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Für Hannah J. Heimlich Blücher
hugl. Karl Farber

REASON AND EXISTENZ

FIVE LECTURES

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of a fundamental origin, the condition of selfhood without which all the vastness of Being becomes a desert. Existenz, although never itself becoming an object or form, carries the meaning of every mode of the Encompassing.

While mere empirical existence, consciousness as such, and spirit all appear in the world and become scientifically investigable realities, Existenz is the object of no science. In spite of which, we find here the very axis about which everything in the world turns if it is to have any genuine meaning for us.

At first Existenz seems to be a new narrowing, for it is always merely one among others. It might appear as though the spaciousness of the Encompassing had been contracted into the uniqueness of the individual self which, in contrast to the reality of encompassing spirit, looks like the emptiness of a point. But this contracted point lodged, so to speak, in the body of empirical existence, in this particular consciousness, and in this spirit, is, in fact, the sole possible revelation of the depths of Being as historicity. In all modes of the Encompassing, the self can become genuinely certain of itself only as Existenz.

If we first contrast Existenz with consciousness as such, it becomes the hidden ground in me to which Transcendence is first revealed. The Encompassing which we are exists only in relation to something other than itself. Thus, as I am conscious only insofar as I have something else as an objective being before me by which I then am determined and with which I am concerned, so also I am Existenz only as I know Transcendence as the power through which I genuinely am myself. The Other is either the being which is in the world for consciousness as such, or it is Transcendence for Existenz. This twofold Other first becomes clear through the inwardness of Existenz. Without Existenz the meaning of Transcendence is lost. It remains only something indifferent and not to be known, something supposed to be at the bottom of things, something excogitated, or,

perhaps for our animal consciousness, something weird or terrifying plunging it into superstition and anxiety, a subject to be investigated psychologically and removed through a rational insight into the factual by consciousness as such. Only through Existenz can Transcendence become present without supersition, as the genuine reality which to itself never disappears.

Further, Existenz is like the counterpart to spirit. Spirit is the will to become *whole*; potential Existenz is the will to be authentic. Spirit is intelligible throughout, coming to itself in the whole; but Existenz is the unintelligible, standing by and against other Existenzen, breaking up every whole and never reaching any real totality. For spirit, a final transparency would be the origin of Being; Existenz on the other hand remains in all clarity of spirit as the irremediably dark origin. Spirit lets everything disappear and vanish into universality and totality. The individual as spirit is not himself but, so to speak, the unity of contingent individuals and of the necessary universal. Existenz however is irreducibly in another; it is the absolutely firm, the irreplaceable, and therefore, as against all mere empirical existence, consciousness as such, and spirit, it is authentic being before Transcendence to which alone it surrenders itself without reservation.

Spirit wants to grasp the individual either as an example of a universal or as a part of a whole. On the other hand, Existenz, as the possibility of decision derivable from no universal validity, is an origin in time, is the individual as historicity. It is the apprehension of timelessness through temporality, not through universal concepts.

Spirit is historical by representing itself in retrospect as a transparent totality. Existenz is historical as eternity in time, as the absolute historicity of its concrete empirical existence in a spiritual opacity which is never removed. But Existenz is not merely this incompleteness and perversity in all temporal existence, which, as such, must always expand and change into some spiritual totality, but rather

temporal existence thoroughly and authentically penetrated: the paradox of the unity of temporality and eternity.

Spirit in its immediacy is the *potential Idea*, whose universality unfolds into full clarity. Existenz in its immediacy, on the other hand, is its historicity in relation to Transcendence, i.e., the irremovable immediacy of its faith.

The faith of spirit is the life of the universal Idea, where *Thought is Being* ultimately is valid. The faith of Existenz, however, is the Absolute in Existenz itself on which everything for it rests, in which spirit, consciousness as such, and empirical existence are all bound together and decided, where for the first time there is both impulse and goal; here Kierkegaard's proposition, "Faith is Being," applies.

