

**Edited transcript of: »Sources of Creative Power«  
Lecture XV (S-II)  
5/21/54  
Part II [Jesus]**

We have been talking about Jesus of Nazareth, about him, his ideas, and his deeds irrespective of the picture of his personality that has survived in the West and irrespective of the forms which his ideas and deeds have taken. We may not agree with those forms (the institution of the church, the endless religious struggles, and so on) and we have had to get rid of them to a certain extent, yet however that might be, the ideas, deeds, and personality of this man were enough to achieve the most astounding historical event in the history of mankind. Namely, to give history a decisive other turn. Everything that we today call the West would have been absolutely impossible without him, not only because through his ideas the fundamental achievements of the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans merged into what we would later call Western Civilization, but also because of the very fact of this faith which, if we want to look at it in a secular way, astonishes us by how much of it has come true.

As an example, let us take a look at the most astonishing of his sayings:

›If you have faith, you will displace mountains.‹<sup>1</sup>

We have displaced mountains. We are always displacing mountains. Without him Western thought would not have taken the decisive turn that finally made it possible for us to displace mountains. Nobody would have been interested in it. The absolute power of man over nature and the whole development of Western science was made possible, in the first place, by this religion which was founded on the teachings of a man who discovered a thing so absolutely fundamental that it had never been thought of before him: Namely, the real meaning of the will. The will had not been tapped until he came along and tapped it. It is a mistake to believe that Zarathustra discovered the quality of the human will. He did not. Rather he discovered a reasonable quality, the quality of decision. That a man is capable of distinguishing between the ›worse‹ and the ›better‹ and is able to decide between them, something which Socrates had to discover again. This is undeniable, but it has nothing to do with the will.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 21:21.

The will has been interpreted by psychologists and by philosophers in many ways but one thing has not been considered. One has never thought that the will might be just that thing which Jesus of Nazareth called the heart. All of the philosophers we have considered up until now talked really about the mind. They discovered this great creative capability of the human person, liberating him out of the context of nature and myth, making him aware of himself, and rounding out, so to speak, the whole human picture. But the picture would never have worked. There was one thing missing and, if we say it in an American way, what was missing is the thing that makes it all tick: the heart. Here was the one quality that none of the others ever considered. As much as Buddha talked about sin, he himself had no real experience of sin. Perhaps only a man who had the experience of sin (although he is called the sinless one) could come to know what sin is in a philosophic sense.

Now the Jews had always lived with sin, just as other people had always lived in sin, but there is a great difference between living with sin and living in sin. The difference lies in the consciousness of sin which has been for the Jews their main characteristic since the time of Moses. It may have been that Jesus inherited the means by which he was able to assimilate this great religious experience of the Jewish people, or it may have been that he himself had the direct experience of sin, but at least this much is certain. No philosopher before him had ever mentioned a term which for him was decisive: Namely, temptation. None of them were ever really tempted. It was no temptation for Socrates to become the great statesman of Athens rather than, as he would liked to have been, the first model of a citizen, almost a world citizen. It was no temptation at all, because he had made up his mind already. Heraclitus was never in temptation and neither was Homer. We cannot say it of a single one.

Jesus of Nazareth was in temptation, and it is not only the best rendering of a story of temptation (where Satan comes to him in the wilderness and shows him all of the empires of the world and says »All these things I will give thee if you will fall down and worship me!«,<sup>2</sup> but also a reflection of real temptation,

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 4:9.

of a temptation which must be the heaviest that a man can bear: Namely, to give into the cry of his beloved people, to liberate them from the Romans, and to become the Messiah as the Jews wanted the Messiah to be.

To resist that, to get out of that, could only have been done through an act of will, and it can clearly be seen in the Gospels just how that act of will was undertaken. It was undertaken with such consideration and deliberation that right up to the very last moment the political issues were held open in order to deceive everyone, in order to bring out more clearly the fact that it was a trans-political issue that was involved, that this man wanted to raise men above politics, above any worldly band, above society, above nature, above anything that can give man a law by showing to man that God has set him above all of those things. The suffering Messiah, the man who said »My kingdom is not of this world«<sup>3</sup> only to establish his kingdom in this world was the discoverer of the idea of freedom in its innermost meaning. For the decisive turn in history, the historical event of which we have been speaking, is that ever since he preached and lived from the moment the Christian church was founded in his name, the value of the human person has never been entirely forgotten. The fundamental distinction between the West and the East (with the exception of totalitarianism) is that the value of a human life has been considerably higher in the West, and this is not, as often asserted, because of reasons of population, but rather for a basic decision that once was made to never forget that value.

If we were to assemble together all of the philosophers we have considered thus far, and we gathered together all of the qualities of the creative human person that they discovered, qualities that can only be developed in freedom, qualities that make man a being that can be, that can enable him to become the human being, then we would find that not only did none of these men ever experience sin, but they never experienced themselves, because a self experience is something that, philosophically speaking, might make us agree that there is such a thing as sin!

