



XII. Politics, Man, and Freedom (1967)

Final Lecture Given By Heinrich Blücher

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POLITICS, MAN, AND FREEDOM

We started this course with the observation that man has never been in a situation like the one he is in today. Philosophically, he does not know who he is any more and he knows that he does not know, which makes it even more tragic. Every precondition for the existence of a nihilistic age has been given, so in keeping with our task we have tried in this course to find out a little bit more about this creature called man, a creature that has always defined himself as being either made in the image of God or as being just an animal, but who now as a result of his development has suddenly become unsure as to who he is. We have tried to trace his major doings and when we looked at them we saw that he has created three kinds of instruments which distinguish him from all of the rest of nature, and they distinguish him, because in nature animals do not create instruments.¹ The first instrument we find is tools. The second is weapons (which in our time have outgrown the tools by far). And the third, the most dangerous instrument he creates (and must create in order to express his will) is words. So we began to trace his words, and in the process we discovered that words only represent something much more fundamental in man, namely ideas. For man is an idea maker and, as we found out, a quite reckless idea maker from which he has created for himself the situation he is in today. We discovered that we had to become critical of many of his ideas, and to become critical means first to become conscious of the meaning of words, because it is through this instrument that man has tried to change the world and to change himself.

We started with mythical thinking, and as our awareness grew we found out a few more things about this amazing creature. This creature is born with a certain consciousness of the world, himself, and of some possibility in the world called God. World consciousness, man consciousness, and God consciousness seem to be given to him only we can never know where from. This first stage (of mythical thought) lasts for thousands of years and it means that

¹ In other words, it is only by means of these instruments that man rises out of nature (i.e., is not in nature) that is, becomes human in so far as he is more than what nature defines him to be (as an animal). To say that man is only an animal is really to say that his primary task (becoming human, that is becoming a political creature) has not been fulfilled, hence the only possible characteristic that could possibly distinguish him from the rest of creation is absent.

all three of the above conscious substances are intertwined. In mythical thinking no real distinction is made between the world, man, and God. Then we saw the appearance of the idea of freedom and the substances began to separate. We traced this separation, first through the development of speculative metaphysics in Greece and then finally through the development of Buddha's philosophy in India. We saw how each step had been deliberately made (not in an evolutionary sense) but rather in the sense of a kind of self development that man brings about himself. We can check this, because indeed man has brought about this development, and so we can look upon it critically. Lastly, we have seen how all of this was necessary in so far as it enables us to arm ourselves for the age that we are presently living in, an age that has been called the time of wars and revolutions.² We have lived through at least two such revolutions and we have found that in our time almost all of our words have become nothing more than lies, and very often conscious lies.

With the help of the instrument of words man creates language, which is a precondition for the existence of truth, but he can also use words to create lies, the condition of untruth. The fact that in our age most words have become lies is due in large part to our political situation. If we trace historically this whole development we see that from a scientific point of view it has been absolutely glorious. Science has developed in a way that we never dreamt of and so in our relation to nature (regardless of the aspect we consider) we now find ourselves to be the masters of nature. No longer is nature (metaphysically speaking) the arch enemy of man. Another enemy has turned up, a much more terrible one, namely man himself. Man has proved to be the worst enemy of man, and we have to do something about this for if science is the most splendid success of the human mind in our age then politics is the biggest and most thorough failure. It is fantastic how we have failed in this field. Successively, constantly, and I am not speaking now as a political scientist but rather as a man who is convinced with Socrates that what we most bitterly need is the establishment of human relations amongst all of mankind, and it is the establishment of such relations that is the task of politics. Politics should be a creative activity, not a destructive one, and it must be our intention (from state to state to the betterment of state) to aim at only one thing: to meet humanity in our capacity as political beings.

Today, we have met humanity. Historically, this is the first time in the history of the world when all of mankind is present to us. Formally, whenever we spoke of mankind (as humanity) we only had some vague idea of what we meant. It was an abstraction. Today it is the most concrete thing in the world. The most lonely tribe in some isolated corner of the earth is visited and studied by anthropologists and everything is known about them, so in a way we do know the whole bunch that today calls itself mankind and we are frightened to death by it. If we look at it historically we can see that it has been our task to prepare ourselves for just this situation, and we haven't done any preparation whatsoever. We have that last glorious idiotic dream called the United Nations to prove to ourselves how unable we have been to unite anybody. It is the greatest symbol for the actual disunity that exists among nations that has ever been created and this situation has come about, because we have neglected our primary duty, namely, to care for the human (i.e., political) relations (that can only come into existence among men who are free).

