II. Talk on the Common Course (1952)

[This talk is continued from the "Introduction to the Common Course." Both were typed together contiguously and bound in the same volume. The "Talk" is really more of an outline of class topics at first. The points gradually become longer until they start to read more like lectures than talking points.]

Section I

1. Why are we here? -- Why are you here? -- What do you want to achieve and how? Questioning analysis of the answers: Is that all you want to achieve? -- What could be achieved and how? -- What did you bring with you? -- what did you learn and why? Break down the answers into categories (possibly on black board), Establish differences and relations between Interests and aims.

What does it mean to enter higher education? -- What was unsatisfactory to you in your former education? (Perhaps that you felt submitted to a process of instruction.) -- Procedure of development as distinguished from the process of instruction. Relation between teacher and student in higher education: Collaboration which will ultimately make the guide superfluous. Why did you come to Bard College? -- Analysis of the answers. Possibilities of free choice.

Why is this a required course? -- Evaluation of previous answers by students and doubt that their ability to make a choice is sufficiently developed. Mention of costly mistakes in one's decisions. Those who are decided need qualification; those who are undecided need clarification. How can one come to a decision and how can one make sure of a decision? The possibilities of higher education in this respect. What role does education play in life? What is education?

2. First hour. Lecture: What is education? All sections together. Second hour. Discussion of the lecture in different sections. Possible reference books: Greek education -- Plato, Aristotle, Homer. Medieval education -- Thomas Aquinas, Dante. Renaissance education -- Lionardo, Castiglione, Luther, Erasmus. Enlightenment -- Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant. Humanist-academic education -- Humboldt, Schelling, Werner Jaeger's Paideia. Progressive education -- Dewey; totalitarianism.

3. Introduction to the principle of communicative education. If no higher metaphysical knowledge is given or revealed to us, if we do not have a system presenting the whole of human endeavors, the whole of the world and the universe in which we may feel ourselves as a whole, why then do we take this task upon ourselves at all? Why do we not accept the role of a part, instead of being a partner? Why do we not become specialists and forget everything else?

What is specialization, one-sidedness, partialization? Why can specialists so easily be won to totalitarianism? -- Because they lost their freedom, feel isolated in their specialty and long for unification. Specialization is productive if it is understood as concentration on one particular field of endeavor around which as many relations as possible are established to all other fields. The use of only one creative capability results in sterility; each ability must feed on all others and penetrate into them.

The purpose of the course is the study of the living interpenetration of creative capabilities and fields of human endeavor. The core is everybody, every free personality, and every single field of creative endeavor. The establishment of mutual relations between these cores and their mutual communication is the community in building.

But how are we free? -- Can we be free? -- How can we establish meaningful relations? -- How do we proceed to build a free and open world by a free and open mind, if no foundations are given? -- The foundations are the founding qualities of our mind itself, which can establish meaningful mutual relationships. The human mind is either free or enslaved, creative or operative, functional or intentional, projective or reflective, conditioned (and then easily enslaved by the rulers) or conditioned-conditioning and thereby self-conditioning.

The natural inquisitiveness of the mind: as it is suppressed by totalitarian education which tends to transform man into an altogether conditioned being; as it must be strengthened by our own education. The non- inquiring mind is processed by authoritative answers; the inquiring mind proceeds by questions. The teacher asks questions only in order to initiate the procedure of questioning. We have to question everything and everybody, and most of all ourselves; thus we put questions to our mind in order to discover our capabilities.

What kind of activities have you engaged in? -- What kind of experiences have you had? -- Break down the answers into categories and relate them; explain that our material here consists of our own experiences and our own activities.

Assignment of a short paper: Enumerate your experiences and activities, try to find out which relations exist between them. Describe shortly and give reasons for: a) Your most satisfying and most disappointing experience; b) your most successful and your most unsuccessful activity.

4. What and who made it possible for you to come here? -- How many people get higher education in this country? How many elsewhere? -- Why?

Higher education for all increases responsibilities. Higher education means leading a higher life. This formerly was the privilege of the few, therefore not all had the same duties and responsibilities.

Higher and lower life. Lower life means to make a living, to provide only for means of subsistence. Higher life means to make a life; to create life. The aim of higher education is to show how to make a life. Higher education formerly meant that those who were "higher up" educated the others, and took the responsibility for the "lower classes." We now have to

educate ourselves; no superhuman principle from "higher up" is imposed upon us. We make our stand and approach the community into which we have been born anyhow.

Who makes a living for you? -- Does anybody also try to make a life for you? -- Why were you sent here? -- Parents, family, relations we are born into-- How do they develop? -- How are mutual relations established? -- How do you carry on communication? -- Where do you come from? -- What kind of people are there? -- Whom do you know? -- What relations have you established? -- Break down the answers into categories; love; friendship; companionship; respect for fellow citizens and for elders; consideration; manners and conventions. Possible references: Plato on Eros, Aristotle on friendship, Declaration of Independence on respect, the favored love poems of students and teachers. Accepting the whole of a human being from within love; accepting a whole personality from without: friendship; accepting an independent person: political relationship; accepting an individual as a member of society; accepting strangers as co-workers.

Communicative mutual relationships. How to avoid dependence by establishing interdependence. Losing independence by making others depend on you: children, old people. The feeling of being independent and the possibilities of becoming independent.

Interdependence. What made it possible for you to go to college? -- Where does your father's money come from? -- What people are required to make his profession possible? -- The whole world and the whole development of humanity seems to have been needed to bring you here in addition to your own free decision to come. These are the human relations in which you are involved.

Did you establish any relations to nature? -- You drive an automobile, etc. What are you doing in these activities? -- We are related to nature by our body and we develop this given relationship into an interdependence through our mind.

So we find ourselves in the middle of a world, in full motion, involved in endless processes of a natural and a social kind, related to almost everything and everybody on earth. Into this world we were thrown and have to swim with it. In it we are determined by causes unknown to us and are conditioned and re-conditioned until we lose ourselves. The more we do to stay alive and make ourselves felt in this world, the more we get involved in this process. We acquire knowledge and gain intellectual power, but this conditions us only better for becoming mere agents of power, mere efficient contractors of energy, mere exponents of a will unknown to us. We are forced to become something that is estimated for its efficiency, whatever this efficiency may be, and we gradually lose our possibility of becoming somebody. We and our mind become operative. We learn how to do things and what to aim at, but we never learn what for and why we act and live. The better we learn how to do and to perform, the more we forget what to make and how to create. Yet this whole world process is the result of man's doing. But, how far is it also the result of man's making? While the rule of metaphysics made up the minds of men for them, it still made it up for higher and partly creative aims. Today we are threatened to have our minds made up for us by almost everything and everybody, except ourselves. To make up one's own mind is our only chance not to lose our personality. To make up one's mind is the

fundamental creative capability of man. By this, every individual begins to make himself into a free personality. This we call self-determination. Is It possible?

5. We are involved in a world process without being able to direct and control it because we lost the power to direct and control ourselves. The steady increase in our performing and executive power has been accompanied by a steady decrease of our creative and legislative powers.

But do we possess such a power of free control which is legislative in that it prescribes laws to the world? -- Are we possible conditioners or are we totally conditioned? -- Are we really active beings, or are we merely reactive? Has our thinking have some projective character or is it merely reflective?

The answers to these questions will never be provided by higher learning through which we learn to know what we are talking about. We have to turn to higher education if we want to find out what we are doing. We must inquire how we are doing at all.

Questions to the students about their opinions and experiences in doing, conditioning, inventing. Are we only related and involved in relationships or do we ourselves establish relations, bring them about, and how? In higher learning we ask: What is man and what is the world? Here we ask: Who is man and what meaning has the world? The question: Who are you? can only be asked if man is a personal, and not a merely natural being. Man as a natural being functions in functional processes. As a personal being, he is a beginner and an originator, engaged not in processes, but in creative procedures.

In this class we are all beginners. Here we must find out if we can be beginners in the sense of originators of values, builders of the world, and not mere performers of given tasks.

We ask the two fundamental Socratic questions, which were the questions of free philosophy before the beginning of metaphysics: Who is man? (Know thyself) and Is there meaning to being? (Passages from Plato). Since man is able to ask: Who is man?, he is entitled to freedom and bound to find out that he himself can establish freedom. By this question man distinguishes himself from being and transcends being. In claiming freedom man claims to be the judge of the world and of life. To this he is entitled because in asking: Is there meaning to being?, he doubts that being has meaning at all and yet requires it. Man must know something about meaning in order to be able to make this requirement. He asks of being to have meaning and thus manifests a blind, but free will. This may lead to open rebellion against nature; freedom is manifested by doubting. Man demands of being that it makes sense, that it has aims, that it harbors a telos, that it gives value. Thus he evaluates being. He doubts its value, he questions being and himself.

In our nihilistic situation this question is usually asked as: Is life worth living at all? In the question: Is there meaning in Being? is implied the threat: If not, I am going to destroy it. Man is liable to threaten Being by availing himself of his last freedom, the freedom of destroying his own being by committing suicide. (References: Ivan Karamasov; Albert Cemus, Sisyphe; L'Homme révolté), or by destroying the universe with atom bombs. In this situation the mass individual, despairing of the world and desperate about the loss of his own personality and

meaning, becomes ready to accept any pseudo-scientific ideology, no matter how insane it sounds, if it only seems to give meaning and value to life. (Kierkegaard: "desperately wanting to be oneself, desperately not wanting to be oneself.").

This nihilistic attitude is usually considered as the result of the breakdown of all metaphysical beliefs of the past. True, up to the 19th century the mass of humanity had almost always lived within an imaginary metaphysical system of values which explained the meaning of Being and the value of life. Myth, organized religion and philosophical metaphysics provided the answers in such a way that higher, transcendental aims remained alive, so that the individual person could find a way of life in which he would improve himself and feel himself to be of some value. Only the secularized, naturalistic or positivistic metaphysical systems, with their pseudo-scientific claims, deny personal value to men and abolish freedom completely. We therefore now witness ever renewed calls for a return to the older metaphysical beliefs. But is such a return possible? We had bad experiences with modern conversions. W. Chambers, for instance, is he now a true Christian? The only thing he seems to have accomplished is that he, who formerly believed that Stalin was a kind of God, now has come to believe that God is a kind of super-Stalin. Even if return were possible, is it necessary? Is there no possibility of advancing?

Section II

6. Test-discussion. Which beliefs have you held, rejected, corrected? -- Which prejudices did you share and overcome? How? -- What aims did you set for yourself? -- Which aims did you refute or revise? -- How did you do this? -- Did you ever experience the breakdown of things you believed in or cared for? -- If so, how does one regain a hold on oneself afterwards? -- By reasoning? By thinking? By adjusting to a set of experiences or activities? -- Assignment of short paper to describe and analyze such experiences. (It would be good for the teacher to have the first assigned paper before this session and to use it for the discussion. As much as possible, the discussion should be carried on from person to person; its result should always be broken into categories.). We try to evaluate the world and ourselves.

Now the second and more important reason for the present nihilistic situation comes to light. Modern nihilists who reject that world as meaningless and life as valueless usually forget to question the questioner himself as to his own standards of values and his own free attempts at doing. This is why nihilism is not philosophy; it neglects the power of judgment of man himself; it always measures and judges world and life by what they may give or withhold from man; philosophy tries to find out what man can give to world and life. The nihilistic approach is essentially the critical attitude and somehow resembles the way of a beggar who will always complain that he did not receive enough. Nihilism does not evaluate values; it is devaluation without any higher proposition. Evaluation of values is possible only through re-evaluation and creation of new values. If the (nihilistic) judge himself cannot conceive of a better world, he is not entitled to judge the world.