And I don't mean sin in the sense in which it is religiously understood today, because it is precisely in that, sense that Jesus wanted to deliver us from sin, and if we

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<sup>3</sup> John 18:36.

had understood him he would have done so long ago. Responsibility and a feeling of guilt. All of this comes only with self reflection when human reason becomes completely critical of itself, and at this very moment it must become clear to the philosophical mind (which Jesus of Nazareth was) that the others, so to speak, had left out the decisive thing. They had left out the will, and they had done so quite rightly and innocently.

Anyone who has become creative or who is creative is always far from one experience, the experience that this very creativity took a decision, and so it is with the men we have been considering. It seemed to them so natural, it seemed that way to Socrates for instance, and there is a certain naiveté in his saying ›virtue is knowledge‹ or ›virtue is wisdom‹ although he meant, as we have seen, that in not being able to know absolute wisdom – we can keep going in the direction of it by developing our virtue. Nevertheless, there is a naiveté in it, and that is in his failure to see that there might be beings in the world who are as gifted for reasoning as Socrates, as gifted and as brilliant, but who will not go the way of reasoning because either they make a fundamental decision against it, or the decision has been made for them. This decision is not a conscious one, but it is a decision, and I talked about it once before when I said that one has to make a decision for freedom, because otherwise freedom cannot be reached. Jesus knew that there are always people in the world who make a constant decision against freedom, or, as he himself would have put it, against goodness. He knew that sin is the negative sign of freedom – that man can lose himself, and quite consciously so, and that this is a matter of the heart.

But what is the heart? What does he mean by the heart? To understand that, we must understand another thing he broke with. In this context, he analyzes a Hebrew term, the [Am ha'aretz](#), the ›unlearned man,‹ the very man who was condemned in the Jewish world of his time, because [Rabbi Hillel](#) (perhaps the greatest Rabbi during the time of Jesus) who said:

›I can say the whole content of the Jewish Law in one sentence: Love thy neighbor as thyself,‹

which became a Christian saying as well, also said:

›The Am ha'aretz cannot help being a sinner all of his life, because he does not know the Law.‹<sup>4</sup>

He must be a sinner. He is condemned by definition. With this Jesus of Nazareth broke completely. Instead, he told them the exact opposite was the case, because if you believe, so to speak, that God is the Law, then the Law is also God, and you have no contact with God anymore. Absolute obedience is your fate. The tax collector who does not enter the [Temple](#), because he does not feel dignified enough and just hits his breast and says ›God have mercy on my soul, I am a poor sinner‹ – he is the real religious man; not the [Pharisee](#) who goes straight into the Temple and thanks God for not having made him like other people, for making him better. He has taken the judgement of God upon himself; this is his sin, to pass judgement upon other human beings positively or negatively, because nobody can do that. Nobody is entitled to say ›I am lost forever‹ and nobody is entitled to say ›I am saved forever,‹ because he cannot know the value of his own person, nor can anybody else know it, and nor can he know the decisive value of anybody else.

Jesus established the infinite value of the human person by a religious saying: Namely, that every single person is of divine value. We can, as philosophers, question this divine value and I certainly do so, that is, if we don't want to take it as a value given by God, because it can be argued that the value of an atom is also a value given by God, nevertheless it is not divine, although it is divinely made. If on the other hand we take it as the church does, that is, we think there is a divine soul in man that has to be saved, then I am ready to accept it as a metaphor, but as a metaphor for one definite thing. The infinite value of every human person which everyone, whether believer or non-believer can recognize and have insight into. With this recognition and insight the infinite value is established. How?

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<sup>4</sup> This is probably a paraphrase of »No ignorant man (Am-ha'aretz) is religious.« See A Rabbinic Anthology, edited by Montefiore and Lowe, London, Macmillan and Company, 1938, page 184.

In our time a philosopher living under the conditions of modern nihilism, the French Existentialist [Albert Camus](#), had the courage to speak out, and he said that every guarantee we have had against murder up until now has been a guarantee which could be sustained only by belief. As soon as we discard every belief (which we have) then we will be driven by the logic of our own thinking to find that there is no valid reason against murder. Furthermore, the whole of philosophy will not be able to find a valid reason that could be transmitted to every reasonable thinking person which would convince him that murder must not be done. This conclusion makes much for the nothingness of our times. When we see the believers in modern totalitarianism coming who tell us ›You must only obey orders!‹ and we try to say to them ›But you know thou shall not kill,‹ then we find that it is to no avail. We are not talking to people who believe in that any more and we are lost.