² This prescription for the twentieth century was originally put forth by Lenin.

Ever since the Renaissance when we first established the idea (and finally came to believe it) that politics has nothing whatsoever to do with ethics, or moral activity, we have wavered from that duty and politics has come to be thought of as an activity in itself unrelated to other activities. The result of this is that we have produced men like Marx who basically had the same idea, and who have helped to create the situation that faces us today.

In order to see this situation a little better we must go back to the Greeks. It is really tragic how often one has to go back to the Greeks today. It shows our failure most clearly. With Plato and Aristotle we see developing one of the two lines of metaphysical thinking that western man has engaged in. On the one side (given to us by the Hebrews) there is an ever growing God consciousness against which is set an ever growing world consciousness (given to us by the Greeks), and although they develop alongside one another they seem to lead us in different directions. Man is an inbred, and incurable relationist. He is born with the curse that he must relate everything to everything else; it is almost a kind of passion (that lies at the source of all our creative abilities) but there is the danger that this condemned and cursed relationist will at any moment talk himself into believing that he knows an absolute principle, be that God, the world, or nature. He will then proceed to relate everything in the world in such a way as so it must lead to that absolute and in the process create a mess of a world picture. He cannot keep the system open as it should be and so is always tending toward a closed system (Weltanschauung) in which everything is related (and must operate according to a certain scheme). So we have here a kind of metaphysics of western nature where these two lines (speculative and religious metaphysics) separate and meet, but please note. in a way there really is no difference between science and religion. Both are out for absolute knowledge and both promise absolute knowledge. You might think religion a little weak when compared to science but the guiding idea of religion is that we can gain absolute knowledge either through revelation (as in the case of Jehovah), or through good works (as is the case with the Christian God). This knowledge will either be revealed to us, or we will gain it for ourselves (but as Karl Marx once wrote in an entirely different context) we will have it.

In the meantime we have discovered that the world and nature are infinite which means that this task (of gaining knowledge) can never be concluded. There can never be a conclusive and decisive world of science. We shall go on doing scientific work and discover more and more (and it will never be anything but more and more), yet it can never come to an end and can never give us any indication as to how we must conduct our life or what we must do. Neither will religion ever be able to give us that, or the idealistic philosophers, or any other metaphysician who claims to know an absolute principle or an absolute idea. The world of eternal ideas first given to us by Plato is a failure. They cannot help us, and the outcome of this has been tragic. Because as more human beings populate the earth and as they gather into masses it seems as if the degree of intelligence in the world diminishes. It is almost as if Zeus had only a certain amount of intelligence to give each of us, and the more people that are born into the world the smaller each of their portions become. We have insisted on this mass production of humanity, because we feel ourselves to be natural beings. We say to ourselves "the animals do the same, don't they?...(one of the reasons why we shouldn't, if we can possibly help it).

Since we have become a mass society we find that our population continues to grow as do those of the Indians and Chinese. We are almost as numerous as they, and of as little quality. In a very systematic way our words are becoming cheaper and cheaper and you cannot even speak of metaphysics any more, or of the things that others once thought were truly sublime. We have created instead a substitute for metaphysics, namely ideologies, where it is really believed that an absolute principle has been found (as in Nazi, Bolshevism, Socialism, Nationalism, or whatnot). It is all an attempt to organize and explain everything according to some fundamental principle which we are told we must accept but which in fact we should be highly critical of. Again, we must go back to the Greeks. Socrates would have counseled us not to believe in anything which we cannot examine critically and he started philosophy, because philosophy means nothing more than the willingness of man to live in the presence of what he does not know. Man is only too willing to live in the presence of what he does know, or at the very least in what he has just learned. But to live in the presence of what he does not know is an entirely different matter, and according to Socrates what he does not know are the highest possible principles of human action.

