single human individual, an abbreviated history of the development of the human mind. The state of early childhood is a state where the thinking is very much related to mythical thinking. We call that being mentally

still in the womb. We do not mean the mother's womb now; we mean now the womb of a mental status that is the original one of human beings, the mere passive observation and passive use of impressions comes in. A little later children suddenly start questioning. There is always the period where every child starts questioning like mad. The parents are absolutely out of all their patience because the questions that a child can invent are apparently infinite. It just seems they want to know everything. What is this? How is this? Why is this? What is that? and so on. We observe those children and we find the questions can be grouped. It starts mostly with, why is this? Why do people die? Why? Why? Why? And then most of them get distracted because that is the original question, the question itself, the question that makes human beings questioning beings. From that derive other questions – How is that? What is that? and so on. And most of us get easily distracted as children from the first line of questioning – why – not getting answers. When Dad explains what it is, how it comes about, then most are satisfied. There are some fools, incurable fools, who are not satisfied and keep on their whole life asking the question why. Those fools may become philosophers.

Then there is another type of child whom we first regard to be the retarded child – the child who is absolutely a-social, who lives alone, never asks questions. And later it turns out that this is the one who knows all the answers

beforehand. They either become insane or a-social, a human being who breaks all the rules and a criminal and a very dangerous one, or something else. [Gottfried Keller] a great German poet of the 19th Century wrote in old age a poem in which he meets a man in the night on the street and recognizes him, a very suspicious man, a criminal of the dirty sort, and he describes in this poem, ›and then I recognized him – it could have been me, haven't we both been the genius-
es of our class, who knew all the answers?‹⁴ The artist is the one who knows all the answers beforehand because to him all things seem to speak immediately and he believes them. He is foolish enough to believe them. That makes his greatness. He does not distinguish between question and answer because the answer seems always to come before the question. The question has been there but it was never formulated because the answer was already there – and what an exciting answer! An answer so exciting that it overrules every possibility of reasonable thinking. It has so much meaning, it is so much nicer, more beautiful and, in a way, more significant than reality really is, transcending given reality into artistic reality at once, having the answer, so to speak, before. But the question has been there, it just has not been formulated.

The inner process of artistic creation is the only one that can give us a key to the understanding of mythical thinking because they both are related. We will later see

⁴ Reference unclear.

and describe and analyze how Homer developed art out of the very myth. Suddenly, just as myth up to then had used art, art started to use myth and with that the free artist was born. But they are so related in their thinking performances and perceiving performances that an insight into the artistic creative process can give more insight into the mythical process. In myth human beings take everything for granted, but they take it really for granted. I would say that the performance of myth is namely the building up of an entirely fictional world or a world entirely of fancy, of imagination. Fancy I call it because it is taken to be reality; art is not to be taken for reality. No artist would claim today that a picture of [Cézanne](#) is reality. This isn't the countryside of Provence, but the mythical mind would believe it is. It would take it for reality itself. That is the so-called dream world of the mythical mind. It works out of the same thing as the artists, the genuine in-born artistic thinking – namely, out of a tremendous capability to fear. The artists gift is his blessing and his curse – namely, already as a child to be more fearful, to be more afraid of things themselves, having to transform them immediately into another thing.

This magical performance that still sticks to art – but only personally; not to the work of art but to the psychology of the artist who is driven by this fear, by this original fear of things, to transform them, to give them

faces or an appearance that is not so frightening, that is more near to human experience, that can be taken for granted – this psychological indication of the artistic process in the artist himself is still another clue to the working of the mythical mind. There is only one world in which being and meaning are identical and that is the world of art. In a work of art being and meaning – we have those endless discussions about form and content in a work of art and that has gone on in aesthetical science for centuries already. They never come to any results – they can't because they try to split something up that cannot be split. The terms are not good – content and form. The real terms are meaning and being. What this thing is, this work of art, cannot be distinguished from its meaning because it is nothing else but its meaning. This has been brought into being by the human capability of artistic creation, this thing, the work of art exists only for the sake of meaning, for nothing else. It owes its being, its very being to meaning itself and to nothing else. That makes it an unbreakable unity of being and meaning. This reality, artistic reality – which is an imaginary reality, of course, – this is the only real in another kind of reality, namely, artistic reality; it is the only existing unity of being and meaning.

