

The objectivity of the Humanities and the Essence of Truth^{* 1}

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1. The Problematic

When dealing with questions about the methodology of the humanities} we are almost unavoidably mesmerized by the point of view of the natural sciences. This occurs not only when we attempt to apply the proven methods of the natural sciences to the humanities, but also when we attempt to maintain the methodological Independence of the humanities from the natural sciences. We assume that we must have thought through the simpler and more distinct relations found in the natural sciences before attaching the more complex case of the humanities« We suppose that because in the natural sciences a guaranteed objective procedure has been developed over a long period of time, the extent to which something similar is possible in the humanities must be determined by reference to it. The difficulty about questions pertaining to the humanities is their more intimate connection with human life. Here there arise/entirely new complications unknown in the natural sciences. From the point of view of the natural sciences the difficulty with the humanities is that the subjectivity of the knower cannot be eliminated. But what from this point of view appears to be a serious difficulty is actually an unmistakable advantage. For we become involved in a problematic that will eventually lead us to consider the role of knowledge in the entire context of human life» a problematic that will generate insights which, when correctly understood, throw new light even upon the questions pertaining to natural science. From this new point of view it becomes clear that the point of departure of natural science, which presumes to find in simple sensations a universally certain foundation for higher acts of knowing built hierarchically upon them, mirrors a

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¹ This lecture was given on Feb. 24, 1960 at the University of Mainz, and was repeated on Oct. 14, 1960 at the Berlin division of the Kant Society. The Mainz lecture referred to an earlier lecture which I had given there on June 14, 1950 entitled "Die Methode der Geisteswissenschaften" and printed in the Mainz Universitätsreden. The reference to the particular situation at Mainz has been deleted.

very definite, inherited epistemological position, one which remains onesidedly oriented toward sense perception.

The questions raised in this problematic have a universal meaning which transcends the sphere of the humanities and throws new light on the question of truth in general, a question that is concealed by the usual orientation toward sense perception and the framework constructed from elementary sensations. For from this orientation it is absolutely impossible to move into the world of the opinions and views that rule daily life, of moral valuations, of political and religious convictions. Unless we can successfully frame the problem of knowledge anew this entire realm must be abandoned to unverifiable arbitrariness.

It is with this in mind that we take as our point of departure the question of the objectivity of the humanities: our goal is to discover points of view which take us beyond this question and are fruitful for the more general question of the essence of truth. On the basis of questions that are clearer and already quite well-developed at the level of theoretical science we may anticipate a result that will apply beyond the sciences to the doctrine of knowledge in general.

2. The Question of the Objectivity of the Humanities

I will attempt to set forth in broadest outline the problem as it appears from the point of view of the humanities. The most universal trait of all of the sciences, that which differentiates them from unscientific points of view, is their objectivity. Here objectivity means the elimination of all subjective bias. Such objectivity is not restricted to science alone; it is an attitude toward life which one can assume also in practical affairs. We meet it especially in that judicial objectivity which is most intimately connected with the virtue of Justice. Here objective means unbiased, unprejudiced, -fetter impartial behavior toward object. It thus presupposes disengagement from immediate vital commitments: the objective Judge must stand above conflicting vital Interests. We meet here the more general tension between objectivity and life. By way of anticipation we may say that when it is a matter of objectivity the immediate existential relation has been cancelled, and when, on the other hand, it is a matter of existential gravity, we stand outside the realm of possible objectivity. This is the question Kierkegaard dealt with. It is the question of the existential limits of objectivity, and we must acknowledge it without being led immediately to depreciate objectivity.

Objectivity is preeminently the basic attitude of the scientist and here, as in the case of the Judge, the immediate existential relation must be bracketed, if there is to be achieved that objectivity which is the presupposition of *every* science. At the same time, however, we meet the limit of this analogy: for while the objectivity of the Judge must be achieved in concrete behavior again and again, in science the objectivity of the result enters into the further construction of the particular science. Thus, objectivity now characterizes, not only an attitude toward life, but a definite result which can be taken over and built upon by another. Now the question of objectivity becomes the question of the methodological guarantee of a science, There arises the question of the criterion of such objectivity, and thus the issue of objectivity as a human attitude toward life becomes the issue of that objective structure which is precisely the context of the foundation of science.

Since the rise of modern natural science this criterion has been universal validation. There are, in particular, two traits which guarantee universal validation within the natural sciences. One trait is the ability to repeat experiments at will so that the results of one investigator can be checked by others. The second trait is the reduction, of all relevant phenomena to the quantitative, the measurable, excluding thereby all unverifiable sensations.