Ultimately there exists only one truly philosophical question which is threefold and indivisible like the unity in trinity: the question about the meaning of being, the value of life and the being of man.

Whenever men asked this one question in its threefold Philosophical sense, they aimed at the absolute and the eternal. And each time man reached an answer which discovered and established one of the definitive creative capabilities of man himself. Each of these answers manifests one of the essential qualities of human freedom, brings forth a creative capability, enlarges freedom to create new values and a new way of life in which life itself becomes more worthwhile living and the world more meaningful because of the meaning bestowed upon it by man. Evaluation engenders value-creating qualities.

There are only [a] few men in history who asked this kind of ultimate question and brought home these values- creating answers. We will consider the nine most significant ones, nine arch-figures of man, nine arch- fathers of the free personality. If it is true that their answers established human creative qualities, then we must all be able to check on them and to find these same qualities within ourselves. In this sense the study of these men, their lives and deeds and thoughts, may turn out to be a way of understanding ourselves better and better. We want to find out whether man can be free (whether he is a being that can be) and whether he can make his own being meaningful.

Most of these arch-figures never wanted to found a religion or establish a metaphysical system, and of the few who seem to have done so, this can be and has been doubted. However, since then, no religion has ever been founded and no metaphysical system has ever been established without the help of one or more of them, and these religions and metaphysical systems are the very essence of the cultural and spiritual history of Asia and Europe. In our time they all seem to have died or fallen down, but the cornerstones on which they were built still stand intact; the founding fathers are more alive than ever, the founding qualities they established are more needed than ever. They have become the builders of men, and that means the builders of builders. They are the only real high educators we need.

Assignment: Texts from Laotse and Buddha for next sessions. Lin Yutang, The Wisdom of Laotse, Modern Library, Aphorisms 8, 78, 77, 43, 38, 21, 17; The Buddhist Bible, ed. D. Goddard, Dutton & Co. 1952. The 118th Discourse, pp. 73-62. Text to be mimeographed, if necessary.

7. Sketch of the life of Laotse, which was in perfect accord with his teachings: He did not act except to help others; as legend reports, he wrote a book only to fulfill the wish of a simple-minded agent of customs whom he gave the book, since he always gave everything away. Like Buddha, Laotse led a perfectly contemplative life, and his answer to the ultimate question he derives from pure contemplation.

How does he answer the threefold question about the meaning of Being, the value of life and the being of man? Being is One and is in itself meaning; Life maintains and sustains Being, is the nourishing force of Being and therefore has value for Being; Man acquires his own value by joining the force of Life, behaving in accordance with the nourishing force of Being. By not

acting, man lets Being be and nourishes it; he avoids changing the world lest he bring it out of order and destroy its meaning. This not-acting is meant as an active furthering of life everywhere; this is similar to what Goethe called "active tolerance," by which he meant the furtherance of others in their own being. (Reference: Similar passages in Whitman's Leaves of Grass: "To water the roots of everything that grows."). Water is the symbol of the nourishing force; smiling is the symbol of human behavior in accordance with it. Everything good is done by water and smiling.

Human judgment here is an absolute Yes to Being, an absolute Yes to the value of life and absolute No to man's self. Man's Being consists in an absolute self- sacrifice to Being, in an absolute denial of the will for the sake of identification with Being; will must serve everything except man himself. Humanly speaking, this seems an impossible solution, and yet a religion was built on this teaching and men have tried to live according to it until our own time. This is the perfect religion of Peace; but not because it is a solution to certain problems, but because it expresses one of the strongest resolutions man ever made: will denying itself through sheer will-power. This may sound strange to us if we think of it as an absolute. In fact, one of the greatest creative powers of man was discovered and established here, the power of our will for self-denial. As long as free men live, the sun of Laotse's smile of creative benevolence will shine through life ever again.

A new meaning was created by man in answering the ultimate question for meaning, the value of life was enhanced and a certain kind of meaning put into the world. Relating himself freely to the whole world except himself, one man created the capability of establishing relations and transforming them meaningfully out of the sheer natural involvement in the world in which man is merely related. Life becomes pure joy in the unconditional identification with the All-life. Out of it has grown the great culture of Chinese painting and poetry in its buddhistic form as it was transformed and influenced by Taoism. Here, the aim is not freedom but liberation; not the world shall be changed, but man shall be liberated from the tyranny of his own will; it is the liberation of man from himself.

Buddha's aim is not freedom either; the world shall not be changed, it shall vanish. He too aims at liberation, but at the liberation of the self from the world. This answer is given out of pure contemplation of the world as it seems to be. Buddha's answer to the threefold question is an absolute No to Being. Being is without meaning and Life therefore has no inherent value; it participates in Being and consists of suffering. Against Life and Being stands Man as the only reality and the only bearer of meaning. This meaning is the self; the self is the only reality, everything else is maya, delusion, which results in vain suffering. Life in itself, if it is lived according to Being, has no value; but Life can be endowed with the highest value by man, if it is used as a procedure of self-liberation from the Being of the world. This includes liberation from the gods, all of whom belong to Being and are maya. When the highest stage of negation of everything that is reached, the self is by no means dead. Nirvana is not death and not nothingness, but the eternal bliss of the self alone with itself and moving only within itself. This has nothing to do with selfishness in practice, but is actually its transcendental form. The No of Buddha is as absolute as the Yes of Laotse. The power of saying No to the world which man has and which was discovered and established here forever is as great in its creativity as the

power of saying Yes. Laotse established the human capability of self-denial; Buddha established the human freedom of self-assertion, i.e. the freedom of man who can do without everything and still be. Here again, an active relation is established out of mere involvement in the world and merely being related. Buddha relates the universe to himself -- all the worlds and gods of India -- in order to get rid of them. Laotse discovered the social power of man. Buddha discovered the individual power of man. Both are individuals, not personalities, Laotse the social individual and Buddha the isolated individual; but by establishing the two poles of sheer will power and the absolute Yes and the absolute No, they both together have set the framework within which man can make a stand in the world and in Being, and thus strive to become a creative personality. They liberated the creative power of man by showing to which extremes of efficiency human will power can go.

We need the self-abandonment and the benevolence of Laotse as we need Buddha's intellectual self-concentration and power of self-determination. The 118th discourse in the Buddhist Bible gives us an opportunity to learn how self-awareness and self-control can be trained.

8. Discussion of texts. Question and answer period. Buddha's influence in Europe (the European pessimism) and America. How does Laotse help us to understand China? Comparison with Confucius.

Laotse and Buddha, two human individuals, have discovered that man can raise himself above Being, become the judge of the world, and take life in his own hands by creating values in life and establishing a certain way of life. They liberated themselves from the absolute involvement of man in the world, from merely being related and being lived; they overcame mere existence by making life meaningful and establishing meaningful relations. All this they did by relating themselves to a meaningful absolute. Through a decision for freedom, they established the human possibility of freedom. The same decision for freedom meant to Laotse the mobilization of man's active power to say Yes to the world, and to Buddha the mobilization of man's passive power to say No to the world. Laotse's Yes showed how much man can give to the world and Buddha's No showed how much every man (be he king or beggar) can refuse to take from the world and still add to the stature of his own being.

How about this Yes and this No today? Let us examine the Yes-sayers of today and summarize their answers: Conformism as the Yes to all powers that be. Let us examine the No-sayers of today and summarize their answers: (for instance, the use of the veto by Soviet Russia in the United Nations), ruthless use of arbitrary power. The modern Yes is no longer a creative power that gives to the world, instead it wants to receive from the world. The modern No is not a self-asserting power that shows how much man can refuse to take from the world, but on the contrary, it wants to take from the world as much as possible and deprive others. In their way they both cooperate and Laotse and Buddha are misused by both groups. (Reference: Nietzsche who feared that European nihilism may become active, the doing of No).

If we go back to the sources, we see that these present Yes- and No-sayers mean the opposite of what Buddha and Laotse taught. Both brought about the first dawn of freedom. They raised man above the world, related him to an absolute meaning, enabled him to establish meaningful

relations by making a stand in the world. Even though neither of them wanted to change the world, each one enabled man to take a position and thus change his situation in the world. Against this, we see that the modern Yes- and No-sayers try to submerge man in the world process; now man is supposed to shift constantly his position in terms of the situation until he is entirely "processed," instead of proceeding by himself; without being related to an absolute, he relates him-self to more and more relative things, until the devaluation of man, life and world makes everything "relative." Nihilism answers the threefold question by saying that Being, Life and Man are equally meaningless. It thereby destroys the human will which enables man to act and transforms him into a mere re-active being, destroys his capacity for conditioning life and world and converts him into an entirely conditioned being. This process of destruction is not beyond good and evil, but even beneath them, because the capacity of decision itself is annihilated. The fact that one can transform man into a being that lives only in relations and the relative and merely re-acts without ever deciding anything shows the infinite human potentialities for change without changing anything.

Metaphysics is helpless against this process because the metaphysical concept of man knows only human potentialities (as distinguished from man's capabilities); these potentialities, it is true, were thought of as having a divine origin and as long as the divine was firmly believed in, they always harbored capabilities of freedom. If the divine origin is denied them, they become what they are believed to be today. Metaphysics, by definition, could only hide but never develop a working concept of freedom, without which the creative capabilities of man cannot be discovered, established and maintained.

The distinction between Laotse's and Buddha's creative Yes and No and the nihilistic Yes and No is decisive, and yet, it is best summarized by what may seem to be a merely verbal difference: The creative Yes of Laotse is active, the destructive Yes of nihilism is passive; the creative No of Buddha is passive, the destructive No of nihilism is active. A passive Yes and active No - that is the perversion of nihilism, the passive death or active destruction of freedom. Passive submission to everything that is or active destruction of everything that is, both eliminate man's capacity to decide.

The man who discovered decision as a possible absolute, as an essential capability of man, was Zarathustra. He established it by his life and his deeds. We know so little about him that we do not even know when he lived, in 1300, 900, 700 or 500 B.C. His thoughts and teachings, as we find them in the Zend Avesta texts, are entirely submerged by the interpretation and additions of the Parsi religion, which was built upon them. (Reference: S.A. Kapadia, The Teachings of Zoroaster and the Philosophy of the Parsi Religion. London, John Murray, l905). But decisions need few words and the discovery of decisions needed even less. Two sayings of Zarathustra are enough: "I praise the well-thought sentiment, the well-spoken speech, the well-performed action." - "Speak the truth and learn how to handle bow and arrow well." (Assignment: Think about the meaning of these two sayings and work out a tentative interpretation.)

9. Discussion of the students' interpretations of the sayings. Summarize them so as to lead up to an evaluation of decision.

Zarathustra is interpreted as the man who established good and evil as absolutes and the Parsi religion is based on this distinction. He is interpreted as a metaphysician who claimed to know what the Good is or the idea of the Good, and who imposed on man the service of the Good or of God. He actually did no such thing, but it is true that such interpretation can be derived from him. He too gives us an answer to the ultimate threefold question: What is the meaning of Being? What is the value of Life? What is the being of Man? His answer is that either there is no answer to the question or that there are two answers: one says that Being is bad and meaningless and Life is destructive and valueless; the other says just the opposite, that Life is good, valuable and meaningful and bestows meaning on Being as the sustaining force of this world. The real answer lies in the decision of man, who must give his answer through deeds and not through words. Words are deeds, if they are true, because true words result in deeds. He who wants to speak the truth, must know how to handle bow and arrow well; he will need this knowledge. Man can speak the truth in absolute sincerity and then relate himself to an absolute which will enable him to establish meaningful and truthful relations, relations that make his life valuable and bring meaning into Being. But man does not know Truth, the absolute, and does not even have a definite idea of Truth like all metaphysicians do. The God of Zarathustra is Truth, but is not called God, but the "Truth thinking one." This God is placed so high above the world, that man can never reach Him and He does not care to reach man. Thus man, reaching out to the "Truth thinking one" but never reaching him, also places himself above the world, becomes its judge, that which God never is. Reaching out to Truth, man remains in the midst of the world, active here and now and aiming at improvement of life and world.

