

The Thisness of Nowness and The Highness of Man

A Contribution to Existentialist Thought

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A circumstance common to human existence is often ignored and forgot, it's always been with us and thus become trifling and difficult even to spot: It is the occurrence of thisness in nowness, the presence presented to us, existence or being, the stream of appearance, the given affecting us thus. From moment to moment in pace with the present and tightly embracing the here, the thisness of nowness is always appearing, is always about us and near. Defying description, immune to man's reason, the given is clearly absurd; yet through our lives, in the here-now presented, its meaningless babbling is heard.

By thisness we shall understand the so-being of this as it is in the now; not anything has-been nor anything will-be, not the why of the this, nor the how. But by nowness we shall understand the so-being of now as it is in the this. Thus applying the term to the there or the yonder of now is clearly amiss. Once these definitions are quite apprehended there is no more rational doubt, that there can be no thisness but thisness of nowness. And showing how this comes about, we need but observe in the field of appearance that everything given is there; that none but the present is here-now presented, that thisness to nowness must bear the relation of of-ness; and every existent must now-this at present exist. For has-beens and will-bees are nothing but fictions and shouldn't be said to subsist.

However much man is entwined in the given, his reason, his logic, deny that it's here. And the now of the present, presented at present, is denied just because it is near. Thus phenomenal being, encompassing spirit, is alienated from man, and the given is branded by classifications, by genus and species and clan. The mental takes ownership of the presented, the given is taken, possessed; one takes stock of existence, claims rights on the real: the world is being assessed.

Once intellect fails in its alienation, man 's struck by the now and the this: The empty-eyed, meaningless face of existence stares into, breaths into, his. The bewildering jumble of sound and of color, the sliminess given to touch leave man - defenseless, disgusted, destructed - at the mercy of being as such. The encompassing real moves in upon selfhood, the world rubs its hide against man's, and this clammy touch of the real existent is just what the intellect bans. The world is so brimful with bulging and stuffy, ballooning and billowing things that one's stomach heaves up in disgusted repulsion of all that the universe brings. One's hand, like a spider, is crawling out yonder, one's foot lives out there to the South; like a slug in its slime-bed, revolting and foreign, one's tongue moves about in one's mouth.

Yet man, in his freedom, creates his own being (at least, his own being as man), his selfhood is not in constraint of the other: he can do whatever he can. He molds his own nature like clay in his fingers; however may be his resolve so courage, or talent, or treasures of wisdom, or unthought-of habits evolve. And man, in his project of making his nature, must chose what he is and will be; yes, even his choice not to chose is a choice which no one can make now but he. Since man, in his freedom, wills freedom for others, his choice is a choice for mankind; and his shoulders are weighted by guilt for all evil which throughout mankind he may find.

The highness of mankind, the value of being, reside in the will to create,

in spite of awareness of imminent failure, the handiwork of one's own fate.
Thrown into existence, deprived of excuses, man is condemned to be free,
his view of the self which he makes always threatened by fear of what others might see.
Yet, lonely and fearful in weighty decisions, each person knows that he can
face up to the essence of human conditions with faith in the highness of man.