

Now we have found that there seems to be a change in the concept of time and the concept of relations. As to time, for example, we see how time has been used by totalitarianism. They invented devices in order to rule the mind of the masses, fantastic schemes of time – for instance, the magical use of promises of five-year-plans, ten-year-plans, certain time periods envisaged. This is just the time of Socialism, then will come the time of Communism where everybody is completely free. For the next two hundred years the state might grow stronger and stronger, then suddenly it will die. Then comes another time, another period – all magical performances, suggestive performances to catch the imagination of the masses with this strange concept of time that somehow has become for all of us – and we have seen certain reasons for it – a kind of a superstition.

We had the same phenomenon in Germany. One of the most fascinating slogans for the masses in Germany was this, ›The Thousand-Year Reich‹. We will take the power over and then we will establish an empire of a thousand years. In the confusion of the masses in the breakdown of all certified values that we had before, the uncertainties like unemployment, by certain catastrophes like revolutions, world wars and so on, the inability of everybody to design anything even for his own next day, such an uncertainty that he would not know if in the next week he would still have his job, or

if he still would be able to feed his children, makes him long for assurances of long certain definite time periods where everything is certain and will be guaranteed, so to speak. So there are deep reasons why slogans like this appeal to the masses. It is a great fault, and has been the fault of all liberals who have themselves become superstitious in our time, to underrate the masses. To think, 'Oh, those are just the dumb masses; they go for everything', This is not true. A big lie, as Hitler said, must be as big as possible – but it must be a lie that meets a certain common demand. It is not so easy to invent a slogan that catches the imagination of the masses if one does not have the feeling for the turmoil and pain the masses are really experiencing psychologically or sociologically. So as to time we see that in those mass phenomenon of our time, the time concept and its change, its specific change has played a tremendous role.

We find the relation concept playing as much of a role. We see that in a non-totalitarian society, in the still so-called free societies, an automatic process is at work brought about by circumstances first by industrialization, building of masses, necessary mass relations. We get a kind of whole science of artificial relations which have nothing whatsoever to do with personal relations. One could really say they are all intentionally impersonal relations – even anti-personal relations. This field is called public relations.

To reach the masses for certain purposes has become a very tricky business. Specialists have to be educated in order to reach the masses for certain definite impersonal and even anti-personal purposes – namely, to swindle them into buying certain things they don't want to buy in the first place. Raising a demand where there is none, creating a demand has become a science with all the means of propaganda, suggestion and psychological tricks influencing the masses. We have developed this whole field and it is called relations – and we see that it has nothing whatsoever to do with relations in the human sense. It works entirely against it.

Modern conditions bring it about that hellish circumstances prevail in certain circles of society. There are society circles in Hollywood where if you earn \$300 a week and then you go on and earn \$1000 a week, it means socially that you have to change your whole social surroundings. You don't meet your old friends who still earn \$300 any more; you are not supposed to do that because now you belong to the circle of the \$1000 wage earners and woe to you if you break that law, because then you will forfeit the chance to belong next year to the circle of the \$2000 wage earners and you will be done for because you will be forgotten in such a kind of society. There is no stability; there is only dynamics and if you do not go in for this dynamics – that means if you do not wait constantly for the future – and here the time concept relates to the concept of relations and they become

the same. They melt, they mix, intermingle and assist each other. All those are very, very current and burning phenomena of our time and we can again – I give only a lead – relate them to the change in the concept of time and to the change in our concept of relations.

