

POSSIBILITY, FREEDOM, AND VALUE

GEORGE J. STACK

The conception of possibility has been central to a number of philosophical issues in recent thought and has been a focal point for analyses that have emerged in existential thought, existential phenomenology and linguistic analysis. Attention has often been centered on the question of the distinction between human possibility and the possibilities of non-human beings. It has been maintained both in linguistic and existential treatments of the notion of possibility that human possibility, in its fullest sense, cannot be accounted for in terms of empirical possibility alone. Aside from trying to show the compatibility of existential and linguistic accounts of human possibility, I will be concerned with an examination of the intimate relationship between possibility and human freedom. Finally, against the background of interpretations of human possibility, an attempt will be made to indicate that the origination and projection of values is very closely associated with key dimensions of human possibility.

Senses of Possibility

The word "possible," in its most basic sense, pertains to what may or may not be the case. As we shall see, contingency is included in the primary meaning of possibility. In everyday language-use the term 'possible' is typically used to refer to what is assumed to be practically possible. This use of the word quite often entails the notion of technical possibility. It is certainly relatively rare for the word 'possible' (or modal terms such as 'can' or 'cannot') to be used to refer to the philosophical notion of logical possibility. Non-technical uses of the term 'possible' are usually intended to refer to what is empirically possible.

Although the abstract concept of logical possibility has an appropriate role in analytical or speculative reasoning, it is not

specifically relevant to an understanding of what is construed as possible in the natural world or in regard to human capacities. Even though allusions to theoretical possibility are hardly ever intended in the ordinary use of 'possible,' it is obvious that any meaningful use of the term 'possible' does presuppose the notion of logical possibility insofar as the assertion of the possibility of something necessarily entails its *logical* possibility.

One sense of 'possibility' that is quite common both in ordinary and philosophic discourse pertains to capacity, capability, or potentiality. When we are referring to human or non-human entities, we may often substitute the term 'potentiality' for possibility or modal expressions pertaining to possibility without changing the sense of a statement. Thus, we may say that "A man can lift an object that is one-quarter of his own weight" or that "A man has the potentiality (capacity or capability) to lift an object that is one-quarter of his own weight." Or we may say that "It is possible for a man to lift an object that is one-quarter of his own weight." In general, to say that it is possible for someone or something to do something means that someone or something has the capacity, capability, or potentiality to do so.

References to the physical capabilities of man or to the capacities of non-human beings usually implicitly pertain to what is assumed, judged, or determined to be empirically possible. And, in general, an empirical possibility is that which does not violate presently known empirical laws or laws of nature. Each judgment that refers to the physical capacities or incapacities of man, natural beings, or objects has reference to what is thought to be physically possible (or impossible) in terms of currently substantiated empirical laws. In this regard, we may legitimately refer either to the empirical possibilities of any given entity or to the physical potentialities of such an entity. Even though it is linguistically odd to refer to the non-potentialities of anything, the word 'impossible' (used in the sense of not empirically possible) does convey precisely this notion. Thus, for example, the assertion "Lead cannot float on the surface of water" expresses the non-potentialities of substances such as lead and water. The substance lead has properties that make it incapable of being kept afloat by substances having the specific properties of water. Conversely, water has specific properties that make it incapable of supporting solid, heavy, lead objects. Although this way of referring to what is possible or impossible in the realm of non-human objects or phenomena is awkward, this is not the case in regard to expressions that pertain specifically to man's physical abilities or capacities.

It would seem that in the sphere of the empirical, the terms 'possibility' and 'potentiality' are virtually synonymous. For, we may

appropriately say either that "It is not possible for a man to lift an object that is three hundred times his own weight." Or, "A man does not have the potentiality to lift an object that is three hundred times his own weight." In both statements non-possibility and non-potentiality have the same sense. The same is true, *a fortiori*, of uses of modal expressions conveying the notions of possibility or non-possibility. This is illustrated in the following instances:

- (A) A train with a diesel engine *cannot* attain a speed of five hundred miles an hour.
- (B) A man *cannot* leap one hundred feet in the air in a vertical direction.
- (A1) Steel *can* be melted.
- (B1) A man *can* run at the rate of five miles an hour.