Jesus of Nazareth is the philosopher who discovered the very reason why we cannot take the life of another human being and still remain human, and he established it with those few words on the cross when he said »Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.«<sup>5</sup> Yes, philosophically speaking, the man who takes the life of another man cannot know what he is doing, because a human being is the only being in the world which can be, which is an infinite possibility of creative acts. Judgement can never be passed on him absolutely and it takes almost the belief in a hereafter to execute even a murderer, because we have to say to him ›And may God have mercy on your soul,‹ which means that we are aware we have not passed definite judgement since definite judgement cannot be passed. But if we did not believe in a hereafter even the killing of murderers might become harder (though it would still be understandable). What Jesus meant was that the infinite value of every person consists in the fact that man and only man is an evaluator, and who can evaluate an evaluator except God? That is how it can be stated philosophically, and its meaning is absolutely clear.

So there is a reason against murder. Choosing between life and death is the choice Jesus of Nazareth has put before us, but it is eternal life or eternal death.

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 23:24.

not eternal life or eternal damnation, which is a very different thing. When in order to make Christianity into more than a trans-political institution, or rather less than it, that is, into a half-political institution, because it was necessary to tame and convince its converts, then the absolute belief in a hereafter came into being in the form of eternal salvation and eternal pain.

In the high Middle Ages, when all of these things came to be an issue, one of the greatest of our poets, [Dante](#), trying to put the teachings of [Saint Thomas Aquinas](#) into poetry, invented the following inscription which, in his [Inferno](#), is placed over the entrance to Hell:

GIJUSTIZIA MOSSE H, MIO ALTO FATTORE  
FECEMI LA DIVINA POTESTATE,  
LA SOMMA SAPIENZA E'L PRMO AMORE.

JUSTICE MOVED MY HIGH MAKER  
DIVINE POWER MADE ME,  
WISDOM SUPREME AND PRIMAL LOVE

(Third Canto)

Love? Oh No, that cannot be, because Hell is the work of eternal hatred and hatred is something that stands in a dialectical relation to love. Nobody who can hate a person he has loved before has ever loved. Hatred is the absolute opposite of love. Anyone who is able to hate the smallest thing in the world might lose the capacity to love his most beloved person, because the capability of hatred is the capability of death.

Jesus of Nazareth has been called the Son of God but the Gospels do not say he is the Son of God. They only say this man will be called the Son of God, which means that is what he will rightly be called, because all Jews were Sons of God. Every Jew has the prayer ›I thank you my Lord our Father.‹ They all speak of ›our Father,‹ that is, they were all children of God. The only question is who shall be the right child of God which means ›who is he that has overcome Adam?‹ But that is precisely what Jesus of Nazareth did do. He overcame Adam. So the Gospels say he will be called the Son of God and rightly so. In that sense he is the Son of God.

The establishment of the infinite value of man and of every living person goes

together with the establishment of absolute equality – not equality in gifts, not equality in quantity (as many Americans like to think of it which is really equality in nothingness), but equality in quality that is, in the most fundamental aspect of the human person. It is this equality that Jesus established, and that is the meaning of his good tidings and glad message. We can formulate it philosophically perhaps, in the style of [Walt Whitman](#). What he [Jesus?] really did was to tell us (without explicitly saying it):

Whoever you are, wherever you have been born, whenever you have been born, however you have been born, you are of infinite value and I want you to be. I love you, every human person.<sup>6</sup>

That is his good tidings. We are all equal, and therefore all brothers and sisters before God. We are equal in quality and nobody shall harm us, nobody shall judge us finally.

It took a long time until we attempted to realize real political equality but we would never have even tried, we would have lost remembrance of it, if Jesus of Nazareth had not lived and the Church had not preserved him. He said he was the King of the Jews and that he wanted to establish the Kingdom of God. We have seen how he sought to establish that Kingdom. Namely, that through this trans-political establishment, if we come together as brothers and sisters or simply as equal persons, regardless of whether or not we are in fact a family, but only as persons who come together in his name, then Jesus of Nazareth is in our midst. This is as true as anything he ever said and it is spoken distinctly in his spirit, because when we realize that man is more than his capacities, that the value of man is greater than the value of his capacities, and that the greatest genius who says 'My work will last for five-hundred years' will never know if Mr. Smith, who has never been noticed by anybody, hasn't done a few things in his life that will far outlast his deeds. We cannot pride ourselves before God as the Pharisees did, because we do not have that insight. We have to know we are infinitely more valuable than our deeds, even our highest deeds, so that our deeds will not get hold of us. That means that the greatest creation in

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<sup>6</sup> This is not really Walt Whitman, but Saint Augustin in the words of Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt: »I want you to be«. Compare letter of Martin Heidegger to Hannah Arendt, from May, 13, 1925; Heinrich Bluecher's letter to Hannah Arendt from February 2, 1950. And Hannah Arendt: Love and Saint Augustin, Chicago: Chicago Press 1996, p. 95.

politics, even the freest Republic in the world, has no right to overrule the conscience of one of its citizens. Man can rise above his works, and when man rises above his works he is in himself in his inwardness, and then he might meet God, because that is the place to meet God.