We have become unable to establish relations – establishment of relations means a personal effort – a personal effort that, for instance, in friendship goes so far that I am such a mighty and powerful person, as a person (which means real might and not power), that I can guarantee to a man, who will perhaps his whole life be a \$100 wage earner, that I, when I have become a million dollar wage earner, will still prefer this man who is a \$100 wage earner to any other man I might know who has become, like me, a million dollar wage earner. That is a clear definition of a personal relation and what it amounts to, but we have been driven into relations which we do not establish, which are established on us, on our backs. We are driven into more and more involvements by mere social relations for which we do not really care but have to care – have to care because otherwise we cannot hold our ground in the material circumstances of our time. Many people feel the weight of those conditions, and very tragic situations arise out of those conditions any time in our world where everything seems to be topsy-turvy. I am not any more the master of my own relations; I cannot say good for myself. I am involved in and driven to establish

relations which I didn't want to be involved in, but I have to go on and again we are in this apparent automatism.

Now when this public-relations business, so to speak, which is the automatic process of involving people in non-wished-for relations, when that is taken over by a definite state power like a totalitarian power, then this power can do everything with it. Public relations, so to speak, in another sense becomes the main ruling factor. Relations are established by the state and cut off by the state, re-established, changed. A process of constant changing relationships is established which nobody wants, which is dictated from above. You are today not a \$100 wage earner, but you are today a man who belongs to this factory. Woe to you when you are interested or you try to establish relations with people of another factory. You are already lost because the state decrees you belong to this set of society. You [are not allowed] to cross borders – and this is what the iron curtain really means. The iron curtain is indefinite; it is going down between every person and every other person, between groups and other groups and so the art of establishing relations by the power to be has become the main ruling method of modern tyranny. It is all prepared by those automatic processes in which we are involved and which we try to analyse. We try to find a lead to understand how can human beings not wanting to be entirely de-personalized, how can they make a stand? Where can they make a stand? How can

they develop resistance? How can they even perhaps look for positions from which those situations slightly, slowly can be changed?

Those are the immediate issues of our course and I think we see that now both pursuits come together - the old philosophical pursuit of great philosophers to find what could men do in a situation where suddenly all involvement in relations that was taken for granted in the mythical world had entirely broken down and a permanent chaos created itself infinitely. They tried to free themselves from the fetters of imposed relations in order to find this original capability of man to establish relations, how he does it, how he can do it, how he should proceed in doing it, what it takes to do so, what he has to give, what he can take, what he must invest. All those questions have arisen already with those old philosophers, so that is why we take them also as witnesses in our procedure. And that is exactly what one has to do in philosophy. As Socrates has told us, ›Stop working as soon as you see the other really starts to think.‹¹ Making thinking is more important than teaching knowledge. Knowledge can be taught everywhere - it can be had for a dollar.

We speak of the mythical world and try to show that the totalitarian world has a strange resemblance to the mythical world and is still something totally different. So trying to say that there was a mythical world if we consider the structure of it and of the other worlds we are talking

¹ Reference unclear.

about, we could, say that the structural principle of the mythical world is a monolithic one, that the structural principle of the metaphysical world, the authoritarian world, is a hierarchical one, and that the structural principle of the libertarian world (which we tried to establish in the French and American revolutions in the West) is a community principle – the principle which rejects the monolithic and the hierarchical principles. It is the hardest one to achieve because here (community?) is only accepted if it is unity in diversity, if it is a unity that assures a freedom of development for everybody.

The totalitarian principle looks monolithic, too, and is almost always mistaken for being monolithic, but it is not; it is much too dynamic to be monolithic. It is not like an Egyptian pyramid which is almost the artistical symbol of the mythical world and its monolithic organization of principles. It is a dynamic, energetic principle; it is the principle of the movement of automatism, the mechanical principle of movement. That accounts for the permanent changes in it. Those changes never change the conditions of man for the better, but they always change the conditions into performing better, speeding up, making more movement. The psychological and social consequences for the people under the totalitarian regime also seem to be very similar to the psychological and sociological consequences for people under a mythical regime – and again they are totally different because in the

mythical regime of the monolithic principle, there is still room for the development of at least a foundation for human freedom and even for personal freedom because this mythical principle, monolithic as it is, is a principle based on imagination. Imagination is something that is absolutely forbidden under a totalitarian regime because imagination involves spontaneity – every artist is spontaneous, no work of art can come about without spontaneity, every act of free (free only in the negative sense of unbound) imagination is bound to a principle of spontaneity. If that would have been erased the mythical world would have fallen down. The mythical world was based on it.