When the humanities sought to establish that they too were rigorous sciences, they could only

be guided by this same ideal of the universal validation of their results. In so doing, however, they found themselves from the outset in a situation much more difficult than that of the natural sciences. On the one hand, they are unable to experiment with their subject-matter, to work out individual factors by varying the conditions, etc.; they must take their reality as It presents itself. One cannot set up experiments in history; it is already given as such. The same is true of all spiritual creations—poetry, the graphic arts, etc.—produced "by history. And even when we might to a certain extent experiment with factors that influence the development of individual persons, 5g. in pedagogy, we soon encounter the ethical question. In matters profoundly human we cannot reduce men to objects of experimentation. And, on the other hand, in the humanities what is essential is not measurable, and what is measurable, so far as there is such, is not essential but at best superficial. In the humanities, therefore, the universal validation of results cannot be attained—or at least not with the same rigor as in the natural sciences. Therefore the humanities lack a corresponding, easily manageable criterion of objectivity.

Let me clarify this point with a simple example. If we consider the great accomplishments of the humanities, the works of various literary historians about one and the same poet, e.g. Goethe, or the works of various historians of philosophy about one and the same philosopher, e.g. Plato, we find pictures which differ greatly, which often even contradict one another and which cannot be reduced to a common denominator. Yet manifestly the relation between them is not such that one interpretation is correct and the others false. In spite of their diversity they are not entirely irreconcilable. We say that each of them is 'somehow correct.' But this indefinite expression "somehow correct" itself contains the problem, for here the indefinite mean appears to hold its own between the clearly true and the clearly false. If it is indeed somehow correct, precisely what is correct about it, and how is it distinguished from what is not correct?

These few indications are already enough to make the conclusion seem unavoidable that only the natural sciences have objective truth in the senate of universal validation. The humanities cannot achieve universal validation; they remain irredeemably trapped in the subjectivity of the individual researcher. And it seems to follow that, therefore, the humanities cannot claim objectivity, for the two, subjectivity and objectivity, are mutually exclusive. This would mean, however, that what goes on in the universities under the title "humanities" (*Geisteswissenschaften*) cannot, by more rigorous standards, be called science (*Wissenschaft*). It seems that the French are justified when, with their greater caution, they speak of *lettres* and reserve the word "science" for the natural sciences. And it is understandable that a rigorous, positivistic presentation of this problem is given the title *Unmöglichkeit der Geisteswissenschaften (The Impossibility of the Humanities)*.²

3. The Disengagement of Objectivity from Universal Validation

Georg Misch approached this problem by distinguishing between objectivity and universal validation.³ By this means he sought to establish that in the humanities there is a form of objectivity which is not necessarily based upon universal validation. Thus, in the humanities we could give up the claim of universal validation (which, in fact, cannot seriously be main-

² Cf. V. Kraft, *Die Methode der Geisteswissenschaften*.

³ G. Misch, *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie*, 2nd ed., 1931, especially p. lx, and pp. 295 ff. I have attempted to develop these thoughts in an essay: "Zur Frage nach der Objectivität der Geisteswissenschaften", in: *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, vol. 97, pp. 335 ff, 1937; reprinted in my *Das Verstehen. Drei Aufsätze zur Theorie der Geisteswissenschaften*, 1949. I allude here to these earlier statements.

tained) without thereby abandoning objectivity, that is, ultimately, the character of science itself. This means that in the humanities there is a genuinely objective, that is, substantively demonstrable knowledge, which is nevertheless not accessible to everyone in the same way, because it is bound up with definite, particular presuppositions within the knowing subject. The precise difference between the natural sciences and the humanities is that in the latter understanding is a matter, not of the formal intellect alone, but of the depth of the soul with all of its forces.

Thus, in the humanities a subjective factor is unavoidable. The question is whether this subjectivity necessarily excludes objectivity. This question is answered differently depending upon what is meant by the word subjectivity. For this word is ambiguous and eminently capable of generating confusion when used carelessly. On the one hand, there is subjectivity in the pejorative sense: subjective arbitrariness, Imprisonment in various accidental limitations and prejudices. We project our own wishes and fears into the subject-matter; we view things in terms of our own advantage and disadvantage; we give uncontrolled play to our own likes and dislikes, building upon them value judgments which have no other basis. This is that subjectivity which the serious investigator can and must set aside, for, like a thicket, it rises up between him and his subject-matter, barring his free access to it. And this is usually what we are thinking of when we say that science must guard against the disturbing influence of subjectivity.

But subjectivity takes yet another form: the influence of the soul of the knower, which must enter into his process of understanding in order that his object be disclosed in its depth. He would hold that a man who sees colors is unjustified in talking about them; he sees things that remain hidden from the man who is color blind. The same is true in a deeper sense. Scheler spoke of value blindness, the condition in which men lack the organ necessary for value experiences. And in general we can say that life experiences, forms of spiritual sensitivity, indeed, most broadly, individual talents and capacities are what alone permit us to see things correctly, for they alone make possible our penetration into the reality to be investigated. As opposed to the first sort of subjectivity, these forms of subjectivity are not limitations and hindrances but organs of knowledge which provide access to reality. This sort of subjectivity is unavoidable; it is the necessary precondition for knowledge. Further, this subjectivity does not exclude objectivity, not if we define objectivity correctly, that is, in a manner faithful to it. Objectivity so defined is perhaps no longer to be measured by the standard of universal validation, but nevertheless it is related to the object, devoted to the object; it conducts us to it by disclosing it in its essence. And ultimately, this is what is meant by the term objectivity.