Philosophy then starts a certain line of development (beginning with Socrates) and that line is critical of any kind of metaphysical assumption whether it be scientific, religious, or ideological. It places the burden of proof upon the knower (i.e., "if you know such a truth, then please teach it to me") that is, it is in principle critical of all assumptions that pretend to be true. In our own day this business of criticism in the sense of critical philosophy has been sadly neglected. What is regarded as philosophy today is really only an organized assimilation of knowledge, or what is taken to be knowledge (a kind of general theory) which has nothing whatsoever to do with philosophy as it was conceived in the classical (Greek) sense by Socrates.³ Rather it is to Plato and Aristotle that we owe the equation of philosophy with system and the presentation of over-all views of the world. In Plato the real world is the realm of ideas (or forms) of which we are merely the mirror. This method (which is totally logical and trusts the human mind entirely too much) both overvalues and overstates ideas. We can indeed undertake to unite all of the phenomenal world into one system (as long as we can stand it, but eventually the inherent tyranny in any system will show itself.

Today we have become most disturbed. In this century of wars and revolutions we have discovered that most of them have been caused and conducted by precisely those ideologies that have taken the place of philosophy. If we really believe that we are fighting God's war in Vietnam (that it is a commandment of God, a mission that we must undertake in his name, to bring democracy to Asia) then this belief is also an ideology and nothing but an ideology. This very cheap perversion of religion (when we can no longer say as Americans whether or not we

³ In other words philosophy has become the handmaiden of science (or rather a kind of science of science as some of its more fervent exponents would like to make it) in so far as it sees as its main task the investigation of the logic of scientific statements (what does and does not make sense); a kind of general analysis of what is taken to be the most consistent theory that happens to be believed in at any given historical moment. It is not (as Socrates would have had it) criticism of the possible around of our knowledge but rather the assimilation of the data and statements of science onto a preconceived structure (Wittgenstein's grid) of general logic. Philosophy does not illuminate (Plato) the phenomenal world but rather "leaves everything as it is (Wittgenstein). It is the most passive of activities.

have done the right thing, when we can no longer discuss these questions in terms of their political context, but rather, as Cardinal Spellman, use God as an argument for political action) is a measure of the degree to which we have fallen down. In a way we have been forced into this position, because the opposing ideologies also talk about God. They talk about the substitute gods they have invented, the pseudo-scientific gods (nature, history) which are supposed to give us the key to the future (to march with us) if we believe in them. The future belongs to us, nature and history march with us (if only we will believe), and in the name of history and nature Mao Tse Tung is committing his senseless, idiotic crimes for the reorganization of society. Then, there are those idiotic slogans that the Russians constantly use (it is a law of history that an oppressed people must be made free), that they must rise up and displace their masters so that in the next moment it is they who will be cutting the throats rather than the other way around. That this has happened, that it has always been true, especially of those who like Karl Marx claimed access to a higher law and higher help in relation to which they occupy a privileged position, is irrefutable. The future marches with them and they march with the future (and we in our own turn say that we march with God), thus we (as human beings) have become the victims of two kinds of political unreality. History, God, and nature can never play a political role and we can no longer afford to permit them to play such a role, because otherwise they will destroy us. God does not want us to carry on war and we would do better to say to all of those who claim he does that they are blasphemers upon his name, because that is what they are. I thought I had seen the last of this during the first world war when our soldiers were forced to pray that God would be with them.[God was with the Germans, the English, and the French; they were all in the war and God was with all of them. That was the first time that we, of the younger generation, had learned to say to hell with God, when he is used in that way. It is the same with those who claim to have scientific insight into the future; who say that the classless society must come, and we must fight for it and die for it. All of the time they are presenting us with some higher reason why we must die, and I am sick and tired of it. I want to know what I am dying for; not some empty abstraction that happens to be a general belief at the time.

Again, I must go back to Socrates, because he never believed in such things. He did not believe in those high flown words with metaphysical meanings that we can never check. He separated himself from all ideologies of any kind, and he believed this to be the first step that man must take in order to purify his political atmosphere. Now that we have assembled all of mankind before us we can see something of the sorry state that our own politics have brought us to. Three quarters of the world lives in a condition of starvation or near starvation, and we know that no human being should have to endure such misery, because when a man must live under the conditions of an animal then he will behave like an animal, will become an animal, and there is no way out. All questions reduce to the fundamental one of survival (you or I?), and the result is war. We have to try to find ways to avoid war and no ideology can help us with this. On the contrary, the poorer the rest of the world becomes the greater the chances that revolutions will lead it into disaster at any price, or lead us into disaster by mobilizing it against us. If we look at the Moslem countries today we witness the most fantastic spectacle. The howling illiterate masses believing the biggest lies (the United States is attacking Egypt), and they are believed by millions and millions of Arabs, because they can only argue primitively. Whoever is against the Arabs is against Allah, and whoever is against Allah must be destroyed. That was the sense

of their religion from the beginning. We have had a very difficult time keeping the holy Rabbis in Israel from retaliating, however their situation is at least a civilized one. In Israel the Rabbis don't have that much to say, but in the Arab world the Moslem priests have a lot to say.

