

Lecture V
(10/23/53)
Sources of Cr. Power

We talked in the last lecture about the spiritual situation of man's mind today as to his creative and productive forces. The situation that prevails between the sciences, philosophy, art, religion -- we have found that they have driven apart but, on the other hand, that every one of those capabilities in a way seemed to come into its own. There are real enjoyable possibilities in this situation which we mostly do not see and here ^{we} face our problems as former ages faced their problems -- only that our problems seem to be harder. This spiritual situation with its dangers and possibilities led us, first, to check, to make an inventory of what the capabilities and powers of the human mind really are and who man might be, if he is able to cope with this new situation as he was able to cope with all of them up to now and what line he could possibly take. In order to give foundation to that we have to first set a framework of this mind of man itself, so to speak in his historical background. We have to find out about the mind of man up to now. Are there perhaps certain states of it that are definitely distinguishable by man with the help of his mind? Because man possesses his mind, he has it. He is not mind, he must be something more than mind because he can use mind and develop it. But such a seemingly abstract proposition as the mind of man -- isn't that perhaps a monster like society seems to be? Isn't that perhaps an en-

tirely ungraspable thing that is merely a reflection of certain abstract notions of ours? We know there have been philosophies, especially in India and the East, and in the West very many of them (Hegel's the last one) where a cosmic mind exists in which man and every man just participates. He is a part of this cosmic mind. It is a supernaturalist power, so to speak, a higher power of which we are a part -- which would mean that man is essentially a mind, not has a mind -- which would make him unfree. He would again be ruled, only not according to society and its whims but according to some higher laws of this cosmic mind itself which makes man function. This mystical entity we can, of course, not accept; so we have to ask the question, 'What proves that there is a reality which we could call the mind of man?' That is a question much more difficult to answer.

We first can say one thing: if we can establish any fundamental equality of man, which sometimes in free republics we could, it was established on the belief that all men are equal before God, because they are created in the image of God. We take that here in this course as a mythical or, let's say, figurative expression for a fact, a reality we have to formulate philosophically. The formulation would then have to be that we are able to see through all history, and our own time by communication with other men, that the structure, the fundamental capabilities of the human mind seem to be the same in everybody and that is what makes him

a man, a human being. Not that they are equal in the sense that everybody has the same stature, or is equal in intellect to anybody else -- those are nonsensical exaggerations of democratism as an ideology that wants to make all people alike in order to rule finally all people. We are not alike -- everybody is different from everybody else. Everybody might even be in his innermost being unique as a human person -- and we seem to lose that feeling of uniqueness just in our time. Nevertheless as far as the creative equipment goes in quality, the equipment of the human mind we have, we are fundamentally equal. That makes it possible to say that all experiences of man are human experiences, that we can talk about human experience as a definite reality.

Now, if we create a history -- and history does not create itself -- we have the phenomenon, and for the first time in history, that since the time of the Hebrews and the Greeks in the West, there has been a line of continuous historical development which merely means if one does not want to be magical and mystical about it, that one of the cultures created by those societies was able to influence the other and a continuous tradition has developed. This has not been the case in other states and other developments in man. If we had lost the Egyptian experience and the Greek had not come we might have been split up into different experiences of states and people which had no connection and could not build a tradition. So this is an exceptional

case of history which by no means need prevail -- let alone the thinking of mystical historians like Karl Marx who think that we can take it for granted that there is such a monstrous thing going on by itself as human history and will always continue and give us opportunities. We know enough now about pre-historic and even historic times to see that such a continuity was not and could not have been established. The experiences got lost. That we, out of this tradition that we created in the West, are today able to have, mainly in the field of art but in other fields by our historical sciences, all those experiences that would have been entirely lost to man if we could not do so, this is an exception. If an atomic war would be really successful in the way the physicists think it could be, it is entirely possible that in a hundred years we will have forgotten global communications, that we will have forgotten the whole of the tradition that we will call here the development of the human mind, and that everybody in single parts of the earth, peoples or tribes, will have to start afresh. We are in possession, as nowhere and never before, has mankind been, of all the knowledge of this tradition and this experience of mankind -- which we will call here the experience of man.