Laotse and Buddha had liberated the will and shown its power; Zarathustra makes the will free and creative by binding it to an absolute aim, the betterment of man, life and world. He claims for man the power of decision over value itself and places upon him the responsibility for whatever values life and world may have. Man does not know Truth, because he is not God, but man can be true himself and thereby establish truth on earth, Man can be truthful if he wants to be, he is a free being that can be or not be free. As distinguished from Kant's "categorical imperative" (which was conceived in line with the metaphysical interpretation of the religion of Zoroaster and the Hebrew-Christian tradition), Zarathustra's thought is based on a value-creating quality of man (as distinguished from the law- giving and law-abiding qualities of Kant's man), on a kind of creative impulse which speaks to life and world with the voice of another categorical imperative: You, life and world shall be good and true because I, who can make you good and true, have decided to do so.

This capability of decision is Zarathustra's discovery. Human will becomes free and creative by transforming itself, not into "good will" but into the will for the good, which is the will to be true. We have thus far worked with the threefold ultimate question. All philosophical questions -- questions concerned with ends not with means, with intentional meaning not with functional ideas -- are related to the one central ultimate question. Have you ever raised such questions? -- Which questions did you ask in your childhood? -- In adolescence? -- Are there questions which have bothered you again and again? -- (Summarize the students' answers, break them down into categories, enlarge them and make them more relevant. Assign to each student one question for which he is to work out possible answers). We saw that whenever ultimate

questions were raised in earnest, they were answered by the discovery of new values. What is the function of ultimate questions? -- Why can man raise ultimate questions?

10. Short discussion of the meaning of ultimate questions. Ultimate questions ask for the meaning of Being; do they not try to reach beyond the finite and indicate a discontent with the finitude of the world and human life? What distinguishes the finite from the infinite? Are they distinguished in quality? Are they not both temporal and spatial? Do ultimate questions aim perhaps at something beyond the temporal and spatial, which may be either finite or infinite? This something beyond the temporal and spatial we shall call the eternal.

Do ultimate questions attempt to transcend Being, as it is given in time and space? -- How is it possible to ask such questions at all? - What does the ability to ask such questions indicate? -- Who are we to ask such questions? -- Where does our mind get the notion of the eternal? -- Infinitude is only endless finitude; yet we possess the notion of something entirely different, which we call the eternal. But how can we even conceive of infinitude since we have experience with finite things only?

Let us start again with the question: Why are we here? -- In order to raise this question, we need the notion of Being, the notion of an I and the notion of situation, of self-location.

How do I know that I am? -- I know that things are because they act upon me, because I feel them and react to them; thus I also know that I am. Animals or even plants may know just as much. This knowledge needs no language and obviously does not develop a language. The very fact that I have a language to express this indicates that I know more than that I am. Knowing that I am, I merely know that I am something among other things. This never tells me that I am I, namely somebody, not only something. In Descartes' Discours de la Methode we find the greatest and most metaphysical analysis of the knowledge which I have of my own being. Descartes preceded by thinking all things out of existence and saw that when he tried to think thinking itself out of existence, he was still thinking. From this he concluded: cogito ergo sum, I am thinking, therefore I am. But in this sense, thinking is one sensation among others; it assures me, as all sensations do, that I am, but not that I am somebody; it assures me of my being, but only as something submitted to sensations, either some thinking thing or some thing thought about. Nietzsche rightly maintained that Descartes' argument never proves that I am, but only that thinking is going on and that therefore thoughts exist. Where do I find assurance for this I?

How do I know that I am a person, somebody, who has a name? The question of who am I can never be answered by replies which explain what I am. I know that I am I because I know that you are you. Persons exist as persons insofar as they mutually recognize each other as persons. A child goes through the experience of changing the mind of his mother; a person who has made up his own mind can agree with another person and through reason can be influenced by him. That is also how Descartes knew that he was he; this enabled him to bring a fully developed I into his inquiry, which then could not account for the I.

We learn of the I through and in relationship with the You. We learn to distinguish the I from the You, until eventually we are able to distinguish the I and the You within ourselves and begin to

talk with ourselves. I can face myself as a You. But is it perhaps the other way round and I can recognize you as yourself only because I can face myself as a You? Perhaps both ways are right; at any rate, they result in the same thing, namely that it is impossible to think of myself as an I without thinking of you as an I, etc. We can look at this relationship from both sides, from our experience of an external You or from the experience of an internal I; the link itself between I and You is unbreakable.

How do we know that we are here? Because we know that we were somewhere else before and will go some other place after having been here? This implies that in order to know that we are here, we must also know that we are now here. And this now could not be, if there were not a then which preceded it. And the same is true for the future when we shall be at some other place. Here and now belong together; we are always here and now wherever and whenever we are. We cannot be now without being here and we cannot be here without now being. And this seems to be true for all things, for all organic and inorganic matter. Everything that is, seems to be contained in space and time, seems to be spaced and timed.

Is everybody contained in time and space in the same way as everything? Are we only timed and spaced or can we ourselves do some timing and spacing? Without such capacity we could never understand why we, in distinction from all other things, know that we are here and now. Animals, some of whom have a very developed sense of time and space, "know" only that at some moment they are at some place to which they were driven. To decide when to be here and when not to be there seems to require a very different relationship to time and space.

(Question the students: What do the painters think of our relation to space? What do the musicians think of our relation to time? Are we able to condition Time and Space or are we wholly conditioned by them?)

Is this relationship indicated in human consciousness? Animals, too, are conscious. Is it indicated in self-consciousness? (This is the opinion of all Western metaphysics from Aristotle to Hegel.) But animals, for all we know, may also be self-conscious. All these categories are scientific approaches to Being, approaches from without and categories which we need for observation and reflective evaluation of scientific research results. They are not categories we live by. Philosophically, we must look at Being from within and think in categories we can live by. The animal, no matter how conscious it may be of things that happen to It, never becomes aware of Being as such or of the Universe; similarly, no matter how much self-consciousness an animal may possess, it never becomes aware of being himself.

The category we live by is an awareness of the universe and of ourselves; our awareness makes use of consciousness and self-consciousness and can distinguish between them. We can distinguish because we are distinguished from Being. We are beings who are above Being. This we call transcendence. If we say that man is a transcending being, we mean that he is not fully explainable by Being, not even by Being as a whole, as is the Universe. Because we are not wholly contained in Being, we are also not wholly contained in time and space. All other beings, except man, are determined and determinable by time and space. Only man is not fully conditioned by time and space, but <u>has</u> time and space; he can recondition time and space because he is neither. We try to overcome time by "making time," speeding up, etc.; and we try

to overcome space by "making a place for ourselves." (References: For time concepts related to this position, see St. Augustine, Confessions; Kant, Critique of Pure Reason; Kierkegaard, Concept of Dread; Bergson, Duree et Simultaneite; Heidegger, Sein und Zeit.)

According to Greek theory, the making of things is guided by an eidos, an idea which man must conceive first before he starts the process of fabrication. This idea is actually a free invention, an abstract time and space construction which man forms in his mind; out of it and according to it, he then makes and forms things. Modern mathematics, after having been liberated from all preconceived metaphysical notions which made mathematics purely reflective, has become intentional and inventive, working with freely constructed time and space concepts which philosophy is still unable to explain and which are called "models." Modern art has incorporated all kinds of ornamental abstractions and painters indulge freely in metaphorical space constructions. The same is true of modern composers with respect to time.

All things are conditioned by the situation in which they exist, they are part of various situations. Man is above situation, even though he is also partly part of a situation; within each situation he can take a position and thereby change the situation; Man, though partly located, is himself location and therefore can locate, make and organize space. He is only partly part of time, he is also duration (being identical or keeping his identity during a span of time) and therefore can make and organize time.

Both, having time and being above it, and having space and being above it, are united in the fact that man is a being who is present. Presence is what distinguishes the being of man from all other things; it makes him a transcendent being. He can make himself present everywhere in the world and at any moment in the past; he can even, to a certain extent, provide for his own presence in the future.

The experience of this human presence, which relates to man's fundamental attitudes to time and space, as distinguished from those of all other things, is the reason for the ever recurrent ideas and concepts of eternity. Man neither knows nor can prove the existence of eternity; yet, in a sense, he always lives in it.

That we are here and now means also that we are the Here and the Now, around whom space can be assembled and occurrences organized, around whom time can be gathered and events provoked. Through this activity and out of our own existence, which apparently rushes past us, finally dissolving us into spatial matter, we can make a bios, that is a life that has a consistency and continuity of its own. Consistency and continuity are not the same as meaning, but the prerequisite to it. Our existence, merely as it is given to us, does not contain them . Only because we are more than our existence can we create them while we exist. They are given to us not as existing entities, but as possible propositions.

Because we are the Here and Now we can reach over to the Now and There (television, which brings us the events going on now in some distant part of the world), or to the Here and Then (into our own history which took place here), or to the Then and the There (studying, for instance, the European past).

We relate, assemble, organize and choose. We establish our own relations, choose our own "relatives" among the dead who are still present among us through their works.

The reach of modern man is very long and wide after Western civilization has spread and established relations between the continuities, consistencies and traditions everywhere. We may lose this reach again. In order to insure it, we relate ourselves back to the great originators of human creativity; we thus free our- selves from the high servitude, into which our mind has been put during our metaphysical past, and from the low servitude into which we may sink through the pseudo-metaphysical concepts of our present time.

11. We are beings who are present in the world, and not merely there in sheer existence; we are not contained by, but are above Being. That is why we have time and space. Pascal in his reflections on human existence, thought that man as a being among beings was the most miserable creature of then all, and most easily destroyable; yet, at the same time, he found man greater than any- thing in the universe, perhaps even greater than the universe it- self, because only man knows that he will die. This knowledge of his own death is, as we shall see later, the condition sine qua non for human freedom. No proposition concerning the transformation of mere existence into a meaningful life could ever be made to man if he did not know that he has to die; he could not use even an infinite existence for the purpose of freedom. Here we need only consider the fact that the animal, which does not know that it will die, by the same token does not know that it will be here tomorrow, and is therefore unable to decide to be there and then; without knowing of death as the end of all future, man could not have a future at all; he could not have time and space and could not be present in Being.