Thus, there arises the task of purifying oneself of the dross of arbitrary subjectivity in order to achieve that deeper and purer subjectivity which is completely devoted to the object. It is a matter, not of eliminating subjectivity, but of purifying it, and the question arises as to how such a purification of subjectivity is to be conceived. It is somehow an extinguishing of the all-too-egoistic aspirations of the arbitrary ego in favor of a deeper and more universal ego, and to this extent it is a process comparable to mystical experience. But it is not the passage to a kind of transcendental ego (e. g. in the Kantian sense) that would assure the universal validation of the results; rather, what enters into knowledge as the Inseparable, constitutive element is precisely the uniqueness of the individual soul, which grants the result its unique, individual character.

Thus no longer are subjectivity and objectivity mutually exclusive; that deeper subjectivity enters into knowledge and discloses the object at a greater depth. We must therefore recognize a truth which is inaccessible by way of universal validation and which nevertheless does not cease to be truth. Truth in this determinate sense is accessible only to a limited circle of men,

and thus it is apparently a necessary consequence of Misch's starting point that (as I maintained formerly in youthful over-enthusiasm) there can be a truth that is valid for only one man and yet is objectively true.⁴ This seemed to be a necessary consequence of this approach, and it is by no means to be rejected just because it contradicts our traditional views.

However, this is an insupportable exaggeration (against which Misch very wisely guarded himself) and it requires reexamination. Of course, it must be made clear from the outset that this re-examination is not simply to abandon the previous results in favor of the ideal of knowledge which is oriented toward the natural sciences; It is rather to deepen what has already been gained. Thus, we come again to the difficult question: how can we establish the objectivity (*ar*, more simply, the truth content) of the knowledge of the humanities, if we cannot ground it on the criterion of universal validation? For, if the knowledge of the humanities is not to dissolve into mere subjective arbitrariness, its objectivity must somehow be established.

4. The Techniques of Interpretation

One naturally thinks first of the rules of textual interpretation which are developed in the philological disciplines and are summed up under the title "hermeneutics". This includes the methods of understanding an unintelligible text in the context of the whole, of relating parallel texts to an author's isolated statements, and of properly extrapolating beyond the author's unfinished thought so as to better understand what he intended but did not say. It includes, further, the consideration of historical circumstances, biographical, psychological and sociological points of view, etc,

I need not go further into this highly differentiated problematic since basically it deals merely with those rules of the trade that give the business of interpretation a certain stability and whose violation, therefore, would in every case be an offense against the requirements of scientific rigor. But these rules do not lead to the ultimate decisive question about the essence of truth in the humanities. They are only the vestibule, not the sanctuary, of research in the humanities.

However, their deeper presuppositions lead us far beyond all questions of mere scientific technique and force us to take up, beyond the particular realm of the humanities, the question of the essence of truth in its universal form which then we can apply to the particular situation of the humanities.

5. The New Point of Departure

If one poses the question of the essence of truth in its universal form, the difficulty arises that its presuppositions can not be formulated as easily manipulable "criteria", that, in general, they withdraw from what it is crucial to verify at the level of disinterested theoretical observation, and are disclosed only to the man who really inwardly 'engrosses' or 'engages' himself in his subject-flatter. They are confirmed only in the movement of questioning itself, and therefore they lead back ultimately to the conscience of the questioner. For this reason we too must follow up the problem and ask ourselves: what in the soul of the individual researcher marks the presence of genuine truth? What differentiates truth from idle chatter? There are, in fact, definite criteria of truth in the soul of the researcher, and we must seek to grasp them.

I believe I can establish three such conditions of truth:

⁴ Cf. *Das Verstehen*, loc. cit., p. 81 ff.

1. The first is the resistance of the subject-matter, its behavior in opposition to the expectations we bring to it, forcing us thereby to deeper levels of penetration.⁵
2. The second is intersubjectivity. I understand by this the possibility of reaching an understanding with another man about his subject-matter. I call this the openness of truth for the other man.
3. The third is the connection between the truth known about an external object and the inner truthfulness of the knowing subject. That is, the indissoluble interpenetration of knowledge that is adequate to the subject-matter and the ethical problematic, or better, the tracing of both to a deeper common ground.