There is another thing we have to consider in the mythical world and that is, ›What is mythical thinking itself?‹ It is, so to speak, the birthplace of all human thinking. We do not have philosophical thinking in the sense of reasoning; we do not have scientific thinking in the sense of observation, adequateness, mathematical calculation, objectivity; we do not have artistic thinking in the sense, in the pure sense, of a controlled imagination in order to create an imaginary world in a piece of art which means nothing but the meaning of this work itself. We do not have that in myth either because every mythical work of art is in the service of myth and means something else in addition to the work of art. We do not have personal thinking or erotic thinking in the mythical world as a pure phenomenon of

thinking. We cannot find traces of development of personal relations on such a basis in the mythical world and yet we have all of them. we have none of them and we have all of them. And that is the phenomenon of mythical thinking. It is like a conglomerate of all the human thinking capabilities in one, not monolithic again, not yet divided, not in their purity, not developed, but like a nucleus of thinking itself where all human capabilities are intermingled and so pressed together that we really cannot distinguish them.

The long scholarly work on the interpretation of myth going on now for about 200 years has led us one step after another to interpretations of mythical texts in a scientific sense and they made sense, in an artistic sense and they made sense, in a philosophical sense and they made sense, in a religious sense and they made sense, in a personal sense and they also made sense. So we do not know how the thing itself developed; it seems to have sprung out of the human mind as a whole. We do not really know of the development of mythical worlds. Our historical knowledge is too shaky in order to find that out but one thing we know: that in the great mythical texts and works we always find this monolithic unity where one capability of the human thinking can stand for the other and can be mistaken for the other. How can such a strange unity be brought about?

There must be one cement that brings it about; this

cement is imagination: namely, the real artistic capability of man. This seems to be the original one that can glue all the others together. Imagination free in the negative sense, as the child has that does not ask the question, ›Why‹ but answers, tells a story. This capability to explain the world by stories, by freely imagined stories, which are agreed upon, and told, are fact and reality the moment they are told. Mythos means originally nothing but story, it was a Greek word for story. This is a world of story tellers. They tell stories, those stories are facts, realities; they are believed not in the sense that that have sense or meaning – as they are they are believed, they are taken for reality. It is almost as if we would suddenly decide to say that our real world is not real but the works of [Picasso](#) are the only things that are real. This is reality, imagination is reality; imagination is taken for being reality within the mythical world. Children, and mostly gifted children, have very often long periods where parents get frightened, where they never can distinguish between dream and reality, between what they dreamt and what happened every day. They mix them up and they tell a story of what happened to them and the parents come and say, ›Oh, what a liar do I have there – I have to send him to the psychoanalyst at once because he will become one of the biggest liars.‹ No, this child is a producer of myth. That is how myth is produced and only by this psychological

way can we possibly look into a state in which the human mind had once been in entirely, a state where one could not decide and did not wish to distinguish between dream and reality, everything became one. This world of reality and dream mixed, reality mistaken for dream, dream mistaken for reality, is best expressed in the great mythical Indian thinking about maya – maya, illusion, dream.

