

HUMANITAS

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SOME SOBERING REFLECTIONS ON THE HUMAN SITUATION

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1. The philosopher is like a giraffe in that he is always sticking his neck out.
2. Nature is what nature *does* and *undoes*.
3. Man is not a unique being existing *apart* from nature, he is an integral *part* of nature itself.
4. The whole object in naturalizing man is not to deprive him of what rightfully belongs to him but simply to accord the proper place to him in the very universe of which he is its only articulate creature, the rest of nature being dumb, by comparison.
5. The continuity of man and nature is embodied in human culture.
6. Human culture is human nature in the concrete.
7. Man is by nature a *conative* animal: the eternal striver from the womb until the tomb.
8. Man strives throughout life to satisfy his individual and social needs in sundry ways, but such striving on his part begets strife sooner or later because man's basic aggressive drive to pursue his own interests tends to clash with his equally basic gregarious drive to meet the demands of others.
9. The original state of tension between the universal but contrary drives (aggressiveness and gregariousness) within man himself is the prime cause of all conflicts of interests in life and the primary natural source of all phenomena of morals in human culture.
10. Where there is life, there is striving; but, where there is striving, there is strife.

11. Striving and strife constitute the basic cycle of life.

12. Conflicts being what human life is really all about, the first and foremost task of ethical theory is to determine the formally possible types of conflicts, each of which presupposes a certain underlying concept of moral conflict itself.

13. Though the conflicts of life are countless in content, in form they belong to three distinct types, which, in ascending order of complexity, are: good/bad, better/worse, good/good. To each of these types of conflicts there corresponds a generic problem of ethics: the Problem of Evil, the Problem of Better, the Problem of Good, respectively.

14. The traditional approach to ethics oversimplifies the problems of conduct by conceiving moral conflict itself in good/bad or right/wrong terms alone and by equating moral effort with the overcoming of evil, thereby reducing all moral problems to the (epic) Problem of Evil. As a result of such oversimplification, the other two generic problems of ethics suffer for lack of critical attention. This does not militate so much against the (comparative) Problem of Better, which is reducible to the Problem of Evil in principle at least, but it does seriously affect the irreducible (tragic) Problem of Good, whose neglect in general is inexcusable.

15. The Problem of Good (good-versus-good) may be defined as that tragic predicament of men and peoples arising out of an inherent clash of ideals which are unavoidable, mutually exclusive, and *equally* valuable.

16. Problems of evil and problems of better are plainly resolvable in form by making the right choices, that is, by choosing good over evil and better over worse, respectively. On the other hand, problems of good are by nature the only problems in life which have no real solution in principle simply because, where people are confronted with unavoidable conflicts between equally right but mutually exclusive alternatives of action, there is no possible way to distinguish right choices from wrong ones and, thus, no satisfactory way to resolve the conflicts in question. Hence the inevitability of sacrifice in all tragic situations.

17. To Kant, telling a lie is wrong because it is irrational from the beginning, but to John Stuart Mill it is wrong because it is impractical in the end.

18. Kant misses the tragedy of life on the moral plane because the antinomy which he sets up in ethics between happiness and virtue is not understood by him as an unavoidable conflict between two moral coequals but as one between a merely natural good (happiness or pleasure) and a truly moral good (virtue or duty).

19. The major antinomy of moral life is the tragic clash of the ideals of happiness and duty, life's major compromise consisting in their possible harmonization.

20. In Verdi's ever popular opera *Aide*, the princess of Ethiopia (Aida) and the military hero of Egypt (Radamès) are tragically torn between love for each other (object of happiness) and loyalty to their own countries at war against each other (object of duty).

