

II

STARTING POINTS

1. THE HUMANIST CONVICTION

In the previous chapter we found an outline of ideas from the past and present that may rightly be called humanist. It is remarkable that in the twentieth century this network of ideas is condensed into a conviction of life that, though containing many shades, occupies a place next to, and often replacing, other convictions. As a matter of fact the first signs of this are found in the nineteenth century. That is to say, the ideas mentioned were beginning to show a coherence that provided a sense of orientation and motivation to those who adopted that pattern. It may be open to doubt whether the word *conviction* is the most suitable for this concept. Some people consider that it implies an idea of rigidity and immutability; and this can be easily understood if one thinks of the various kinds of fanatical, religious, and political convictions. But in that case the objection is leveled against the fanaticism and not against the conviction. Open-mindedness and openness can also form the content of a conviction; and the meaning of these notions is misunderstood if they are not considered as elements of convictions. It is a denial of one's own conviction if one regards one's personal starting points as arbitrary preferences. One is "convinced" that these starting points are correct, though this does not mean that they are not open to criticism or subject to change.

Other terms have also been used to express the concept intended here, for instance: intellectual trend, philosophy of life, outlook on life and the world, concept of man and his world, attitude to life, and so on. Obviously one cannot say that such terms are "wrong": it is a matter of definition. In a way, one is entitled to give one's desired meaning to any term. However, there are certain inherent objections to some of these terms. Thus, *intellectual trend* is a rather general concept: one could speak about a romantic or a classicist trend, but then one is talking about a different field. The word *philosophy* is, at least on the European continent, too often used for the

professional study of philosophy to be suitable for the purpose under consideration, while it also underlines the mainly contemplative element in thought. A similar objection can be made against such terms as *outlook on life and the world*, and *concept of man and his world*. They rather refer to insights than to motivations. And finally there is the term *attitude toward life*; but each one of us must occasionally have found that people of different convictions have a similar attitude toward life. As a result, a humanist may then be described as "really" being a true Christian, and vice versa. Because of the considerations above, we prefer the term *humanist conviction*.

The question is: Is it possible to say anything sensible about convictions? Scientific statements are regarded as sensible if they can be tested. That implies among other things that observations are understood and coordinated in such a manner that further observations fit into their framework. One even dares to predict new experiences of the same kind. The test must then show whether the prediction is correct, and therefore whether the theory is tenable or not. Since Newton, there has been a theory about moving bodies that expresses a connection between all kinds of movement. Under certain conditions it can be predicted how movement will develop. The conditions partly refer to certain circumstances, such as the influence of interfering forces, and partly to starting points of a general nature, for example, the assumption that the universe is homogeneous: the laws in force here are regarded as also applying there. Is it possible to talk about convictions in a similar manner? Not without comment. One should not forget that here one is rather concerned with more circumstances and with fewer concrete starting points; and the latter are not always easy to discover and describe. In this context one must, for instance, consider the social situation in which and about which statements are made and the ideas about man that play a role in this connection. If only for that reason any testing of statements about convictions is more problematic.

If, for instance, one looks at the issue of survival, which these days provokes so much interest, one sees that the attempt to survive cannot be founded solely on the natural urge toward individual self-preservation; after all, the world will last for our lifetime. That is the reason that this problem does not appeal to many people, however much it is shown that it is necessary to take steps now in order to safeguard the future. An appeal must be made to the responsibility for posterity, which is also a concept found within human consciousness. There are those who might recognize in this the natural element of preservation of the species found among all animals living in groups; but in man it seems that this is expressed on the basis of reflection. This is only to show that, though convictions are not scientific systems of thought, neither are they purely subjective structures. They have a touch of both, because statements based on convictions, like those concerning survival, are obviously based both on an evaluation of

reality and on existential notions. And these influence each other. The next question would be: What are the notions that form the basis of this type of statement? Statements concerning convictions can also be discussed by examining these notions. But before doing that it is necessary to examine this concept of convictions in greater detail.

Expressions of convictions seem on further consideration to be based on a mostly unspoken attitude of mind. In this context the meaning of *attitude of mind* is: a basic inclination that is used to approach every experience. Sartre speaks in a roughly similar sense of an "attitude interrogative." This interrogating attitude is something all convictions have in common: it contains elements of wonder, discovery, and ordering, which appear at a pre-conscious stage. In this attitude, however, very divergent shades are possible that are characteristic for specific convictions. For example, the familiar question about the imperfection, finiteness, and relativity of the world can be asked: Doesn't that call for completion by something perfect, infinite, and absolute? The attitude of mind on which this is based places man and the world against the wholly other. Man must submit himself to the other; the other challenges through the intermediary of the world, and the answers to the challenges emanate from the other through the world. The world is the intermediary between man and the other. This is a sensible starting point, but not the only one possible. It is also possible to consider man and his world as an indissoluble bond, within which man challenges and must meet the challenge within the framework of that bond. The challenges will obviously differ from those of the first starting point, because the attitude of mind in this case is different.

Such an attitude of mind is not an unalterable datum by which man is overcome in some quite mysterious way. It is based on aptitude, education, experience, and culture, by which it is shaped and changed. But, at a certain point, one's attitude of mind is the real basis of one's ability to experience reality, and man cannot dissociate from this at will. He has no choice but to approach his experiences on the basis of this attitude of mind. In so doing, he groups them, and some experiences acquire the character of guidelines, around which new experiences can be arranged. This is how an orientation pattern, which controls a person's concept of man and the world, comes into being. Though this process mainly takes place unwittingly, it is possible in certain circumstances to build a more or less conscious outlook on life and the world on this basis. In this manner, it is possible to differentiate between convictions (beliefs) and philosophies (concepts). Now we can say: a conviction is based on an attitude of mind that creates an orientation pattern and has a motivating character. On that basis again, a view of life can be built that, as the word already suggests, is of a contemplative nature.

On the basis of these considerations it may also become clear why an exchange of ideas concerning views of life can often be so discouraging. Whatever is opposed to the view touches the conviction only very indirectly.

One then gets the impression that the other person, in spite of knowing better, sticks to his opinions. But what must be understood is that he simply lives in a different world. It is his attitude of mind that provides him with a different orientation and because of this he sifts and groups his experiences in a different manner. Yet, in the long run, experience, even the experience of an exchange of ideas, can influence a conviction. But that is a laborious process, because man is his conviction. It is not that he simply has an attitude of mind, he lives it; and therefore a change in attitude means a change in himself. This can sometimes lead even to a spiritual crisis.

Is there anything further to be said about humanist convictions in particular? There are different ways of arriving at a more precise definition. First of all, an attempt can be made at defining a personal or collective point of view. Though one takes into account what has over and over been presented as humanism, one still puts a very personal or collective stamp on it. In this manner, all sorts of definitions that have their use as individual or common signs of recognition have come into circulation. They carry, as it were, the function of a kind of identity card. They say something about the form in which it appears, though the inner meaning of the conviction is left uncertain. If one were to ask for such a visiting card, it could possibly say something like this: Humanism is a conviction characterized by an attempt to understand life and the world and to act in it based exclusively on human capabilities and directed at everyone's self-determination in a common humanity.

This definition is derived from the declaration of principles of the Dutch *Humanistisch Verbond*. It characterizes a nonreligious humanism, which is to be expected, not only because the *Humanistisch Verbond* happens to be an organization of nonreligious people, but above all because in the course of time humanism has increasingly dissociated itself from religion. Hence the "exclusive appeal to human capabilities," though theoretically this does not say anything about what is revealed in and by those abilities. They may possibly be god-given, and God himself may be revealed in them; but nonreligious humanists do not see it that way, although this does not deny the existence of humanistic Christianity—as a mixture, or synthesis, of humanism and Christianity.

However, it is possible to follow a completely different path to come to a closer definition of the humanist conviction. That is the path already indicated in the previous chapter. We have seen that various humanist thinkers develop their conviction on the basis of specific scientific insights. In this way, biology, psychology, sociology, and philosophy as well, can become the starting point of, respectively, evolutionary, psychological, social, and philosophical humanism. And in a similar manner one could also talk about a cultural humanism. Yet it is clear that thereby one deals with only a particular form of humanism. This raises the question of whether there is a more comprehensive method of defining its content, one

that would do justice to humanist thought in all its various forms. It might be possible, then, to prepare a catalogue of humanist statements to determine what the humanist world of thought looks like in its diversity. The first chapter of this book already contains a series of such statements. The International Humanist and Ethical Union formulated a number of statements in a declaration (1966) that covered different central ideas.

The declaration reads as follows:

- Ethical humanism is a complex response to the world of those who hold that man is self-dependent. It rejects absolutes and cannot be characteristically represented by any tabulation of statements. Those that follow should be read as an indication of what humanism stands for, rather than as a declaration of what humanism is.
- Ethical Humanism expresses a moral conviction; it is the acceptance of responsibility for human life in the world.
- It represents a way of life, relying upon human capacities and natural and social resources.
- Humanist morality starts with an acknowledgment of human interdependence and the need for mutual respect.
- Ethical humanism calls for a significant existence, made worthwhile through human commitment and acceptance, as a basis for joy and fulfillment.
- Man becomes human in society; society should provide conditions for the fullest possible development of each man.
- Human development requires continuous improvement of the conditions of free inquiry and of an open society.
- Scientific knowledge progressively established and applied is the most reliable means of improving welfare.
- Human progress is progress in freedom of choice; human justice is the progressive realization of equality.
- Justice does not exclude force, but the sole desirable use of force is to suppress the resort to force.
- Ethical humanism affirms the unity of man and a common responsibility of all men for all men.

