

as that total recollection of which unmistakable symptoms occasionally appear already in this life, even though the teaching of Christianity cannot be more sharply illuminated by any opposite than that of the Greek conception⁶⁷ that the immortals first drank of Lethe in order to forget, yet it by no means follows that the recollection must become directly or indirectly comical—directly by recollecting ridiculous things or indirectly by transforming ridiculous things into essential decisions. Precisely because the accounting and the judgment are essential, what is essential will have the effect of a Lethe on whatever is unessential, while it also is certain that many things will prove to be essential that one had not expected to be so. The soul has not been essentially present in the drolleries of life, in its accidental circumstances, its nooks and crannies; hence all this vanishes, except for the soul that was essentially in this, yet for him it will scarcely have comical significance. If one has reflected thoroughly upon the comic,⁶⁸ studying it as an expert, constantly keeping one's category clear, one will easily understand that the comic belongs to the temporal, for it is in the temporal that the contradiction is found. Metaphysically and esthetically it cannot be stopped and prevented from finally swallowing up all of the temporal, which will happen to the person who is developed enough to use the comic but not mature enough to distinguish *inter et inter* [between one and the other]. In eternity, on the other hand, all contradiction is canceled, the temporal is permeated by and preserved in the eternal, but in this there is no trace of the comical.

However, men are not willing to think eternity earnestly but are anxious about it, and anxiety can contrive a hundred evasions. And this is precisely the demonic.

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Anxiety as Saving through Faith

In one of Grimm's¹ fairy tales there is a story of a young man who goes in search of adventure in order to learn what it is to be in anxiety. We will let the adventurer pursue his journey without concerning ourselves about whether he encountered the terrible on his way. However, I will say that this is an adventure that every human being must go through—to learn to be anxious in order that he may not perish either by never having been in anxiety or by succumbing in anxiety. Whoever has learned to be anxious in the right way has learned the ultimate.

If a human being were a beast or an angel, he could not be in anxiety. Because he is a synthesis, he can be in anxiety; and the more profoundly he is in anxiety, the greater is the man—yet not in the sense usually understood, in which anxiety is about something external, about something outside a person, but in the sense that he himself produces the anxiety. Only in this sense can the words be understood when it is said of Christ² that he was anxious unto death, as well as the words spoken by Christ to Judas: What you are going to do, do quickly. Not even the terrifying verse that made even Luther anxious when preaching on it—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"³—not even these words express suffering so profoundly. For the latter signify a condition in which Christ finds himself. And the former signify the relation to a condition that is not.

Anxiety is freedom's possibility, and only such anxiety is through faith absolutely educative, because it consumes all finite ends and discovers all their deceptiveness. And no Grand Inquisitor has such dreadful torments in readiness as anxiety has, and no secret agent knows as cunningly as anxiety how to attack his suspect in his weakest moment or to

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make alluring the trap in which he will be caught, and no discerning judge understands how to interrogate and examine the accused as does anxiety, which never lets the accused escape, neither through amusement, nor by noise, nor during work, neither by day nor by night.

Whoever is educated by anxiety is educated by possibility, and only he who is educated by possibility is educated according to his infinitude. Therefore possibility is the weightiest of all categories. It is true that we often hear the opposite stated, that possibility is so light, whereas actuality is so heavy. But from whom does one hear such words? From wretched men who never knew what possibility is, and who, when actuality had shown that they were not good for anything and never would be, mendaciously revived a possibility that was very beautiful and very enchanting, while the foundation of this possibility was at the most a little youthful giddiness, of which they ought rather to be ashamed. Therefore this possibility that is said to be so light is commonly regarded as the possibility of happiness, fortune, etc. But this is not possibility. It is rather a mendacious invention that human depravity has dressed up so as to have a reason for complaining of life and Governance and a pretext for becoming self-important. No, in possibility all things are equally possible, and whoever has truly been brought up by possibility has grasped the terrible as well as the joyful. So when such a person graduates from the school of possibility, and he knows better than a child knows his ABC's that he can demand absolutely nothing of life and that the terrible, perdition, and annihilation live next door to every man, and when he has thoroughly learned that every anxiety about which he was anxious came upon him in the next moment—he will give actuality another explanation, he will praise actuality, and even when it rests heavily upon him, he will remember that it nevertheless is far, far lighter than possibility was. Only in this way can possibility be educative, because finiteness and the finite relations in which every individual is assigned a place, whether they be small, or everyday, or world-historical, educate only finitely, and a person can always persuade them, always coax some-

thing else out of them, always bargain, always escape from them tolerably well, always keep himself a little on the outside, always prevent himself from absolutely learning something from them; and if he does this, the individual must again have possibility in himself and himself develop that from which he is to learn, even though in the next moment that from which he is to learn does not at all acknowledge that it is formed by him but absolutely deprives him of the power.

However, in order that an individual may thus be educated absolutely and infinitely by the possibility, he must be honest toward possibility and have faith. By faith I understand here what Hegel⁴ somewhere in his way correctly calls the inner certainty that anticipates infinity. When the discoveries of possibility are honestly administered, possibility will discover all the finitudes, but it will idealize them in the form of infinity and in anxiety overwhelm the individual until he again overcomes them in the anticipation of faith.