21. Whenever we are faced with an unavoidable conflict between at least two equally good but mutually exclusive things, the consequences of choosing either of them are equally bad. This is the tragic dilemma in any problem of good, irrespective of the rationalization that may occur after a fatal choice is made, e.g., the Sophoclean Antigone, who chooses divine over civil law on the alleged ground of its being the higher law, therewith understandably transforming a good/good conflict into a better/worse one as a temporary way out which is eventually doomed to fail. On the one hand, in a choice between good and bad, better and worse, you suffer the consequences only if you make the wrong choice; on the other hand, in a tragic choice between good and good, you suffer the consequences whichever you choose. Such is the inexorable logic of tragedy.

22. Whereas in Stoic and Kantian ethics vice is its own punishment, in a tragic situation virtue is, paradoxically enough, its own punishment. Stated differently, while most people are guilty of evil, a tragic person is guilty of good, in the sense that he or she must choose one good at the expense of the other equally valuable good.

23. Two wrongs don't make a right, but two rights in a tragic situation do make a wrong.

24. You can choose the lesser of two evils, but you can't choose the lesser of two goods of equal value.

25. A tragic situation may be likened somewhat unto the legendary story (attributed to Buridan) about the ass which, on finding itself placed midway between two equally desirable piles of hay, starved itself to death for being unable under the circumstances to prefer one pile to the other.

26. In a tragic situation the two poles or extremes of choice are equally good, but in Aristotle's ethics, on the contrary, the two extremes deviating from the mean—excess and deficiency—are equally bad. Consequently, the Aristotelian doctrine of the Golden Mean belongs to the ethics of the better on the obvious ground that courage, for example, is superior to both rashness and cowardice. In a word, Aristotelian ethics is a classical form of meliorism.

27. The problem of Job is not the problem of Antigone. The Book of *Job* is a Hebrew story of pathos with an epic ending, not a Greek tragedy.

28. In tragic stories, strictly speaking, there are no villains. Villains reflect the Problem of Evil, not the Problem of Good.

29. Tragic situations are popularly confused with pathetic ones. Even so, the pathetic is the opposite of the epic. In epic situations good overcomes all sorts of obstacles and eventually triumphs over evil (e.g., Vergil's *Aeneid*), but in pathetic situations evil overpowers good and triumphs over it (e.g., Shakespeare's *Othello*).

30. Even the great Aristotle, alas, seems to be confusing the tragic with the pathetic. Although Dante's master of those who know considers tragic poetry a higher art than epic poetry, Aristotle is too Homeric and epic-minded in spirit to understand the nature of tragedy proper. According to his incomplete *Poetics*, at any rate, the function of tragedy is to bring about the catharsis of pity and fear—pity being aroused by unmerited misfortune, on the one hand, fear by the misfortune of someone *like* ourselves, on the other. Now, granting of course that a tragic story arouses emotions of pity in us, does not a tragic figure (such as Antigone, again) arouse our feelings of admiration rather than those of fear, because hers is the misfortune of someone *unlike* ourselves? After all, the tragic figure is not an average but an exceptional person cursed (or blessed) with such an uncompromising attitude that we can't help but admire him or her for refusing to compromise on principles, whatever be the ultimate outcome. Moreover, the probable reason for Aristotle's failure to understand tragedy is that he attributes the change of fortune in a tragic plot to some great error or frailty in a character of the play, in other words, to a problem of evil (intellectual or moral). The flaw, however, in a tragic play is not in the *dramatis personae* but in the antinomic nature of the tragic plot itself. In short, tragedy as such is really addressed to problems of good, not to problems of evil.

31. Most tragic situations in the drama of life as well as in the life of drama are of import to the moral side of experience, but some are important from an intellectual and philosophical standpoint.