One cannot but find that these statements in their diversity show a certain relationship. Yet it is not immediately clear whether there is a genuine coherence and, if so, what the connection would be. And, furthermore, one should not forget that the thoughts above are only a limited selection from all the available material. In fact, all humanist literature and practice would have to be included in the investigation intended here, and that is the presupposition of the views that will be provided in the following. In that manner, our investigation acquires a basis that does justice to the multi-

formity of humanism. Yet it must be recognized that even when working in this way the subjective element still plays a role that should not be underestimated. To begin with, it is out of the question for one investigator to be familiar with every humanist expression in word and deed; one has only to think of the almost inexhaustible literature in periodicals, while in practice one also has to make a choice from the countless available books and brochures. What is regarded as important or characteristic is also determined by humanist tradition, but to a certain extent this is a relevant fact. Moreover, a decision concerning what is distinctive in that tradition is not independent of the preconceived idea one has of humanism, though that idea again is partly determined by tradition. Therefore, the end result of such a working method is a mixture of objectivity and subjectivity; but the advantage is that the subjectivity becomes obvious and is therefore open to critical assessment.

2. A MODEL

If one steps oneself in the abundance of humanist expressions, one may wonder what really are the central ideas at their root. The purpose is not to determine a kind of highest common factor. That is more or less the result of the IHEU declaration quoted earlier. In that case, everything on which there is no unanimity among the various opinions is omitted, which does not necessarily mean that what remains is what humanists are actually concerned with in their conviction. A highest common factor provides the basis of understanding but is more of an indication of what consequences the humanist conviction can lead to than a clarification of the conviction itself. The thing to look for would be a humanist orientation pattern from which humanist views unfold themselves, as it were, of their own accord. To achieve this, humanist expressions must be stripped of whatever may be derived and compiled, so that only what is essential remains. While this does not at all mean that these essentials must always be present in humanist statements, it will be found that they lie at the root of them. For example, one will meet the expression "human dignity" very often in humanist statements and thought, but its clear intelligibility is the result of the basic ideas that lie hidden behind it.

The way of thinking referred to here could be called phenomenological. Phenomenology is a manner of philosophizing developed by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl. This is not the proper place to examine the merits and drawbacks of this philosophy. Nor shall we place ourselves in the position of phenomenological philosophy. But the phenomenological method in a more general form, detached from Husserl's system, so to speak, does offer us the possibility of penetrating as far as the central ideas of humanist convictions. As a matter of fact, others, notably Nicolai

Hartmann, have also employed the phenomenological method in their own way, and it is now often used in the human sciences. What then is the phenomenological method in this general sense? In this method, an attempt is made to understand and describe the essence of the phenomena by means of an inner "vision." Phenomena can also, and more particularly, be understood to be phenomena of the mind—in our case, the elements of a conviction. For this purpose, whatever might be coincidental should be left aside; the phenomena should be reduced to their essence: and that is the phenomenological reduction or *époché* (suspension of what is less important). In adopting this method, we differ from Husserl in that we do not yet in this context express an opinion on the origin or nature of the phenomena of the mind; whether they are of a psychic or cultural nature we leave out of consideration for the present. We only wish to ask ourselves: What are we essentially talking about when we discuss certain phenomena of the mind.

In this way, we can postulate a system of central ideas that on closer investigation prove to lie at the root of all humanist statements. They refer to man and the world and form a coherent entity, which we might call a system of basic humanist notions or starting points. By the term *system*, we mean that we aim at describing a complete whole. The openness of the system consists in that these starting points leave room for manifold applications in different contexts. For the rest it is an experiment, which means that it is quite possible that on reflection more or fewer or other basic notions will be employed; but that does not alter its being an attempt at systematization. By this very means the starting points of humanism are presented for discussion. Therefore, they are not supposed to be unassailable views, but provisional bases. To suggest that it would be more "open" not even to agree provisionally on starting points, whatever they may be, misjudges the possibilities of human consciousness. Any awakening of consciousness begins with a certain foreknowledge; without that, the process by which consciousness develops would know no bounds and lose itself in the numerous possibilities offered by experience and consideration. The very fact of making oneself aware of what foreknowledge is the starting point helps to avoid a naive dogmatism and makes it possible to discuss one's starting points.

The bases of any conviction belong to what can best be called a postulating category. Postulates are requirements, requirements for the thinking process. They are not ordinary presuppositions or hypotheses. Hypotheses are tested against reality, but a reality that is already interpreted. I can presuppose that a stone that I release will fall. And in reality this turns out to be true; and that gives a provisional proof of the hypothesis. But the whole process is preceded by the fact that reality is understood as a time-space system in which a causality can be discovered. Without that, our observations are undetermined and do not really prove anything. Postulates have a similar interpretive function in the area of philosophies of life; they are

requirements for all subsequent reasoning. "God is a superfluous hypothesis," reads a familiar statement. But that statement is only significant by virtue of the postulate that the world can be explained from within itself. The fact that this really is a postulate can be understood if one considers that the world has never been fully explained. It is postulated that the world can be explained. Once again, postulates are not unassailable truths, but fundamental notions, notions that are behind all hypotheses, which therefore also could be called meta-hypotheses.

Postulates of convictions can, for example, be compared with geometrical axioms. Only one, and not more than one, straight line can be drawn through two points. One has only to think of a tight piece of string or the sharp edge of a ruler. A whole system of geometry can be built on this axiom, and similar ones, for which a starting point is provided by original notions with regard to reality. Subsequently, one finds that this geometry is also applicable to reality. But only up to a point, because, as everyone probably knows, Euclidean geometry only applies in a void or (by approximation) on a small earthly scale. In real space, which is not a void, and in cosmic dimensions it has its shortcomings. In those cases, other axioms are necessary, such as those that have been developed in the theory of relativity. They are "necessary" in order to be applied to a newly explored reality. But theoretically it is possible to devise as many geometries as the number of sets of axioms that can be thought up. And that is why a number of different forms of geometry have been developed. In practice, however, mathematicians restrict themselves in the main to those systems that are theoretically or practically useful. The development of postulates concerning convictions can be compared with this course of events. They are taken from notions of reality and completed, modified, or replaced on the basis of experience in which all aspects of being human are involved.

We can now frame a group of postulates in which the humanist attitude of mind finds expression. It can be said that in humanism people are credited with being natural, related, equal, free, and rational, while the world is considered to be something that can be experienced, that exists, and that is complete, fortuitous, and dynamic. How these terms are exactly understood will be a subject of closer investigation in the following sections. But provisionally it is assumed that they form the basis of a humanist anthropology and a humanist ontology. In this context anthropology is understood as the philosophical reflection on being human and ontology as the philosophical reflection on the world. In the humanist conviction the two are very closely linked, because in humanism the world is understood with man as the starting point. Therefore the ontological postulates are really extensions of the anthropological postulates. For that reason, it is perhaps ambiguous to speak of humanist metaphysics. For metaphysics can mean the philosophical reflection upon that which surpasses, or transcends, the natural world, that which is its real basis—for example,

Absolute Reason or God. In that sense, metaphysics deals with the transcendental basis of the world. But it must be admitted that the word *metaphysics* is also used in another sense, that is, to express reflection about what the human mind is always adding to his sensory impressions of the world and of man himself. In that sense man transcends himself and metaphysics is directed at the transcendental character of all experience. In that sense, metaphysics coincides with ontology in humanism.

The humanist conviction is fully characterized by the anthropological and ontological postulates mentioned here, though this does not at all mean that it would allow a recognition of humanism in its totality. The postulates provide the theoretically well-thought-out starting point for humanist reflection; but theory is not reality. Humanist theory is something different from humanism, in the same way that music theory, for example, is something other than music. All that is known about music history—keys, harmony, and composition—still cannot replace experiencing live music. But the reflection can provide support for the experience. At best there is a fruitful relation between theory and practice, and a good theory is a means to clarify the practice, to free it from incidental elements and to manipulate it more effectively. Theory is designed on the basis of practice, but in turn shows practice to its fullest advantage. That is also the function of humanistics as the theory of humanism; it is not just a nicer word for humanism, but is a means for the humanist—and for others—to appreciate an inspired experience. In the first place, one should not expect inspiration from humanistics, though it does provide a significant support for reflection. Humanistics can provide a model of the humanist attitude of mind and the orientation pattern arising from it.

What then is a model in this context? To start with, one could think of a model railway. The engine, the cars, the rails, the signals, and all other accessories look exactly as they do in real life but are made on a much smaller scale—very often only one to twenty. However, the trains can also run under their own steam and everything works exactly as it would in reality. But on closer consideration, that is not really the case at all: the mechanism is simpler, doors and seats are often missing, and all sorts of constructions are somewhat simpler or missing altogether. The model resembles reality, it operates as it would in reality, but it is not reality. That is typical of a model. Another example is a paper dressmaking pattern. To anyone who cannot read it, it is a muddle of lines, dashes, and dots; but those who understand it see an article of clothing in it, which he, or usually she, can make with the help of the pattern. It is obvious that to do this one must know the rules and techniques that are supposed to be used. This is equally true for the man of science. After all, what is the vibration and refraction theory of light if it is not a scientific model? If I look at a color I do not see any vibrations and if I peer through a lens I do not see any refraction, but what I do see can be explained very well by the scientific model.