All reality is dream, there is nothing but dream and I think the mythical producer – who we cannot call an artist, a scientist, a philosopher, a religious thinker or a lover, who seems to be all those things at once in his nucleus state – is perhaps best described as a self-description of the human mind of himself in a certain stage, for example, in the great fables of the Indians, of the highest God, [Vishnu](#). This God, Vishnu, dreams worlds; he dreams up one world after another, and they arise and are reality and become reality; they are dream and reality. This Vishnu is man himself in the state of mythical thinking where everything that comes to our mind by imagination, that fits and seems to explain an action although it is not related to this action at all by reason. The flash of mind that comes to us, imagination about a certain action is taken for the truth, is taken for granted, is taken for the explanation and is carried on. That is how the mythical mind looks as an entity, as a monolithic entity. The helplessness of great mythical empires as soon as they are broken up by nomads, attacked, conquered

– if that be the Inca empire or the Egyptian or the old Indian empire – it is always the same story. As soon as they are attacked and even the possibility that another principle could prevail in the world, that people could exist who do not take that all for granted, this mythical framework, then their whole world breaks down like nothing because they cannot endure doubt. There is no doubt in the child and there is no doubt in the mythical mind. As soon as doubt enters it, it is lost; it breaks to pieces because it is built by imagination and imagination cannot stand doubt. Doubt is fatal for imagination and kills it immediately. The great tragedy of the breakdown of those mythical empires is contained in this little fact of the mind that imagination cannot stand criticism and it cannot stand doubt. Everything is taken for granted, everything is true. Man is a piece of the world, a part of the infinite world; he is entirely contained in it; he is entirely defined by it; he is never apart, he is never himself – he is in it, contained in this mythical world in its whole context. That means the gods also.

There is no such thing as transcendental thinking in mythical thinking. Indian philosophy is mythical throughout with the exception of Buddha and Buddha has been expelled from India with all his thinking. Buddhism was successful as a religion only in other parts of Asia because India wanted to stay within the myth and still stays within the myth.

Modern European interpretations of Indian philosophy are often that Indian philosophers, [Vedas](#) philosophy, [Upanishads](#) and so forth are perhaps the most gifted philosophers we have ever seen and this means to misunderstand what we mean by philosophy. Even [Nietzsche](#) made that mistake when he said, 'to mention the two opposite poles for the gift for philosophy! India and England.'² That means the Indians have the great gift and the English almost none for philosophy – that was his opinion. It is still in this wrong context. Speculative abstract thinking in symbols, mythical symbols, which look like concepts but are not concepts because they are not reasoned, have been developed in India to such a virtuosity that every philosopher who has to be trained in abstract calculation and in abstract speculation can learn from it forever – this is true – but this is a mythical capability with them, it is not philosophical thinking, nothing is ever really reasoned. No doubt ever enters, no question is really ever raised. Here questions are not asked and answered; here speculative answers are given to non-existing questions. It is free imaginary speculation in the abstract like a thing of chess or mathematics only with words. And it is such a high art that we are still astonished to see it and can learn much from it – but it has nothing to do with philosophy.

Philosophy exists only the very moment where man asks

² Nietzsche, Friedrich: [On the Genealogy of Morals](#), 1887, [III](#), § 7.

›Why‹ – and mythical man cannot ask ›Why‹. He only asks ›What‹ and ›How‹ and gets his explanations in an explanatory form because the question ›why‹ with which all philosophy and all reasoning starts supposes another existential situation of man – namely, an awareness that he does not entirely belong. As soon as he is absolutely contained he does not dare to ask this question because it would be thought to be pride and arrogance to ask why. There is no such thing as why. Things are as they are and as they are they are good and the world is as it is and being is identical with meaning because being is meaning itself. Everything has meaning for the mythical man. do the question ›Why‹ supposes the human capability to suspect that being and meaning might not be identical, that there might be beings which have no meaning, that perhaps all of being has no meaning, that only men might have meaning. That could make him the judge. He sets himself, so to speak, outside or inside or anyhow above, apart from the world the moment he really asks the question ›Why‹ – which means what is the meaning of being? That means that he himself does not consider himself to be mere being. He thinks he is more. He has something that can judge being. He is somebody who wants to rise above being. That is the moment where he transcends. That is really what we call transcendent thinking. That does not mean as we usually think, as to God or to any mystical thing – it just means that we are able to set ourselves apart from the other

world and ask the world questions – including ourselves, asking questions to ourselves.