32. A celebrated case of the appearance of the tragic Problem of Good in matters philosophical is the hypothesis put forward by Leibniz to explain and justify the Problem of Evil in the universe. According to that most ingenious of Western philosophers, God had to take into serious consideration the two ideal conditions to be satisfied in choosing this particular world of ours as the best of all possible worlds, namely, how to make at the same time a world containing both the greatest possible variety of things and the greatest

possible attractiveness of each individual thing itself. Now, unfortunately, these two ideal metaphysical conditions clash radically in principle, but their intrinsic clash is not due to God's fault at all. For, as every rose has its thorn, so even God's world has its own metaphysical limitations resulting from the conflicting desiderata involved in its very makeup. In fine, the Leibnizian justification of metaphysical evil is ultimately based on an implicit but disguised recourse to the Problem of Good as applied to the universe at large. Needless to add, Leibniz himself was too optimistic and diplomatic in mentality to be explicit about his recourse to the Problem of Good inherent in his theodicy and cosmic aesthetics.

33. While the conscientious objector personifies tragedy on the moral plane, the conscientious agnostic personifies it on the intellectual plane.

34. In the two possibilities of tragic conflict between reason and faith, the tragic fideist (e.g., Miguel de Unamuno) is the tragic agnostic (e.g., T. H. Huxley) in reverse.

35. Unamuno's Categorical Imperative to every man *de carne y hueso* may be put as follows: So live as not to deserve to die.

36. Unamuno the tragic heretic must be given belated credit for reminding us of the tragedy of life at a time when the climate of opinion in the world was generally complacent, but human life is too complex to be reduced to its tragic dimension alone.

37. The best thing perhaps about contemporary existentialism as a movement is its having called special attention to the primacy of possibility as the cardinal category for understanding the less roseate and more disconcerting aspects of human life, but unfortunately some of its most popular representatives (e.g., the late J. P. Sartre and his followers) have gone overboard by confusing the tragedy of life with its absurdity, thereby making the serious mistake of identifying the tragic with the pathetic, the sufferings of an Antigone with those of a Sisyphus.

38. Man needs to wander from culture to culture in order to wonder about his own.

39. As persons differ in their predominant individual traits, so cultures differ likewise in their predominant collective ones. To be sure, if generalizing about the former is difficult, generalizing about the latter is even more so.

40. The focal traits of the different cultures provide a useful key to the multidimensionality of human life. To illustrate, to the extent that the life styles of the two Americas differ in certain fundamental respects, to that extent their basic differences may be put in the following terms: While Anglo-

America sees the conflicts of life primarily in *epic* (good/bad) terms, Latin America ultimately sees them in *tragic* (good/good) ones. The focal difference between these two cultures is traceable to their respective histories, in the final analysis. Their historical difference itself signifies that the two cultures should not be contending rivals but complementary partners, that is, they should be mutually supplying each other's lack, inasmuch as there is both a tragedy and an epic to life.

41. Good understanding on all sides makes good neighbors in international and intercultural life.

42. There are no chosen people of culture, except to those who have no sense of history and have learned nothing from the rise and fall of empires.

43. A genuine sense of history not only gives birth to the moral virtue of humility, it also gives birth to that rare intellectual virtue called humor, without which no sympathetic understanding of the human comedy is possible.

44. The common problems of humanity as a whole are problems of evil of all sorts (such as poverty, crime, war, ignorance, disease), but some peoples (e.g., the Mexicans with their dual Indo-Spanish heritage) have to cope with problems of good as well. This implies that some cultures are more complex than others in types of conflict situations to contend with, and therefore are subject to more internal difficulties than others.

45. Our society is not so rigorous logically as it is rigid morally. For it allows us to think illogically to our heart's content but not to behave immorally— not in the open, at any rate.

46. Stability in social life without mobility is empty, mobility without stability is blind.

47. Despite all the rhetoric and counter-rhetoric in political life, politics is, as politics *does*.

48. Marx or no Marx, politics is mostly economics, as is clear from St. Paul's shrewd observation many, many centuries ago that money is the root of all evil.

49. Fear made the gods for Lucretius, and fear makes the peace for Hobbes.

50. The derogatory phrase "power politics" would merely be redundant to Hobbes. For, to him, politics without power would be utterly powerless, and Leviathan the Big Fish would simply become a poor fish.

51. We seem to talk of every human right except the right to do right. We even talk of the right to do wrong. For a current instance, witness modern industry's proclaimed right to pollute the environment.