Not only do models serve to explain but also, with the help of a model, reality can be reconstructed and even influenced. At a certain point it was concluded, on the basis of a model of our solar system, that another planet, up till then unknown, had to exist, and it was possible to deduce its size, condition of movement, and orbit from the model; when the telescope was then aimed at a calculated place, the planet assumed to be there was actually found to be there. That is a characteristic example of the reconstruction of reality, even if it has not yet been observed, with the aid of a model. Besides, people actually do nothing but "model" their environment, very often to their detriment. Every instrument and every machine either is a creation of reality or influences it, based on an intuitive or well-thought-out model. In general it can be said that a model is a simplification of reality in the form of either an outline of thought or a material reconstruction with the corresponding operational rules, and it is designed in such a manner that the relationships in the model and the operation of the model correspond with those existing in reality or enable (re)construction of that reality. The postulates of the humanist conviction form such a model. It takes humanist thinking out of the area of a certain vagueness, while its content maintains the openness that is characteristic of this thinking. Summing up, it can now be said that humanistics is the systematic, phenomenological reproduction of a model of the humanist conviction.

3. ANTHROPOLOGY

The five postulates mentioned earlier, namely, that men are natural, related, equal, free, and rational, provide a model of the humanist concept of man. We shall now look at them one by one in greater detail in order to explain their meaning.

The most fundamental notion about man in humanist thinking is that he is natural. It implies that people are understood as being part of a world that can be naturally experienced and from which they have been brought forth together and of which they form a part. They are a link in a process of gestation that continues in their existence and that also contains the possibility of the individual and collective growth that is so prominent in humanist statements. It also implies that people, like all other creatures, are natural organisms and are subject to the forces of nature, which in itself is appreciated in a positive manner. To people, nature is at the same time familiar and alien, life-giving and frightening. It seems to be subject to human efforts, but at the same time people are dependent on it and cannot abuse it with impunity. Therefore, an insight that man is also the guardian of nature, in which and with which he lives, often breaks through. Human consciousness has resulted from natural development—obviously connected with an extra cell division of the cerebrum—and by virtue of this is

connected with the body as two forms of being of the same reality: man is an indissoluble entity consisting of body and consciousness. This must be understood as meaning that, for people, bodily functions take place in an area of consciousness that in turn affects these functions, while consciousness itself is understood as a function of the body that reflects the entire physical situation. Body and consciousness are considered to be an original dual entity of which the elements can be discerned though they cannot be separated.

As a part of nature, people are intersections of natural relations; they are, as it were, positioned in nature. But they can also use their natural abilities to influence nature, to their advantage as well as to their detriment; they are centers of action with an intentional direction. Their consciousness allows them not only to experience the world in a vital manner but also to separate themselves from it and bend back toward it. This is sometimes called the eccentric position of man. People are able to isolate elements out of the original world of experience and to combine them, which makes conceptual thought possible. That is also the reason they are capable of designing a language and of creating a culture. As creatures of purpose they create their own reality, both mental and practical. It is human nature that creates culture. And therefore nature and culture are, for man, indissolubly linked. There is no point in asking what man is by nature if that is not directly related to what he has become by virtue of culture. The "law" of nature is, for man, always incorporated in a form of culture and has thereby acquired a cultural character. The difference between nature and culture is a relative distinction; it concerns elements that together form human reality, in which the extrahuman world is also included. The culture of men is the nature of men.

We have seen that people are considered to have been brought forth together by the world. That is all that their relatedness consists in. They are in the world together and are dependent on one another for their development. The individual discovers himself in the other; he also becomes himself through the other. What initially was possibly no more than an evolutionary fact turns, by virtue of language and culture, into something that can no longer be thought of as different. People are human together; every human function—thinking, feeling, wishing, and doing—refers to the other, without whom these functions would hardly have any meaning. Though people are distinct, they are not hidden from each other in their humanity. This starting point has nothing to do with the idea of an idyllic society of people. Since the dawn of time they have trapped and fought one another. But they have also always needed one another. In the beginning it was in small family groups, but the development of culture has been accompanied by a realization of human relationship. The word realization indicates that this cannot be understood as a practical fact by itself. The practical necessity or desirability is based on an existential datum. The

individual cannot but form a society, however imperfect, and society puts its stamp on the individual, even if he opposes it. The individual and society can never be fully separated, nor can they be completely reduced to each other. Individuals are always individuals together; their community is their fate.

The "we" indicated here is initially a rather neutral we. It can express itself in competition, aggression, and destruction. But these forms of society do not provide a genuine realization of their original relatedness; they cannot consistently be thought through to the end without the destruction of the human race appearing on the horizon. Therefore, actual cultural development shows a trend toward larger groups, based on cooperation, in which aggression is to some degree kept in check. This development creates room for reinforcement of the concept "we" in larger groups. And this feeling of belonging can develop further into a feeling of togetherness and mutual responsibility. In actual fact, however, this feeling is supported by common interests and desires in which antagonism toward other groups—also within a particular society—is very often a driving force. Nevertheless, a realization of the primary relatedness in which the unit is extended to all men is also taken into consideration. This idea could not arise from the experience of antagonism alone; it is only possible if being together in the world also implies being dependent on one another and therefore leads to a willingness to bear responsibility for one another. This possibility is provisionally expressed in the relationship with whomever can literally be called one's nearest, the person on whom we always depend most in our existence. A mutual responsibility that aims at the fulfillment of life of two partners is the most complete form of relatedness, which we call love. But this word may not be used lightly.

When thinking about relatedness, the notion we call the postulate of equality already plays a part. What can this possibly mean? It is obvious that people are not equal. They differ outwardly, they differ in their mental and physical abilities, they differ in character and temperament, and their social positions are different. In short, they differ in practically everything in which it is possible to be different; no two people in the world are alike. How then is it possible to speak of the postulate of equality? The introduction of the concept of equivalence cannot get us out of this difficulty, because there is no conceivable standard to which all men would equally conform; whatever the criterion used to test that value, people still differ in moral, intellectual, or social value. How then can humanists speak of human equality? It is obvious that they cannot mean uniformity, which goes without saying because that is the last thing humanists stand for. A starting point for an answer can be found if one considers that, though people are not equal, they can all be identified as human beings. It seems that they have characteristics by which they can be distinguished from other living creatures, not to mention the inanimate world. One never confuses

people with chimpanzees or with dolls, but on the other hand Bushmen are immediately recognized as people. Initially it looks as if we are only concerned here with external biological means of identification but, if one starts from the point of view that body and consciousness are indissolubly linked to each other, this must also have consequences related to the mind.

For all the differences existing between men, there is obviously a similarity that characterizes human biological organization and mental structure. That is also apparent from the fact that the most divergent cultures can be "translated" into the language of our culture. If there was no fundamental relationship, it would be impossible to explain what the differences consisted in. The fact that it is possible to cut across all cultures to communicate with each other is based on the assumption that, in spite of all differences, there is a common basis. The French expression "*Pour discuter il faut être d'accord*," means that differences can only be bridged through a point of agreement from which these differences can be clarified and, in favorable circumstances, removed. This agreement is in the final analysis based on the similarity in biological organization and mental structure. In this context, the idea of equality means that in this respect the differences between people are insignificant. The idea of equality gives expression to this common humanity, in spite of all differences between individuals, sexes, races, social positions, and cultures. That is why people basically live in a common world, about which it is possible to come to an understanding. Equality is not directed at egalitarianism, which easily could lead to the suppression of the individual personality, but it is the foundation of the human dignity of everyone, which in that sense implies equivalence. This does not preclude the importance for the culture of everyone's own personal creativity; to the contrary, it is the motivation for equal rights, but particularly for the right of everyone to his own free development according to his potential.

Everyone's own free development. This is where freedom arises; but what does freedom really mean? Libraries are filled with literature about free will; but it remains difficult to imagine an absolute free will in theory. How am I to understand a subject that is influenced by nothing and takes totally spontaneous decisions and sets a new sequence of events in motion? Or does aptitude still play a role? And if that is the case, does that mean that education and cultural patterns do not? Or do I have to assume that natural, social, and personal factors do actually play a role in such "free" decisions? Others choose the other extreme: they assume the contrary, that decisions are determined. But in that case there are again theoretical difficulties. A system is determined when we have come to know all of the relevant elements and the factors that control their interrelationships. How? By experience: for instance, we know the way gravity works from experience. That is how we can design a model of our solar system. We know the elements and the force field and can derive the state of the system at any

arbitrary moment from its state at any other arbitrary moment. That is determinism. It is obvious that this idea is not applicable to man: we do not know all the relevant elements and factors and cannot deduce anything with any certainty from what we do know. This does not mean that one cannot believe that people all the same are determined; that is really a nice belief, but it has no practical significance because it cannot be used to deduce satisfactorily what people will decide. It serves no purpose for the individual who has to make a choice to know that his decision is determined. He still has to make the choice. The knowledge that in certain circumstances he has always already made the same choice does not help him either: he might be "determined" in such a manner that next time he would have to make another choice. It may be possible that he "must" leave the thousand and first drink alone, and that really does happen. For a great number of people reactions are somewhat more obvious, because individual differences cancel each other out, but never to the extent that one can with certainty deduce specific results from specific circumstances. In that case the comment is that the masses are unpredictable. On the other hand, it is fairly clear that circumstances exert an enormous influence. Even if the existence of free will is assumed, one must recognize that, as a rule, it is guided by circumstances. To a certain extent that is even the case if one opposes the circumstances. Therefore it is more useful to approach the question of freedom from another angle. As compared with other kinds of animals, men exhibit a relatively nondescript pattern of living; they must shape their existence and their world by making decisions, by making choices from among the possibilities. It is true that these possibilities have already been given by their ancestors and that the decisions are often made in collective patterns, but that does not alter the fact that they are human decisions in circumstances shaped by men to which they can submit collectively or individually or not. It is a question of practical freedom of choice, from which nobody can really run away. People are "condemned to freedom."