What I am saying here probably strikes many as obscure and foolish talk, because they pride themselves on never having been in anxiety. To this I would reply that one certainly should not be in anxiety about men and about finitudes, but only he who passes through the anxiety of the possible is educated to have no anxiety, not because he can escape the terrible things of life but because these always become weak by comparison with those of possibility. If, on the other hand, the speaker maintains that the great thing about him is that he has never been in anxiety, I will gladly provide him with my explanation: that it is because he is very spiritless.

If an individual defrauds possibility, by which he is to be educated, he never arrives at faith; then his faith will be the sagacity of finitude, just as his school was that of finitude. But men defraud possibility in every way, because otherwise every man, if he had merely put his head out of the window, would have seen enough for possibility to use in beginning its exercises. There is an engraving by Chodowiecki⁵ that represents the surrender of Calais as viewed by four persons of different temperaments, and the task of the artist was to mirror the various impressions in the facial expressions of the

four. The most commonplace life no doubt has experiences enough, but the question is that of the possibility in the individuality who is honest with himself. It is told of one Indian hermit who for two years lived on dew that he once came to the city, tasted wine, and became addicted to drink. This story, like similar stories, can be understood in different ways. It may be regarded as comic, it may be regarded as tragic. But the individuality who is educated by possibility needs but one such story. In that very moment, he is absolutely identified with the unfortunate man; he knows no finite evasion by which he may escape. Now the anxiety of possibility holds him as its prey until, saved, it must hand him over to faith. In no other place can he find rest, for every other place of rest is mere chatter, although in the eyes of men it is sagacity. Therefore possibility is absolutely educative. In actuality, no man ever became so unhappy that he did not retain a little remnant, and common sense says quite correctly that if one is cunning, one knows how to make the best of things. But whoever took possibility's course in misfortune lost all, all, as no one in actuality ever lost it. Now, if he did not defraud the possibility that wanted to teach him and did not wheedle the anxiety that wanted to save him, then he would also receive everything back, as no one in actuality ever did, even though he received all things tenfold, for the disciple of possibility received infinity, and the soul of the other expired in the finite. In actuality, no one ever sank so deep that he could not sink deeper, and there may be one or many who sank deeper. But he who sank in possibility—his eye became dizzy, his eye became confused, so he could not grasp the measuring stick that Tom, Dick, and Harry hold out as a saving straw to one sinking; his ear was closed so he could not hear what the market price of men was in his own day, did not hear that he was just as good as the majority. He sank absolutely, but then in turn he emerged from the depth of the abyss lighter than all the troublesome and terrible things in life. However, I will not deny that whoever is educated by possibility is exposed to danger, not that of getting into bad company and going astray in various ways as are those educated by the finite, but

the danger of a fall, namely, suicide. If at the beginning of his education he misunderstands the anxiety, so that it does not lead him to faith but away from faith, then he is lost. On the other hand, whoever is educated [by possibility] remains with anxiety; he does not permit himself to be deceived by its countless falsifications and accurately remembers the past. Then the assaults of anxiety, even though they be terrifying, will not be such that he flees from them. For him, anxiety becomes a serving spirit that against its will leads him where he wishes to go. Then, when it announces itself, when it cunningly pretends to have invented a new instrument of torture, far more terrible than anything before, he does not shrink back, and still less does he attempt to hold it off with noise and confusion; but he bids it welcome, greets it festively, and like Socrates⁶ who raised the poisoned cup, he shuts himself up with it and says as a patient would say to the surgeon when the painful operation is about to begin: Now I am ready. Then anxiety enters into his soul and searches out everything and anxiously torments everything finite and petty out of him, and then it leads him where he wants to go.

When one or another extraordinary event occurs in life, when a world-historical hero gathers heroes about him and performs deeds of valor, when a crisis occurs and everything gains significance, then men want to have a part in it, because all of this is educative. Possibly so. But there is a simpler way in which one may become more thoroughly educated. Take the pupil of possibility, place him in the middle of the Jutland heath,⁷ where no event takes place or where the greatest event is a grouse flying up noisily, and he will experience everything more perfectly, more accurately, more thoroughly than the man who received the applause on the stage of world-history if that man was not educated by possibility.

So when the individual through anxiety is educated unto faith, anxiety will eradicate precisely what it brings forth itself. Anxiety discovers fate, but just when the individual wants to put his trust in fate, anxiety turns around and takes fate away, because fate is like anxiety, and anxiety, like possibility, is a "magic" picture.⁸ When the individuality is not