These three conditions are not criteria of truth in the ordinary sense of the -word, for the concept of such a criterion means that the truth known by one man is verifiable by every other man (and this is precisely the guaranteed scientific character of the natural sciences). Here, however, there is the difficulty that only the knower himself is certain of the truth and this certainly cannot be verified by anyone else. Indeed, even the knower himself feels this certainty only in the very act of knowing Itself and cannot retain it as though it were a detached possession. It is precisely this that gives the man «ho engages in the humanities, if he takes his task seriously, a heightened responsibility: he must decide the issue himself and may not depend on confirmation by another.⁶

This provides the outline of the following reflections. I will attempt to treat in detail the three problematics which I have separated here but which in reality are most tightly interwoven»

6. Heidegger's Concept of Truth as Unconcealment.

Our best approach is the manner in which Heidegger has sought to grasp anew the concept of truth. We will not take up the Heideggerian presentation in detail⁷, but will limit ourselves to a decisive point of departure, namely, the interpretation Heidegger has given to the Greek word for truth, the word ἀλήθεια, as is well known, Heidegger interprets this word as the combination of the verbal stem λανθάνειν, to conceal, with the alpha privative. Thus, for him, truth is to be grasped from the outset as a negative concept. He translates it as unconcealment. We do not need to concern ourselves here with the extent to which this Interpretation is philologically compelling; what alone concerns us is the issue, that is, this interpretation of truth.

Truth as unconcealment means that there is not at the outset a situation of some sort of unknowing from which one then begins unrestrictedly to build knowledge or acquire truth. Rather, at the outset there is the situation of concealment and one must wrest the truth from it in an explicit exertion. One must tear the veil from truth. This holds both for the truth about external things and for the inner truthfulness of the man himself. Heidegger speaks of the "error" in which man always finds himself and which belongs to the inner constitution of his Dasein.⁸

Thus, the real opposite of truth is not the He. The lie is secondary: there must first be a truth before one can consciously hide it in a lie. The real opposite of truth is the deceptive *e* appear-

⁵ This is the only one of these points taken up in the work mentioned above.

⁶ As will be established below, this does not contradict the asserted openness of truth.

⁷ To do this we would have to take up the steps in Heidegger's development together with the exposition in *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 33 ff. and p. 212, and especially in *Platon's Lehr« von der Wahrheit»* 1942, and *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, 1943.

⁸ *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, p. 23.

ance whose indeterminateness, like a thick fog, hides the true essence of things. To such deceptive appearance belongs what Heidegger has called the world of chatter and ambiguity: everything is understood in an approximate manner such that absolutely nothing is doubtful. The path to truth, therefore, consists in conquering deceptive appearance.

But this deceptive appearance is not untruth in the sense of a consciously distorted truth. Rather, it is untruth in the sense of an unproblematic condition in which man is estranged from the question about the real truth. Truth, therefore, to say it once again, is not von in a neutral process of knowledge; it requires the cancellation of a deceptive, but pacifying, appearance. However, that is always a painful process which touches a man in his inmost depth.⁹

But if truth can never begin from the beginning without presuppositions, if truth always consists in conquering a given intelligibility which is deceptive, if truth means lifting something out of concealment into the light of full visibility, then this means that the path to truth can never consist in building from the bottom up; rather, it must consist in the circular procedure known to us from the methodology of the humanities: it is here that the universally fruitful path to truth is revealed.

The application of this universal characterization of truth to the particular situation of the humanities would take approximately the following form: In the beginning there is always a certain under-standing of the subject-matter, e.g. a poem. We have read it and already know what occurs in it. But this understanding is superficial and conceals the truth. We must first demolish it in order to find behind it the authentic profound truth* We have to "extract" the truth, much as Dürer spoke of the extraction of the beauty slumbering in nature by the artist who only brings into relief what basically would have been visible without his mediation. But just this analogy with artistic creation raises the deeper question as to whether such a disclosure of the truth consists merely in removing the veil from a truth which is complete already or whether this truth is not itself created, or at least co-created, in this process of disclosure. This is the deeper question: is the truth something finished and needing only to be extracted or is the truth created, or at least modified, and thereby enlarged, in this very process of extraction?

These are the questions we are led to ask by Heidegger's concept of truth as unconcealment. And we know that it is not just a matter of another characterization of the word truth or of an ingenious etymology, but that here the essence of truth is grasped in a new way.

7. Resistance of the Subject-Matter

If truth is not just found but simultaneously created, or at least co-created, then there arises anew the question of how true knowledge differs from arbitrary interpretation or mere subjective fantasy. So as not to deal over-much in generalities, I will focus upon the questions about knowledge in the humanities, and I will orient myself above all toward the understanding of a poem or a philosophical text. The question then becomes: how does the researcher recognize that his interpretation is correct?

The first answer to this question is that he knows his knowledge is true by virtue of the resistance of his subject-matter, that is, by the fact that the object holds rigid in the face of his interpretation and does not fit together simply according to his wishes. Since Dilthey we have sought to clarify the question about our certainty of the reality of the external world by appealing to the resistance with which things oppose our naive urge to expansion. I know an

⁹ See my earlier essay, *Die Schmerzhaftigkeit der Wahrheit*, in: *Einfache Sittlichkeit*, 2nd ed., 1957, pp. 142 ff.

object is real because it opposes me; it does not yield when I approach It; I hump£ into it, often quite painfully} it constricts my living space, and often it is absolutely not what I would like it to be. This is true not only of perceptible things. Another human being, for example, can stand in my way even though I do not bump into him in the physical sense; the pressure I feel can occur in a nonbodily manner, when for example, my application for a position Is rejected because another man is preferred over me. It is the same with purely spiritual entities. For example, I perceive the reality of the state in the tax bill it sends to ay house and the reality of the legal order in the unpleasant consequences which the mere thought of prevents me from breaking the law (if my inner moral impulse in insufficient).