In these examples it is clear that 'can' and 'cannot' are employed in the sense of possibility (potentiality) or impossibility (non-potentiality). What makes this use of such terms appropriate is determined by an appeal to known empirical laws. But even in instances in which statements refer to physical capacities, a distinction must be made between those potentialities that we ascribe to any physical object and those we ascribe to man. To be sure, there are general principles that encompass both man and any physical entity. Thus, "Any physical object or entity has the potentiality of falling, if unsupported, at the rate of thirty-two feet per second." On the other hand, there are potentialities that are conditionally ascribed to a human being in a manner in which we would not ascribe them to a physical object. In asserting that "A standard, functional automobile can attain a speed of seventy miles an hour," we assume that it would be possible (ideally) to state the very numerous physical conditions that would have to be satisfied in order for this performance to be possible. In the case of a human capability or possibility, we would also assume that we could, in an ideal sense, be able to refer to the empirical conditions that would be required in order for a task or action to occur. We may say, for example, that an individual man can run at the rate of fifteen miles an hour if he is in good physical condition, if he has prepared himself with appropriate training, if he runs over clear terrain, etc. But in such a case we might also refer to relevant non-physical conditions that would have to be satisfied. We would make reference to the intentions, desires or motivations of such an individual. We may ask of a particular individual whether he desires to run at a rate of fifteen miles per hour. What his motives for doing so are or whether he is in the mood to manifest his physical

capacities on this occasion. We cannot refer to human potentialities solely in terms of physical capabilities. And it is not standard linguistic usage that leads us to incorporate various psychic factors into our account of human capacities. Rather, it is our general, non-technical knowledge of others, as well as our acquaintance with our own psychological traits.

By shifting our concern from physical abilities to attitudes or feelings or behavior that calls for resoluteness or decisiveness, it is clear that we are no longer dealing with phenomena that can be included, in a strict sense, under the rubric of "empirical possibility." Possibilities of choice, decision or action are intimately related to man's feelings, desires, purposes, intentions or capacities for self-reflection, introspection or subjective behavioral modification.

When we say of a machine or mechanical system that it "can" or "cannot" perform specific tasks, we do not use these modal terms in the same sense in which we use them when we are talking about what a man can or cannot do. This seems to be the case with the proviso that man as a purely physical being is, of course, subject to possibilities or potentialities that *all* physical entities, as far as we know, are subject to by virtue of their physical existence in space and through time. However, it is still the case that the meaning of expressions of the modality of possibility is quite different in instances in which such expressions are applied to the non-physical possibilities of man. We see in the following illustrations the similarity of the meaning of the first two assertions and the difference between the last two:

- (i) It is possible that the furnace will explode.
- (ii) It is possible for a man to have a coronary infarction.
- (iii) Propane can be used as fuel.
- (iv) An habitual sensualist can change his behavior.

Obviously, the use of 'can' in (iii) and (iv) conforms with grammatical rules and is quite clear. However, the meaning of 'can' in these assertions is not by any means the same in each case. In this instance we must, *contra* Wittgenstein, look for the meaning, not the use. The use of 'can' in both cases is quite similar; but the meaning of the word is different from statement to statement. The capacity that the sensualist has is one that relates to desire, intention, motivation, and purpose. It is clear, then, that a demarcation between human possibilities (or potentialities) and non-human possibilities (or potentialities) can be identified.¹ In addition, it is certainly suggested

¹ Cf. Stuart Hampshire, *Freedom of the Individual*, New York, 1965.

in these illustrations that non-human or non-conscious things do not "have" potentialities or possibilities in the same sense in which man may be said to have them.