Jesus said, so to speak, ›You cannot find God anywhere, wherever you look – only in yourself.‹<sup>7</sup> ›Heaven has come nearby,‹ he says. ›It is in your midst.‹<sup>8</sup> Heaven, eternal value, and relation to God; they are all within you. That is why he said to the Jewish people that their relation to God as a people was over. There is only this one relation; that every human person is immediate to God and only human persons are immediate to God. That, in his terms, makes for the infinite value of man.

By establishing this inwardness, by rising above our own works, we not only can no longer pride ourselves on our work, but more importantly we cannot destroy ourselves, because of our misdeeds. From a philosophical viewpoint, that is the position [Søren Kierkegaard](#) was looking for. A position from where it is possible to jump into faith. A sign that man is really creative in the sense that he is not even a creative function but rather a real personality who can, or cannot, at any moment create, but who can smile on his creations and rise above them.

Because this ›being‹ that man can experience (if only he goes far enough); this being has no other possibility of explaining himself to himself then through the assumption that he has been made by an Absolute Creator. But even if he does not need this explanation, even if he does not want it, then he may still remain creative, his person may not be violated, because of the possibility of faith which he can still decide for. He has the possibility of faith, and philosophy can do no more than to state this possibility.

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<sup>7</sup> Paraphrase of Luke 17:20-22.

<sup>8</sup> Paraphrase of Matthew 4:17.

The Christian Church, as an institution, is decaying throughout the West, and yet one can still feel the effects of the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Whenever people decide to put themselves above the world, whenever they refuse to obey the commandments of the state, because those commandments go against their conscience, then they are together with Jesus of Nazareth. Man, in transcending the world, can to a certain degree transcend himself, and this transcending of the world, this refusal to be a mere function of the world, was established by Jesus when he spoke about heaven, about eternal bliss, eternal value, and on the other side eternal death. In this respect he was a Jew, a son of the Jewish people. The proof is that every time the Jews have lived under conditions that were a little bit favorable for their religious life, they produced Christianity again. They did it in Chassidism. It is so near, it comes so out of Judaism, and yet it is, so to speak, such a logical consequence of the heart.

There are two kinds of punishment in Judaism. Either your children will be punished for your sins (which is a very cruel punishment that was, so to speak, abolished by Jesus of Nazareth); or, you will be blotted out of the book of life, the book of the living. No one will think of you any more. This is the highest form of punishment, and it is also the real concept of death that Jesus has. What is the worst thing that he can say about his betrayer, Judas Iscariot? He says »For this man it would be better never to have been born.«<sup>9</sup> By »never to have been born« he means that he failed entirely in life. That he succeeded in destroying the infinite value given to every human being, because each and every human being is entirely free to do so. We ourselves are free to do so. Nobody else can destroy our infinite value, but we ourselves can destroy it, and then, as Jesus said, it would be better for us never to have been born. Nobody will think of us anymore. We are out of the context of eternity! We have become merely temporal. We must now do

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<sup>9</sup> Mark. 14:21.

entirely for ourselves. That is all. There is no more. There is no Hell, there is no eternal punishment, there is no eternal pain. How could a man who talked about eternal love also talk about eternal hatred (?), because eternal hatred is nothing less than eternal condemnation. It means to attribute hatred to God, something which we all have done, and something that we would do well to get completely rid of. And we get completely rid of it, because there has been one man in the world who did, who showed us that it can be done, and that man was Jesus of Nazareth. His commandment »to love thy enemy as thyself«<sup>10</sup> is the non-understandable commandment, the commandment that all of the Dostoyevskys and Nietzsches of this world and all of the Grand Inquisitors with them have never understood and never will understand, the commandment that they have always used to indicate ›that if he wasn't an idiot who knew nothing of life, than he was certainly too young and boundlessly naive.‹ He was not! He knew exactly what he had achieved. He knew that a human being can abolish hatred absolutely if only he recognizes the infinite value of every human person. He can drive out of himself completely any instinct of murder, can make himself incapable of murder regardless of the situation, and can come to understand that there is no possible reason for murder and at least one definite and fundamental reason against it. He can abolish hatred as Jesus did and then he will be able to love, because love stands in a kind of dialectical relation to another opposite which is not its absolute opposite, and that is scorn. Hatred makes any kind of love impossible. The man who has within him even the slightest trace of envy or hatred can never be sure he will ever be able to love. Jesus did not have hatred, but he was certainly a scornful person, because in scorn there is still love. Scorn never breaks the communication with another person. It still recognizes the infinite possibilities of that person and tries to do its best. In the most raging scorn there is still a remnant of love. In hatred there is none. And in the greatest love, the most absolute love, the most enthusiastic love for another human person there is still a remainder of scorn, a little place left for its possibility, and woe to us if there were not, because it would then mean that we have lost interest in that

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 5:44.

person. We do not want them any more to be ... to be more of themselves.