52. The possibility of gaining freedom involves the possibility of losing it.

53. Kant is a thorough critic of human slavery in two senses. In the first sense, he is against the slavery of others, as is perfectly evident from his Categorical Imperative in its more popular version. In the second sense, he is against self—slavery, which to him at least is the inevitable result of living according to one's natural wants and fears— these (wants and fears) pertaining not to morality proper but to the economy of life. And yet, ironically enough, Kant conceives God as a Divine Auditor, whose function is to compensate immortal souls in the next world for whatever unhappiness and injustice they have suffered in this one.

54. Just as the burnt child dreads the fire, so the pampered child craves the candy.

55. In spite of his utilitarian theory of ethics and not because of it, John Stuart Mill is quite aware that unequivocal cases of conflicting obligation do arise under certain moral circumstances, but he does not realize that such cases spell the tragedy of life, to which no "common umpire" is applicable, strictly speaking. Mill's whole utilitarian appeal to a common umpire as an arbitrator of conflicting interests belongs to the political and legal side of life, where compromise is the standing rule. By contrast, a tragic situation of conflicting rights and duties is the most uncompromising state of affairs in the world.

56. What the Aristotelian mean (moderation) is to ethics, compromise is to politics, to wit, an adjustment of extremes.

57. A compromiser in action and an eclectic in theory go together.

58. The basic presupposition of all human efforts is the challenging gap between the actual and the ideal.

59. Mathematics is what man does with his power of reasoning and sense of exactness.

60. Science is what man does with his power of observation and sense of facts.

61. Art is what man does with his power of imagination and sense of beauty.

62. Morality is what man does with his power of conscience and sense of justice.

63. Religion is what man does with his power of faith and sense of reverence.

64. Philosophy is what man does with his power of speculation and sense of wonder.

65. In morality man is conscience-stricken, but in religion he is awe-stricken.

66. The sublime as a religious category is beyond the tragic: the "meta-tragic", to be precise.

67. Every field of inquiry has its logical advantages and disadvantages.

68. Propositions of pure mathematics are demonstrable and propositions of factual science are verifiable, but propositions of philosophy as such are neither demonstrable nor verifiable, strictly speaking, but tenable at best, being concerned as they are with complex matters of value which are highly debatable.

69. The tragedy of human knowledge lies in the unavoidable and intrinsic clash of its two ideal requirements: exactness in form and richness in content. The more exact our knowledge is, the less its richness in content, but the richer in content, the less its exactness. To arrive at once at the tragedy of human knowledge, just compare mathematics and metaphysics as fields of inquiry.

70. We do not argue whether wholes should be greater than their parts and we do not argue whether acids should turn blue litmus red, but we do argue whether women should be drafted.

71. The three f's of error are: fallacy, falsity, foolishness. To say something fallacious is one thing; to say something false, a second thing; to say something foolish, a third thing.

72. The great paradox of the empiricist is that he can't be too clear about things because that would make the world too rational to suit his particular theory of knowledge.

73. According to Locke, to employ a present-day trade name, the human mind is too limited in cognitive capacity to obtain an exact Xerox copy of the external world.

74. As against Leibniz, who holds that general truths of fact are governed by the principle of sufficient reason, Hume thinks that they are not governed by reason at all, let alone a sufficient one. For, according to the latter, what we now call modern science is not reason-made but *custom-made*, literally. Or, in other terms, all reasoning about matters of fact is nothing but rationalization, that is to say, it is purely psychological, not logical. Yet, if the study of nature at large (physics) is purely psychological, then it would necessarily follow on Hume's sceptical grounds that his own study of human nature (psychology) as the proposed psychological foundation of physics is itself purely psychological likewise. As goes the study of nature in general, so goes the study of human nature in particular. If physics is no science,

neither is psychology. And, to make matters worse, if physics is no science, psychology is even less so, for reasons that should be more obvious at present than they were in Hume's day.