This holds, not only when the issue is the actuality of a thing or a man, but for all cases of truth. In truth' and "in actuality" are colloquially almost equivalent expressions; they are artificially separated only by the abstract philosophical way of speaking. Truth, In the sense of lived, existentially experienced truth, has this same hard, resistant, if not aggressive, character. In his everyday understanding a man lives, not in the truth, but in the previously mentioned world of chatter and ambiguity. Only if sane event literally strikes" him does the truth come up against him and Jolt him cruelly out of his everyday understanding. According to the penetrating interpretation of Hans Lipps, shame Is above all the distressing situation in which a man becomes frightfully conscious of the truth about himself. Truth is, in the broadest sense, the deeply painful event wherein the veils that conceal are torn away and a man sees reality as It is. We speak appropriately therefore of the "naked" truth.

It is understandable that we fear this truth and would like to retreat in the face of it to the old irresponsibility. But only in resisting this temptation, only In maintaining the truth and in seeking to tear the veil away completely, does a man actualize his own existence. We cannot here pursue further the question of truth in its universal existential meaning. We return to our narrower theme, truth in the humanities.

8. The Result for Knowledge in the Humanities

If, in general, we know the truth by the severity with which it resists our wishes, then this must apply also to knowledge in the humanities, though in the peaceful flow of scientific endeavor there is usually no ultimate existential intensity. It applies too to every simple work of interpretation: we realize we are on the right track when the subject-matter resists our interpretation, when it remains independent of our expectations and forces us to correct our original starting point again and again.¹⁰

In order to appreciate this point consider the opposite. Clever constructions, interpretations which lack substance, do not encounter rigid resistance in the subject-matter, but press unresisted into emptiness. Whenever a theory unfolds neatly, whenever everything seems to fit into it smoothly, we must fear that we have to do only with our own airy phantasies. Smooth, pervading connections, symmetrical arrangements according to archetechtonic principles, hug» synthetic systems — all these are things of which we must be deeply suspicious, in oar own work as well as in the work of others.

We must be on guard whenever one thing seems to confirm the other, whenever the starting point we have derived from one example can be directly applied to another example, whenever our expectations seem all too easily confirmed. Conversely, however, whenever our expectations are not confirmed, whenever we find in one example something other than we had thought of on the basis of the first, we may be certain that we are touching the bedrock of re-

¹⁰ Cf. *Das Verstehen*, loc. cit., pp. 85.

ality whose resistance sparks our own (creative) effort. Of course, one must not exaggerate. I am not always certain when an expectation is confirmed that my assumption is false. I must merely be suspicious. But the opposite is true; whenever the resistance of the subject-matter forces me to increase my effort, I know that I have not yet lost contact with reality.

This means that in general the analytic attitude has primacy over the will to synthesize. But again, this does not mean we are to renounce all attempts to synthesize. Without such attempts analysis would remain a chaotic multiplicity. But the danger of all synthesis—and of all Idealistic systems—is the frivolity of building a castle in the air. Opposed to all synthetic simplifications are the great advantages of the phenomenological method, in its original sense. We could develop this point in detail with respect to the methodology of the humanities, and it would lead us to quite definite, concrete rules of scientific procedure, but because to do so would blunt our present concern with the more fundamental problematic, we will resist this temptation.

I use the term "encounter" to characterize the process in which we experience being struck by the resistance of the subject-matter in spiritual concerns. I find it useful to limit this term to those ultimate, decisive experiences when we are in the truest sense "shaken" and thrown off course by the power of the reality which confronts us. Rilke's poem *The Archaic Torso of Apollo* is, I believe, the pure expression of such an encounter: "For there no place is unseeing. You must change your life."¹¹ The "wholly other" confronts man, demanding and frightening.¹² But while encounter with the overpowering defines the ultimate greatness of the humanities, it also permeates the details of its everyday work. To a certain extent every truth in the humanities is characterized by the encountered reality in something independent of the subject, and this is what is meaningfully called objectivity, that is, verification in the object.

9. Truth as Beyond Subjectivity

The second point concerns overcoming subjectivity by agreement with another man. Feuerbach was probably the first to stress that there is truth only if several men concur. In this vein he once wrote: "Not by oneself, but only with another, does one arrive at concepts, at reason in general. For both physical and spiritual procreation two people are needed: community is the first principle of truth and universality. Even my certainty about the existence of external things is mediated by the certainty of the existence of people other than myself. What I alone see I doubt; I am certain only if the other sees it too."¹³ Nietzsche took this up, saying pointedly: "One is always wrong; truth begins with two."¹⁴

If we take Feuerbach as our starting point, it is meaningless to talk of truth at the level of the individual man; something like truth arises only when there are several. In the simplest example, "which Feuerbach himself uses: "If I can see something, I can also be deceived; only if another sees it too and confirms it for me, do I know that it was no deception."