So man (?) does not really exist (?) but it might exist if we are able to continue this history and it is up to us because (?) and we can ruin it. There is no such mystical thing as history. History is the

creation of man and men and nothing else. History itself is no higher power that shields us against catastrophes. We have no guarantees, in spite of Mr. Spengler and other historians and so-called philosophers who try to assure us that if we die off there will be a new barbarian race that takes over. There is no new barbarian and fresh race. If we are not able to transform our situation out of the civilized society we have today we might be lost and this whole historical tradition which is our greatest opportunity to solve our problems might be lost entirely. So history as we consider it here philosophically is nothing but the chronicle of the deeds of man. Those thoughts and deeds of man are either continuous or they are discontinuous. There are cultures that die and have no continuation -- and we have had cultures in the West that had continuation and continuity. We are still in the course of this continuity but this continuity itself is a deed of men and nothing that has been given gratuitously to them. They have done it and if we want to continue it we have to feel responsible for it and to continue it really by our doings; otherwise it will break.

Now, there seems to be a history, an historical trend in this development of culture that is most significant to us here in our inquiry. The human mind developed in a very curious trend. It seems to have passed certain definite states of mind which have their own significance. We read a continuity and a development into those states of mind; we

read it into them. We cannot be sure that it is in it because we do not know the mind of man well enough to be sure of one thing: that men using their minds and making a tradition of the knowledge of the mind and the methods the mind develops enriched for everybody today the possibilities and the capabilities of the mind tremendously. All those capabilities and possibilities might be lost in a catastrophe of history. So we cannot even be sure that we have in the human mind an inherent guarantee that we can go on if we let a catastrophe happen. Not even that. But one thing we know -- we know different states of this mind and we are entitled to read a certain meaning into it. As soon as we are able to distinguish those states of mind and make our free choice, then we are entitled to say that the human mind today is richer in capabilities and possibilities in life than it ever was and that we might feel responsible to hold this possibility open because everybody of us depends on it. In a not mystical but very marvelous, even miraculous way are we given the opportunity of our ancestors in this tradition.

So we are very rich in mind though entirely undisciplined and unorganized. The trouble is here we get the same phenomenon as we get in our experience with society: namely, the tremendous enrichment of our mind with knowledge of the experiences of ages and ages, this very increase of our power of knowledge seems to have tremendously decreased

our power of wisdom. Our creative capabilities are not that much strengthened as the operative capabilities of the mere intellect and the mere knowledge seem to have decreased. Again there seems to be a contradiction in the situation also in the development of the power of the human mind itself. We can only approach and check all that if we have a short look at this "development" in quotation marks -- let's say better, this history -- of the human mind and its different stages of mind.

We have found that since education, if it is a good education, is, so to speak, the ante-chamber for the way of life and that we have three different ways of life today prevalent on the earth -- namely, the authoritarian, the totalitarian and the libertarian way. We are in the libertarian way. But now we must look at the background of those three things. Have things like that happened before? What are the real roots of those three attitudes of the human mind and the human being towards world and life. Those attitudes seem to be fundamental attitudes -- authoritarian, totalitarian, libertarian -- relating to very different, fundamentally different opinions about the task of man in the world, about the question, 'Who is man?', 'What is the world? and What is life?' All cultures, every culture that comes about and is created by man means that men take a definite position within the world, that they develop definite fundamental views about man, people, or society or

mankind, divinity, person to person. Those views change but they are always value-creating.

The values we still have are mainly the artistic values; there we see it most clearly. But in all other fields values were created. So we, not wanting to be historians, merely try to put on one mask after the other today to pretend that we are persons who have the experience of the Mayans, and today we feel like Indians, and another day like Greeks, and we behave like them. We can do that and it is done in the intellectual world continuously -- only it has nothing to do with culture, it is a mere show, an intellectual show.

We do not want that, so we must go to the root of the matter. What interests us here is that man is a value-creating being. What are his capabilities to create values? What induces him in the first place or makes it possible for him to create value, different cultures? It is exactly that, whoever he is and whenever he lives -- and this is his continuity and eternity -- man is a being that is placed from nowhere, so to speak, into the world and into a definite situation of the world without knowing where he goes -- not knowing where he comes from, not knowing where he might go, but places, so to speak, out of nothingness into the middle of being -- namely, the world -- and an historical world, a world in a very definite situation. So there he stands and has to take position. He looks around, tries to find instinctively first

the main factors that are agents in this situation, finds himself to be an agent, finds other human beings to be agents, finds society to be a definite agent, seems to find God a definite agent, as well as nature and so on. Those are our checking points. If we compare cultures we look at cultures as creative by men taking a specific position in a specific situation. Their answers to the question that the situation gives them are the value-creating force of man. So questioning and answering seems to be the basic performance of the human mind in becoming creative, taking position.