The discovery of the question is the discovery of the great possibility of human freedom. Before real questioning arose – and questioning is bound to doubt – in the mythical world no doubt was possible, it would destroy the mythical world. The mythical world breaks up when some men begin to doubt and with beginning to doubt they raise questions and try to find answers and that means reasoning, because reasoning is nothing but asking questions and giving answers. The question itself asks for a reason, for a cause. When it finds that reason, then it has the answer. This discovery of reason or the emergence of reason is the first which we see out of the breakdown of the mythical world. That means the monolithic thing that brought about the monolithic civilization of myth, all kinds of myth – the Egyptian, the Indian, the Babylonian, the Syrian – this monolithic apparatus, so to speak, the inner monolith that built that monolithic civilization, namely, mythical thinking broke up and we get now into the period of emergence of artistic thinking, philosophical thinking, scientific thinking and erotical thinking. They all emerge separately now, by and by, in those thousand years until the death of Jesus of Nazareth.

Then a new synthesis comes about, the hierarchical one, the metaphysical one which is an artificial synthesis and one that is not monolithic – it is hierarchic. The

capabilities have been discovered. Now they get to be ordered into a system, into the wrong system, a strict system, hierarchical, with the highest capability of religious thinking, then philosophical thinking, metaphysics and then all the other capabilities well ordered. That will be the world of man until the 19th Century. Before that they are not yet discovered and free in this new system.

This is the period we consider. All the thinkers we consider are discoverers, originators of one of those pure human capabilities of thinking, reasoning, and creating. They had the first chance to represent those capabilities in their purity because the monolithic bondage of the myth has broken up. That is the historical situation of the human mind at this time. With them questions start and with them we enter this period that gives us our foundation for a reconsideration of the question of freedom and truth itself, because those are our sources from which we can move. Among those we consider belong two Asiatic thinkers – namely, Lao-tze and Buddha. We will take up next session Lao-tze, the Chinese philosopher. To include them already means that we doubt – that we doubt the judgment of the West; that in Asia nothing ever happened that had to do with freedom, that in Asia never have tendencies been seen in humanity that can be related to the urgent development need of the West – namely, freedom and to find out what freedom is, and to set human beings really free.

On the contrary, we think that Buddha and Lao-tze belong with the other seven we have as two of the greatest liberators of the human mind – and they worked under handicaps, under conditions that nobody later in the West, not even Abraham, let alone Socrates, let alone the Greeks – all of them never met conditions like Buddha and Lao-tze met – namely, conditions of a really splendid, overwhelming, yet almost unbroken mythical world which they had to stand up against as lonely persons. Two figures of men who suddenly in a development of two great overwhelming societies where nobody had ever dreamt really of being an individual, making a personal move. There stand up those two persons suddenly as definite personalities and question their culture, their past, the whole world of myth.

It is a gigantic phenomenon if we first understand how they were conditioned. They were conditioned more than anybody else, conditioned by a thousand-year-old tradition of mythical values and from one day to the next each of them was able to break with this tradition absolutely and to stand out on an almost invisible position alone as a free man asking questions. This phenomenon of the emergence of two thinkers of pure caliber within that non-thinking world of pure imagination which the mythical was at their time, especially in Asia, is a harder performance than that of any other Western thinker who did not meet those conditions any more. He met them, too – they all had a hard time in order

to find their essential positions, but it was never such a power as myth has been in China and especially in India. In India it seems almost impossible to break myth and Buddha did not succeed. He did not succeed for India; he succeeded for other people and for other countries, but not for India, which shows that he had the hardest position. So both of them, one after the other, Lao-tze and Buddha and then both together because they are opposite poles of the human mind. Here two questions are asked for the first time in the world as to the meaning of being and the first absolutely polar different answers possible are given by Lao-tze and by Buddha. So we handle them one after the other and then both comparatively because we can understand both better by taking them finally up together.