This then, is our situation. It is the very model of a mess, and what is worse we have decided to completely neglect the possibility (first given to us by the Greeks) of establishing a truly human community. Both lines of our traditional metaphysics (theological and deontological) have come to an end. The ontological ends with the insight that we shall never have complete knowledge of nature. The theological comes to the sorry end that many people start to think that we are fighting God's war, that we fight for him, as if he actually needed our help. We would surely need his help but at least one thing is certain: He doesn't need ours.

In this context our situation can only become more and more fanatical. The ideologies of the religious kind (which today rule masses of people) and the ideologies of the other kind (such as those that rule Russia and China) are leading us into disaster. The most consistent and consequential application of the ideas of Marx and the Bolsheviks, a dream that is almost inhuman, has now been put into practice by Mao Tse Tung. The dream to change man completely and make a new kind of man. What kind of purpose is that? If we ask from a humanistic point of view the question we have learned to ask every religion and ideology, namely, "will you please tell me how many innocent people have been killed for your God...how many more are you ready to kill"?. We can almost predict their answer. This question must be asked, because we don't want people killed senselessly any more. We ask them this question and they have already given us an answer. Mao has said that China is not afraid of a third world war, is not afraid of the atom bomb or the hydrogen bomb, because in a country of seven hundred million people even if a nuclear war takes place at least two or three hundred million will survive, and that means that five hundred million human beings will be killed in cold blooded murder. That is how they figure it according to strict scientific figuring, and I don't like that kind of scientific figuring any more than I like the kind of religious and theological figuring that we have witnessed. I want to leave God and scientific knowledge out of war. It is very good for creating weapons and we have been very successful in that, but this is not the way out of our situation.

If you want to say (as it is often said in America) that since the natural sciences have developed so fabulously, and the social sciences are retarded by comparison, we must develop the social sciences to be as precise as the natural sciences and then we shall know everything, you may. But we will not gain more knowledge by that. We will only become more confused. We will learn not how people should live together, but rather how they have tried to live together, and failed. We had better go back to the primary task of philosophy. The political and creative task of discovering formations and constellations (groups of people living together) which will guarantee peace and the humanistic development of mankind without any kind of superstition. They have all become superstitious today. Even scientists are superstitious, and I am not talking about practicing scientists, but rather those people who believe in scientific metaphysics. That means the belief that science is everything, that science can deliver all the goods, and strangely enough most of the people who actually believe this are not themselves scientists. Real scientists could not carry on their work if they weren't more skeptical than that. But the press has duped the masses with the most incredible scientific expectations, and the result is we are

faced with charlatans who get hold of these partly scientific, partly nonsensical results, and claim to have the key to all knowledge (what the next theory of history must be, what everybody must fight for, etc), and we see here the creation of a certain danger.

What this course has really tried to do is to raise our understanding in such a way that we can come to see there is no field of creative activity, no human faculty, that can exist and persist all alone in isolation from all of the others. They must be related, must be taken care of, and must help each other. In the time of the Greeks (before the death of Socrates) we see the strange fact that there must have existed the recognition (both in the Polis and in Socrates' own philosophy) that before anything else man, this incurable relationist, should take care to establish decent human relations (even before he establishes his relations to the gods or to nature). This task (the establishment of human relations) in regards to the above three powers, is outside of science and cannot be handled scientifically. It is the task of philosophy in the sense of Socrates, which means the decent and productive relations that man creates with himself. This is what Socrates calls the soul, to create a decent relationship with oneself, to insist that one is a free man, and to care for those higher aims of human life. These are not Platonic ideas. They are ideas that we can never reach, but if we ever lose sight of them and don't act in their direction we will find ourselves lost, along with our freedom, truth, justice, love, and piety.