Although we are transcendent, we can never know what a transcendent being actually is, we never know its essence. The reason for the necessary "ignorance" is that while we have essence and existence, we are not essence and existence, but transcend both. The essence of man, the what he is, escapes all definitions because he is by definition more than any What. Of man we cannot ask: What are you; we must ask: Who are you? The essence of any human being cannot be determined because it is capable of constant self-determination. Everything that is, man can approach scientifically, except himself. Everything that is, has definite potentialities, possibilities, qualities; but man is a being of free creative capabilities which make these potentialities and qualities possible. Certain sciences, such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, deal with man and they can help us orient ourselves in the world. But if they try to rule man and determine his capabilities scientifically, they assume that he is not free; and this assumption does not follow from science, but is a metaphysical hypothesis which destroys human freedom and man himself. The uniqueness of the human being among all other beings and things is the profoundest reason for the establishment of equality. Equality is not a fact which I can prove or disprove, observe or fail to observe; equality is a free proposition of man, founded on the uniqueness of man in Being. Here lies the reason why since its earliest memories, mankind (not counting individual exceptions of abnormal people) has always considered murder with such great horror. Totalitarian regimes have succeeded in overcoming this horror and made mass murder everyday occurrences. They probably could do this only because for the first time they have destroyed all awareness of human uniqueness and freedom.

We can decide to be equals because of this transcendent quality of uniqueness. This brings with it the singularity of every free personality. In other words, equality based on human uniqueness is possible only as equality of diversity. It is one of the creative procedures of freedom to establish equality in diversity and to develop both, diversity and equality, at the same time. Equality becomes an instrument of tyranny if one tries to make everybody like everybody else, to level everybody down to a common denominator. The more we lose our distinguishing qualities and try to be like everybody else, the more we shall in the end try to distinguish ourselves from all others through exercising certain performing powers over them -- money, standing, administrative power, etc. In such a society those who are personally least distinguished will always eventually prevail. This was true for the two outstanding "mediocrities" of our time - Hitler and Stalin. Once true equality, the equality in diversity, has been abolished, the fake equality of everybody like everybody else soon dies out too. After thousands of years of "struggle of the sexes" we have finally come to an equality of the sexes, with the result that we already forget their natural difference, and we treat women like men. If this process goes on, the "struggle of the sexes" will become even more merciless than ever before precisely because it has become almost sexless.

The struggle for equality among the sexes was long and difficult because here no substitute for equality in diversity seemed even possible. And it is here that man first became aware of his creative capability to establish equality at all. How this was done can still be seen in that much neglected story of man's creation in Genesis, in which we read: "God created man in his own image; male and female created He them." We do not know who wrote this. (Perhaps the author of this story is Abraham). But we do know that this unknown man, if we knew him, would belong among the founding fathers of freedom and creativeness. This is not true of the other Biblical author, whose story of the creation of man has always prevailed, and who tells us that God made woman out of man's rib because the bored male needed a companion and (later) a servant, who (according to Milton) must adore God in him, the male being the only one who was permitted to adore God Himself. Our unknown man, on the contrary, must have known that an Adam whose only companion was a being inferior to himself could never be free because he would at once get involved in the vicious circle of servant and master, in which the servant is always in a sense the master's master. He must therefore have understood that the attribution of such an act of creation to God meant accusing God of having created man as an unfree being. He, for the first time in history, was able to conceive of a God who could create a creative creature, i. e. conceive of truly divine creation which must transcend all creative capabilities of man himself. This unknown author must also have understood something of the wisdom of God, Who created a free creative being who is never able to know himself as a free personality without the existence of his You. When God created man, he could only create "them," man and woman, who are absolutely equal by being unique as persons and who are at the same time absolutely different from each other and irreplaceable.

The uniqueness of each human being, as conceived by the unknown author of the first chapter of Genesis, has prevailed only twice in the recorded history of mankind, once during the period of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and once again in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

We do not know if the man Abraham, whose actions are described in the Biblical stories, as a continuous biography of one consistent personality ever existed, although it is almost impossible to think of this figure as the product of mere imagination. Unity between thought and action, it is true, is the hallmark of each of our great originators. Yet nowhere else is this unity expressed chiefly in terms of action so that a whole pattern of thought is clearly revealed through action. Because of this unity, in which action has the priority, the author of the Abraham stories could only have been a man who was able to describe the deepest thought by inventing action. This man then would have been like Abraham himself; he would have been one of the original thinkers who distinguished themselves from all later metaphysicians by saying: "What I do, you can do, if you want to," and not: "Do as I tell you." It is highly improbable that an author who expressed thought exclusively in terms of action would have lacked in his own actions the quality of his own thoughts. The question therefore whether the man Abraham ever lived or whether a poet once created this figure is of no relevance to us. The specific unity of thought and action in the Abraham stories could as well be achieved by an author, who, starting with thoughts, invented for them the story of an acting man as a historical figure who revealed his thoughts in his actions. It is always the same Abraham we deal with, the man who lived the most exemplary life ever recorded in history.

For our philosophical purposes, Abraham, the man of thinking action, is a free creative thinker. We want to find out how he answered our threefold ultimate question and which creative capability of man he discovered. However, one obvious obstacle presents itself: Abraham was a religious thinker. The question arises: Is there such a thing as free creative religious thinking that could meet our philosophical requirements? We shall postpone this question for the time being. One thing is certain: if a creative religious capability of man exists, it will have to stand the test of free reasoning, which is the test of philosophy; no assumption of religious belief or metaphysical speculation which cannot be accounted for in free reasoning can be permitted. Every concept of God based on preconceived belief has to be discarded because it does not result from free religious thinking but from certain metaphysical or theological speculations in terms of revealed truths or fundamental assumptions.

Not only Abraham, all our originators were also religious thinkers. Do we therefore have to discard them as we discard the metaphysician, the theologian and the believer because their teachings are based on assumptions?

There exist nine concepts of God without any such assumptions. They are the concepts of our originators and they are relevant for believers and nonbelievers. These spring from their thoughts, but transcend these thoughts in a final vision of a possible God; they are the end, not the beginning of their thinking. We therefore start with a consideration of these thoughts without at first taking into account their concepts of God.

This approach seems almost impossible for the Abrahamic stories because Abraham was the man who walked and talked with God and God cannot be eliminated from a single of the stories. However, this God of Abraham is a very curious God. Abraham, who always expresses his thoughts in his deeds, talks with God as though He were an imaginary figure on Whom a solitary thinker calls for help in the conviction that God does better than he himself. The God of Abraham would have pleased Socrates because Abraham, a man, could argue and reason with

God; God listens to reason and even concedes certain points to man. (Genesis, ch. 18, 20 ff., story of Sodom and Gomorrah). Abraham's God is engaged in the same task as Abraham himself: the establishment of righteousness on earth. He does not command; He gives advice and praise. And He keeps faith. God here is evidently a portrait of Abraham himself; it is as though Abraham is talking to the You within himself whom he identifies with God. This God cannot be seen and does not perform signs and miracles like the God of Moses. He tells Abraham what he is going to do (cf. Genesis, ch. 18, 17) and listens to reason. Deeply in thought, Abraham walks the earth with his God; they are thinking together. Abraham's concept of a transcendent personal God is evidently made in his own image, after the likeness of man. This concept is a model of man's highest creative abilities. There is only one way communication between a free personal God and a free reasonable man could possibly come about and be satisfactory to both - a communication in thought and in thinking. In order to find out whether Abraham's thoughts are valid in themselves for believers and nonbelievers alike, we assume that his God is his imagined thinking partner.

The two greatest marital stories in literature are stories of mutual faith. They are Homer's story of Ulysses and Penelope and the Biblical story of Abraham and Sarah. There is the man Abraham, living under patriarchal conditions with his wife, Sarah, who "bare him no children," and having children therefore by Hagar, his wife's maid; but Abraham is not satisfied because he wants a child by this one barren woman who is his wife. Although he himself almost becomes reconciled to her condition, he still desires the child more for her sake than for his own. When their child, Isaac,is born, he is the beloved son of the beloved wife. It is no coincidence that the sane man who for the first time conceived of a free personal God became fully conscious of himself as a person through the recognition of his wife as a person; from now on he could discover and respect the same quality in every human being. "Male and female created He them" - Abraham knew that he was he, because he understood that she was she; he remained himself by respecting her as herself, and everybody else as himself or herself.

The conclusion to be drawn is that this transcendental interdependence of persons is a creative action: Abraham begins to guarantee the freedom of other persons. For this purpose the man of peace even takes up the sword and handles it well. (Genesis, ch. 14, 12 ff.).

Abraham and Ulysses are perhaps the two greatest characters known to us. What distinguishes these stories from all others is the overwhelming omnipresence of the central figures. (Reference to the category of presence as discussed above.). This is chiefly shown in the description of the great impression they both make on other people. (Comparison of such situations in the Bible with those in the Odyssey). This impression reflected in the reaction of others brings them to life. Their appearance gives testimony to a consistency and continuity of life, whose end result we call character and which stands there, like a great piece of sculpture hewn out of the given material of mere existence. (Refer to the categories of consistency and continuity as related to time and space.).

What is character? (Discussion of our use of the word in everyday life. What is a character on the stage? Shakespeare's characters. What do we see in the appearance of a human person? Character-mask. Character and type. Character types.). All these uses of the word character indicate the various ways a character shows itself so that we can perceive it from without; this is

the scientific, but not the philosophical approach. None of these terms helps us to understand what character is. Even the greatest character in literature, Homer's Ulysses teaches us only the appearances of character, its impression on other people, its ways of dealing with them. It does not show us what character is or how character is developed.

The word character is of Greek origin and means that which has been coined, and therefore, to become characteristic of something. In this sense, every thing, every animal, every human being can have a character; it is his or its individuality. But the Greeks still had another word for what we call character: the word ethos, from which our term ethics is derived. In one of his great flashes of thought, Heraclitus states: "Ethos -- man's demon," (Diels, Vorsokratiker, B 119; translation quoted from W. Jaeger, Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers.). In the context of Heraclitus' philosophy this can mean: No demon, neither a ghost nor a god, possesses man and is his fate; if man is possessed and a fate prepared for him, then it is only because his ethos, his character, developed through blind reaction to conditions; but man must not be possessed, his ethos does not need to be a demon; man can possess -- form and transform - this character of his by the creative power of logos, as it was discovered and established by Heraclitus himself, the great thinker of Ephesus.

While we think that Heraclitus' claim is right in the sense that the power of logos can be helpful in the formation of character, all experience points to the fact that this is not the specific and generally valid character-forming force. This force was discovered and established by the only free ethical thinker we know of: Abraham. It is the creative power of faith.

Abraham has been called the man of God and the man of faith; he became the man of the faithful God and of the God of faith. Abraham and his God together are engaged in the task of establishing faith on earth. Righteousness grows out of faith. Since Abraham and his God are only reflections of each other, we shall understand Abraham better by considering the chief difference between his God and all the other gods before him as well as many after him. All previous gods were immortal and infinite and not concerned with time; time meant nothing to them even though it could move indefinitely in circles around them. Abraham's God created a world with a beginning in time; He is a beginner and He wants to accomplish something that can only be accomplished in time and by timing. This God has a task and expects man to help him with it. God is concerned with the continuity of mankind and its consistency.

These traits ascribed to the God of Abraham show us, as in a mirror, Abraham's own distinguishing features. Abraham is a beginner who got himself out of his country and from his kindred (Gen. ch. 12, 1), who begins a new life, takes his own time and discovers his own space. He is the beginner of a new family, a new tribe; the beginner of a new way of life, the establisher of new, unexpected relationships with strangers. Like his God, he starts from the present, the here and now, and reaches out into time; thus he can distinguish and at the same time unify past and future. Abraham may not be the father of mankind; he certainly is the father of historical mankind.