Insofar as volition, wanting and desire play a significant role in bringing human potentialities to realization, it is clear that the ascription of potentialities to non-human, non-conscious objects refers exclusively to what they would be expected to "do" or how they would function under particular conditions. A causal explanation of such "potentialities" would have reference to the dispositional properties of such entities. Naturally, the ascription of empirical potentialities to man would apply to man only in the physical dimension of his being. This does not, of course, mean that there are not distinctive human possibilities or potentialities that are clearly *not* reducible to empirical possibility.²

From the examination of the language of possibility we have seen that there are distinctive human possibilities that fall outside the sphere of empirical possibility. The emphasis upon distinctive human possibilities is a central theme of Kierkegaard's philosophical anthropology, Heidegger's phenomenology of the modes of being of *Dasein* and, in a more abstract sense, of Sartre's phenomenology of human reality. Human possibility or potentiality lies at the heart of the existential interpretation of human existence. By examining Kierkegaard's understanding of the application of the existential category of possibility to human life and Heidegger's analysis of possibility or "being-possible" as an essential characteristic of *Dasein*, we may be able to elucidate the ramifications of the disclosing of distinctive human possibilities; as well as showing the intimate relationship that possibility has to the contingent character of human existence and to an existential conception of freedom.

Possibility and Existence

The centrality of human possibility in existential thought has its origins in Kierkegaard's repeated assertion of the importance of the concept of possibility for an understanding of the state or condition of man in the world. Dilthey, too, later emphasized possibility (*Möglichkeit*) as a basic "category of life" that is central to our

² In this regard, it has been said that "the power to do a specific thing on a particular occasion [. . .] is the fundamental kind of power, and of potentiality, which philosophers have tended to neglect, particularly in the context of an individual's freedom of decision." Stuart Hampshire, *op. cit.*, pp.16-17. This "neglect" is certainly not found in the thought of Aristotle, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, or Sartre.

attempt to grasp the nature of man's "lived experience" (*Erlebnis*). And before Heidegger and Sartre, Ortega y Gasset had stressed that the individual (in relation to things encountered in the world) is the pivotal center of "reality" and that each person's life is a poetic task. If we have no predetermined essence, no essential nature (as Ortega argued before Sartre), then to exist is to act, to create ourselves. Man must seek to make himself in the face of a multiplicity of finite stimulates. The circumstances of our lives, the actual world in which we live are not chosen; but the openness of the future for the realization of possibilities provides for an ontological space for something to be done (*quehacer*) in the time of our lives.³ The fundamental theme of the dialectical relationship between facticity and possibility in human life is found in the thought of Kierkegaard, Ortega, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Sartre. But it is presented in its most dramatic form in the context of Kierkegaard's attack upon the systematic rationalism of Hegel.

In Kierkegaard's thought the importance of the concept of possibility emerged first in his personal concern with finding possibilities for his life that would give direction and purpose to a life in which action and commitment were inhibited by polemical reflection and a fascination with the imaginary possibilities of a purely aesthetic way of life. This personal concern for the projection of an "idea" for which he could live and die was matched with his theoretical and existential opposition to the Hegelian notion of a universal, necessary rational dialectic that seemed to pervade all actuality, all aspects of existence. It was argued that the Hegelian claim that there is "movement" in logic is fallacious. Real movement, change or development takes place in temporality and involves a movement from potentiality or possibility to actuality.

The Aristotelian conceptions of possibility and actuality are exclusively applied by Kierkegaard to the historical becoming of man in time, the development of a personal life-history. Hegel's emphasis upon world-historical evolution seemed to undermine the role that individual choice, decision and action played in the self-becoming of the individual. Nowhere does Kierkegaard *deny* that the objective momentum of world history does affect our personal destinies either directly or indirectly. His own attacks upon the tendencies of his time, the dissolution of essential Christian faith in official 'Christianism,' the increasing power of impersonal social forces ("mass man" or, in Kierkegaard's term, "the crowd"), the leveling propensities of

³ Cf. *Meditaciones del Quijote* (1914), *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (1923) and *El Espectador* (1916-1934).