Before all that happened, we tried in the beginning to identify being and meaning in the mythical way, namely, as a reality of life. Being was supposed to be identical with

meaning; being itself as meaning. Everything as it was had its meaning. This meaning was superimposed also as a work of art, so to speak. If we look at the experience, for example, in the richest development of myth we know, namely, the development of Indian myth, we see an almost unbroken development for six thousand years now. There was once a break – we will consider this break. It was Buddha, but he himself, after he was dead, was already retransformed into this world of myth with a new kind of mythical religion and finally when he really could not be fitted in was thrown out of India altogether, so that there is no real Buddhism in India today. Buddhism has been victorious all over Asia except in India and again the development of mythical thinking, dreaming, mythical philosophizing, mythical building of art went on and on in India. If we have any knowledge of this tremendous welter of myth and mythical imagination that this development produced, then we have before us one of the greatest miracles of human creativeness, and we find that it contains almost everything. In [Vedanta](#) philosophy, which is absolutely abstract, or in the [Upanishads](#), we find those abstract formulations. My God! We Europeans are so proud that we have developed those things. Those people can really think abstractly; and then we see finally that it is not true – even the capability of so-called abstract thinking here is sheer imagination, is still mythical thinking. That is the most developed myth we have.

This we have to take into consideration because here we can learn what we are after. How the mythical mind works. This whole welter has a tremendous artistic quality because it is imagination. It is absolutely unbelievable how deep certain artistic – let's call them artistic now, really they are mythical – symbols in religion, art and philosophy are. We can reinterpret them again and again and again and they always seem to reveal a new meaning. But we can do the same thing with great works of art. If we read [Shakespeare's](#) works when we are fourteen we interpret them one way; and when we are thirty we interpret them again and we see much more in it; and when we are ninety and about to die, and we make our last interpretation, we will have discovered it goes still deeper because they are full of significance. So is myth – it is full of significance; but art is not magic – it is, so to speak, white magic. It is a magic that only applies to the human mind and helps the human mind to assemble and develop its own Imagination and to live richer, to have more experience. But the myth does the opposite. It prevents human beings from having experience; it replaces every experience that the human being as an individual person might have by so many artificial wonderful artistically expressed experiences of the world that you never have time even to develop an experience of your own, and by this means the experiences of whole societies have been absolutely equal; they have been equalized in an artificial manner.

That made the myth rule the mind, rule the mind absolutely, bring the mind into certain patterns which could never change. When you talk with an Indian today who is still in the myth and has not had any Western break-up of those things you will argue with him for hours about what truth is until you find out he means something absolutely different from what we mean because he has an established pattern for truth that runs through thousands of years and there is no experience for him possible that would contradict this concept of truth. He cannot make this experience, or this concept has first to be broken and his mind has to be freed.

Myth is the greatest power the human mind ever invented in order to rule the human mind, a power that was in force for thousands of years and created great closed empires – an absolutely closed system of thought, but infinite – namely, it can develop that way but it still remains closed. It is always closed; it is never a personal experience. How hard it must have been, being still in the tradition of the myth, for a man like Buddha to do more than to come out of his castle and to see for the first time people dying as the legend tells us. It must have been much harder for him to come out of his inner castle of mythical thinking which would not have allowed him to have one single original thought, a thought of his, but only to develop thoughts that have been given, remaining in the same framework of ideas, in that way the mythical mind works as an over-all picture.

We have to find out how it comes about, how the mythical world is nevertheless a world which prepares the jump into freedom, because if it had not, the jump would have been impossible. There is a new system invented which I am always tempted to call pseudo-mythical and those are the modern totalitarian ideologies – a system that tries to rule the human mind absolutely again, and many people today think, whatever they might do, there will still be the possibility later of the development of the human mind back into freedom. I doubt it because this seems to be a system in which certain features that the myth had which prepared for the possibility of freedom are not visible. We have to look into the question, ›What are those features?‹ So let's say the human mind, to give a figure, is, so to speak, in the womb in the mythical world, in the womb of the All of being. It is unable to take real conscious position towards being; it is entirely contained in being; it merely reflects being; its first taking position is merely reflective and creative only so far as imagination (?) is creative which would be and is supposed to be the real world as the world really is. We can just make that clear to ourselves, but it's a paradox. It is as if somebody, like an insane person, would go around and say that the world of art is the real world, and all that he sees around him and what we are doing and thinking in our daily life just does not count because the real world is the world of art. Everything else is illusion. So everything real in

the mythical world – what we would call real – is illusion and everything fictional is real. And this is the secret of the practice of magic that is the practice of myth in the mythical world. We will have to look into that, too, in order to understand how the break could be made and how the human mind could come out of this first womb which is, so to speak, the womb of the all-mother, all-being.