Where does this creative concept of time come from? How did Abraham conceive of it? All the metaphysical and pseudo-scientific definitions of the "nature" of man tell us what man is, define his essence, and thereby at once deprive man of his freedom, which depends on continual

self-determination. Among these definitions there is only one which is self-defeating in this respect and that is Nietzsche's definition of man as "an animal that can make promises." It is self-defeating because an "animal" or even an animal (the soul as a metaphysical supernatural entity) which possesses a "nature" could only do what it has to do according to this nature; that is, it could never promise, it could never determine itself and other things. Abraham corresponds precisely to Nietzsche's definition of man: he is the man who constantly makes promises and keeps them. Nowhere else is the unity of thought and action as close as in the relationship between making and keeping a promise. Here the thought, the making of the promise, is no thought if it is not followed by the deed, the keeping of the promise; whereas the deed itself does not exist without previous thought of it. Abraham is the man of promises; that is the reason why his thoughts can always be translated into immediate actions and why his actions always contain his thoughts. Abraham's God is a God of promises; because Abraham makes and keeps promises, God promises him many things.

Abraham was no prophet. Sometimes he guessed what was going to happen, either because he knew what happened before or because God told him what He was going to do; but there was never any certainty about these guesses because this God, like Abraham himself, had to make up His mind in every single case. Abraham, therefore, could not pretend to know the mind of God - nor for that matter, the logic of eternal ideas. He did not belong to the Biblical prophets and does not belong to the modern prophets, who, like Marx, pretend to know the iron laws of nature or history. He did not predict, he did not teach, and he did not convert. He only showed what man can do. He knew of the future insofar as he knew that he could make true his promises. Unlike the prophets, therefore, he never became a slave of time, subject to the future which they predict, engulfed in the stream of God's providence, or of becoming, or of nature, or of history, which they pretend to know but which they cannot avert. Abraham has time, is the master of time, because he makes promises for the future and keeps them; the more promises he makes, the more he becomes the master of future time. In this sense, he predicts what is going to happen; it is as though he said: This will happen tomorrow or Abraham will not be.

If we consider the historical conditions under which Abraham lived, the nations among which he moved and with which he and his small tribe had to get along, the risks involved seem simply fantastic. The historical circumstances explain a good deal about the impression he made on others; he must have left them gasping with surprise, probably including his own relative, Lot, when he offered him his terms for a division of the land between them. (Gen. ch.13). There is the story of King Melchisedek, who saw Abraham as the "priest of the most high God" (ch. 14, 18) -- that is the unknown highest God for whom the Egyptians were searching -- because how could a man take such risks without higher, unknown protection?

The more we consider the circumstances surrounding our story, the less we can understand how a man could do all this without God keeping His hand over him. As a result of Abraham's life, the acceptance of Abraham's God seems almost a matter of course. Yet none of our originators who acted and thought as free personalities took a lesser risk. Solon was rejected and overthrown by the Athenians, Heraclitus was hated and cursed by the Ephesians, Socrates was forced to drink poison, and Jesus of Nazareth was crucified; the others, including Abraham himself, were probably just lucky.

All these men, and Abraham the first among them, were without fear (in the singular), although he, like the others, was often afraid. Fear in the singular, fear as a basic condition of human existence, can be overcome only through the creative joy of life. What made Abraham fearless was that he concentrated on the creative procedure of establishing faith among men. Nothing could keep him back, as nothing could keep Socrates, Jesus and the others back.

At this point, we must pay attention to the remarkable absence of any concept of sin, especially original sin, in the Abraham stories. Except for the original teachings of Jesus, who tried to destroy this concept, this is the only part of the Bible where sin does not play a decisive or even a major role. God destroys unfaithful people and rewards faithful ones; that is all. At their own risk people can act faithfully or unfaithfully; they are never depraved by original sin. (The few instances which seem to be exceptions to this do not fit into the Abraham stories. Abraham clearly conceived his task to be the establishment of faith on earth; he never thought that this was impossible on account of the degradation of man, nor did he conceive of a better hereafter where his task could be fulfilled.).

No less remarkable than the absence of the concept of sin in a religious thinker is the absence of any attempt at conversion. Abraham never tried to impose faith and he never preached faith as a duty for all men. Faith for him was not a duty but the highest human privilege, which required freedom; to impose faith would have seemed to him a contradiction in terms, if not an outright lie. It was Moses, not Abraham, who established faith in the form of a command -- as Plato established reason as a commanding force and as St. Paul made a command out of love; against them stand Abraham, Socrates and Jesus. The fundamental discoveries of the originators concerning the creative abilities of man are meant to be true for every human being, to be used by everybody who is a person. In reconsidering these discoveries, everybody can find out who man can be and how he can be. But nothing more.

Who is man? Man as a transcendent being is undetermined and therefore entirely incalculable, unpredictable and unreliable. Since men live together with their equals, since they must cooperate with their fellow-men, if they want to survive at all, they must learn how to become calculable, predictable and reliable, at least to a certain extent. In other words, man must develop character. Character can be developed by others who determine and then proceed to form certain desired character types. It can also be achieved through self-determination. Abraham has designed a procedure of self-determination which is identical with free ethical creativity. All formation of character by others is possible only because of self-determination; those who determine others and form character types must be capable of self-determination themselves. Man has a strong longing for character and if he is not given the opportunity for self-determination, he will easily submit to being determined by others rather than not to be formed and determined at all. The individual is born formless and longs for form and character. Modern mass-individuals are often quite willing to submit to the most brutal methods of character formation in order to escape the terrible boredom of their own formlessness. Longing for an identity, such as only character can ultimately give to human beings, they may submit to being branded with almost any mask in order to have a face. Morals are one of the more human forms of forceful character formation; as such, they are the falsification of free ethics, which consists of self-determination.

Abraham, to whom God said: "Get thee out of thy country," started out into free space, one man alone with his family and his belongings. A great self-reliance was required for this first decision, with which the story begins. From then on, he gradually learned to trust himself, to have faith in one human being: himself. This is the beginning of self-determination. Instead of trusting only himself and distrusting everybody else, he tried to trust other people as well and to have faith in them. This means that he did not think of himself only as a self but as a person; and therefore could meet other people not only as (selfish) selves, but deal with them as persons. In other words, he did not simply "consume" and live on the quality of self-reliance, such as nature or God had given to him; he transformed this self-reliance into a productive capacity. His procedure consisted in making covenants (giving and receiving promises) first with his wife, his son, his other wives and their children, then with the kings and people whom he met, and finally with God. (And Abraham's God, it should be remembered, was a God of faith and a maker of covenants himself, who had created man in order to establish faith and make covenants.

There are a few incidents in the Abraham stories which throw some light on the difficulties involved and Abraham's methods to overcome them. There is the story of Abimelech (Gen. ch. 21, 22 ff.), which tells how Abimelech saw that God was with Abraham and that he wanted to make a covenant with him. During the negotiations, Abraham tells Abimelech that a well of water has been "violently taken away" from him, in other words, that a previous agreement between the two tribes has been broken. The same story is told at some greater length of Isaac in Genesis 26, 1-3l. There we see clearly what actually happened: Abimelech was frightened by the growing prosperity of the Abrahamic tribes, he therefore broke the first covenant and sent them away. They departed peacefully and without breaking any of their own promises. Then Abimelech called them back, probably very surprised, and said to them: "We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee; and we said, let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee." Now the initiative was with Abimelech; by not breaking his own promise despite the provocation, Abraham had not only taught his neighbor the value of covenants and promises, but how to enter into them freely and voluntarily.

This was Abraham's way of convincing people of his own faith and of establishing trust on earth. Like his God, he brings consistency and continuity into the dealings of people and their living together; he makes it possible for everybody he meets to join him voluntarily because he does it freely and respects the freedom of the others. His thoughts design a continuous and consistent line of projects, all of which aim to establish and develop faith as a value- creating capacity of man. This free ethical thinking, like all other kinds of creative thinking, is projective and planned; it is reflective only to the extent that some reflection is needed for the formation of a properly designed project.

The various kinds of creative thinking with which we are concerned here are established by a decision through which man makes up his mind that this is what he wants on earth. But they are not isolated capacities, although they are clearly distinct from each other. Between them exist definite interrelations and interdependencies. If a man decides in favor of one of them, he needs the assistance of all the others in order to form them into a certain constellation. Each of them, however, has its own conditions according to which it can move and its own specific terms in which it can proceed. These different terms have one common denominator: none of them is

purely theoretical in the sense that it can be used to contemplate and explain things that exist; on the contrary, each of them sets forth a proposition which is, so to speak, offered for consideration and contains a project. Each of these powers of thought creates according to its own proposition and its creations can only be properly understood in its own terms; terms pertaining to another form of creativity can be used only if the fundamental constellation grouped around the chief creative power in question is properly grasped. A work of art, for instance, cannot be understood in terms of science; aesthetics can be called upon to help understand art only if we know what the relationship between artistic and scientific creativity is.

The thinking will of Zarathustra is free and intentional; it proceeds in terms of decision, that is, it lives in the alternative of either - or. It thinks by projecting situations which require that man take a position and make a decision. The ethical thinking of Abraham proceeds in terms of repeated tests; it also projects situations, but the position which man should take in these situations is decided upon by the character of the person; the situation is projected in order to test character, to see if man can live up to his own character under extreme circumstances.

Let us once again remember that we do not know whether Abraham is an historical figure or whether he owes his existence to the imagination of a great poet, and let us ask ourselves once more which is the more probable hypothesis. If we assume that the story was invented by an ethical thinker, we see that it proceeds the same way actual ethical thinking would have proceeded: it is the story of repeated tests and describes test-situations. (Indicate and enumerate such situations.). The greatest of them is the supreme test when God tempts Abraham by requiring the sacrifice of Isaac. All these stories, culminating in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, make one constant whole. However, if we look a little closer into this, we become aware of one serious inconsistency: Abraham, who is so much in the habit of arguing and reasoning with his God and who is so persistent in his arguments to save the righteous people from the fate of Sodom, never raises one single argument about the fate of Isaac. Abraham had never accepted blind faith, his faith always was absolutely reasonable, in spite of all his daring. Why does he suddenly have blind faith?

It is improbable that any author who invented the figure of Abraham would have committed such an inconsistency. The seemingly strong inconsistency indicates a living historical figure whose stories and experiences were written down and who was much too revered to be tampered with.

Let us try to understand this inconsistency of Abraham. Kierkegaard,in his great interpretation of the Abraham story in Fear and Trembling, says that he does not understand Abraham, that he cannot understand the quiet and certainty with which Abraham started on the dreadful journey and made his preparation for the sacrifice. He therefore concludes that Abraham's faith in God was so great that it was a blind faith, as though Abraham who had argued with God so often had given up arguing and became a believer. This is improbable. Moreover, if man is created in God's own image, a creative creature himself and master of all Being, how could God accept a human being as a sacrifice unto Him? We saw how much Abraham resembles his God and how much Abraham's God resembles Abraham; it is this God that Abraham deals with here and does not argue with because he had reasoned it out beforehand. In this greatest test in which God tempts Abraham, reasonable faith becomes a faith which keeps reason. Abraham does not "believe" and does not argue, because now he knows. He now knows his God, knows that this

God cannot accept human sacrifices and therefore he does not lie to Isaac when he tells him: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for the burnt offering." (Gen. 22, 8); he knows that lambs and rams roam the countryside in this land of shepherds and one will be there. The situation, therefore, is this: God tempts Abraham and Abraham tests his God, and Abraham knows beforehand that both will stand the test. Thus, he lets a "miracle" happen, gives a sign to his son and the other members of his tribe to show them who God is, the living God, the Creator of free creative creatures. This is a miracle of reasonable faith and the ever repeated miracle of free reason.