Rationality, as humanists usually understand it, is to some degree linked with freedom. What does it mean? It obviously does not mean that all people are always rational. But it does mean that rationality characterizes people, that is to say, that they are considered to be capable of rationality and that the use of this ability characterizes them as being human. Although the word *reason* is much used by humanists, it cannot be said that it is strictly defined. Usually it is distinguished from intelligence, which can lead to "rationalism," which is understood as a logical manner of thinking, disregarding moral or emotional elements. That brings us somewhat closer to the meaning that is really intended. Reason, *logos*, *ratio*, originally meant, among other things, verbalization, understanding, proportionality, accountability. Humanist usage is connected with this; these concepts are mainly applied to evaluations, that is to say, to ideas of true and false, beautiful and ugly, good and bad. A statement one may well come across is

that reason is intelligence applied to evaluations. It is a matter of expression and hence accountability for oneself and others as well as justification, and, by virtue of this, a means of understanding with regard to values. Rationality requires a readiness to be accountable for thought and deed; it can provide a standard for judging and acting because it relates the concept of man to man's actions.

Expression, accountability, and understanding are typical notions of the humanist concept of rationality, even if not particularly directed at values. This ability of expression, accountability, and understanding is considered an essential part of the way in which people handle themselves, the world, and others. Rationalism is also used in this sense, but not with the meaning we have mentioned above. When humanists call themselves rationalists, they mean that they attempt to apply intelligence to being human in the world, in all the fullness that can be experienced through it, and not the arid reasoning that the word *rationalism* is supposed to express sometimes. Anyway, rationality in humanist terms does not express any supposition that man can fully understand life and the world by means of logical reasoning: there is more between heaven and earth than people dream of. But rationality is rather understood as the form of language in which internal and external facts can be put into words in order to make understanding between people possible. It is not denied that in face-to-face relationships nonverbal communication can also play an important role, but living together as real human beings is, in its totality, only possible by a readiness for justification in a rational manner. By changing a word of Kant's, one could say: Do not begrudge reason the thing that makes it the highest asset on earth, namely, the privilege of being the final basis of understanding.

4. ONTOLOGY

According to humanists people are not the center of the world, but the world is interpreted by people. The ontological postulates deal with that interpretation.

First of all, the world can be experienced. Sensory impressions can attract attention; but that need not always be so, in which case one remains unaware of them. If they do attract attention sensations arise that gain coherence in consciousness. That coherence can come about in different ways: on the one hand, by man allowing all sensations to come to him jointly, as it were; on the other, by purposively directing his attention to specific sensations, which then become observations. That means there are two different manners of experience that must be distinguished: perception and reflection. Perception, as meant here, implies that man identifies with his sensations, which are experienced as an entity, while reflecting man is more detached from his observations and purposefully relates them to each other. If perception identifies-totalizes, reflection analyzes-synthesizes. Such a

perception provides emotional encounter; reflection, intersubjective knowledge. So perception and reflection continually enter each other's domain, but they cannot change into each other; while knowledge of the world does not provide a perception of being in the world, neither is perception able to provide an intersubjective knowledge of the world. What is possible is reflection on the perception that can be the object of investigation and insight, while people also perceive something when reflecting, for example, surprise, satisfaction, enthusiasm. Furthermore, it is often perception that sets reflection in motion. But in spite of all this, perception and reflection do not change into each other, they complement each other but also exclude each other and are therefore called complementary concepts.

Perception in this particular sense is an important way of experiencing. If it concerns an awareness of life and the world, it is even primary. [The fact that communication between people must for the most part come about through reflection may not obscure the realization that in existential matters it is perception that provides the basis for reflection.] Perception itself cannot really be transmitted. The sensation of events, the experience of festivity or of sports, the engrossment in vision or sound, and the experience of nature and the world can only be expressed by emotional descriptions—moving, powerful, horrible, awful—in which it is assumed that they can appeal to similar experiences of others; but, if that happens not to be so, explaining is impossible. It is possible, however, for reflection to support a perception that is still vague, but it is impossible for it to generate perception. Perception represents for many people—perhaps for everyone—a dimension of their existence that enriches it beyond words. They can draw inspiration and a sense of harmony from it. More particularly, perception of the coherence in all that exists provides their lives with a background of wonder, respect, and fascination, which one may call religious. That is why it is possible to speak authentically of agnostic *religious humanism*. It symbolizes perceiving the world in its impenetrability, both overwhelming and captivating.

The existence of man and the world in an indissoluble relationship is closely related to the fact that the world can be experienced. In this context existence means that which is capable of being experienced, directly or indirectly (by instruments, for example), tangibly or intangibly (as by noting states of mind). It also expresses the idea that experiences are not taken as delusions but are taken seriously as what they are to people, for it also means that the world is what it is for people and people are what they are in this world for people. This existence of man and world is a cultural fact; it is quite possible to imagine a way of perceiving and reflecting totally different from ours—notably, the magical concept of a world that is full of forces to which man is subject without being able to influence them. He can sometimes use them, but he cannot control them. The humanist concept of the world also includes forces that go far beyond man, but he is able to

interpret them, to a limited extent, in a man-world context. This man-world concept is distinguished not only from the magical, with its primacy of forces, but, according to most humanists, also from the materialistic, with its primacy of matter; and from the structuralist, with its primacy of structures. In all these views man is understood as a function of the other, the forces, the matter, the structure, so much so that he has no place of his own. But nowadays humanist statements also usually disassociate themselves from the obverse idea according to which man has the primacy. These include spiritualism, which only attributes reality to the spirit, and idealism, which relates existence to the idea—consciousness. With these ideas the world threatens to disappear beyond the horizon, to be nothing but a pure creation of the consciousness. Although these ideas appear in all sorts of different shades, and although followers are included among humanists, it can still be said with some reservation that humanists usually consider the relatedness of man and the world as a primary fact.

This means that only in human experience is "what is" turned into a world or a reality for man. For the postulate is precisely that there is something that is indissolubly bound up with the existence of mankind, and that "something" might be called "being." But that is a marginal concept that emerges at the edge of our consciousness without our being able to give it a separate content. As physically conscious creatures, people perceive being as their reality, and therefore the demand for "genuine" reality is not a sensible demand. Being turns into a reality that can be experienced only in relation to man (or other, possibly hypothetical, creatures). Most humanists are not dualistic when expressing this relationship of experiencing and being, and one should not think that experience would, as it were, be on one side and being on the other, with only a theoretical connection between the two. On the contrary, what is emphasized in that relationship is that people themselves form a part of being and that in that sense consciousness is a function of that same being. The presumption of a fundamental connection between being and consciousness is based on this, so that reality is indeed related to "something." Reality is not a direct reflection of "something," neither is it an ideal construction enveloping "something." It is the existential experience of the world interpreted by man, and not in such a manner that people would, so to say, have two worlds, namely, being and the world. They are completely one: being as the world is the one reality for people.

That is why it can also be said that the world is complete. That does not mean that man can experience and explain everything. The possibility to experience is limited by the range of the senses, possibly supported by instruments. The very extension of the experience by means of instruments gives rise to the assumption that the ability to experience the world is capable of extension. Indeed, that assumption may also be supported by certain reliable investigations in the field of telepathy, for example. The idea of completeness is not intended to express the idea that as a group

people have already discovered and understood everything that is subject to experience and explanation, and even less that this might apply to some individual. But if we describe the world, or reality, as has been done above, it implies that any knowledge of reality can only come about by means of experience. The world is what it is and does not refer to something outside it or beyond it. Although people can discover more and more of the world, they must live with that world they have discovered and which constitutes reality for them. After Columbus the world was bigger than before, that means that since Columbus America has always existed for Europeans, but this was not the case for people who lived before. The manner of interpretation—the paradigm—has changed as well, or rather such a change (with regard to the spherical shape of the earth) actually made the discovery possible, but again and again people had to live in the world as it could be experienced.

All this really expresses that, according to humanists, people interpret the world together in confrontation with being. It is not a being behind the world that governs the interpretation but a being that itself becomes the world. This is distinctively different from all types of transcendental interpretation. In transcendental statements one finds the following type of argument: If the world is finite, imperfect, and relative, does not that require completion by something that is infinite, perfect, and absolute? As a rule, humanists will reply: No, because we ask other questions, because the challenge of the world is interpreted by us from within our ability to experience the world. If the world is found to be imperfect, finite, and changeable—obviously according to the opinion of humans—then all we have to do is learn to live with it. Completion is not perfection, whatever *perfection* may mean, but it does mean that the world is not understood as being dependent on something or someone, a power or a creator, that rounds it off from the outside, or, as Sartre puts it, that there could be an empty space, left open by an absent creator. The world is what it is and that is all a humanist can say about it.