That then, is the dialectical relation and Jesus lived it perfectly. And he could live it perfectly only because he was absolutely free of hatred, so the concept of Hell could not have been his. He would have been unable to envision such a concept. The quality of self-knowledge, to know thyself, as Socrates did is fine, but the quality of heart, to be able to live with oneself in the way that Jesus did, is much more. It means to be able to recognize that before we can enter into a creative life we have to first purify ourselves. What does it mean, to be purified?

I have said, the human heart means will! If we examine all of the activities of the mind we have considered up to now, we could describe them all with one German word. The word ›Sinnen.‹ That means ›to mean meaning,‹ to aim at meaning. We have seen how each of these few fundamental philosophers have discovered quite different ways to aim at meaning, and to open the way towards a creative life. Now there is an opposite for this word in German, the word ›trachten‹ which means ›longing,‹ and with this word we can describe nearly everything that Jesus says in the Bible, because what is given there can be described mostly as longing. The Jews had said that the human heart is evil from birth until death. Jesus of Nazareth – was of the opinion that the human heart is evil, or not evil, good, or not good, but mostly mixed. How? Here is the difficult borderline between not the subconscious and conscious, which are psychological terms, but between man's desires and man's intentions. Desire is a great thing. When Nietzsche said ›Man is the will to power‹ he did not know he was really saying man is evil, because if man could be ›the will to power‹ then he could only be evil in the sense of Jesus of Nazareth. Man is ›will‹ – that is right. Man cannot help but being will. The only question is what kind of ›will‹ will he be?

The ›will‹, in the first place, has nothing to do with will as we normally conceive of it: Namely, as decision and so on. It is first really only a desire. That is how it starts, but that is not the answer as to its nature, because the question of its nature is linked with another question: Namely,

who is man, that is, where does the last decision fall as to who he is? The answer, according to Jesus, is that it falls in the heart, because there are two possibilities in the heart. Either to act by impulse, or to act by compulsion. Compulsion is not meant here in any psychological sense. I will try to show why.

Man can make the distinction between life and death, because he has the capability within himself to be life or to be death. When Jesus of Nazareth said »I am the way, the truth and the life«<sup>11</sup> he meant ›I am the life.‹ We are so used to religious interpretations of his sayings that we often forget how shallow they are. Let's get at the philosophical interpretation. Yes, he is the life, and we can also be the life. He is the life, because he abolished death in himself and in his heart, so he is the life.

We, if we abolish death in our hearts (and we can, by following him and understanding him) can also be the life. It is a change of heartbeat, so to speak. By such a change the human heart, the innermost inwardness of the will of a human person, can be.

Now, let us take it still further philosophically. The human heart can be or it cannot be. That means it can be being, or it can be nothingness. We can be nothingness. We can have an empty heart, and an empty heart means that all of the world can be drawn into it and be destroyed there, or we can have a full heart. Jesus very rarely spoke about salvation. He never made the Platonic or Pauline distinction between body and soul, or spirit and matter, because here in the heart spirit and matter are indistinguishable. They are really one. Rather he talked about fulfillment, not salvation. He came to fulfill the law, to fulfill us, and to teach us how to fulfill ourselves. To be able again to have the fullness of heart which means to love as against the emptiness of heart which means to hate. To understand that these are our choices because between these two words man's innermost being lies.

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<sup>11</sup> John 14:6.

We have both possibilities. To be empty, or to be full. To be being, or to be nothingness. To be an active nothingness, a nothingness that draws everything into an empty heart and eats away at it until it has been destroyed and rendered valueless, or to be an active life. Love seems to be the only law of Jesus of Nazareth. He says to the Jews ›I have not come to destroy the law. I have come to fulfill it!‹ He has not come to destroy the law, and yet he breaks the Sabbath. The Pharisees say to him ›but you are breaking the law and so are your disciples. The Sabbath is a law.‹<sup>12</sup> How does he explain it?

He says, ›the Son of man can forgive sins ... can forgive even the breaking of the law.‹ But the Son of man is he, and you, and I. We can forgive! How is that possible? He says again and again ›they did it out of love.‹ Love overrules the law because the law is there in order to make love possible. There is no other sense of the law. As soon as man thinks that once the law has been kept then everything is done he is wrong, because this is only a predisposition. Laws, Jesus said, are made by men, not by God. He explains that in Chapter nineteen of Saint Matthew where he talks about changing the divorce laws. But how could anybody ever propose to the Jews of that time to change a law? Laws cannot be changed with the Jews, because they are the laws of God. They can only be gone around and interpreted, so the law that you can divorce your wife by just giving her a letter explaining the reasons is a law of God. It cannot be changed. But he explains to the Rabbis »Moses gave you this law (but) it hadn't been so before.«<sup>13</sup> No, it hadn't been so before, and we know that now. Abraham knew no such law, because Abraham founded his religion and his whole religious thinking upon the first story of the creation where it is said ›God created Man, man and woman created He them‹<sup>14</sup> and this is quoted by Jesus of

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew 12:2.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 19:6-9, 5:31.