When Existenz understands itself, it is not like my understanding of another, nor the sort of understanding whose contents can be abstracted from the person understanding, nor a sort of looking at; rather it is an origin which itself first arises in its own self-clarification. It is not like sharing in something else, but is at once the understanding and the being of what is understood. It is not understanding through universals, but moves above such understanding in the medium of spirit to become an understanding without any generalization in the absolute present, in deed, in love, and in every form of absolute consciousness. It is the difference between the love of another, which I understand but yet never really understand, and my own love, which I understand because I am that love. Or, in other words, the difference between understanding other things by empathy as process or experience, and understanding myself as unique since I know myself before Transcendence.

When we compare Existenz with consciousness as such, spirit, or any other mode of the Encompassing, the same thing appears: without Existenz everything seems empty, hollowed out, without ground, fake, because everything has turned into endless masks, mere possibilities, or mere empirical existence.

If reason means the way to *totalities*, the life of the Idea, then it is the Encompassing of *spirit*.

But if reason means the pre-eminence of thought in all modes of the Encompassing, then more is included than mere thinking. It is then what goes beyond all limits, the omnipresent demand of thought, that not only grasps what is universally valid and is an *ens rationis* in the sense of being a law or principle of order of some process, but also brings to light the Other, stands before the absolutely counter-rational, touching it and bringing it, too, into being. Reason, through the pre-eminence of thought, can bring all the modes of the Encompassing to light by continually transcending limits, without itself being an Encompassing like them. It is, so to speak, like the final authentic Encompassing which continually must withdraw and remain inconceivable except in those modes of the Encompassing in which it moves.

Reason of itself is no source; but, as it is an encompassing bond, it is like a source in which all sources first come to light. It is the unrest which permits acquiescence in nothing; it forces a break with the immediacy of the unconscious in every mode of the Encompassing which we are. It pushes on continually. But it is also that which can effect the great peace, not the peace of a self-confident rational whole, but that of Being itself opened up to us through reason.

Reason is the inextinguishable impulse to philosophize with whose destruction reason itself is destroyed. This impulse is to achieve reason, to restore reason; it is that reason which always rises clearer from all the deviations and narrowings of so-called "reason" and which can acknowledge the justice of objections to reason and set their limits.

Reason should not get caught within any mode of the Encompassing: not in empirical existence to favor a will-to-exist which in its very narrowness asserts itself pur-

toward law and order or is identical with it. But it remains a possibility in Existenz even when these fail. Reason is itself still the only thing by and for which the chaos of the negative in its passion for Night preserves its mode of potential Existenz, a reason which otherwise would be surrendered to what is absolutely alien at these extreme limits.

V. REASON AND EXISTENZ.

The great poles of our being, which encounter one another in every mode of the Encompassing, are thus reason and Existenz. They are inseparable. Each disappears with the disappearance of the other. Reason should not surrender to Existenz to produce an isolating defiance which resists communication in despair. Existenz should not surrender to reason in favor of a transparency which is substituted for substantial reality.

Existenz only becomes clear through reason; reason only has content through Existenz.

There is an impulse in reason to move out of the immobility and endless triviality of the merely correct into a living bond through the totality of the ideas of the spirit, and out of these toward Existenz as that which supports and first gives authentic being to the spirit.

Reason is oriented toward its Other, toward the content of the Existenz which supports it, which clarifies itself in reason, and which gives decisive impulses to reason. Reason without content would be mere understanding, without any basis as reason. And, as the concepts of the understanding are empty without intuition, so reason is hollow without Existenz. Reason is not itself as mere understanding, but only in the acts of potential Existenz.

But Existenz is also oriented toward an Other. It is related to Transcendence through which it first becomes an independent cause in the world; for Existenz did not create itself. Without Transcendence, Existenz becomes a sterile, loveless, and demonic defiance. Existenz, oriented to reason

sees its own alternative outside itself, to which it is enduringly related, without either absolutely denying it as falsehood or appropriating it as its own truth.

The idealism in man finds the high standard where he seeks it. As long as we remain serious, we encounter the seriousness of others as important to us. The unconditionally atheistic is closer to the truly faithful than is thoughtless mediocrity. But the philosopher worries unceasingly about these others; he is touched by both churchly religion and by atheism. He searches them out in their highest forms.