Socrates was an utterly skeptical man. He did not preach, like Plato a little later, a doctrine of eternal ideas that can be learned from philosophers. Socrates knew he could not teach them, because he could not possibly know what they were. But he asked instead that we practice together. He said, in effect

Come. Let us practice together. I know that you cannot know the truth, but you can show it to me. Show me how true you can prove the truth.

To pursue and search for truth is not easy. It is a highly dangerous thing. The truth about the state of the Polis of Athens cost Socrates his life. The fact that he might die did not hinder him from following the truth and questing after the truth. It is the same with justice, with freedom, and with what he called those higher divine matters. These things will always be beyond the reach of man, but with their help we can climb higher and higher, because they are our greatest ethical capacities. We can never achieve them in any final sense, but there will always come a next time when for some inexplicable reason there is more justice in the world, and there can never be enough justice in the world; when there is suddenly a bit more freedom in the world, and there can never be enough freedom in the world; when there is a bit more truth in the world, and there can never be enough truth in the world. They are growing entities, not sods; unexplainable powers that help us if we follow them and if we try hard enough.

These three regions, namely, the relation of man to himself, of man to his beloved one (the person he fully recognizes as his eros and his friend), and of man to the possibility of reaching all of mankind (which is the hardest of all) can never be taken care of by science. In the same manner there must be the readiness of every human being to be a friend to man instead of being a wolf. It is an ideal, but the more we follow this ideal the better circumstances will get. In spite of all the promises that only if we change a few economic items, or change the world

scientifically, man will finally be happy, we know that on the contrary he will be as miserable as hell. Because we have already proved once in the twentieth century (against the former adherents of socialism), that not only unemployment will drive the masses into blind action, but luxury as well. We have only to look at our situation here in the United States. When human beings have too much wealth they will act in the most anti-philosophical way imaginable by taking drugs and indulging in other escapes. Socrates would have asked every one of them how they could possibly do something like that to themselves. To ruin and destroy your perceptions and then say that you want to pursue truth. Are you crazy? The experiences that you have you will not be able to communicate. They are not in the region of human speech. They are hallucinations, and Socrates was the first philosopher to stand up and say to the gods that we are all suffering from hallucinations and illusions. Mankind is permanently creating illusions. (This one tells me that he knows what justice is, another one that he knows what truth is, and I have to prove to them that it is all an illusion). He understood that the best possible result of a dialogue is always a negative one, namely, that we who think we know what justice is and what truth is, really do not know. This means to be able to liberate oneself from an illusion, from a lie, and then we can proceed to find out precisely what it is that we should call justice.

For Socrates, these goddesses, these metaphysical entities, these divine matters, have a strange life. Any time you pursue them, any time that you really think you have them, they slip out of your hands again. However in the process, they have grown. On each new day they mean more to us than before, as if we had to continually weave the clothes for Athena in Athens, and on every fourth year we bring her the dress we have made for her. In this persistent dressing up of those eternal ideas, those persistent ideas, lies the true meaning of our life. Let anyone come into the situation in a concentration camp where all hope is lost, and he will see that the religious man will still think of God, and the philosophic man will think of freedom, and they will understand a little better than what God means and what freedom means. Those are the hard teachers, and Socrates was the first philosopher who taught us to listen to them.

This unity of approach is what we have attempted here. These three creative capacities of this incurable relationist called man can never be attended too enough. Man can go on and on. He can rule nature by polluting the air, by creating problems and finding scientific solutions to them, but for all of that he can never build for himself the one thing he is not, the one thing that nobody is, but what he can become, because man is a becoming being. He is the only being in the world. There is no scientific solution then for the problem of philosophy; the problem of man's freedom and that he can develop from a simple man into a human person, into a moral person, into an ethical person, and that he can do this ~ himself. That is the task of philosophy. Everything else is just a general theory about what all metaphysicians can engage in. Socrates didn't have time for any of that. We shouldn't have so much time for it either. We should rather concentrate on the one thing that we cannot afford to lose, namely, our contact with the qualities required for the activity of philosophy: erotics, (friendship), and politics. If they are not related, as in our own time (and we have parted with them entirely), then we must integrate them again into some kind of human ethical responsibility, because otherwise they will tear us down. They will develop their own devices like those modern ideologies that try to fool us, and death will be our penalty for fooling ourselves and letting ourselves be fooled.