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 1:27.

Nazareth in Saint Matthew, and then he says »it was not so before,« meaning there was no such law. So he forbids all divorce, which is really a reflection of the social circumstances of his times, because he means something different. What he means is to establish the equality of man and woman.

To establish the equality of man and woman could have been done in Abraham's time, and it was done in Abraham's time for a brief period and then was forgotten. But it had not been done anywhere else. Jesus re-established this equality, and no interpretation of Christianity from [Saint Paul](#) to [Luther](#), not even the interpretation of [Milton](#) in one of the greatest world epics, has succeeded in destroying it, because otherwise we would not have fought so hard for it in the last century. We said before that Jesus established the equality of human beings in quality, in the immediateness of the relation of every human being before God, in the infinite possibilities of every human person, and therefore in the absolute inviolability of that person. But he knew that in order to establish this he had to first abolish the inequality between man and woman, because here every other form of inequality was anchored. What a thinker!

Because we have found out through historical and political analysis that no inequality in the world, either of class or of caste, or what-ever, can survive once the inequality between man and woman has been abolished. Here is the center of inequality, the very principle of it. If one abolishes it, then every other form of equality follows by itself logically and automatically. Then even Paul and Luther will not prevail over Jesus of Nazareth, and no Christian Saint, no Jewish Rabbi, or no Hindu Brahmin will ever be able to take that back again, because we all live it. The fullness of heart gives us this. Love, is the highest law here, because it really is no law.

A Christian theologian of our time, perhaps the greatest Christian theologian, [Rudolf Bultmann](#) of Marburg, has written a book about Jesus of Nazareth,<sup>15</sup> and

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<sup>15</sup> Bultmann, Rudolf: Jesus. Berlin 1926. <http://library.bard.edu:80/record=b1029304>

there is a funny misinterpretation in it which is also, in a way, one of the best interpretations I have ever read. It concerns the concept of obedience. He starts to explain, and rightly so, that obedience was of course, the Jewish Law, and that there is no other quality that can compare with obedience in the Jewish religion. That Jesus of Nazareth tried to replace this with a higher obedience, just as Paul and the entire Christian Church after him tried to replace the teachings of Jesus by a form of obedience even more severe than servitude, but what was this higher obedience and how does it differ from Judaism?

Now here Bultmann, because he is a German and has this wonderful possibility that the German language so often gives, uses the fact that obedience in German means ›gehorsam,‹ and that ›gehorsam‹ contains the word ›hoeren,‹ to hear, so in effect, he makes Jesus say:

›You think you can obey God. You are absolutely incapable of obeying God. You can just obey the Law, but you cannot obey God, because you can only obey God if you have the possibility to hear Him.‹

and by a slight of hand the distinction is made, and it is still servitude. At least the English language is more fortunate in that there is no possible bridge between obedience and listening to somebody.

To listen to God, to hear Him, means to be capable of hearing His will but how is that possible? God is an absolute. Can we hear his will? Jesus said yes, in our own hearts we can hear Him, but that is only because His will is very simple. It is not obedience. His will is to love, that is all. To love, because there is no other will. He discovers here the creative activity of love, but only under the condition that it is taken entirely away from the capability of hatred, thus he ›fulfills the law,‹ because any time you break the law for the sake of love you do not break the law, you make the law better.

It is often said that the love of Jesus of Nazareth is an entirely asexual love (non-erotic). Oh no! The love of Jesus of Nazareth is real love, and since it

has no relationship whatsoever to hatred it has no relationship to possession, because possession means destruction. The philosopher Hobbes once said 'I have really possessed a thing only if I can destroy it', and that is true. Possessive love is destructive, that is, it is no love. It is rather a relation of power between men and women that has nothing to do with love. Love, as Jesus of Nazareth meant it, is the real relation of a man to a woman, the recognition that the other is inviolable for their own sake, that we want him or her to be, that even the loss of this love can only lead to scorn but never to hatred, that this scorn shall only be temporary, and finally, that one can never love another person if one is able to hate that person. There is nothing in that which in the least contradicts sex. There is only one thing it contradicts and that is the emptiness of the human heart from which comes the will to possess everything and into which everything can be dr aim. The will that man can become nothingness and that nothingness can be a positive thing when in reality it is the murderer of murderers, the negative of Being, and the destroyer of Being. It is the de-creative capability of man and a capability that man carries within himself just as he carries the creative. To have real freedom then means to make the basic decision for freedom which is the decision for creation, to lose the capacity to hate and destroy, and to love all of God's creations. This is what Jesus of Nazareth meant by 'purification of the heart,'<sup>16</sup> and everyone who makes this decision and who lives in the smallest circle of life does not need to be an artist or a genius, because he lives according to the law of love. Jesus said »The last shall be first.«<sup>17</sup> Let us say might be, because we cannot judge, but at least one thing is certain. This inward decision is the decisive one.