We now have the elements of Abraham's answer to the threefold ultimate question: What is the meaning of Being? - What is the value of life? - Who is man? - Being is there for man who can use it reasonably; it sets certain conditions for man in such a way as to enable him always to recondition it and himself. The existence of man contains the proposition for the possibility of a creative life. Its value is the establishment of faith by which the continuity and consistency of mankind is assured on earth in freedom.

12. Homer was called by the Greeks the Father of Poetry. Why did Western culture, even after the discovery of a rich pre-Homeric poetry, accept the first great Greek poet as the father of all poetry?

Pre-Homeric poetry is bound by myth and religious ritual. Homer liberated art, not only poetry, from all bondage and servitude; only in him does artistic activity become entirely free and creative in its own rights. The world which Homer created is the first free imaginary "fiction" in which all generations who came after him could participate and experience a possible transcendence of the given world of Being into a man-made meaningful world of imagination. Parts of the Odyssey and the Iliad are ascribed by some scholars to a pre-Homeric tradition and there is no doubt that bards used to entertain kings and provide pleasure for the great ones prior to Homer. No work like the Odyssey was needed for such social purposes. The poetic qualities of myths had been expressed before Homer; Homer was the man who discovered the possibility of treating myths in an entirely free fashion; he was no longer bound by them.

The Greeks said that Homer (and Hesiod) gave them their gods. This sounds strange to us. We can hardly understand how a people would accept gods that have been fashioned or even re-fashioned by artists for art's sake, and still recognize them as a living mythological reality. This miracle of an artistic and mythological unity is what enabled the Greeks to lead an artistic imaginative life within their mythology and, at the same time, to develop this mythology freely into its great artistic forms (Greek drama). The pre-platonic philosophers (with the exception of Heraclitus and Socrates) and especially Plato himself, mistrusted this development. The metaphysicians always maintained that the ideas contained in myths must retain their authority even though they first have to be purified and cleared of all mythical metaphors. The main opposition of the metaphysician to poetry (see Plato's criticism of Homer) is the poets' treatment of myth, which seemed to them irresponsible and playful: The first introduction of mankind to the eternal realm of ideas was through myth; it had to be overcome, not by Homer, who created his own free artistic myth, but through metaphysics, which was a kind of purified and spiritualized mythology. Metaphysics, not art, should be the successor to mythology.

Every myth, however, is a work of (unfree) art, and every work of art is a (free and not binding) myth. This fundamental relationship between myth and art is personified in Homer and manifest in his work; Homer handles myth as an artist would, he is no longer a mythographer who uses art in telling mythological stories. Yet, while he thus reversed the former relationship between art and myth, he maintained the relationship itself so pure that the Greeks could accept his work of art as a binding myth. This is the greatest triumph any artist ever achieved. It may also account for the strange fact that no artist ever dreamt of surpassing Homer, and artists always dream of excelling each other and all former models. Homer has not only remained the father of art, the originator of the free artistic capability of man; he is still its uncontested master. That is the reason why we have chosen him to tell us what free artistic creativity is and how it comes about. For this inquiry we first need a better understanding of the relationship between myth and art.

If it is true that myth and art are so closely interconnected that we can describe myth as unfree art, then the invention of myths must itself be a creative activity. But can an unfree activity be creative? Did we not maintain that all the creative powers of man are developed only if man freely decides to follow them, that they involve a decision for freedom? Creativity and freedom seemed to be almost identical, freedom being the only atmosphere in which creative transcendence seemed at all possible. Against this stands the fact that mankind lived, survived and created before any of our creative powers were discovered and established. Mankind first created, lived and survived by myth. Mythical creation preceded the emergence of the first two free creative personalities, Laotse and Buddha. Both Laotse and Buddha reached into freedom by turning against myth; they liberated the human mind from the authority of myth by drawing certain consequences from mythology itself; they discovered the liberating forces in the myth-creating activity itself. That a liberating force can be hidden in an otherwise still unfree activity is only another version of the old paradox that there exists a compulsion toward freedom.

Mythological action is the immediate reaction of man to the primary fear which overcomes him when he is first confronted with the reality of Being. This reaction is blind and without reason, it is provoked by the human condition in the universe and as such is more than a reaction: it is counter-action. Mythology bears witness to man's greatest counter-attack against the unbearable attack by the reality of Being. Against the sheer weight of existence, man mobilizes a kind of blind and reckless transcendence. Against his own overwhelming original fear of Being, man summons up an overpowering, reckless courage to transcend it. Here he uses artistic power for the first time (which from then on remains the purest and most immediate of all his creative capabilities); he engages in the possibilities of free imagination, day-dreaming, creative world-dreaming. Yet, while he indulges in this dream-like imaginary life, man does not become aware of this power as free transcendence which enables him to take his position in reality. He does not accept the reality of Being as it is given to him in order to transform it, but he uses his imagination in order to jump, as it were, over reality and hide from it. Against the real world he constructs an entirely irreal world of fiction, and since reality can never be completely kept out of it, he uses magic to rid himself of reality altogether and change it into fiction. Magic is mythological practice, it is myth applied to reality. Mythology always uses art as its most powerful instrument of thought and life; this art, still embedded in myth, usually deforms real features until they fit into the mythical dream of another world. That the element of deformation

is so entirely absent in Greek sculpture is due to Homer's liberation of art from myth. Nothing shows clearer the free artistic life which the Greeks led within their own mythology than the statues of Greek gods. (Here the artistic principle of style is reformation of reality; and this is no longer a mythical art.).

We all begin life by reacting to the shock of waking up to the overwhelming reality of Being with wild and arbitrary dreams. Most people forget these early dreams; a few attempt to realize them later in life by developing free creative powers of transcendence out of the first blind impulse to replace reality by irreality and thus hide from it. The artist is the man who transforms his early dream into a free world-image. Neurotic and insane people have fallen victim to it and perish in irreality. (Reference to Andre Malraux Psychology of Art: "The child is possessed by his art, the artist possesses his art."). Gradually and in the course of a long process, mythology takes possession of reality and draws more and more of it into its own realm. Scientific observations of nature, reflections on society, observations and experiences of all kinds, as well as rational explanations and philosophical speculations, are assimilated and incorporated into mythology and specifically deformed by it. (This process can best be observed in the wonderful development of Indian mythical religion, philosophy and art. See Heinrich Zimmer, Philosophies of India.). This is a process in which thought and figure penetrate into each other to such a degree that the great mythologies of mankind seem to be related to everything; they are open to interpretation from all points of view and abound in figurative significance for all times. Mythology owes this quality to the one great magic tool which it borrows from art: the metaphor, which is the hallmark of artistic creativity and whose early appearance in myth bears witness to the intimate relationship between myth and art. The early conglomeration of mythical and artistic thought resembles the origin of all other creative capabilities; as though while still in their mother's womb, they begin to grow, but are indistinguishable from each other, a shapeless mass where everything points to and may signify everything else.

All our great originators are post-mythical and pre-metaphysical. They brought about the great event of the emergence of man into creative freedom, an event which we call transcendental because it took place within the human mind. It is as though each of them liberated one of the human creative faculties from the womb of the myth, so that from now on it could grow in free independence. Everyone of these liberations implied the rejection of the mythological irreality and involved the conscious facing of the reality of Being, of life and the human condition. Together, they freed the human mind from its involvement in an irreal, fictional world, as blind and fearful transcendence had first created it, thus enabling man to take position in reality, not outside of it. The original deeds of our originators were like explosions of the shapeless mass of mythical thoughts, out of which the individual stars of human capabilities could now form their own dynamic constellations. But these explosions were possible because in the center of the shapeless mass of mythical thoughts was the double star of mythical and artistic power, which had revolved around each other, as it were, and remained almost indistinguishable from each other. When this mass exploded and the new constellation began to take form, a singular fate befell the double star of artistic and mythical power: the mythical star fell into its artistic twin, that is, artistic power attracted and united with mythical power. Since then, free art is a myth and free myth is art. This event took place with Homer.

The unique triumph of Homer's art, that it was being lived as mythology, was followed by the unique triumph of the artist Homer, who himself has become a myth, a living legend. The legend of Homer can help us answer our question: What is artistic creativity? The legend tells us that Homer was blind. (Reference: Rembrandt's portrait which presents the blind seer, the blind man who sees everything on earth and in heaven.). The blind seer plays a great role in Greek mythology and the legend of Homer's blindness in itself makes him a mythological figure. The very paradox of the blind seer shows a profound insight into the structure of the artist and the power of art. Both myth-maker and art-maker behave as though they are blind to reality and both are said to possess the faculty of second sight. The myth-maker is blind because he looks away from Being; he is a seer because he perceives a different fictional world by looking in another direction. The artist is blinded by reality itself, the very miracle of Being, and he becomes a seer because he sees through everything in reality and perceives behind it what Being could be or become. The metaphor (as created by maya, which can be imagination or illusion or delusion) is the tool of both art and mythology; but the mythological metaphor is like a carpet hung over Being to hide it; it is illusion, while the artistic metaphor is like a transparent veil through which we look at Being itself with creative eyes, it is illumination.

The legend tells us that Homer knew everything. Many generations accepted him as the best educator, the best ruler, the best strategist, the best agriculturist, etc. Just as mythology contained everything because it had gathered everything into its realm, so Homer became a mythical figure who knew and understood everything. This may have been a matter of course to Homer's contemporaries or his immediate successors, since Homer, emerging directly from a mythical world order, brought to light all the accumulated knowledge and experience contained in it. Yet, Homer's superior wisdom was not doubted even when free scientific inquiry and experience had greatly developed in Greece. And the reason for this lasting authority of Homer is an artistic one and not an historical one. Nobody with political experience reading Shakespeare can help feeling that Shakespeare knows more about the essentials of political action than any statesman. Napoleon believed seriously that Corneille was the only human being who had ever known as much about government and strategy as he himself. We all know from experience that a great work of art is open to new interpretations ad infinitum and will always yield new insights. It is as though art still contains the mythical power of comprehending and encompassing everything. The solution of this riddle is of course -- since we do not think that art is a supernatural mystery and the artist a super-human monster -- that myth had borrowed from art its power of all-comprehension, that it could encompass everything because it always worked with artistic means. The mystery is no mystery, it is a miracle, the miracle of artistic creativity.

The truth of Napoleon's estimate of Corneille as a statesman lies in the fact that Napoleon derived some of his best political ideas from reading Corneille. His own creativity had been strengthened and stimulated by art. Corneille created for him the quintessence of political experience. (And Shakespeare may have done this even better).

It is the miracle of art that it stimulates and enriches each of the creative capabilities so that the more creative a man is, the more he is likely to be inspired by art. Nothing is as characteristic of

an individual as the works of art he loves; while we pretend to "judge" them, we usually are unaware of the fact that we are being judged by them -- and frequently with more justice.

Experience with works of art is an artistic not an aesthetic experience; it requires the mobilization of our own artistic capability and although we are not artists ourselves, it remains the nourishing force of all other creative capacities. Artistic creativity is often mistaken for man's only creative capacity. The reason for this error is the fact that artistic creativity nourishes all others and is in constant communication with them. As such, it works in all directions at once, can be guided by any other creative capacity but has no direction of its own. Artistic creativity can never become the dominant and organizing force in life; the artist therefore easily submits to any argument or direction given him by others, not because he lacks character or strong convictions, but because he is sure to use it in a different way. (It is very interesting to see how artists, especially modern artists, misunderstand ideas and misuse theories, how they even formulate absurd doctrines of their own, and yet manage to make good use of all of them.).