In its universality this statement is perhaps exaggerated, and one can object that, if I am uncertain about what I see vaguely in the distance, I can check it up close. And one can further object that I can assure myself of the truth or pragmatic suitability of an assumption on

¹¹ R. M. Rilke, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, p. 117.

¹² In my earlier Mainz lecture I sought to introduce this concept of "encounter" as a category of the humanities. I have since pursued it further, especially insofar as it is fruitful for pedagogy. Cf. *my Existenzphilosophie und Pädagogik*, 1959. I do not take it up here; a general reference is sufficient.

¹³ L. Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by W. Bolin and F. Jodl, vol. 2, p. 304.

¹⁴ F. Nietzsche, *Werke*. Oktavausgabe, vol. 5, p. 203.

which I base my action, by the consequences which flow from it and that it is therefore quite appropriate to speak of truth even in the case of Robinson Crusoe living alone. But the limits of such truth are very narrow, its validity extends only as far as the possibilities of my immediate practical verification, and thus it does not go beyond my technical-practical comportment. At any rate, such verification is irrelevant in the humanities. I do not wish to dwell on the fact that even the formation of concepts presupposes language and thus communication, but certainly there is absolutely no possibility of immediate practical verification when I call something beautiful, or someone's behavior good; nor is such verification possible when I believe I understand a spiritual work or when I discuss the concepts which guide this understanding, or when I articulate the goals of my own life. The positivistic extremists conclude from this that to speak here of the truth or falsity of propositions makes no sense, that such affirmations are meaningless. This goes too far; we could in no way do without such affirmations in our lives (even if we set aside the issue of the humanities as sciences); another man's understanding acceptance alone can confirm me in the truth of my thinking.

Thus, I am in a situation -which illustrates the deeper sense of Feuerbach's example of seeing in common. Feuerbach said, what I alone see, I doubt; I am certain only if the other sees it too. Only when I can grasp a thing immediately with my own hands can I alone convince myself of its reality. Even about the stars in the sky I depend on another's confirmation« There is a deep meaning in the phenomenologists' talk of a spiritual seeing -whose goal they define, in general, as a letting-between. Heidegger defined the task of phenomenology as a "letting that which shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself."¹⁵ And his concept of truth as unconcealment is directly related to this: "true in the Greek sense is the ἀσθησις, the pure sense perception of something."¹⁶ But this letting-be-seen occurs not only in immediate sense perception, but also throughout the entire spiritual realm: see how beautiful this line is, how warm this red, how melodic this verse sounds, how touching this gesture seems, how humanly great this behavior of a fellow man in a difficult situation, what profound presentiment of a hidden meaning speaks from this poem. We are always in the same situation of referring to something, of calling attention to it, of guiding the other toward it.

But the other cannot be forced, and there are always, figuratively speaking, blind men (blind to value or meaning) who are unable to see what I believe I see, and perhaps even laugh at me on that account. Many, therefore, would prefer to exclude the possibility of such confirmation. But the presupposition of my own certainty is that there be at least one other man who sees what I show him—seeing and showing taken here in the figurative sense. And, further, only in such community can I attempt to penetrate deeper. It is in this sense that I believe I must accept Feuerbach's statement, "community is the first principle of truth and universality." The condition of truth is that I can come to an agreement about the matter with another. There is absolutely no truth which holds for only one man (as I once maintained); truth is open for the other.

10. The Openness of Dialogue.

This phrase means something other than universal validation, for it does not mean that we are necessarily of the same opinion or that with evidence I can force the other to agree with my assertion (as is the case, for example, with a mathematical demonstration). When I attempt to force the other, even if only by the force of my arguments, I have already forsaken the ground of a common truth. The community and universality of truth means that we engage with each

¹⁵ M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 1927, p. 34.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

other, in full reciprocal openness, in a genuine dialogue, and that In such a testing and clarifying dialogue we stand on the common ground of rational discussion. Jaspers described this as a 'loving struggle.' It is essential, not that we come to complete agreement on all points, but that we search for the truth together in fundamental equality, without competing, that each recognizes the possibility that he can *err* and that the other may be right, and that each, therefore, be prepared to learn all over again. This openness for dialogue is the presupposition of truth.

This is best understood by considering the opposite, for it has an incisive consequence here: when I deny the other the possibility of such dialogue because I presume to have a monopoly on the truth and am no longer prepared to discuss my view, then not only have I withdrawn from dialogue, I have forsaken the presupposition under which alone truth is possible. I am in untruth. The example of the National Socialists, who ordered their followers not to debate with those who thought differently, was profoundly frightening because one felt (even if not with full clarity at the time) that they had at this point forsaken the attempt to locate a common truth. This holds for every fanatical belief; it propagandizes its conviction, but it does not discuss it; that is, it requires submission to the truth it presumes to possess, but it does not recognize the common concern about a truth which is never to be possessed as finished but is always present only in the openness of seeking. Thus, a barrier is set up around the exclusive truth possessed by a special group. There arises the sectarian consciousness of those who presume to possess the truth and who close themselves off from those who think otherwise. Such totalitarian consciousness of mission has only two alternatives: Either it advertises its intuition, requiring that others submit to it, and this is propaganda; or it battles those who think otherwise, who do not submit, seeking to exterminate them, and this is war of annihilation«