the nineteenth century, the rising power of the media (the "press" he scorns so often), etc., testify to his (Hegelian) historical consciousness, his awareness of the massive influence that history or the values given dominance in historical periods have on the quality of individual life. He offers a "corrective" to dominant, collective historical sentiments or the Hegelian *Zeitgeist*. Despite the very real forces of history, each person should strive to take up responsibility for his life and become self-conscious about his choices and personal commitments. In the development of the subjective individual there is, Kierkegaard believed, no historical inevitability. Rather, the individual possesses and can project for himself finite possibilities that he can strive to realize. The acquisition of distinguishing characteristics or individuating qualities is a matter of contingent possibility, not necessity. Such an understanding of the characteristics acquired by individuals has recently been reiterated in only slightly different form. It has been said that the "properties" of historically significant individuals are nonnecessary. There is "no logical fate hanging over" such individuals "that they should have possessed the properties we regard as important to them; they could have had careers completely different from their actual ones." What is true of particular "objects" and their "properties" is true of historical individuals: "an object could have had properties very different from its most striking actual properties, or from the properties we use to identify it."⁴

Man, then, is neither immersed entirely in socio-historical facticity nor in necessity. He is capable of transcendence towards the open contingency of the future, towards the possible. Insofar as individuals have real life-histories, there is a "dialectic of life" that is a temporal, historical process of becoming (*Vorden*). Hegel's description of a necessary sequence of stages or *Momente* in the overpowering historical dialectic seems to negate the value and meaning of subjective existence. The contingencies and possibilities of individual life seem to be swallowed in the jaws of Hegelian necessity. Reduced to its simplest terms, Kierkegaard argued that if man is free and responsible, then there must be real possibilities or potentialities both in man and in the indeterminate openness of the future. Possibility is the primordial ground of freedom and human possibilities are the foundation for human freedom.

Ironically, it is the Hegelian concept of necessity and its presumed relationship to possibility and actuality that provided

⁴ S. Kripke, "Naming and Necessity," in *Semantics of Natural Languages*, Dordrecht, 1972, p.289.

Kierkegaard with the philosophical ammunition with which to defend his own conception of possibility (and freedom) in individual historical becoming. In what is probably one of the most purely philosophical passages he wrote, Kierkegaard strikes at the heart of the Hegelian fortress. His argument against the doctrine of necessity may be summarized in the following way:

- (i) Coming into existence or coming into being is a change or 'movement.' If a "plan" or posited project comes into existence, then it must involve a "transition" from not existing in actuality to existing in actuality. This is a change not "in essence," but a change in being (an ontological change). That which changes cannot, in any absolute sense, not be. It must have a kind of being. On the other hand, what emerges in existence may also be understood as a kind of non-being. For, if it existed, in the full-blooded sense of the word, it would already be. Therefore, the modality of what comes into being is possibility. The possibility or the possible is paradoxical: it is not and it is. More precisely, it is "in between" non-being and being. The possible neither is (in the strict sense) nor is not (in the strict sense). The change or transition characterizing coming into existence is, then, a process involving a 'movement' from possibility to actuality.
- (ii) If coming into existence is a real, and not a chimerical, *change*, then "the necessary cannot be changed." Coming into being involves "suffering," undergoing something or, as this allusion to classical thought suggests, *pathos*. The necessary is beyond "suffering" or undergoing something insofar as it is not, as the possible is, subject to negation in becoming actual. If something is truly *necessary*, it cannot "not be." In the process of becoming actual the possible is negated, *qua* possible. Therefore, "everything which comes into existence proves precisely by coming into existence that it is not necessary, for the only thing which cannot come into existence is the necessary, because the necessary *is*."
- (iii) Hegel's claim that necessity is a synthesis of possibility and actuality is self-contradictory because (a) the necessary is a "determination of essence" not a "determination of being;" and because, (b) if possibility and actuality could be synthesized to become necessity, they would have

formed that which is precluded from coming into being at all. That is, "the necessary" or necessity. The necessary is neither the possible nor the actual; nor, *a fortiori*, is it a synthesis of both. Therefore, Hegel's conception of necessity as the synthesis of the possible and the actual is contradictory.