The world is accidental. That means it is there without visible cause and it functions without visible purpose. It does not itself reveal a meaning, but some people—humanists as well—think that the world at least displays a harmony. But, if that is supposed to mean a natural and cosmic order and regularity, one should not forget that these only appear as a result of human interpretation. One might wonder whether order and regularity are not obvious from the very fact of being, but—even if this could be imagined—it does not help us much further, if only because from the human point of view the cosmic order is not particularly exciting. Perhaps the universe is nothing but a tremendous explosion, within which cosmic catastrophes are, so to speak, the order of the day. Stars encounter each other, they explode and perish; and according to some people the universe is doomed to freeze into nothingness or to collapse until a new explosion follows. Though one

might call that harmony, it hardly gives any basis for meaning to human beings. And it is no different for the natural order: nature produces and destroys in extravagant abundance; life is only possible at the cost of other life; fire and ice, water and gas threaten our existence, which is infested with disease and afflicted by death. Once again, this might be called harmony, but that is not an obvious comfort for life on this earth. And that is why Sartre is led to say that the world is not made for man.

In general, humanists will consider the world as a given fact. In its unruly reality it forms the framework for human existence, but no guarantee for its meaning. The only meaning is the one that people can give to it, and that is a meaning for their own existence rather than for that of the world. People are able to make regions of the world materially and ideally inhabitable to some degree. They can cultivate it, but the world as a whole is terrifying rather than idyllic, overwhelming rather than encouraging, absurd rather than reassuring. Human life unfolds itself as an experiment, a seemingly impossible adventure, in order to realize something that is worthwhile. What is worthwhile is a life that has reconciled itself to the human condition and which gains meaning in it—in the midst of contradiction and finiteness, but directed at a realization of being human, which at the same time relies on the world and is threatened by it. It makes use of the forces in this world, by controlling them in the realization that these forces also go beyond the human art of control and have their own dynamics. People have not got the world in their pockets.

In humanist statements it is always assumed that the world is dynamic. The world is perceived as enacting an everlasting natural gestation. Human experience of this expresses itself in a pattern of contradictions or continuity that can assume the form of order. Evolutionary, causal, or dialectic order reflects the cohesion of human experience, and all it does is explain this cohesion. One should not forget that explaining does not mean that one can make clear why the world is as it is. One can only experience the world as it is and attempt to express the cohesion in these experiences. To the question "Why do the planets move in an elliptical orbit around the sun?" there is actually no better answer than "Why shouldn't they do so?" as indeed Einstein seems to have said once. Why does an object fall? Because that is the way it is. But that does not exclude that the experience of the falling of objects, the movement of planets, and all kinds of other phenomena show a certain regularity that can be expressed in rules and quantities. The laws of nature and formulae are the form in which human experience is systematically recorded. The forces that are—sometimes—presumed for this purpose, e.g., gravity, are just thinking tools to clarify the experience. Modern physics seeks indefatigably to connect these forces with inconceivably small and inconceivably short-lived carriers of energy. However, that still does not explain why things are as they are, but only how they function.

The foregoing is above all intended to make it clear that causality is a form of expressing the coherence that people perceive in the dynamics of the world. It can sometimes serve as a method of establishing a relationship that has not yet been discovered; this is called a heuristic principle. But it can go no further than experience allows. Practical knowledge of all the relevant factors and of the rules of the operation is the condition for establishing a causal connection. It is often a very accurately defined form of probability. Evolutionary thinking is also a form of causal thinking in connection with living nature. Here the rules refer to the abrupt changes (mutations) in the pool of heredity and their inherent possibilities of effectively adapting to the (changed) conditions of life. In humanist terms, therefore, effectiveness does not mean agreement with a previously recognizable object; it is a tendency deduced from evolution itself. Moreover, dialectic thinking is also a form of causal thinking. It is especially—although not only—applicable to socio-cultural relationships. Force summons counterforce, and a new distribution of forces results from the collision of these forces. But the transition of water into steam at a temperature of 100 °C. can also be interpreted as a dialectic of conditions: the quantity (of regular heating) turns into a new quality (of condition). The difficulty with dialectic thinking lies in the decision as to which contrasts must be considered characteristic in the dynamics of the world and society. In the meantime, all of these forms of thinking are handled as means of enabling people to live in and with a dynamic world and to act in it.

5. THE HUMAN WORLD

In both of the preceding paragraphs, we have tried to define the humanist attitude of mind and the postulates contained therein. It cannot be said that this system of postulates as such would not be capable of some regrouping or that further nuances could not be applied. And it may be that this number of two times five postulates also represents a certain amount of system-aesthetics. Yet it is proposed that the “requirements” for the development of humanist thought and action are contained in this description. In this context one should not forget that these postulates are an expression of what could be called an existential decision. Though there is perhaps no better term for it, one should not think that the word *decision* indicates the same kind of choice as deciding whether one wants a cup of coffee or a cup of tea. The decisions meant here are those taken through one’s perception of talents, circumstances, and experiences. People have always already chosen, and these choices were made between unmistakable alternatives. People can be said to be natural or supernatural, related or isolated, equal or unequal, free or not free, rational or irrational. The world may be subject to being experienced or imagined, existing or appearing,

complete or incomplete, accidental or intended, dynamic or immutable. It may also be thought that both extremes are always or occasionally true at the same time. From an intellectual point of view nothing much can be said against this, but in certain visions of life one of the aspects is considered more characteristic than the other—not necessarily quantitatively but qualitatively. The characteristics are attributed, not observed, and they cannot intellectually be proved.

This does not necessarily mean that the attributed characteristics possess a dogmatic unassailability. Humanists are keen on stating that they are open to criticism and capable of change. But it must be borne in mind that indeed a criticism supposes other postulates, and that is why it must logically be at cross purposes. Yet it is possible that in the encounter of convictions of life and under the influence of experiences of life an inner process is set in motion in which a different shading or even a reversal of starting points takes place. Because of the fact that postulates together form a structure, changes in one of them will usually entail changes in the others as well. Yet certain parts of the system often also act as a more or less fixed point. That is the reason why outsiders often think that there is an interesting relationship to be observed between the previous convictions and the new ones of someone who has undergone a remarkable conversion. In any case, the postulates contained in one's vision of life form the framework of one's interpretation of the world at each and every moment. In the interplay between people and their situations, experiences and decisions occur that gradually cause a pattern to emerge that sifts and organizes these impressions. Some impressions do not lead to observation, some observations do not lead to experience, while others acquire a particular emphasis. This is the way an orientation pattern is formed that contains the starting points of a view of life. Then it is again a question of an interplay of starting points and orientation patterns, or rather between orientation patterns, because different though more or less related orientations are also developed for different spheres of life. The more integrated the system of orientation, the more structured the concept of the world.

As far as humanists are concerned, a concept of the world is always a concept of a human world, in the sense that it always implies a world interpreted by people. From the experience that (sensory) appearances are "deceptive" and because science usually tries to reduce this experience to something different, people discover that "something" lies at the root of their reality. On the other hand, it is not possible to invest that "something" with any concrete content. Yet, as a rule, humanists suspect that this being with which people themselves are interwoven reveals itself in their interpretation. It can be interpreted in different ways but still displays its own recalcitrant character. People face this experience in an inquiring stance, which means that curiosity, wonder, and respect characterize their approach even before they come to asking concrete questions. Their ability

to distantiate themselves, their ex-centricity, plays a major part in this approach. It enables them to detach specific elements from the totality of the original experience, to designate them, as it were, and then to connect them with other elements. In this way new relationships are established and a human ordering of the world begins. In this process people force what "is" to answer; and that "is," which has become an answer, is their world or their reality. As a matter of fact, everyone questions the presumed being and so everyone lives in his own world, which has become an answer or reality. This is sometimes called the projection-character of reality, because this idea can be compared with the projection of a slide on to a screen. People live in a projected world.

Projections can exhibit all sorts of curious aspects. An old gnarled tree in the forest can take the shape of a sinister character by whom we are threatened. Every older man can, under certain circumstances, assume the character of his own father, with whom he still has a bone to pick. Railway tracks seem to draw toward each other on the horizon; tower blocks look like small cubes from a great distance. These are all examples of projections that can be undone. The sinister chap turns out to be a tree, the rails turn out not to touch each other, light and sound prove to be vibrations. But it must be borne in mind that this de-projection is never complete. The real tree is also a projection, just as parallel rails are a projection; and the concept of vibration is also based on projection, because we think of a stone thrown into the water or a rope that is violently shaken. Even scientific formulae are based on projections, because they all go back to the concepts of quantity and relation, which are known to us from projected reality. Even the direct perception of reality is based on projection, since to a certain extent this perception is controlled by sensory and conscious reality. It is possible to de-project further, that is to say, to make the projection transparent and, as it were, to take it back; philosophical de-projection is something that occurs if one thinks that one sees through all reality as an illusion of existence; there are also religious concepts of the world, in which one attempts to break away completely from "illusion" and to be liberated from experience. Reality disappears over the horizon and so, too, the relationship between the subject and reality, which will waft away into nothingness, nirvana.