Opposed to all of this is the affirmation that there is In principle no exclusive truth, that is, no truth which can be «Son« fined to an individual or group. Hegel once said that with the appeal to feeling community is torn out from under us; this holds also for every rigid position. With the refusal of dialogue the community within which alone truth is possible is torn asunder. To live in rigidity means necessarily to be in untruth. And here untruth does not mean this or that false opinion; it means, more deeply, the inner constitution of the man who presumes to possess the truth and who withdraws from the claim of reason.

Truth, on the other hand, is never closed; it is open for other men and holds its own in rational dialogue.¹⁷ Truth is immediately perverted into untruth when there is the presumption to possess it and withdrawal from the openness of speaking with each other. That holds also, by the way, for all philosophical sects that entrench themselves in arbitrary terminology and look down proudly upon those who think differently. There is no esoteric truth.

This openness of truth for the other's understanding does not mean universal validation in the earlier sense. There remain individual differences, but these meet in reciprocal understanding, the irreducible wonder of our spiritual existence. It makes sense to speak of universal validation only in the realm of objectified propositions} here, however, we are in the realm of the nonobjectifiable ground, from which alone every objectified pronouncement springs and which with Jaspers we call the 'encompassing'

11. The Tension in the Hazardous Venture of Truth

As we pass from these more general reflections to the particular question of the methodology of the humanities, it may be objected that our identification of truth with the receptive under-

¹⁷ For details see in *Die Vernunft und die Mächte des Irrationalen* " in: *Wesen und Wirklichkeit des Menschen Festschrift für Helmuth Plessner*, 1957, pp. 88 ff.

standing of another man renders impossible all progress in knowledge, because this can occur only in the solitude of the individual thinker. We reply that, while it is true that initial, groping inquiries into new truths occur only in the soul of the Individual inquirer, and, while it is also true that tragic conflicts with the uncomprehending masses are unavoidable, still there remains the condition that only if it can be repeated by another man can what the individual believes he knows be proven true. It is the unavoidably burdensome risk in every search for truth that when he makes his breakthrough the seeker does not know whether what he has grasped will be confirmed by the other, that is, whether it is truth or subjectively conditioned error. Every man who ventures into the uncharted assumes this risk. Only if others assume it too can his hunch be confirmed. That does not mean that the truth of his hunch can or should be measured by the standard of universal agreement. It is enough that there are individuals who are able to follow, in whose circle the truth is preserved and from whom it can spread further.

This further clarifies our rejection of an esoteric truth. The openness of truth does not mean that everything can be known by everybody in the same way. What individuals can grasp depends upon levels of understanding, levels of maturity; and unavoidably every act of knowing is personalized. But there are here no fixed limits behind which to withdraw; as a knower, everyone is in the situation of being able to confirm his truth only in community with others. When this confirmation is lacking, he must recognize that in the struggle to reach the peak he has become lost in the mountains.¹⁸

This is the unavoidable danger every genuine investigator faces, and only if he takes this risk can the hitherto ungrasped truth be disclosed to him.

12. Truthfulness as the Presupposition of Truth

The third and final point concerns the interpenetration of truth and the inner truthfulness of the man concerned with truth. We assert that only the man who is inwardly truthful is able to grasp the truth and that conversely the truth necessarily remains closed to the man who is untruthful within himself. This relationship signifies a close interconnection between the theoretical and the ethical, and of the three points it is the most difficult to grasp* I can attempt only some preliminary, groping steps toward its clarification.

The relation between truth and ethical problems became apparent in the previous reflections. If, as I have stressed, truth is something profoundly painful which cuts into our lives, then strong self-discipline is required in order to bear this pain, and whoever is afraid for himself will find some excuse to avoid the burdensome truth by suspending further investigation in this area or by turning to something less threatening.

This holds true even of the simplest scientific work: every one is immersed in his own pet ideas and seeks to confirm them. If they conflict with reality, we are forced to withdraw or to modify our original starting point. But this is always uncomfortable and requires a certain severity toward oneself. This severity, therefore, is an indispensable presupposition of all scientific effort. It is especially required whenever the newly emerging truth immediately concerns the person himself, whether it is a matter of the immediate self «recognition of new dimensions of his being or situation, or whether it is a matter of the very foundations of the meaning his life has borne so far. We must reject the false and superficial arguments of life-philosophy which assert that, because man can neither seek nor esteem a truth hostile and resistant to him,

¹⁸ Cf. L. Binswanger, *Drei Formen missglückten Daseins: Verstiegtheit, Verschrobenheit, Maniertheit*, 1956.

truth must always be life-enhancing, Jacob! said something of this sort.¹⁹ But this view, correct though it may be in its initial tendency, that is, in its denial of a concept of truth which is neutral to life, is nevertheless superficial, for truth which is painful to man is not on that account hostile to life; precisely as painful it contributes to the deepening of life. This profound age-old experience, which is expressed again and again by the more recent poets, especially Rilke, goes right to the roots of the problem of knowledge.