The break which we are witnessing (which is already present in the Middle Ages) has started us searching for more certain scientific laws that govern politics. Each time we have thought we discovered a new one we found that in reality it only drove us deeper into misery. Socrates wanted us to face our immediate human tasks first. That is why he said that he was not interested in nature or natural science. He could not afford it, he had no time for it, because all else to the contrary he was at least very very sure of one thing: Even if we knew the whole of nature and all of its laws we still would not know the answer to the question of what we should do. The answer to that question is not written down in nature. The answer to the question of what I must do is written down for plants and animals but not for man. We have to eat but no more than that.

"What shall I do",

the question of freedom, has been answered by all kinds of metaphysics and morality systems, and up to the time of Immanuel Kant they all had one thing to say:

"Thou shalt, and thou shalt not."

Commandments, philosophic moralities, ontologies based on nature, religious moralities, theological moralities all appeal to higher powers because higher powers are necessary for giving commandments. If we can imagine a higher power we can only draw from him commandments. Even the most abstract moral and ethical thinker of our modern time, Immanuel Kant, expressed his final solution to the basis of morals in the form of a thou shalt, and thou shalt not. He gives this to us as ~ - kind of an inner command so to speak. The only exception to all of this systematic and scientific moralizing is Socrates. He does not say such things. He just tries to find out by observing himself and others. He had a passion for man. He stuck by him. He wanted to find out who this strange being is, and what are his capacities? In the process he found out some very strange things. He found that man really can do either evil or good. He doesn't know what evil is, or what good is, but he can make little distinctions (as Zarathustra once said), and so Socrates took this up.

What is the better (action) and what is the worse? The notion of an absolute good is an idea of Plato's. Socrates never mentions it. His idea of virtue is to be good for truth, not, "what is the good?", but rather: be good for truth, or in the American sense, be good for something. He means to be good for truth, to be good for justice, to be good for love, and to be good for beauty. He never really uses the term good, because he does not know what it means. The language cannot express what it represents. Plato talked about the idea of the good (whatever that might be), but Socrates talked about something else. He might very well have said:

Be true to truth your life long. Be true to justice as long as they let you. Don't be mistaken. I warn you, it will be terribly dangerous. Be true to beauty. Be true to love. Be true to piety. Be true to those metaphysical, or divine matters, that cannot be done perfectly, because there is no perfection possible in human beings. But they can be done at least as much as we can dream of perfection.

It is this dream of perfection that exists in all of our arts. We cannot stop to dream of perfection, and if perfection exists it cannot exist for mortals. It can only exist, according to Socrates, for the immortal gods. He said:

"I don't know anything about (perfection), or why God is."

It is wisdom that Socrates is out for and wisdom does not mean knowledge. He is always translated as saying that virtue is knowledge, but no, wisdom is virtue and virtue is wisdom. With wisdom grows virtue, and with virtue grows wisdom. They really hang together. It is the only proposition I have ever heard that is made to free man under the condition that he can take it or leave it. No commandment whatsoever. It does not say thou shalt and thou shalt not. It says instead, you can, you might, you may, but only if you are intelligent enough to make up your mind. If you pursue this way you will become convinced. There is no commandment whatsoever, because Socrates is not the philosopher king. Socrates is just the philosopher citizen for man, and in so far as he considers the question of what a man should be, he believes that every man should be a philosophizing being. He should be engaged in ethical action, because ethics and philosophy for Socrates, are one in the same.

What he recommends is a philosophic life, and he believes that this might help us, because it appeals directly to the person, to the individual, and we live in an age that destroys individuals. Look at it yourself. You are represented by locked cards in some registry and people will look at the cards and say "yes, this is the guy". Nobody looks at you any more, nobody has the time. In a system of mass education it gets worse and worse. We become more and more like numbers and all individuality is threatened. A true individuality depends entirely upon the meaning it has in Socrates. Mankind can only change when man changes; we can only be changed if the citizens can be changed. It seems like such a long way to go, and we are in a hurry, I agree, but we could have learned something from this mess of a political situation that we are in. Namely, we should never have given up the idea that politics and political action should be judged by our ethical human interests. We were always so ready to give this up. The ideologies came and said that none of this business matters. We don't need free man, we need socialized ~ We need little cogs in the wheel, we need people who cannot think for themselves. It was exactly this way in the Nazi system, They could not bear the truth and that means that they could not bear the carriers of truth. They wanted to destroy all human values, and today the ideologies are destroying them. They are quite determined to destroy them, and that means that they must first destroy the evaluator, the only being that can bring values into the world, the only being who can conduct himself according to values, that can quarrel about values. And this quarrel about values...is this not the better justice?