- (iv) Aristotle was correct in holding that if something is possible, it must also be non-possible. "The necessary" is an isolated concept because it cannot legitimately include either possibility or actuality. Actuality cannot emerge out of necessity. If it arises from possibility, it is *ipso facto* non-necessary. For, change occurs through a movement from the possible to the actual. Aristotle is in error when he assumes the principle that "everything necessary is possible." For, "In order to avoid having to assert contradictory and even self-contradictory predicates about the necessary, he helps himself out by two kinds of possibility." He ought to have seen that his initial principle is incorrect because "possibility cannot be predicated of the necessary."
- (v) *Conclusion*: The change or transition that is involved in coming into existence is a movement (in an ontological, not a putative logical, sense) from possibility to actuality. This change occurs in freedom. Nothing comes into being through necessity. For, "Nothing comes into existence by virtue of a logical ground, but only by a cause." Even the possibility of deducing consequences from a law of nature gives no evidence for the necessity of any coming into existence. Actual (empirical) events occur by virtue of "intervening causes," but they are not necessitated. The actual must be understood as at least possible and at most probable. Change, transition and becoming cannot occur according to necessity: they take place through a dynamic process, a movement from possibility to actuality.⁵

By inserting a wedge between necessity as a valid logical conception (even in the ostensible logic of contradiction of Hegel) or as a predicate of logical relationships and the possible, contingent realm of the actual, historical, temporal world of genuine change, Kierkegaard opens the way for his defense of his own "ontology" of

⁵ S. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans., D. Swenson and H. V. Hong, Princeton, N.J., 1962, pp.90-93.

human possibility. In Kierkegaard's view, the reflective individual has access to his own unique potentialities in self-consciousness. The sense of possibility or potentiality arises out of the clash between the recognitive of an "ideality" (a conceptual or imaginative possibility) and its opposed relation to actuality. I-consciousness emerges when an individual projects an ideal (being resolute in regard to one's life) and seeks to realize that ideal in his life. It is subjective concern that stimulates the sense of possibility in the individual. That is, the individual is not only capable of discovering what is possible in the empirical world, but he is also able to discover in himself (in his consciousness) a freedom for possibility, for choice, decision or resoluteness. The central characteristic of man is that, aside from his very real factual actuality (at any moment of his life), he is imbued with a "potentiality-for" (*kunnen*). This is the origin of his capacity to shape his life and character in the limited domain in which this is possible. Each reflective person's subjective capacity for "the ought" is his primary potentiality, a potentiality that is discoverable in concerned reflection, a reflection about what is a matter of vital concern or *interesse* for his personal life. Through critical self-knowledge in concerned consciousness the individual is thought to have access to the significant spiritual possibilities of the self. If the argument against Hegelian necessity has some validity, then this means that the individual becomes a self in terms of possibility and by virtue of repeated choices. In the "qualitative dialectic of life" the person shapes his character through freedom in the sense that he is morally indeterminate "in the beginning" and has ethical, as well as factual, potentialities that may or may not be brought to fruition in a lifetime. The individual, at that hypothetical point at which he becomes truly self-reflective, discovers a primordial potentiality in his existence. The qualitative change characterizing an individual's life are brought about by means of numerous transitions from possibility to actuality in time. In sum, then, Kierkegaard applies his analysis of the meaning of change to the becoming of the person and thereby proclaims the contingent nature of the acquisition of psycho-spiritual qualities.

The self is conceived of as a dynamic, moving synthesis of necessity and possibility. The term 'necessity' is used by Kierkegaard to refer to the causal factors that have shaped an individual independent of choice. In *Either/Or* an absolute choice of oneself is described as the means by which an individual illuminates the causal factors that have determined his being independent of his choices. Basically, the natural and/or empirical traits of the individual comprise what Kierkegaard calls the "necessity" in the self. A

searching self-knowledge is considered as the *sine qua non* for opening up the self for its own possibilities. Kierkegaard shows himself quite aware of the powerful influence of natural or empirical possibilities on an individual's life. But he insists that, apart from natural, empirical or "objective" possibilities, there are spiritual possibilities that man possesses that cannot be included under the rubric of "empirical possibility." It is in the activity of striving to realize such possibilities that the individual can bring about the development of an integral self or the intensification of personal existence.