It was not always so in the consciousness of philosophy. Medieval philosophy thought of itself as a *praeambula fidei*; atheism was absolutely false, an enemy to be destroyed. Descartes was a true servant of the church under whose conditions alone he wished to philosophize. Spinoza was without enmity to these alternatives, but also without recognition of their possible truth; believing himself in possession of the truth, he was as though blessedly at rest, moving out into the contemplation of God. Hegel translated everything into pure spirit, knew spirit in his own sense down to the bottom, worked out his Logic as a form of divine worship, and thought he was a believing Christian.

Today the question is posed more decisively, with avoidance no longer possible. Philosophizing sees in a more honest way that it is incapable of reaching the meaning of faith in revelation and, against it, asserts its own way of seeking God out of its own resources. It sees itself as imperiled from within by a doubt whose real success would be atheism but which philosophy rejects out of its own grounds.

To this correspond attitudes toward philosophy by these others. Orthodox religion regards philosophy as atheistic, while atheism regards it as a dishonest and impotent impoverishment of religion out of whose secularization philosophy rose as a moribund descendent.

Philosophizing however remains true only so long as it stays within its own independent and irreplaceable sources.

Philosophy is never a sociological power like churchly belief and atheism. Powerless, the spirit of philosophy emerges out of its ever-present source in the soul only to awaken the soul and let it participate in a truth which has no "purpose" and which neither serves nor opposes any other truth. Only in its own inwardness does it lead to an experience of the presence of the truth through the path of thinking out of the whole nature of man. It is only comparable to the prayer of religion; but at the same time it is less than prayer since it does not have the definite answer of a personal divinity, and also more than prayer since it is the unrestricted perception of all possibilities of the Encompassing and of their always historically absolute fulfillment in one's own Existenz. Only such is the achievement which is proper to philosophy.

Philosophical thinking however can seek its achievement totally otherwise in priestly religion itself, and then it sinks back into a *praeambula fidei*, imperceptibly preserving its own grounds for a long time in spite of that alien fulfillment which, in itself, would retroactively tend to dry out philosophy into a mere conceptual schematism.

Or, philosophical thinking can seek its realization in atheism which presents itself as the conclusion of a philosophizing which opposes revealed religion; and then, retroactively, philosophy as such tends to be annulled in favor of its finite knowledge of the world. Atheism however applies philosophy, now robbed of its essence, as a disintegrating force against everything permanent or authoritative, so long as this is not the authority affirmed by atheism itself of dominance in empirical existence.

Philosophizing which remains faithful to its origins can not really understand either revealed religion or atheism. Both, insofar as they are modes of thought, appear to develop their ideas in conceptual terms which seem to be analogous to those of philosophy and even for the most part borrowed from it. But in their inner activity, both

must work in a way essentially different from this apparent one. The philosopher is perplexed by what is not understood as though by something that decisively concerns him. He does not understand it, since in order to understand one must be it. The man who philosophizes can not know whether one day he will not betray his path and sink to his knees praying, or whether he will not surrender himself to the world in the atheism of: nothing is true, everything is permitted. And this, although he must look upon both alternatives as though they represented the suicide of his nature as eternally bound to Transcendence. In its incomprehension or in its concern over mere accidentals, revealed religion from the philosopher's standpoint has made a *salto mortale* into an inaccessible region from which philosophy itself must appear as something inessential. On the other hand, atheism appears to him as productive of adventurous claims about the course of the world, thoughtless superstitions, uncomprehended substitutions for religion, so that in its fanaticism it seems closer to the intolerantly battling religions of the churches than to philosophy.

Philosophy remains continually confronting these two other modes of belief into which it can change only by giving up its own resources but which it can ignore as indifferent or false only by losing its own life. Its life must ever remain questionable in order to become authentically certain of itself.

The philosopher himself achieves his fulfillment, not by anything abstractly universal in his thought, nor by a restriction to thought as such, but rather in his historicity.

In this historicity he has a positive relation to his own religious origins as well as to the universally penetrating fluid of atheism. Looking at the fact of atheism, he sees a decisive battle over the nature of man which can not help but change into something very different when God becomes alien and dead. Philosophically, however, this battle is not an external one against an appearance in the