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<sup>16</sup> Matthew 5:8, 15:18, 23:26-28.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 19:30, 20:16.

**Lecture XV (S-II) 5/21/54**  
**Part III [Jesus]**

Now, he says, he wants to establish the Kingdom of God. Where does he want to establish it? He says, »My kingdom is not of this world.«<sup>18</sup> Does that mean his kingdom is of another world? Yes, it means that. Must this other world be an absolute other world: Namely, the hereafter, or could it be another world here? Is he also a Jew in that respect that he wants to establish the Kingdom of God on earth? Yes, he most certainly wants to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and he had already proceeded very far in that direction. Because wherever people sit together in communication as persons out of a want to obey God more than men or the laws of the world then there is a part of the Kingdom of God. It is always there, and in this sense he established it to a certain degree. We have only forgotten that, because we thought it had been established in institutions which became almost hatable. In this sense there are more religious people outside the Christian church than inside which is something that should never be forgotten.

We have seen he was a great politician, one of the greatest politicians, otherwise he would never have been able to transcend politics or to create this trans-political position for man. Historians who now analyze his sayings have found that a great deal of his meaning has been distorted in nebulous so-called prophetic utterances about the end of the world and so on, which is all that later Christianity needed to liberate the slaves, which it did, and destroy the Roman Empire, which it helped to do. But all that the liberation of the slaves meant was that new masters would come with more hatred, and this time they brought all of their hatred into the Church, and with it came Hell, because Hell is the child of hatred. They forgot that the oppressed ones could not be liberated without doubling their hatred which is why [Tertullian](#), one of the great fathers of the Church, could urge his Christian brethren:

›Don't go to the Roman games and see how the gladiators are torn apart by the lions, because we will have better things to see. There will be a greater show when we go up to Heaven and sit to the right of our Father and see how all of those scoundrels suffer eternally in death.«<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> John 18:36.

<sup>19</sup> Probably a syllabus from Tertullian: De Spectaculis.

The slave who wants to enjoy the pain of others and the man with an empty heart as a Christian are really the same person. There we have him already, and he represented a majority of men as far as Christian church goes.

Jesus knew all of this, and many of his sayings speak about the coming destruction of the Temple which is also why he refused to become the Jewish Messiah, because he knew better than anybody else that if the Jews had revolted the Romans would have been victorious, and then the Temple would have been destroyed, and with the destruction of the Temple would come the destruction of the Jews as a holy people, and he wanted them to be the holy people. He wanted them really to become it, and so through this trans-political position, which is a creation of political genius, he had hoped to bring the Jews to the place where they could be the first church in an inner sense, a society that has risen above politics, an international society of people who are not concerned about anything other than the direct relation of every man to God. That's what he wanted, and he failed. His fear, that the Jews with this tremendous tradition of religious experience, would be destroyed by the Romans with the Temple was fortunately not justified. The Jews survived, but their Temple was destroyed, and they had lost their chance. That is why when he goes to the cross and the women weep he says to them:

»Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

For behold, the days are coming, in which they will say. Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts that never fed.

Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills Cover us.

For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?«<sup>20</sup>

Because he knew that the Temple would be destroyed, and afterwards, when the [Zealots](#) came, and the revolution was made, the Temple was destroyed. He was a prophet in a historical sense, and he knew exactly what he was talking about, which is why so many of his prophecies were fulfilled.

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<sup>20</sup> Luke23:28-31.

He wanted the Kingdom of God on earth. Why and how? He said of himself, »I am the Son of man.« The ›Son of man‹ is a very funny expression for us. Originally (in Hebrew) it meant the son of Adam. So he really said ›I am the son of Adam‹ which merely means ›I am a human being.‹ ›I am a human being, nothing more.‹ But then, in his teachings, he redesigns it, and the Son of man still stays the son of Adam but now Adam really becomes ›man,‹ and the son of Adam becomes the new man, the new man who has gotten rid of the old Adam, that is, the original human condition which involves sin in the sense of death, and he is now the new man, the Son of man in general. This Son of man everybody can be as well as Jesus of Nazareth. Here again, we see an indication of his good tidings, for when this naked babe came into the world and was later crucified as a simple carpenter's son he had already laid the foundation for the principle that ›whenever, wherever, and however you have been born, you are of infinite value‹ so it is man himself that counts, nothing else. He even shows that you are of more value, because this inherent possibility of decision within the human heart means that every man is Adam, every man is the Son of man, because with his birth every man came into the world. The birth of Jesus of Nazareth was the birth of every man which is what he taught and lived. We can either stay Adam (namely man), or become the Son of man by doing exactly what Jesus of Nazareth did by destroying hatred. This does not mean unselfishness. Psychologists are all right when they say that Christ must have been the most selfish human being in the world. Yes, but what a Self! The real question is only a distinction between self and Self, the distinction between one's ›self‹ and ›the Self‹ one can be. No human being is born a human being. It can only become a human being.