We encountered the connection between the problem of truth and ethical questions a second time In discussing the openness of truth for dialogue with other men; for this openness requires exposing «hat has been gained to the criticism of other men again and again, and so the truth remains in that suspense which prevents it from hardening into mere possession. While men are tempted by natural weakness to withdraw from discussion, openness requires the courage to place oneself in question again and again.

Thus, In the struggle for truth the seeker oust pledge unconditionally both to recognize, against the grain of his own wishes and expectations, what is painful and threatening in the truth he encounters and, with respect to other men, to be open to every objection which calls him into question. A man is capable of this unconditional pledge only if he has come to terms with himself, that is, only if he seeks to conceal nothing in himself, either for his own sake, or that of the other; for any inner untruthfulness forces a man to enclose something within himself, to conceal something, even If unconsciously, and it robs him of that unconditional openness -which is the indispensable presupposition of every truth. What depth psychology calls "complexes" are also of the greatest Importance in the realm of knowledge; for such complexes distort the Image of reality, Inner as veil as outer. When seen from this point of view, what we called the purification of subjectivity gains a new precision.

The question of the meaning of the clarity of knowledge for the existential self-becoming of man rules Hans Lipp's profound book *Die menschliche Natur* (which until now has been almost without Influence). Lipps came to existential philosophy from logic, and his treatment of this issue is his decisive contribution to existential philosophy. It is important also for the present problematic. On the last page of his book Lipps speaks (In a phrase that presents some difficulties) about the "truth of a man." He understands by this the truth which concerns his substance, not just his function as a witness"²⁰, that is, the truth which characterizes his inner condition, not just his statements. And Lipps says of this truth that It is something other than and deeper than what we would call a man's sincerity. Sincerity has to do with the agreement between a man's outer appearance and his inner essence. Its opposite is artificiality, insincerity, the externally assumed, the stylized and mannered (which does not mean mendacity). But mere sincerity alone, says Lipps, Is without the power of an ever-increasing, self» originating self-transparency." only here does there grow a man's authentic truth.

In this context, sincerity refers to the immediacy of living. It Is all the purer the more unreflective a man is. Thus simple, even "primitive men can be sincere, and indeed more easily than more complicated natures. But the truth of a man is something other than this. It grows only In a man«e explicit comportment toward him» self. It is not given at the start as something "natural"; It must be achieved in the explicit effort of an ever-increasing self« transparency." We are reminded here of Heidegger's notion of truth as what must be wrested in an express effort from unconcealment. Lipps's notion of the truth of a man Is the inner equivalent of Heidegger's truth as unconcealment. But then this means that this substantial truth of a man is the necessary condition for every truth he grasps and attests.

However, this truth is gained, according to Lipps, in the "power of an ever-increasing, self-

¹⁹ Cf. O.F. Bollnow, *Die Lebensphilosophie F.H. Jacobis*, 1933, p. 225.

²⁰ H. Lipps, *Die menschliche Natur*, 1941, p. 155

originating self-transparency." This formulation may be misunderstood; for it is not to be understood in the sense of an introspective concern with one's own soul, which, when existential seriousness is lacking, makes a man a mere object of curiosity. What Lipps means is something other than either idle self-reflection or an appended search of one's conscience» What is meant is that a man does not try to fool himself with his actions, that he does what he does clearly and simply and without hidden, ulterior motives. It is a standing-with-oneself, a self-identification with oneself, a process not of introspection but of self-becoming, in the action itself. Just as, for Heidegger, unconcealment has to be wrested from concealment, this self-transparency is no self-evident starting point, but has to be wrested in explicit exertion from ambiguity, unclarity, and vagueness. And only in this process, Lipps stresses, does a man become himself in the authentic sense. Lipps calls the result of this process by which a man wins his authentic self in the struggle against the confusion of his natural existence} the "truth of a man", the truth insofar as it concerns a man's substance. Truthfulness, which we spoke of previously, although imprecisely, is the human virtue by which this truth is achieved. And it follows that this substantial truth of the man himself is the presupposition for his knowing any objective truth of knowledge. Such knowing is then more than an isolated activity of theoretical consciousness; it occurs only in the comprehensive effort of the whole man. Or more precisely, there is no separation of before and after, ground and grounded; the substantial truth of a man is itself rescued from the danger of idle self-reflection only by being actualized in self-forgetful dedication to the objective truth. Both the substantial truth of a man and the objective truth of knowledge are gained only in one and the same indivisible process. Thus we arrive at the existential ground of truth which is prior to any separation of ethical and theoretical points of view. We touch here upon the ultimate ground of all truth, including all scientific truth. This perspective was the goal of our effort. How vague this perspective remains and how much more exact elucidation it requires, I am painfully aware.