The humanism described here does not go that far in its de-projection, because when it comes to it, it intends to live with reality. Therefore the concept of reality demands still further reflection. We saw that the obscure character in the forest turned out to be a tree. That means that an emotionally colored projection was replaced by a sober observation. The rails do not touch each other, which means that an initial sensory illusion makes way for closer inspection. Light consists of waves, and that implies that the experienced reality is translated into an idea of reality. To a large extent, reality can temporarily be suppressed in primary perception,

although everyday experience is seldom completely dissolved. These are examples of different ways and stages of de-projection. But what is the meaning of the different levels of reality? Why is the tree more real than the imagined vagrant? How can we say that the rails do not touch each other in "reality"? Is a scientific or philosophical de-projection more real than the initial reality experienced? Or is it that the average reality of the daily experience is more real than the emotional fantasy or scientific theory? And, if that is the case, why? Has it perhaps something to do with the practice of life within this reality? But how in that case are we supposed to clarify it further?

We saw earlier that every person lives within his own reality, for he projects his answers on to what is. But this does not say everything, because we assume that people are of a similar biological organization and mental structure. By virtue of this, their answers to what is are also similar and everyone's reality coincides to a large extent with that of everyone else. And all the more so since, in the course of collective cultural development based on human relatedness, common reality patterns have also been devised. This is the reason that a rational communication with regard to reality is possible—first of all between people within the same culture, but even, though with a greater effort, between people of different cultures. Therefore distinction must be made between the strictly personal area and the common human area in experiencing reality, so that the common area becomes more extensive and more identical as cultural unification becomes more complete. A certain strained relation always remains between what could be called personal and common reality; but still, according to humanists, and not only according to them, the common reality of everyday practice is pre-eminently conceived as reality. And we will follow suit here. The scientific or philosophical model of reality is also related to this common experience; it influences the experience but cannot take its place. Reality is an intersubjective, albeit with a different nuance from one person to the next, irreplaceable practical experience.

If someone wonders whether he has dreamt or fantasized something or whether it has happened in reality, if possible he will ask someone else whether he too has seen or heard it. If the answer is yes, then it is reality; if the answer is no, it is not. Sometimes a person himself can make out whether it was a dream or reality, but occasionally images can have such a strong semblance of reality that someone else is needed to decide whether it had been imagined or not. The other person acts as a representative of what is commonly human, on which the judgment with regard to reality apparently depends. For this, the physical presence of someone else is not always necessary, because reality also displays a coherence on the basis of, once again, intersubjective orientation patterns. The absurdity of an image can make someone aware of the unreal character of it. In that case he represents to himself the intersubjectivity of the experience of reality. It is

this very coherence that makes communication with regard to reality possible. For there is no means of ascertaining how someone else experiences, for example, shapes or colors or other elements of consciousness. Is the red that one person sees the same as the red another person sees? No one can say. But the relationship between, for example, red and yellow and all the shades in between is obviously similar for both persons. That is why they can come to an agreement about it. People's states of mind are obviously somewhat apparent to others as well, although traditional forms play an elucidating role in this respect. The relation between different states of mind and the expression of them by body and language have a common human character. That is why, up to a point, people live in a common reality.

The structures in which reality is set differ from culture to culture, and differ within a culture at different times. Even during the same period different structures can apply, for example, for different social groups. Yet the different structures are not totally alien to each other; one can be understood on the basis of the other; they can be, as it were, translated into each other, because a similar human structure lies at the root of them. Every structure of reality finds expression in a specific form of consciousness and its corresponding language system. Such a relationship of language and consciousness is called a paradigm, an example, not to say a model, of the perception of reality in a specific cultural form. Judgments about reality are made within the framework of such a paradigm, although it also relates to other paradigms because of the relationship of different cultural forms. It can be asked whether such judgments are true or false. That brings us to the question of the truth of judgments. Because truth (or falsity) is a feature of judgments, not of reality. Reality is, but judgments about reality can be true or false. The question now is, What meaning should be attributed to the concept of truth? What are we actually saying if we say a judgment is true?

The first answer is that a judgment is said to be true if it fits into the system of consciousness and language in which a reality is set; that is to say, if it answers a common conception of reality. In that sense truth is an intersubjective concept; it applies to people together. Truth is by definition a truth for everyone. Sometimes people say of a judgment: That is my truth. That refers frequently to existential perceptions. In so doing, they are thinking of preferences, such as "I prefer Mozart to Beethoven," or of inner necessities, such as, "I cannot do national service." Others do not need to share that view. It cannot basically be denied that such statements for those who make them correspond to a reality and in that sense can be called true. More important, everyone who would really know the person in question ought to realize that that man or woman, being who he or she is, could not judge differently (supposing that this is really so). And this recognition that someone, in view of his personality and circumstances, could do nothing else represents the intersubjective character of this judgment. That he cannot do differently is true for everyone. It does not necessarily imply that

others must also think or act in the same way (although that is not of course excluded either). But, generally, an assertion about truth will not only refer to the subjective necessity of a judgment for the person who expresses it, but will also refer to the general validity of the content of that judgment. We too shall employ the concept of truth in that sense. A judgment is true if its validity has to be recognized by everyone.

However, this does not mean that we are finished yet with our investigation into the meaning of the concept of truth. Let us take the history of Galileo as an example. He asserted that the sun did not revolve around the earth but the earth revolved around the sun. That was contrary to the traditional views of the church; therefore Galileo was brought before the Inquisition. He could only escape punishment by recanting his theses. But legend has it that in so doing he muttered: "And yet it moves." The story is not very likely, because if his "and yet" had been audible he would have been condemned, and if it was not audible it is not possible for us to know whether he said it. But at any rate, he could have thought it. The question now is: If he thought it, what does the thought mean? He would have meant: yet it is true that the sun stands still and the earth moves round its axis. That is to say, this must be perceived by everyone. But hardly anyone actually realized it. So it is obviously not a question of actual acceptance but of the inner necessity of this acceptance for everyone who is prepared to fit a new experience into the paradigm of reality. But Galileo was concerning himself with the extra difficulty that he was interfering at the same time with the paradigm itself. A contemporary indignantly shouted the objection at him that the eyes were witnesses to his error. But Galileo, preceded long before in this by Copernicus, thought that the sensory illusion had to give way to the simplest interpretation and ordering that the consciousness could produce. And it was this very fact that distressed the Church.

We see from this, first of all, that it is possible for a man to transfer from one paradigm to another without every previous experience of reality coming to nothing by virtue of it. It was on the very basis of that experience that Galileo (and others) could come to their new views. However, that did not occur without a connection with the socio-cultural changes that had come about during the Renaissance. Yet it took another few centuries before the new concept of the world was generally accepted. Darwin had to wait three-quarters of a century for general recognition; and Freud a few decades. In our culture, there is obviously some acceleration in the space of time within which new ideas are accepted. Moreover, it appears that assertions, as far as they are true, gain general recognition in the long run, although a great deal must often change for that to happen, also in the socio-cultural situation, which is in its turn influenced by new ideas. Seen in this way, truth is to be viewed as the gauge of the interpretation and ordering of reality. It is, with trial and error, progression and regression, an advancing process in which more and more reality is brought ever more com-

pletely into the human outlook. That does not only apply within specific scientific fields, such as, for example, the natural sciences, and since their start in the nineteenth century, also the human and social sciences, but also increasingly to their influence on one another. And from the sciences there is a feedback to the practical paradigm of reality.

A good example of the progression in the natural sciences may be found, for instance, in the development of the theory of light. According to Newton, light ought to be understood as consisting of "minute particles"; according to Huygens, of vibrations. By setting up an experiment, we can investigate who was right. If light consisted of "minute particles," two beams of light together would always have to produce double the brightness of one; if it consisted of vibrations, two beams could neutralize each other under certain circumstances, because the vibrations can be opposite to each other. Around 1800, it was possible to show a dark line on a screen where two beams of light came together. Huygen's theory was proved by this. Within the paradigm of the entire nineteenth century, the truth concerning light was that it consisted of vibrations. That is, this idea was the experimental and conclusive explanation of the phenomenon of light. But in the twentieth century, a new paradigm began to present itself in connection with new experiences. The new experiences had become possible by new instruments, which in their turn owed their existence to industrial development. It appeared that when, under certain circumstances, beams of light were thrown on to a plate of barium, they reflected from it, or rebounded away from it, in the form of what can best be called "parcels" of energy: the so-called quanta, or quanta; Newton's "minute particles"! Had Huygen's theory now become worthless? Not at all; it retained its validity in the usual circumstances. But, under other circumstances, as indicated, it required completion. The theory of vibration and quantum theory are complementary. The truth concerning reality has herewith acquired a new dimension.

In the idea developed here, truth is a feature of a judgment or a complex of judgments concerning reality, which is continually changing and growing. Indeed, it grows because, in broad outline, the interpretation covers more reality and corresponds better to it. Such a truth is absolute in the sense that at a certain moment it expresses the optimum knowledge concerning reality. Nothing is truer than that. But it is relative, because it is subject to change and extension by confrontation with new experience and other cultural forms. Truth is not, it becomes. In that sense, the correctness of Paul's words may be recognized; we know partly. But not as if an ultimate truth is waiting for us somewhere. Such an idea can suit a conviction, in which an all-wise God knows the truth and partly reveals it to us. But, in a conviction that does not want to know about an all-wise God, there can also be no question of a perfect truth. Atheist thinkers seem sometimes to play with the illusion of an ultimate truth, which is easily conducive to a

misjudgment of relative truth, with which we are here concerned. Then it may seem that truth does not matter much because it is relative anyway. But in a humanist view, relative truth must be taken absolutely seriously. Truth is not something that is waiting for us somewhere; it is the result of a never ending process that provides the basis for human understanding about reality. It is the fruit of being human together.