The miracle of art is the miracle of beauty. The creation of beauty is closely connected with the artistic use of the metaphor. Every work of art is a web of metaphors. Nietzsche once formulated -- in terms of a philosophy of art, not of the aesthetical sciences -- the quintessence of all artistic inspiration: "Here I can ride on the back of every metaphor to every truth."

What is the connection between Beauty and Truth? What is Beauty? What is a metaphor? -- We shall begin with a saying of Heraclitus about Apollo, the god of art: "The Lord who owns the Delphian oracle neither reveals nor conceals, he signifies." (Diels, Fragm. der Vorsokratiker, B. 93). This is the oldest statement on art and we shall compare it with a very recent one made by Clive Bell who defined art as "significant form." Modern aesthetics generally accepts this definition without however being able to reply to the questions arising from it: What is form? What does "significant form" signify? The inability to answer these questions shows that the definition itself leads into an impasse. Artistic form is significant because it is form, and it is form because it is significant. "Significant form" can mean either: form made significant, or: significance made into form. To this the artist will reply that art creation does not consist of forming content or of filling a form with content, because the two are not separated in the original artistic vision. This first vision may only be the nucleus of what the work of art eventually will be, but it already contains the whole, not parts of a whole. The first nucleus of a work of art, as conceived by the artist himself, is a metaphor which spins itself out into a definite web of metaphors; it contains in itself a continuous and consistent composition, which we call artistic form.

We may define a metaphor as the sensual manifestation of significance. But what is the significance? What is being signified in art?

Heraclitus says that Apollo neither reveals nor conceals. What can be revealed or concealed? Truth. Apollo neither reveals nor conceals truth, but he signifies it. The miracle of beauty is to signify truth, to point to it, to promise it, to indicate its presence, and yet never to reveal it. This non-revealing does not mean concealment. Who has eyes to see will see -- provided he has artistic eyes. Apollo is at the same time the god of art and the god of oracles. Like art, oracles only signify truth, they do not reveal and tell it. It depends upon the man who receives the oracle

whether or not he will understand its truth. Without eyes nobody is able to see beauty signifying truth and without the "know thyself," inscribed on the temple in Delphi, nobody is able to grasp the truth of the oracle. The key to the understanding of a work of art, like the key to the oracles given in Delphi, lies in the beholder himself.

The work of art does more for the beholder than the oracle does for the man who comes to seek its advice. Beauty invokes truth in the beholder himself; it cannot tell him a truth which he never possessed, but it can bring to life in him a truth of which he had never before been aware. Beauty, signifying truth, arouses the beholder and enables him to join in the true artistic experience. The aura of significance throws its light to the beholder so that he now can see, like an artist, right through reality, through the merely existing being and discover new potentialities of truth behind it. He will see through his own feelings and experiences and discover a deeper meaning to them; and this discovery never comes to an end as long as he lives, because the great work of art will tell him different things at the different stages of his life, depending on his own experiences. The more truth he has in him, the more will beauty eventually reveal to him.

We ask once more: What is a metaphor? The metaphor is closely connected with maya, the great instrument of all art. The god of maya is Vishnu, one of the gods of India, who endlessly dreams up worlds, one after the other, in the infinite time and space of Indian religion. In the figure of Vishnu, mythological thinking became aware of its artistic element, the element of world dreaming. The artist is a world dreamer in the sense that he creates world images. This corresponds to one of man's deepest wishful dreams. Post-mythological thinking and creativity faces the reality of Being and stills its craving for meaning by making Being more meaningful; yet at the bottom of our heart, there remains the original shock of human confrontation with reality and the original desire to live in a perfect world, which by itself would unite Being and meaning, where meaning would simply exist and Being be meaningful in itself.

Physiognomical phenomena seem to indicate such a unity of being and meaning. Facial expressions, a smile, gestures, intonations of voice and forms of movement are sensual and yet endowed with a meaning such that can only be revealed to us through direct verbal communication. It is as though we sense significance with all our senses, yet we can neither grasp nor define it. The artist who thinks in metaphors can grasp this sensed significance; his vision consists of a sensual image of Being which he gets hold of through his "sixth sense," the synthesizer of the other senses. This image contains the significance which we only "sense" but which the artist can work out in detail.

Artistic creativity develops in three stages: There is first the uncontrolled life experience of the artist, the almost mythical mass of sensations, thoughts, intentions and feelings, out of which he conceives the nuclear metaphor of his work. He then proceeds to develop the whole web of related metaphors which eventually constitute the work of art. This procedure follows certain correlative significances, which make one thing after another meaningful until a whole fabric of similar experiences is assembled and organized. One metaphor leads to another metaphor; it is a mutual give and take process in which the metaphor inspires the artist and the artist works out the metaphor.

A metaphor is not a symbol. A symbol, meaningless in itself, is a sign that stands for something else. Symbols are used in scientific thinking and are illustrated by examples. In the statement: Three things are in this room, we have used a verbal logical symbol, thing and a mathematical symbol, the number three. Thing is in itself meaningless, but can be exemplified by chair, table and couch. I call them all things and thereby establish a relationship among them, a unity of three; this relationship between the three things in the room exists only insofar as they all are things, they are not interrelated and there is no communication between the symbol, thing and what it may stand for: chair, table, etc.

In the metaphor: "The ship plows the sea," an interrelationship between ship and sea is established; at the same time, plow and ship communicate their activity to each other through which (characteristic of Homer) an intercommunication between land and sea is brought about. The artistic vision lies in the action of carrying-over (meta-phor), the evoking of one experience through another and the resulting correspondences. The symbol works like a magic ray which penetrates Being, unites certain things, throws a special light on them which shows table, chair and couch as things, and brings about a transfiguration of Being. The metaphor works like a magic chain reaction which is started through the inner human experience with the world, carrying over the experience of one activity into another, of one movement into another, of one significance into another, bringing about a transfiguration of Meaning. Metaphorical thinking is constantly overwhelmed by the vision of such correspondences.

All art is metaphorical and artistic creation is projective metaphorical thinking. In mythical art, it is true, symbols play a dominant role, not because mythical art uses symbols to represent and stand for something else, but because mythology itself is a world which is supposed to stand for the real world, to hide reality from man. In this sense, mythical art is truly "surrealistic," it depicts the "true" reality of the surrealistic world of the myth. Therefore, the mythical artist uses not only mental symbols but needs the real magic symbol, the fetish, which plays a role even in the highest developed mythical art. The reason why we can understand mythical art even though we no longer believe in mythical symbols and fetishes is that the metaphor here, as in all true art, has prevailed. Metaphysical art is supramundane, it reaches out beyond the world and tries to establish another, the truly metaphysical world order. Characteristic of it is the allegory in which a concrete event is represented by a figurative story destined to cover several similar happenings. As such, the allegory is similar to the symbol; its figure also unites different "things" without establishing an artistic intercommunication between them. This is the reason for the proverbial dryness of allegories. In a great metaphysical poet like Dante the allegory receives metaphorical significance; in the Divina Comedia allegories and symbols merely assist the rise of the great Dantean metaphors. Free art is transcendent; it does not represent anything that cannot be grasped by the metaphor alone.

Homer is the first artist who created a world in free imagination. No longer bound by mythology and not yet under the authority of metaphysics, he uses metaphors with such incredible purity and freshness that they have become the admiration of all succeeding generations. Symbols make their appearance in Greek art only after Homer; they already play a role in the Greek drama, whose lyrics are still built on Homeric metaphors, but whose "plots" develop around metaphysical ideas. Symbols have played the greatest and the most ruinous role in pictorial art,

which developed in its amazing modern form after Cezanne liberated it from all symbolic meaning. (It seems probable that at some historical moment between Homer and ourselves transcending art broke through all layers of symbols -- in Shakespeare and in Rembrandt). Cezanne's art represents metaphorical ideas; in this sense modern art is non-representative, regardless of whether it is abstract or non-abstract art.

Free art is neither mythical nor realistic, neither classic nor romantic. Homer's art can not be placed in any of these categories; it is truly transcending and Olympic because it transcends towards the Olympus. The Olympus, as conceived by Homer, is neither a fictional world in the midst of the real one nor a supramundane realm far above us, but the pinnacle set on top of this, our world. From the Olympus of free art, which is open to everybody, we look down into ourselves and into the world.

Colors and plasticity of Homer's style (compared with Milton) make it difficult to believe that he was blind; and yet, every reading of the Iliad or the Odyssey again suggests this possibility. Only a blind man, one feels, is so completely alone in the world with nothing to stand on but his own being, and only in blindness can there develop a visionary power which will gather the whole world around one man who becomes its veritable center.

Homer's hero is Man. His heroes, Achilles and Ulysses, are metaphors for man, not symbols -- as Adam in Christian speculation, or as Dante, who is his own hero and at the same time a symbol for man, or as the Ulysses of Joyce. They are single individuals, full personalities whose lives form the topic of the two epic poems. They are the central metaphors out of which all other metaphors are developed into a web of consistent composition. The tragedy of Achilles' early death is enhanced by not showing it; death is always present in Achilles' life, in his brooding and raging. Achilles is absolutely alone because he is doomed, doomed by his own free decision. This free decision forces the predestined order of moira (necessity) of Greek myth (as well as the closed cosmological order of Greek metaphysics) wide open; we do not know whether Homer himself invented this or whether mythical stories before him had already indicated this possibility. The figure of Ulysses makes the former alternative more probable. In any case, the non-dependence of both Achilles and Ulysses on necessity and fate is the reason why they were neglected in Greek tragedy; and even if Homer did not altogether invent their freedom of decision, he chose them as his heroes for that reason.

Achilles' choice was for a short life, with the opportunity of bestowing upon it an eternal significance (which is the Greek understanding of fame), worthy to be forever praised by poets. In the Odyssey Homer clearly shows the greatness of this decision against a long, happy existence without special significance. Here Ulysses meets Achilles in Hades: Achilles knows that it is better, in a sense, to be alive as a miserable slave on earth than to be the lifeless shadow of a great man in the world of the dead. A similar decision occurs in the Odyssey when Ulysses refuses to become the immortal husband of the nymph Calypso -- almost a blasphemy for Greek religious feeling which admired and envied its gods for their immortality. Ulysses' reason is different; he had already defied Poseidon, the god of the seas, when he insisted on establishing his own identity. Ulysses chose to remain himself, human and mortal, with the possibility of free self-determination outside of and above everything else.

Homer places Achilles in the middle of world events which happen around him so that he may have the opportunity to do his one great deed: defeat Hector and win victory for the Greeks. There he sits in his tent, the center of everything that goes on, the fighting gods above him and the fighting men around him, he himself almost motionless, imprisoned within himself. A prisoner of his own self-chosen destiny, he has also become the center of himself so that it seems unlikely that he will be able to break through his lonely brooding and undertake the one great deed for which he has doomed himself. Only the death of his friend, Patroclos, breaks the spell and draws him out of himself. Not Ulysses but Achilles is the great sufferer in Homer; Achilles suffers and rages, Ulysses endures and prevails. With one single decision, Achilles has designed his whole life and its end; he acts in the world as though he acted from beyond the grave. He anticipated his own death and now time stands still around him, and space is reduced to the space within himself. Everything that goes on around him in the space which is the world contradicts him and almost mocks him. And the same is true for the time of the others, which is absolutely separated from his own predictably limited time. Between the infinite time of the gods and the absolutely limited time of Achilles lies the time of the mortals around him, which has an end but an end that no man foreknows. Because he has chosen the shortest span of life, Achilles has become the opposite of the gods. In a sense, Homer puts him above the gods of Greek myth, who are, as it were, condemned to immortality and therefore cannot prove eternal courage like Achilles.