When a person undergoes concerned consciousness (that is, experiences a deep and serious concern with the quality and direction of his life), he is at the point of projecting existential possibilities that guide a "subjective teleology." The individual seeks to realize the "ideal self" that he has a potentiality to realize. To be sure, in a lifetime an individual will realize (or have realized) a multiplicity of factual possibilities which are, for the most part, morally or spiritually neutral. This may be characterized as the world of *adiaphoric* choice or action. It is the intimate relationship between existential possibilities and the quality and nature of a person's spiritual life that distinguishes such possibilities from factual possibilities. Certainly, it is only a limited number of choices that are "absolute" in the sense that they relate to decisions concerning a life-project or significant, pervasive attitudes towards the world, other and towards oneself.

In *Either/Or* Kierkegaard isolates a fundamental absolute choice: the choice to live under the "determination" of the principle of good and evil or the refuse to do so. If we choose the former, we commit ourselves to living in the domain of "the ethical;" if we choose the latter, we have excluded judgments of good or evil from our life and have undermined the possibility of moral distinctions: in effect, we have chosen a nihilistic standpoint. If we assume, as Kierkegaard does, that a consistent moral nihilism is exceedingly rare (insofar as few, if any, human beings seriously or consistently abjure *all* moral distinctions), then it is by means of our existential possibilities (projected as goals for life) that we strive to become an authentic self. The primitive "potentiality-for" that is said to be 'present' in man's being is the basis for the potentiality for becoming a self. The dialectical tension of existence is revealed in the repeated act of relating the possibility of the "ideal self" to the actual, imperfect self. The central paradox of ethical existence is the repeated activity of striving to relate the ideal to the actual in one's own existence.

A persuasive feature of Kierkegaard's account of the disclosure of

distinctive individual possibilities is that the very act of raising the question of the possibility of becoming an authentic, subjective person entails the awareness of this possibility even if it is rejected. If, as is argued, absolute choice is individuating, then even a deliberate choice to lead an inauthentic life is self-negating insofar as one has *affirmed* one's individual freedom through this choice. There are three basic ways in which individuals seek to renounce their existential possibilities: they submerge themselves in "the crowd" and drift with the tide of the conventional goals and values of their time and place; they submit to what they take to be the iron law of necessity and disclaim responsibility for their lives; or, finally, they casually live in the world of imagination or fantasy in which they playfully entertain a multitude of pleasing or interesting imaginative possibilities. The existing individual who is a dynamic synthesis of necessity and possibility affirms actuality and seeks to illuminate the necessity in his being and free himself for possibilities the pursuit of which give continuity, history, direction and meaning to his existence.

Before turning to a discussion of the role of possibility in Heidegger's thought, we may pause to consider a curious and unintended analogy between Kierkegaard's notion of possibility and a contemporary analysis of possibility. It has recently been argued that the "ontology" of possibility is important, especially in regard to the implications of hypothetical assertions in relation to 'the existential status of the state of things' to which such assertions refer. It is held that possible, but unrealized, states of affairs do not exist in a strict sense. Rather, it is only the actual that exists. There is no mysterious world of unrealized possibilities. However, it is said, it is certainly the case that "unactualized possibilities can be conceived, entertained, mooted, hypothesized, assumed, etc." In this sense, possibilities may be said to 'exist' or 'subsist' insofar as they are "objects of certain intellectual processes." The existence of possibilities is restricted to the "intensional order" since they are "correlative objects of actual . . . thoughts," suppositions, assumptions, etc.⁶

⁶ N. Rescher, *A Theory of Possibility*, Oxford, 1975, pp.195-200. Cp. "In both the case of logical and empirical possibility we are concerned with the relationship between conceptual possibilities and an individual or group of individuals who entertain such possibilities [. . .] the notion of logical possibility is related to the conceptual structure of human reason. [. . .] In effect, then, there is no problem of the ontological 'status' of logical or empirical possibility since both are only in relation to a reasoning being. They exist only in relation to the thought or consciousness of some human being. [. . .] Future, possible events do not exist in a 'realm' of possibility, but have only relational being in relation to human thought and experience." George J. Stack, "Existence and Possibility," *Laval Théologique Philosophique*, (June, 1972), pp.167-168.