6. MAN IN THE WORLD

The relatively indefinite character of man causes him to give his life shape and content by decisions. People have different possibilities, but those possibilities are not unlimited. They present themselves within the framework of physical and social realities and within the range of human nature and personal aptitude. The question can be raised here as to whether human nature can actually be spoken of. There are voluntaristic movements, which in their absolutist freedom postulate that man comes into the world as a blank sheet, as it were, and can literally move in every direction. But this idea will not often be met in humanist statements. Humanists will not make light of freedom, not even to make possible the as yet seemingly impossible; but their concept of man opposes the denial of an inherent human nature. That is an improbable idea even on the ground of the unity of body and consciousness; for it cannot easily be denied that man displays his own identity from a biological point of view and this implies that this will also be reflected in his consciousness. Socrates was the first to apply the concept *phusis*, nature, to man. This *phusis* is the material with which he develops the concept of being human. And a completely different thinker like Marx also spoke of the human *Gattungswesen*, the essence, the character of the species, in which human nature is expressed. Sartre, on the other hand, does not wish to know of the essence or nature of man; what his essence ultimately is, only becomes manifest because he develops it in his existence. *L'existence précède l'essence.*

The aversion to the concept of human nature or the essence of man probably originates from the idea that this would at the same time imply the recognition of a whole system of (eternal) truths and values, which man would then possess by nature. But that is certainly not the intention in modern humanism. Social and historic investigations have indeed taught us that there can be no question of this. On the other hand, that need not mean, and cannot mean, that man is "nothing" by nature, if only because he expresses himself too clearly as a species in all cultural forms, which in spite of their diversity still betray their relationship. But whatever man is by nature is only recognizable as potential, as ability, as a structure of possibilities. Such potential is the ability to be self-aware and to live together, to deny and to objectify, to order in space and time, and to

evaluate. In this way, a complete structure of potential could be devised; a system of postulates, which would not characterize the specifically humanist concept of man but the human existence as such that even precedes it, albeit always included in a specific vision of man. This potential forms the basis for human freedom. It is realized in his actual decisions in an interplay with nature and culture. Whatever man potentially is by nature becomes concrete in his actual existence. *L'existence révèle l'essence*: The essence is revealed in the decisions of existence.

The assumption with such decisions is that they are taken in freedom. We have already seen that it makes little difference in practice whether that process is placed within the framework of a certain indeterminism or in a strictly deterministic framework. A choice has to be made in both cases and the point in both cases is whether the choice that one wishes or has to make can be performed without any retrospective hindrance. That is freedom of choice. The assumption is always that such a decision has influence; that is to say, that something is brought into action by this, which would not have come about in such a way without that decision. That assumption is implied in the notion of freedom. For freedom means that existence is given shape by decisions. That is why freedom is not consistent with the vision embodied in fatalism. According to the fatalist, decisions are only a means of carrying out what was already a foregone conclusion; decisions do not cause a specific result but are brought forth by the already given result. This is illustrated in a concise form in the well-known story by Somerset Maugham.

A merchant in Baghdad tells that his servant, white and trembling, said he had met Death in the market: "Master lend me your horse, so that I can get to Samarra before nightfall!" A long time after the servant had left, the merchant himself met Death and asked why his servant was threatened in the morning . . .

Death answered: That was no threatening gesture, it was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Baghdad, for I had an appointment with him tonight in Samarra.

Humanists will not deny that the result of decisions is often the opposite of what was intended; but they will not blame that on a previously established course of events but on the fact that the wrong decision has obviously been made. This idea puts the full responsibility for decisions on him who makes them. Although humanists recognize the limitations of each choice, these limitations do not cancel out freedom and responsibility. On the contrary, freedom derives its directedness from this concrete restraint. It is not an openness in all directions within which everything is always possible, but a progressive definition of purposeful design. In this process, people choose the dilemmas they have to solve. Sartre especially made clear that the distinguishing mark of freedom is found not only, and perhaps not first and foremost, in the choice that is made but also in the choice of the dilemma

within which that choice arises. If a young man receives a call-up for national service, he reports at the fixed time and place and is enlisted. "Everyone" does this, and there is no feeling of having made a decision. It can be said that the conscript has objectively really made a choice—not choosing is also choosing—but subjectively that has escaped him altogether. However, there is a dilemma here: one can comply with the call-up or refuse to do service. Even if he finally decides to enlist, he has really chosen. The discovery of this dilemma, choosing the choice, is the distinguishing mark of existential freedom.

The most fundamental dilemma that arises when the fact of being human in the world is spoken about is that of acceptance or rejection of the very fact of being in the world. It is true that the natural urge to self-preservation does not make rejection simple, but it is still frequently seen that people do live on, but under continual protest. They did not want this life and do not hide their unease about it. It can be thought to be inconsistent that they do not therefore just put an end to it, and sometimes they do that. At any rate, their choice is clear. However, humanists will make another choice. The realization of being bearers of natural evolution, heirs as it were to an endless development, the feeling of relatedness with one's fellowmen, and the realization of coherence with the world, and then the challenge that consists in the adventure of freedom, are all motives to accept the experiment of human existence. They are motives, not arguments. There is nothing to prove. It can only be said that, given the humanist concept of man and the world, another choice would not be congruent. This does not mean that individual life would have to be maintained in all circumstances. The acceptance of being-in-the-world does not preclude that in certain circumstances life might be or should be sacrificed for the sake of the quality of life, or to protect morality. The one who sacrifices himself to save his comrades in misfortune, something which happened quite often in the war, is not acting contrary to the acceptance of being in the world, but in agreement with it.

The acceptance at issue here is an identification with the "yes" that one already is, and is together with others. The decision on this is not taken as a sudden resolve with relation to a dilemma that had never presented itself before. In everyone's development with regard to the human and social relations, in which that development is embedded, there appear turning points at which the answer must be yes or no. The decision is then always taken in a certain way, and all those decisions together are already a prelude to an ultimate choice: for humanists, that of the acceptance of a common existence in the world. At a certain point, we are faced with a challenge, to which we give a motivated reply with a choice that has been prepared in our previous existence. That is what Sartre means when he says: we have always already chosen. The choice in favor of an acceptance of existence is not a logical choice, nor illogical, but existential; that is to say, it is a resolve of

will, in which the whole person is concerned, though it cannot be conclusively motivated. Existence is not useful; because usefulness is attributed to a means that is of service for attaining an objective. But, if the objective of existence is unknown, there is no point in talking about the usefulness of it. Existence is "superfluous." But this very realization brought Ortega y Gasset to make a pointed statement, which can be called a real humanist statement: Only the superfluous is necessary.

Once existence has been fully accepted, then one wants it to be worthwhile. That is then the basis of the decisions that are taken. It is a question of satisfying the needs of our body and consciousness, to nourish our sense of wonder, to fulfill our being in the world. The decisions necessary for this purpose are tested against their effectiveness to attain the objectives in view. But most decisions also display another side: they concern morals. It is the moral side of decisions that plays an important part in humanist opinion. As a matter of fact, humanists quite often have difficulty with justification of their morals. On the one hand they fear—and rightly so—immutable rules of conduct, which can cause fixed behavior in their practical application, and rigidity in the one who has to apply them. On the other hand, humanists—also rightly—have no desire to let morals become absorbed by subjective preferences by which everything seems permitted and action appears to shirk any moral justification. The question they have to face is therefore: How can intersubjective validity be attributed to moral judgments without invoking established norms? Such norms would have to be based on immutable laws, which would be peculiar to man by nature. But the differences according to place and time, which moral norms show, appear to counter this assumption. And yet there is no inclination to view, for instance, the fairly general condemnation of Hitler's misdeeds as a more or less casual and concerted expression of good taste, or a purely factual reflection of the cultural pattern under which we happen to live. Ethics—that is, the result of thinking out (humanist) morals—has to provide a clarification.

First of all the meaning of the words *good*, *evil* (or *bad*) and *ought* arise in conjunction with this. The term *good* has many meanings, for example, in the expressions "a good hammer," "a good electrician," "a good school," and "a good cup of coffee," "a good painting," "a good friend." All these meanings, which in turn belong to different categories, are distinguished from what we mean by expressions such as "a good deed," "a good disposition," "a good person." They are really all evaluative, but we can only speak of moral evaluation within the last group. What then is a good person? It is someone who gives evidence of a good disposition because he aims at doing good deeds. But what then are good deeds? They are deeds that ought to be done, and that shifts the question to the meaning of the word *ought*. It means that something should be done, not because it is impossible to do otherwise—the reverse is the case—but because it is

required. Required by what? It is sometimes said that acting morally is required because it contributes to the happiness of people. But that raises more questions than it answers. Why should I contribute to the happiness of other people? And if I make a sacrifice because it is morally demanded, does that then contribute to my happiness? Yes, if happiness is defined in such a manner that it consists of the realization of having acted morally. But that is a circular argument that makes us none the wiser. Besides, this feeling of happiness only arises if we have actually acted not because we wanted to acquire this sort of feeling but because it was morally demanded. Only then can this special feeling be an incidental consequence.