75. Scepticism is to our intellectual life what tragedy is to our moral: No positive solution to problems is possible in either case.

76. A scientific imperialism is a contradiction in terms.

77. Science is the necessary but not the sufficient condition of wisdom.

78. As the method of science is self-correcting, so the method of philosophy is self-examining.

79. Relevance is a relative term. If what was relevant yesterday is no longer relevant today, it follows that what is relevant today may be irrelevant tomorrow.

80. It is indeed the height of irony that certain contemporary thinkers, who cavalierly dismiss all metaphysics as irrelevant Big Talk and then reduce philosophy to the analysis of language ("glossoanalysis," to coin the exact word for them), are themselves not immune to the all-talk disease, panglossitis" (after Dr. Pangloss in Voltaire's *Candide*).

81. Arrogance, the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset used to declare, is not only the cardinal sin of the typical Spaniard but of the typical philosopher as well.

82. It seems natural for the philosopher to exaggerate his exclusive possession of truth, and Plato the Aristophanes of philosophy was the philosopher who saw the comedy of it all in his best *Dialogues*, such as the *Symposium*, where philosophers are subtly reminded that they are not gods or possessors of wisdom, but rather lovers or seekers of wisdom, by etymology.

83. Two moral wrongs (misdeeds) don't make a right, but two intellectual wrongs (mistakes) make a comedy.

84. The perpetual misunderstanding of Plato on the part of his interpreters, including the first and the most influential of them all (Aristotle), is due essentially to their lack of a profound sense of humor and to their taking him so literally as to misread completely his tentative hypotheses as dogmatic theses to be defended at any cost.

85. Regardless of their radical difference in temper, Plato and Aristotle share that fundamental conviction which is the whole purpose of comedy at its best and which, incidentally, derives directly from the Hippocratic concept of health in ancient Greek medicine, namely, that the good life is the well-balanced life.

86. Plato's dialogical conception of philosophy as a comedy of errors is the intellectual equivalent of war.

87. Whereas tragedy reveals our dual crises in life, comedy exposes our onesided follies.

88. The comic side of life is the only side of life which is not onesided.

89. The Higher Comedy of philosophy is the best preventive measure against fanaticism and intolerance.

90. In sum, Plato's irreplaceable Socratic message to all of us is: An unexamined belief is no more worth believing than an unexamined life is worth living.

LA INTENCIONALIDAD DE LA CONCIENCIA

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1. *El carácter intencional de la conciencia*

FRENTE AL Inmanentismo empirista, que desconoce la intencionalidad de la vida intelectual, como distinta de la de los sentidos, y frente al Formalismo kantiano, que apriori y arbitrariamente deforma la realidad del hecho mismo del conocimiento, E. Husserl reacciona y re-descubre el carácter intencional de la conciencia, expuesto y ampliamente fundado antes por Santo Tomás de Aquino.

Todo hecho de conciencia, como tal —de la voluntad libre, de los sentimientos, y, concretamente, todo conocimiento, tanto sensitivo como y principalmente intelectual— se manifiesta como intencional.

Limitándonos al conocimiento, la intencionalidad se presenta como un sujeto que aprehende y está frente a un objeto. Sujeto y objeto son dados inmediata y simultáneamente en todo conocimiento, como términos enfrentados, en una polaridad, dada sin embargo en la unidad de un acto.

En el conocimiento sensitivo esta dualidad no es aprehendida expresa o reflejamente, no llega él a distinguir formalmente el sujeto del objeto, precisamente porque no llega a develar el *ser*, como tal.

En cambio, en el acto intelectual la intencionalidad o dualidad de sujeto y objeto es plenamente consciente: hay una aprehensión inmediata y simultánea del *ser del sujeto* frente y formalmente distinto del *ser del objeto*. Se trata del *ser del sujeto* —del *ego cogito*—, quien de-vela y tiene ante sí como distinto de sí o trascendente, el *ser del objeto*.