The tradition we were talking about is the historical tradition from the Hebrews and the Greeks in the West until the 19th Century when this tradition broke down. We are living merely by the remnants of this tradition and have added to it now all our knowledge about other cultures that are not Western cultures. We know much more about India and China than people before ever knew. We have added it. Nevertheless we have only pieces and those pieces do not even make a mosaic. They are pieces that do not even enable us to put them together. They are just a richness of definite points and impressions. The unity that prevailed until the 19th Century has been lost. We have talked about the point that there are different kinds of unity seen in the world. There is a unity in uniformity (totalitarianism), there is unity in hierarchy (authoritarianism), and there is this tremendously hard thing, unity in community (libertarianism),

which is the productive state of the human life, this state of the possibility of free creation. In our time unity has been lost -- that we know.

Now we have to see what made the inner unity of this tradition in the West. We have to find historically, first, a sign that hits the eyes, so to speak. There are a series of revivals in the history of the West. We have the Renaissance, and before the Renaissance we have the Carolingian renaissance in the time of Charlemagne when manuscripts of Greek literature became known through the work of an Irish monk in the Emperors court. Then we have one renaissance after the other of Greek, Roman and Hebrew elements in Western culture. Two typical renaissances of Hebrew culture were, for instance, Protestantism in the time of the Reformation, going back to the original content of the Bible and by that rediscovering the Old Testament to a degree that has never been known in the Catholic world. And then there was Puritanism. Look at Milton; that is almost a revival of this original very narrow and rigid spirit we see in Mosaic times. It is no accident but of significance that many first names of pioneers and settlers of the United States have been Hebrew names -- Abraham Lincoln, the Isaacs, etc. Those are all American families; they are not Jewish. Revivals of those traditions are always remodeling and carrying on, in a way reforming them. So a continuous line of reformations has taken place until the 19th Century

and by the means of those reformations the continuity of the tradition in the West had been assured.

Now suddenly we face a situation where it seems that no reformation can help us any more. We try and try again but what we produce is either shallow classicism, shallow humanism, an extreme materialism or any ideology of any kind. We seem to have lost the possibility to go back to those sources that were once springing so freshly. We become mere imitators. We try a reformation and we end up with imitation because we cannot add anything new. We can only repeat and this becomes (?) Alexandrianic. We live out of books. We try to learn those things out of books. We become filled with paper and letters. We go into production, almost a self-production of literature when authors are almost only involved as transmission belts between the last generation and a new one. They are not authors any more. There is no authority in them because authority originally only means authorship, being able to originate, out of one's self to bring something entirely new and never before seen into the world. We seem to have lost the capability of originating in that sense and that is one of the reasons why we cannot reform any more and this tradition breaks. It produces an anxiety and inner fear for everybody who is involved in our modern situation as a supposed creator, as somebody who is supposed to produce and sees himself crippled mentally by this splitting up of the human capabilities. It seems almost as if since we discovered the

fact that the earth is not the center of the cosmos, and that there might not be any cosmos, that the movement in which the cosmos really is seems to resemble much more the explosion of an atom bomb -- namely, that it is continuously expanding at a terrific speed -- that since the discovery of this fact we have imitated this image and we are about to dissolve a constellation of our capabilities, bringing about the same situation, driving them farther and farther apart and losing the last hope of a real unity of that.

This made a few modern philosophers aware of the strange thing we have never considered before: namely, that a similar break, not similar but one entire breakdown in the situation of the human mind had already occurred once before, and those philosophers were able to encourage historians to work on that discovery of a new historical phenomenon of which we have become aware. We have neglected entirely the historical time between 1000 B.C. and the year 1. In that age everywhere worlds were breaking down, worlds of a very ancient and great tradition. The splinters of those worlds created new things that were entirely despotic, sometimes entirely anarchic. It seems to have been an age of continuous, feverish transformation, an age when nothing remained sure, when everything seemed to have to be doubted -- an age very strangely resembling ours. No traditions, everywhere the necessities of absolutely new beginnings. This is the age we have chosen our thinkers from in this

course because they have one thing in common -- the fundamental thing they have in common is that everyone of them was in an extreme situation, a situation which we hope people will be very rarely driven into -- namely, a situation where they had to realize that the one-way street (?) had become so absolute that they had to take a position of entire independence and establish the other pole -- to adjust the world to man absolutely, to raise this demand that the world might be judged by man and by personalities. They were all, in that sense, in an extreme position. They were driven into that position and they made their work in that extreme position.