Against the short life of Achilles, in which all significance is concentrated into one single act of supreme courage, stands the long life of Ulysses whose wanderings lead him over the whole space of the world. He does not concentrate his life into one single climactic point, he ensures its full course. These are the two alternate possibilities of human bios, of the life which man can make out of his mere existence, as Homer conceived it, and his two epic poems are the greatest biographies ever written. Homer's metaphor is man himself and its truth consists of his having a bios, a life whose story can be told as a consistent and continuous whole.

Opening the Odyssey, there is Ulysses on the island of the nymph Calypso, who prevents his return to Ithaca because she hopes to marry him. In a few lines we are introduced to the essential facts of his life, the time and the space which he has and of which he is the center. From there, Homer leads us up to the Olympus, where the gods are deliberating Ulysses' fate. Immediately we find ourselves in a world inhabited by gods and men where everybody is concerned with Ulysses and where Ulysses is ever present. Tho only exceptions, as we are told presently, are Penelope's suitors, the most important fact about them being that they are not aware of Ulysses and that this oblivion eventually leads them to their doom. The omnipresence of Ulysses provides the unity of the story. The deliberations of the gods are opened by Zeus, whose first speech seems to have no connection with Ulysses. Zeus bewails the crime committed by Aegisthus, the murderer of Agamemnon, because it was committed "against fate" and therefore will bring sufferings to the mortals which are "beyond fate," more than moira had assigned to them. These opening words of Zeus, seemingly unconnected, are of great relevance to the whole story because they introduce an entirely new concept of the relationship between men and gods and moira. Gods as well as men, Homer tells us, have some freedom from moira; Zeus knows not only the moira of men but also what men do or can do against and beyond it. The conclusion is obvious: blind fate has decided nothing about Ulysses; divine as

well as human forces are at play in his life and the gods have to save him first of all from the wrath of Poseidon, whom Ulysses had provoked of his own free will. Athena leads us back, down to earth. She acquaints us with Ulysses' wife and son, who are all the more aware of his presence since they live in fear of his death; she acquaints us with the suitors who do not think that he is present because they believe him dead. Telemachus' voyage to the kings, who were with his father at Troy and from whom he hopes to learn what happened to him, is chiefly a land journey and contrasts with Ulysses' own wanderings over the seas. For a while the two voyages of father and son parallel each other; a recurring line, describing the movement of horses, and a similar recurring line describing the movements of men rowing a boat transmits to the listener (and the reader) the essential notion of each man. The story of Telemachus' trip makes Ulysses present in the lands of his friends and brings Ulysses' past back into the present. At the same time, it serves to drive the suitors, who, encouraged by Telemachus' absence, contrive to murder him, to their well- deserved doom. The whole story of Telemachus is designed in one straight time movement, which contrasts with the revolving time movement of Ulysses, whose circular wanderings thus become more impressive and measurable.

The fifth song brings us again to Ulysses on the island of Calypso. Here, we find him right in his own world, on one of the Mediterranean islands, the skies above him, the seas around him, the mainland of Greece in the East, and his homeland, Ithaca, in the distance: Ulysses' world, the transformed world image of the sailor and his poet.

It is the time element in the story that construes this world around Ulysses, and this time, expressed in Ulysses' wanderings over the seas, is the metaphor for the time Ulysses himself has and makes use of. He is in the midst of his island world, but he is not yet in the middle of his time and life, and therefore cannot yet go home to Ithaca. He must wander again, leave the center of the island world and go to one of the borderlands of his world, the country of the Phaeacians. Only then will he be able to go home and come to the peak of his life. Now, on the island, he is jammed between his past and his future, they overlap, so to speak. The last part of his past, its last big wave, will roll over him, and (this is the power of the metaphor) this will be the wave of the storm let loose by the god of the seas, in which he will lose his liferaft and almost his life. The storm will wash him ashore to the land of the Phaeacians, the shore of his future, where he will come into the midst of his life and his time, taking his past into his present. This happens when he tells the story of his life to the Phaeacians, presents them and himself, as it were, with his past and thus assures his future by persuading them to bring him safely home. Recollecting his time, the story of his past, he assembles his space around him: Troy and Ithaca, the lands of his friends and his enemies, the magic islands of the bad sorceress and the good beautiful nymph, the lands of the borders of the world and of strange, barbarian people, the island of the Cyclopes -- all of them bordering on the sea or surrounded by it, the sea with its rocky dangerous shores and straits between Scylla and Charybdis, the skies above it with the Olympian gods, and underneath, Hades, the world of the dead. This is Ulysses' world constructed by Homer in a multiple space by the instrument of one man's time; and this is Ulysses' time, whose revolving motion year in and year out Homer describes by the means of one man's space. In the Odyssey, a perfect unity or time, space and action is accomplished in which the identity, consistency and continuity of one life, the life of man, is metaphorically caught. The final victory over the suitors is the climactic, not the decisive action of this life.

Ulysses' great deed, the deed that decided his whole life, was done when he told his name to Cyclops whom he had blinded and thus defied Poseidon. This is the nucleus of the story and this is the key to understanding who Ulysses was: he will risk everything in order to assert and keep his identity. It is the identity of a free personality as it is shown in his relationship to Penelope and the faith he keeps.

While the inner unity of the story is provided by Ulysses' omnipresence, its poetic unity is enforced by recurrent metaphors. The same metaphor makes the sun rise and set every day; other metaphors combine to describe movement on sea and land; everything that happens is represented, time and again, in its essential, unchanging identity.

Success, unequaled by any other work of art in Western history, has veiled rather than revealed the character of Homer's work as free, transcending art and its author as the originator of purely artistic thinking. Since it is the only work of art on which a religion was ever founded -- the Homeric religion of the Greeks (See the interpretation of Walter F. Otto, Die Götter Griechenlands, Bonn 1929) -- metaphysical thought has interpreted the work and its author in symbolic terms. The power of Homer's metaphors had transformed the older Greek gods into a vision of beautiful super-beings with such plastic force that the great imagination of the Greek people almost instantly believed in them as their real gods. They became personifications of the higher powers of life and spirit with whom post-Homeric Greece, and especially post- Homeric poetry, could live as though they were real divinities. The formation and development of the Homeric religion is the only example we have of the transformation of a mythical into a metaphysical religion. This theological process, initiated as it was by a poet, takes place chiefly in the form of poetry and culminates in Athenian tragedy. Plato synthesizes tragic theology with the thinking of the early natural theologians and philosophers; the result is the establishment of Greek supra-mundane metaphysics, which has remained the basis of all Western metaphysics, and which asserted itself again and again in continuous revivals. Aristotle himself presents the first of these revivals, the revival of early Greek natural metaphysics and theology.

The reason why theology as well as metaphysics could ultimately base itself on Homer's work is that Homer himself was a religious thinker. But this religious side of Homer is not something that was added to Homer the poet and artist; it arises directly from his specific poetic creativity. His vision of divinity is the vision of a free artistic thinker. It is also the vision of one God. Because Homer wished to be a free artist, he could not use the closed world of mythology and he had to liberate Zeus from his involvement in mythical functions. Homer's concept of God forces open the closed Greek cosmos, ruled by moira. Only in one respect, and this is decisive) does Zeus wield power against and beyond moira, and this creative power is an artistic power. Zeus cannot save Hector from the predestined moira to fall at the hands of Achilles, but he can make the fate of the defeated glorious, he can illuminate Hector's last fight with the undying aura of beauty, which gives his life and death eternal significance. Zeus does precisely what Homer, the poet, can do himself. But Homer tells us -- in full possession and awareness of his creative power, knowing that he had not created himself but only chosen the proposition of his creativity and tried his best with it -- that his great art in its free creativity could be inspired only by a transcending (moira and cosmos transcending) God, who himself possesses absolute power to create significance. This statement of Homer, to be sure, does not prove the existence of God;

yet there is no argument in all human reason that could contradict the experience of such a man.

Homer, the poet, re-groups the world of Olympus around his vision of one God. The other gods became personifications of powers that Zeus delegates to them. They are metaphors of these powers, not their symbols, They remain acting persons and are at the same time the actions (the pragmata) of Zeus, his virtues (aretai). Arete in the Homeric sense means highest capability; it has not yet any moral connotation. Aphrodite is one of these divine "virtues," and Homer loves Aphrodite.

Homer, the artist, communicates with his God by making his Ulysses communicate with Zeus. The gods (first Athena, but also Hermes and the invisible Aphrodite, who shows her power in the desire of every woman in the Odyssey to marry Ulysses) are always present around Ulysses. The actions in the Odyssey are frequently described in such a way that we do not know whether certain acts are performed by Athena herself or by Ulysses, whom she advises and Protects. For these gods are metaphorical personifications of human capabilities (aretai, true virtues) as well as of the virtues of God. Each action of Ulysses, therefore, shows the influence of Athena and the power of Zeus; and each action of Zeus is transmitted through Athena to Ulysses.

Which then is Homer's answer to the threefold ultimate question of the meaning of Being, the value of life and the being of man? An artist never raises these questions directly because he is not able to doubt -- as a pregnant woman, under normal circumstances, is not able to doubt the value of life. Yet, he is the only one who lives this question permanently and his whole work is one single answer. The artistic impulse arises from the initial shock that meaninglessness is possible at all; and this shock is answered by am immediate transcending action in which the question itself is contradicted: Being and life is given artistic significance; artistic creativity is the ever repeated evocation of the aura of Beauty (signifying truth) which again and again assures the artist and the beholder that meaning exists everywhere.

If we pose our ultimate question directly to the artist, who himself never explicitly raises it, he is liable to mistake significance for meaning. He will tell us: I do not care if Being has no meaning or if life is valueless as long as man can create beauty and through this may make life worthwhile and give significance to Being. Homer does not need to answer our question directly, he needs only to point to his work. It is up to us, not to him, to grasp meaning in significance and see truth in the aura of beauty that contains it. This is possible only if beauty begets meaning in us while we look and listen. Art, more than any other experience, inspires us to philosophize and in this process we may discover ways that lead to meaning, that is to the discovery of those creative capabilities through which we can realize meaning.

We shall discuss next the originator of creative scientific thought, Heraclitus of Ephesus. This follows the chronological order which we have observed. However, this transition from art to science is of greater significance than merely chronological. The relationship between science and art has again been questioned in recent times, since, on the one hand, Nietzsche attached science from an artistic viewpoint, and, on the other, the positivists mobilized science against art. Since then this whole problem has become rather involved; painters -- not the greatest

artists among them, as a rule -- have begun to claim that only art can reveal truth, that science is an inferior human capability and that philosophy is old-fashioned. Psychoanalysts -- whose scientific achievements are more than doubtful -- have claimed that Shakespeare and Dostoevsky were nothing but clumsy and outdated psychologists who are no longer needed. Yet, this matter has also another and brighter side. The constellatory movement of the various creative powers, which our originators started when they liberated them from their early mythological bondage, came to an end with the rise of Western metaphysics which protected and fertilized each of these powers. In our time this movement has started anew. Science, led by mathematics, nuclear physics and logic, has come into its own. And so has art, led by the great modern development of painting and poetry. Scientists and artists, especially mathematicians and painters, have begun to inquire into their mutual relationship from the viewpoint of their own well established positions. (Reference to the study of certain art-problems by the eminent mathematician Hermann Weyl, Symmetry, Princeton l952).