"Is this not the better justice"?

Let us discuss it again. To let us get at it again. To let us become critical again. This activity should never cease, and that is what Socrates wanted from us.

Professor [William] Lensing, recently asked me what I thought was the greatest honor that could ever be given to a man. He talked about many possible honors (the congressional medal and so on), and people made up lists, and I said that the greatest honor that a man could ever receive

would be first, to have been sung about by Homer, and second, to never have been forgotten. We have passed the first opportunity unfortunately. Homer can never sing about us, but we have modern poets, and to be sung about by a poet is always a very impressive honor. Because those devils are impressed by a kind of genuine human experience, but you can never present that to them if they are singing about you. As for the second, we must look back to Socrates, because Socrates was a man nobody could ever forget. We are talking about him again here, and are trying to give a new interpretation of him in this century. We are trying to get everything out of him that we possibly can, because he is so far above our human errors, and this desire (to never be forgotten) is something that he shares with us.

If we take him up, he might even live longer.

He always stimulates our thinking afresh, and any new philosophy in the beginning must start with a reevaluation of our fundamental relations in order that we may be able to establish decent and productive human relations. We have to work for a new kind of humanism and to forget about everything else. To forget about the world and how it is explained, to leave the scientist to his work, and to concentrate only on this, our fundamental task. The scientists will never reach their end, but they are reliable, they will do at least that. What God wants of us we will never know. Let new theologians come and explain that to us. I think that today if we need a new idea of God, then it must be a much higher idea than the one we have been living with. It must be the idea of a kind of God that would never want to mingle in a human war, or want us to carry on war (missionary or otherwise) to make people Muslims, Christians, or Jews. We don't want that kind of a God any more and what we are crying for is a more human God, a more humanized God, a God who truly cares for us.

I am not interested in propositions for a new religion. What I am interested in is the pursuit, the eternal pursuit, of this thing called philosophizing. That means the pursuit of wisdom, and to get that you have to fight like hell to be able to live in a state that leaves you free. This political freedom is a precondition for every other kind of higher freedom, for every other kind of higher life of human beings, and it is this that makes us all politicians and philosophers. We need political freedom, and we should know why we need it, and what we need it for. Nietzsche once said, in a very ironic remark:

"I am not interested in what you want to be free from. Tell me what you want to be free for."

All right, we have the answer. Nietzsche wanted to be free from the will to power, which he proposed as a high metaphysical answer, and unfortunately he was right, because that is the easiest one. If we imitate nature, and nature is full of the will to power, then it is a law that everything wants to eat away at every other thing. But we thought we were human beings and that we could behave exceptionally. Nietzsche and Socrates have taught us that we can behave exceptionally. That is, that there are values that we must bring into the world that are not in the world, values that do not follow from nature, that we must invent, improve upon, and try to better.

Let us merely take the simple example of love. What can't we improve upon in our own loves, in our own love affairs? Love is inexhaustible as a richness of experience, as something that is absolutely unnatural. It is as unnatural as our politics, as unnatural as it would be to create a republic in which every human being was free, a republic that would guarantee his freedom, his life, and his pursuit of happiness. Nobody can figure out what happiness is (does what makes you happy make me happy?, and so on).

But one thing is certain. These highly divine matters, as Socrates calls them, which make us wiser and wiser and wiser without ever making us wise, without ever reaching the end, symbolize a real process of permanent growth. It is a process of permanent growth which made itself manifest long before the advent of our modern age. It is a real possibility we have in hand, a possibility of developing a better and better humanism, and of establishing the absolute inviolability of the evaluator which is man himself. It is starting from things like this that will be our task, and if we neglect it we will never get out of this mess we have brought ourselves too. In that sense, Socrates is a guide for our time. It is funny, but it is so. He is the only guide we can trust, because he does not promise too much. He only promises what every man can at least partly do, and that is to point the way, not to happiness, but to final self satisfaction. To a full life, and to a meaningful life. It is a philosophy of life that he presents to us. We have forgotten it, because we have always been ready to sacrifice life for some so-called higher ideal, and we should stop that, as the first step out of this damn situation.