The late German writer, [Karl Kraus](#), once said:

›The concept of the superman as in Nietzsche is a little pre-mature.  
The precondition for it would be man. Man doesn't exist yet.‹

Yes, that is exactly what Jesus of Nazareth was saying. Man doesn't exist yet,

because man is only the Son of man, he is just Adam, but not the new man he can become by shedding Adam and by becoming the true Son of man. How is this done? That is the meaning of rebirth, the rebirth that we all can achieve. Birth and rebirth. Not eternal life in some hereafter, not a life of immortality, but a life here and now. Everything he says relates to here and now, so it is with the Kingdom of God, everything is here and now. If we make the decision and live according to it then we can shed Adam, we can become the Son of man. The more that make it, then the more the Kingdom of God, which is always there, will finally prevail.

He says ›The Son of man will return to sit at the right hand of the Father.‹<sup>21</sup> Yes, obviously. If we could come to handle our politics and all of our creative activities in a more humane way by putting ourselves above them, then the Son of man might prevail here on earth. He might return, because we would have destroyed power for power's sake which means we would have destroyed hatred, because hatred is only power for power's sake and nothing else. So it is quite possible that even that one beautiful day will be fulfilled, but one thing is sure. It cannot be fulfilled until we fulfill it, and that is what he meant. It is our decision. Our power is already so great that power for power's sake we do not need. We have to control the instances of power within ourselves, we must use power but not fall prey to it, because only then will we be really powerful – not before. We may think we are powerful today but we are not. Today, we are only hysterical.

We said before that Jesus of Nazareth was the discoverer of inwardness, of the possibility of eternal personal relations, relations which are placed above all other things and which can only take place among free persons. This was, so to speak, the flower of the tree we were talking about, the tree that grew out of three roots: faith, freedom, and truth, and which I have called the human trinity.<sup>22</sup> Out of these three roots the tree of human creative capabilities in all of our nine thinkers has grown. After the tree had grown, and developed

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<sup>21</sup> Mark 16:62.

<sup>22</sup> In 1954/55 Heinrich Bluecher will held a lectures series on »The Human Trinity« at the New School.

its crown in Socrates, the tree seemed perfect, and it was perfect. It lead only to bring forth a flower, and with the flower, a fruit. This flower was Jesus, and the flower and the fruit are what make the tree eternal, because they can reproduce the tree. So the rediscovery and the use of that tree can best be achieved by using the fruit, and that means by starting with the insights of Jesus of Nazareth.

It can be argued that Socrates and philosophical man will always be at the center of all human creative capabilities including this, the personal one, and that only philosophy can explain them. But it is also true that all of them, including philosophy, can only be really practiced and done through passion and love so in the end, the flower and fruit are what really count, and if we use them we can re-establish the tree. That exactly is what we called the ›quest of our time‹ and the goal of this course. To find a way of re-establishing the tree, so we have come full circle. Philosophy can and must play the role of bringing forth anew, of making possible anew, the real peace of mind and fruitfulness of mind that can make this come true not the peace of mind we are longing for today which is the peace of ›dumb heads,‹ but the peace of mind in which all of the human creative faculties which we have discovered do not work against each other, but with and for each other. Philosophy has the task to do that, but philosophy will never be able to do that until it has made its peace; first, with religious thinking, and second, with the purest religious thinking there ever has been. The thinking of Jesus of Nazareth.

Everyone who has ever in his life established a loving human relationship is a follower of Jesus of Nazareth regardless of whether or not he has heard of him, because this is a personal religion (a religion of persons). Jesus of Nazareth was religious man, because he discovered what we all can be inside or outside of any established religion. The Catholics have always believed in the invisible Church – something unfortunately which Protestantism has forgotten, and Protestantism has rotted because of it. The Catholic Church has always knew, as

Jesus knew, and as the Jews had known before anybody else, that at any moment there might be only seven just men alive unknown to anyone else on earth and that is the only reason why God does not destroy the world. There is always the hidden Church which Jesus established when he said »Wherever there are two or three of you gathered together in my name, I am in your midst,«<sup>23</sup> and in this spirit, with these words, the hidden Kingdom of God might finally be made to prevail on earth.

This is his promise, and if we as philosophers do not come to know his mind then we will never be able to go on with our central task which is, in the final analysis, the practice of reason and faith as mutual conditions of our lives. This then, is a sketch of the task that is before us today. To make the decision for freedom in ourselves. To reject death in ourselves. And to become life in order to make life. To mobilize our creative faculties and to order them but again, only for one purpose, and that is to bear fruit so the tree can grow again in the next generation. We can achieve that, to bear the fruit, and every generation will have to be concerned with that tree so long as a free humanity should live.

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<sup>23</sup> Matthew 18:20.