That is the reason why they might be able to help us in our plight. They might have even been in a more extreme situation than we are yet in. But at least it is similar; it is one thing we can compare ourselves to, to a certain degree, in our situation. What occurred, the catastrophe of the human mind ~~that~~ came about in this time and took a thousand years to accomplish itself, was the complete breakdown of myth. All historical life and even, it seems, pre-historical life as far as we know now up to around roughly 1000 B.C. had been entirely mythical. The state of mind of the human mind, of the mind of man we can best describe as a mythical state of mind. We will have to find what this mythical state of mind means. I do not want to imply here again any development hidden from us or the monster called

the human mind; I do not want to imply that then the human mind was young, so to speak, and in its childhood, and then it came into another period, into adolescence and now it comes to maturity -- nothing like that. Nothing biological, nothing organic in this proposition. We cast a cold eye on those things. We only want to know whether it has been a different state of mind generally, and what has this state of mind been? What distinguishes it from the later states of the mind of man.?

We find that after the breakdown of this state of mind, this transition age between 1000 B.C. and the year 1 approximately, the crisis is absolutely overcome and the state of mind of the mind of man comes into a new form and especially in the West but almost everywhere new fundamental attitudes of man towards the world and towards himself and divinity and nature have developed, attitudes, opinions, general opinions and basic actions that are absolutely different from the opinions, positions, and actions taken before 1000 B.C. -- different in quality. We have to find this fundamental difference in quality of the attitude of man and the propositions and fundamentals and foundations of the human mind in those two periods. The second period that starts after the transition age is over, approximately with the year 1, -- that means roughly with Plato and Paul -- this which lasted until the 19th Century is a state of mind of which the unity of which we again have to discover and to

describe. Let me call that a metaphysical state of mind. We will have to find out what that means and how that is distinguished from the mythical state of mind.

What happens now or seems to happen now is much more important. At the end of the 19th Century there might have been only one thinker who really faced or had an idea that something much more important than a new reformation, a new development of this Western culture or metaphysical culture in a straight row would be before us, namely, a total breakdown of some fundamentals that all this tradition had in common -- and this was Nietzsche. He proved that he tried to probe into the assumptions that had held up this culture much more ruthlessly and much deeper than anybody else because he was haunted by the fear and confessed so that he and we would lose perhaps all the richness of the Western development, that we would lose our continuity, that something terrible might be going to happen to the state of the human mind and he tried to find out, to make the first steps to find out what that might be, what are the reasons for it. In the meantime the opinion takes place that there is more to our situation than the usual transition that we can overcome by a reformation of the old things we have lived in.

And so, for the sake of the matter, even if we shouldn't be right, we make the assumption in this course that this is the case -- that means we look at our situation

as if this were the case. That gives us the opportunity to look at the situation much more consistently than we otherwise could. Let's suppose we could find out that we are not justified in that assumption, that the fear of those people is not justified, then we would have gained a great advantage; we would ~~have~~ at least have gained an opinion how we might bring about a new reformation if such a reformation is still possible. We might have discovered something of our own that we could add to our tradition.

So we suppose that approximately we live in such an age of transformation and we compare this to other transformations that happened before -- namely, the one great transformation of the mythical state of mind of man to the metaphysical state of mind of man. We want to find out what happened then, what did people and great thinkers, great personalities, do in order to achieve this transformation? How did they discover new fundamentals, and what was the power of origin in them? -- because we are interested in the question, 'Is the human mind, is man, creative?' 'Does he have the power of originating?' And, 'What is origin?' 'What is principle?' 'What is beginning?' And, 'Is man a being that can make a beginning?' So we take those people who have been forced to be beginners, hoping that we might for heaven's sake not be entirely beginners; but if our situation would be like that we have to prepare ourselves for it. The question is open. We better prepare for both possibilities, the reformation as well as the transformation, without making up our mind what

our path will really be. This background of the development of the human mind that we can distinguish in different states of the human mind that brought about entirely different kinds of culture and positions taken by man in the world is one of our main means to clarify those, our possibilities, for ourselves.