thus transformed by himself in relation to fate, he will always retain a dialectical remnant that no finitude can remove, just as no man will lose faith in the lottery if he does not lose it by himself but is supposed to lose it by continually losing when he gambles. Even in relation to the most insignificant things, anxiety is promptly at hand as soon as the individuality wants to sneak away from something or stumble upon something by chance. In itself, it is of no significance; from the outside, from the finite, the individual can learn nothing about it. But anxiety takes swift action,⁹ instantly plays the trump card of infinity, of the category, and the individuality cannot take the trick. Such an individuality cannot in an outward way fear fate, its vicissitudes and defeats, because the anxiety within him has already fashioned fate and has taken away from him absolutely all that any fate could take away. In the dialogue *Cratylus*,¹⁰ Socrates says that it is terrible to be deceived by oneself, because one always has the deceiver present; similarly, one may say that it is fortunate to have present such a deceiver who piously deceives and always weans the child before finitude begins to bungle him. Even if in our time an individuality is not educated by possibility in this manner, our age nevertheless has an excellent characteristic for each one in whom there is a deeper nature and who desires to learn the good. The more peaceful and quiet an age is and the more accurately everything follows its regular course, so that the good has its reward, the easier it is for an individuality to deceive himself about whether in all his striving he has a beautiful but nevertheless finite goal. In these times, one does not need to be more than sixteen years old in order to recognize that whoever performs on the stage of the theater of life is like the man who traveled from Jericho¹¹ and fell among robbers. Whoever does not wish to sink in the wretchedness of the finite is constrained in the most profound sense to struggle with the infinite. Such a preliminary orientation is analogous to the education by possibility, and such an orientation cannot take place except through possibility. So when shrewdness has completed its innumerable calculations, when the game is won—then anxiety comes, even before the game in actuality

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has been lost or won, and anxiety makes the sign of the cross against the devil, and shrewdness becomes helpless and its most clever combinations vanish like a witticism compared with the case that anxiety forms with the omnipotence of possibility. Even in the most trifling matters, as soon as the individuality wants to make a cunning turn that is merely cunning, wants to sneak away from something, and the probability is that he will succeed—because actuality is not as sharp an examiner as anxiety—then anxiety is there at once. If it is dismissed because it is merely a trifle, then anxiety makes this trifle as prominent as the little place Marengo became in the history of Europe, because there the great battle of Marengo was fought. If an individuality is not weaned away from shrewdness by himself, it will never be thoroughly accomplished, because finitude always explains in parts, never totally, and he whose shrewdness always fails (and even this is inconceivable in actuality) may seek the reason for this in his shrewdness and then strive to become still more shrewd. With the help of faith, anxiety brings up the individuality to rest in providence. So it is also in relation to guilt, which is the second thing anxiety discovers. Whoever learns to know his guilt only from the finite is lost in the finite, and finitely the question of whether a man is guilty cannot be determined except in an external, juridical, and most imperfect sense. Whoever learns to know his guilt only by analogy to judgments of the police court and the supreme court never really understands that he is guilty, for if a man is guilty, he is infinitely guilty. Therefore, if such an individuality who is educated only by finitude does not get a verdict from the police or a verdict by public opinion to the effect that he is guilty, he becomes of all men the most ridiculous and pitiful, a model of virtue who is a little better than most people but not quite so good as the parson. What help would such a man need in life? Why, almost before he dies he may retire to a collection of models. From finitude one can learn much, but not how to be anxious, except in a very mediocre and depraved sense. On the other hand, whoever has truly learned how to be anxious will dance when the anxieties of finitude strike up the music

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and when the apprentices of finitude lose their minds and courage. One is often deceived this way in life. The hypochondriac is anxious about every insignificant thing, but when the significant appears he begins to breathe more easily. And why? Because the significant actuality is after all not so terrible as the possibility he himself had fashioned, and which he used his strength to fashion, whereas he can now use all his strength against actuality. Yet the hypochondriac is only an imperfect autodidact when compared with the person who is educated by possibility, because hypochondria is partly dependent upon the somatic and is consequently accidental.* The true autodidact is precisely in the same degree a theodidact,¹² as another author has said,** or to use an expression less reminiscent of the intellectual, he is αὐτουργός τις τῆς φιλοσοφίας [one who on his own cultivates philosophy]† and in the same degree θεουργός [one who tends the things of God]. Therefore he who in relation to guilt is educated by anxiety will rest only in the Atonement.

Here this deliberation ends, where it began. As soon as psychology has finished with anxiety, it is to be delivered to dogmatics.

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427 * It is therefore with a higher meaning that Hamann¹³ employs the word "hypochondria" when he says: "Diese Angst in der Welt ist aber der einzige Beweis unserer Heterogenität. Denn fehlte uns nichts, so würden wir es nicht besser machen als die Heiden und Transcendental-Philosophen, die von Gott nichts wissen und in die liebe Natur sich wie die Narren vergaffen; kein Heimweh würde uns anwandeln. Diese impertinente Unruhe, diese heilige Hypochondrie ist vielleicht das Feuer, womit wir Opferthiere gesalzen und vor der Fäulnis des laufenden *seculi* bewahrt werden müssen" [However, this anxiety in the world is the only proof of our heterogeneity. If we lacked nothing, we should do no better than the pagans and the transcendental philosophers, who know nothing of God and like fools fall in love with lovely nature, and no homesickness would come over us. This impertinent disquiet, this holy hypochondria is perhaps the fire with which we season sacrificial animals in order to preserve us from the putrefaction of the current *seculi* (century)] (vol. 6, p. 194).

** See *Either/Or*.

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428 † Xenophon's *Symposium* [I:5], where Socrates uses this expression about himself.

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