It is a peculiarity of moral judgments that they cannot be deduced from reality. The fact that something is like it is does not necessarily mean that it ought to be like that. An "ought" cannot be deduced from an "is," as David Hume had already discovered in the eighteenth century. On the other hand, it does not suit humanist speech to detach the ought from reality. Where else could it have come from, if not from reality? More often than not humanists are not very clear about this. This much is certain, it is not presumed that reality leads directly to moral judgments. Perhaps the best way of doing justice to humanist ethics is by stating that the origin of the ought is sought in existence, not in reality as a whole but in the humane being of man. In this way, a certain connection does exist between "is" and "ought," but then also between specific possibilities of being human and a related ought. This means that in humanist speech man is considered characterized by possibilities and that he only really becomes man by realizing these possibilities. In that way the humanist concept of man offers a starting point to judge and to justify the relations between people. The starting points such as naturalness, relatedness, equality, freedom, and rationality fulfill a normative function for this. All of this does not remove the element of choice from the forming of a moral judgment, but it places it in the context of a conviction of life, and in an area that permits discussion and justification. Some humanists will even maintain that in the sphere of moral judgment all people use the same, or at least similar, standards.

The foregoing needs to be explained more concretely. Moral judgments are not given in an abstract space, but in a concrete reality. Different moral levels can be distinguished here, in which a certain hierarchy is discernible. The lowest level is that of custom or role pattern. At that level it is laid down how a person has to behave as a family member, in society, on special occasions like funerals and weddings, and in general in the different relations of social intercourse. Above that, there is a level of morals or standards. They are really related to customs but have a more generally applicable and motivating character: do not steal, care for others, keep promises, accept responsibility, and the like. The third level is that of values. They are, as it were, the core of moral judgments. They can be described as veracity, neighborly love, fidelity, courage, devotion, and so

on. An ought applies at every level, but this ought can be criticized from the higher level. A change in circumstances plays an important part here, but always in such a way that new customs, morals, and values are represented and also perceived as better, not just different. That "better" can refer to utility or applicability of the new standards, but it always includes an element of moral evaluation as well; that is to say, it corresponds "better" to the human condition. As we get to a higher level, durability also becomes greater. At this level of values, the changes are hardly noticeable; the changes here concern their application and interrelationships rather than their content. How should we picture these changes?

The meaning of values changes with the conditions of time and place. But here again what is different also presents itself as morally better. The question here is what grounds there are for this judgment. Many humanists assume that it is based on a fundamental evaluative ability, also known as a sense of values. That is not, as is sometimes thought, a sense or even a system of ready-made values, but a function in relation to circumstances. That function implies that people can adjudge value and that they cannot even refrain from doing so. It is not a value itself, but an "operator," a factor by virtue of which it is possible to evaluate. In this respect, there is no basic difference between logical and ethical operations. Neither is it possible in logic to state a basis as regards content on which all logical systems should be based. Yet all logical systems can be logically assessed in such a way that it is intersubjectively convincing. Something like this applies, according to many humanists, to the area of morals. This is why they contain an intersubjective, nondiscretionary element, and an attempt can be made to define its outline. The evaluative ability acts by creating values in which the starting points of the concept of man are expressed. Attempts are made to put this as formal statements such as: love thy neighbor as thyself (that is, as a creature of the same nature as yourself); do as you would have another do unto others; realize your human abilities in relation to others and the world; and there are still many more descriptions. They are not actually definitions as regards content, but an indication of the way in which moral judgments function.

Here lies the basis for understanding about morals, according to humanists. That basis has an intersubjective character pervading all cultural patterns and interests. By virtue of this, people can expect moral values from each other; if they wish to, of course, and in favorable circumstances. But at the same time they cannot refrain from doing it either, if only to emphasize the moral aspect of their (group) interest. How is that possible? Only if an intersubjective meaning is attributed to it. It must be admitted that slavery was only abolished when it had become economically possible to do so. But even then, a hard, morally based struggle was necessary, though the moral criticism of slavery dates from long before that. That is why one cannot simply talk of reshuffling morals. It is true that most people are not

prepared to face a moral dilemma if it is in conflict with their interests: choosing a choice! But it does not mean that they would not be approachable with respect to it. Otherwise every exchange of ideas about social evils would be superfluous. There is quite a close connection between social developments and moral judgments, but not to the extent that the judgments would only be side-effects. Moral judgments are active in social changes as well and can turn the scale in the choice of social alternatives. It may be true that the change in the relations of production is a condition of (Marx would say "*bedingt*") the (general) change in consciousness, but it is not a sufficient condition: the creative activity of moral judgment—and action—is equally indispensable.

And how about cultural patterns? Aren't they the ones that control moral judgments? Of course they do, partly; the more so as we concern ourselves with the lower levels of morals and customs. But that control is not absolute. Otherwise criticism of our own cultural pattern would just not be possible, at least if that criticism were intended to be more than blind opposition. In fact, it also announces itself as entitled to moral superiority. Of course we have learned most of our judgments, but we can only learn what we are susceptible to. If there were no sense of values, when coming into contact with traditional judgments, we would not even know what they were all about. But since we have it, traditional judgments can be criticized. When doing this a great deal is of course borrowed from traditional culture itself, because generations of human judgment are reflected in the cultural pattern and applied to an ever changing social situation. That is why the cultural pattern itself provides elements used by creative evaluation when testing conventional standards in a changing situation. Communication about values and their relation to the situation in different cultures is possible because of this greater or smaller distance between evaluation and cultural pattern. Other cultures are not inaccessible and show other—not necessarily better or worse—realizations of similar human abilities. Idealization does not fit here, nor does prejudice, but unbiased criticism of values in relation to every circumstance that is relevant.

It may be asked what meaning humanists attribute to the conscience in all of this. Not much is heard about the conscience in humanist statements. But not because humanists are without conscience; they rather view conscience as a reflection of traditional morals, which are absorbed through education and environment. It is a common knowledge of traditional requirements, and the conscience gives a warning if one infringes it. The conscience is something that says no. Depending on education and environment it either can make great demands on a person or can exercise a milder influence. In the first case, it can become the cause of internal inflexibility and rigid functioning. This is often expressed in vague guilt feelings, which are not due to concrete causes, and in feelings of mental impotence in challenging situations. This is therefore easily conducive to intolerance and authori-

tarian behavior, that is, behavior that is servile in one direction and imperious in the other. But there is also a lenient conscience, which functions more constructively. It cautions us if we do something that is in conflict with recognized morals, and it challenges us to appreciate that. This function is quite useful, if only because people are not able to live creatively continuously. But living morally is something else: it can open up a prospect of creative decisions in which under new circumstances traditional morals are tested against original values, and this again can alter conscience. It is not a source of morals, but the reflection of them. It cannot make morals clear to us, but it can be understood by reference to morals. It can then reveal an inner strength, which even leads people who are gravely threatened to say: Here I stand, I can't do otherwise.

In the light of all the foregoing, the question must be asked whether humanist morals have no definable content. According to humanists, that can least of all be said. In thinking through humanist ethics it is found that there is no question of eternal, immutable laws in humanism; but that does not mean that, in the judgments of humanists, no central ideas could be discovered that can in fact be considered as touchstones. They have to do with participating in the world and at the same time being directed toward it; the challenge of accepting reality in the context of existence; the realization of human abilities in relation to the world. They are directed at overcoming self-sufficiency, at self-determination in human relatedness. The humanist concept of man is brought out in this: recognition of everyone's naturalness, participation, equivalence, freedom, and rationality. It is man's self (*autos*) that reveals this law (*nomos*); this explains the expression "autonomous morals." It may be supposed that becoming conscious of such an—autonomously based—touchstone increases its motivating power. Standards like usefulness, happiness, and duty are put in their proper light by it. It will also be active in creating personal and social conditions for human development, and in education and other agogic situations. A touchstone such as is meant here is not a recipe but a first principle, a starting point; not an instruction but a guideline. In this manner, a way of living is under consideration that bears its fulfillment in itself. It lends intersubjective meaning to human existence; a meaning that is not based on an object beyond reality, but which is placed in reality on behalf of all.

Do humanists really think that people are able to practice such a life to the full? In other words: Do humanists start from the assumption that man is good by nature? No unequivocal answer can be given to that. There have certainly been periods in history in which humanists were inclined to give a positive answer to this question. They too saw that people did not in fact act as they ought to, but that was attributed to the circumstances—the corrupt culture or the social conditions. That opinion is still much in evidence, but more with others than with humanists. It neither arises from

the humanist conviction, nor is it supported by experience. Even under favorable circumstances, people can be hungry for power and can act selfishly, cruelly, and high-handedly. As a matter of fact it is not possible to think of a form of society in which there would exist not a single inducement to selfishness, domination, or high-handedness; at any rate, not within the foreseeable future. There is also no single guarantee, in the concept of man described, that people could even come to that without external inducement. However, starting points for the humanization of their own being do lie in it, in connection with the development of their culture. That culture, including its social structure, forms the framework for their moral self-realization. There is no reason to call any possibilities of expression bad, except in their meaning for oneself or for others, and perhaps also for nature. All this means that it is necessary both to create the most favorable moral circumstances and to invoke the moral potential of people themselves. Humanists will often not deny that people are by nature (but always in their cultural situation) inclined toward every evil; but they will add: yet for all that, they are capable of, and even inclined toward, some good.