The lucid analysis of possibility summarized above is interesting because it is entirely consistent with Kierkegaard's thought on the matter even though it does not make any allusion to possible distinctions between subjective human possibilities and empirical possibilities. Granted that the context of the analysis does not provide for speculation on this latter issue, it independently reiterates Kierkegaard's general notion of possibility. For, in *Johannes Climacus* and *Concluding Postscript* it is maintained that the concept of possibility arises (phenomenologically) out of a consciousness of the act of relating the related of "ideality" (conceptual, linguistic 'objects') and immediate actuality. What is entertained as possible either as an objective (empirical) possibility or a subjective (individual) possibility is either a conceptual or an imaginary possibility. In *The Concept of Dread* the openness of the future is characterized—dramatically, but accurately—as "the nothingness of possibility." Translated into the cool language of the logician or the philosopher of science, Kierkegaard's expression states that there is no realm or world of the possible, that what is not yet, but is possible, does not 'exist.' The possible is, for Kierkegaard, the conceivable, the hypothetical, the assumptive. The possible 'exists' only as an object of consciousness in the mind of an individual. Even existential possibilities are only conceptual possibilities until they are realized in the actuality of the self. However, despite this symmetry between conceptual-imaginative possibility and existential possibility, there is a significant difference: the individual is profoundly interested in, or concerned with, those possibilities that he conceives of and strives to bring to fruition in his self-becoming. It is subjective concern that heightens the meaning that existential possibilities have for each individual. The outcome of Kierkegaard's evocative statements about possibility and those of a logical analysis of possibility is the same: there is no world of unrealized possibilities; possibilities 'exist' as objects of the reflective consciousness of man; and, finally, the issue of the ontology of possibility leads us to an implicit or explicit conception of the being of man, of the human capacity for conceiving or imagining "the possible." Paraphrasing what Sartre says of "nothingness" in *Being and Nothingness*, we may say that it is through man that possibility enters the world.

The conception of man as a being capable of disclosing unique possibilities in "lived-experience" is quite similar to Heidegger's description of the fundamental "potentiality-for" (*können*) that is the primitive foundation for man's "potentiality-for-being" (*Seinkönnen*). Heidegger's appropriation of Kierkegaard's original notion retains the basic assumption that human possibility is a unique

spiritual "power" (*po + esse* or "power to be") that is distinguishable from empirical possibilities as physical capacities and as possibilities to which man is subject as an entity in the world. In regard to the "being-possible" of *Dasein* Heidegger raises a question concerning this modality of 'being.' Is possibility something that man "has" or is it something that man "is." In *Being and Time* it is argued that each individual has already realized any number of "factual" possibilities. This is the case before an individual has attained self-consciousness or before he raises questions about his existence or about Being as such. As being-in-the-world, man is subject to a variety of contingent possibilities that may occur in the practical, empirical world in which *Dasein* is engaged in pragmatic matters of concern. It is clear that the conception of "factual possibilities" (*faktische Möglichkeiten*) is compatible with typical notions of empirical possibility. But in the case of Heidegger's account he emphasizes factual possibilities that are chosen in the everyday world of practical concern while only implying that there are, of course, empirical possibilities to which we are subject independent of choice.

In his description of a person's existential possibility Heidegger sees it as a primordial characteristic of *Dasein* that is "lived" rather than possessed. This pervasive trait of man, this clearly universal, ontological characteristic of man, is presented as the ontological condition for the possibility of the factual possibilities of the individual, as rooted in human *Existenz*. Being-possible is essential for man, the origin of man's being free for those possibilities that comprise his potentiality-for-becoming-a-self.

The claim that man "is" his possibility seems somewhat questionable. For, what exactly does it mean to say that a being such as man "is" its possibility? What seems to be intended in this way of discussing possibility is that man (as in Kierkegaard's thought) is essentially his "potentiality-for" in the sense that the possibility 'in' the being of man is the primitive origin of his freedom. In Kierkegaard's writings, of course, it is stressed that it is an actual, if imperfect, self which initiates and sustains movement towards the realization of distinctive spiritual possibilities. The most central possibility for man is the possibility of becoming a self. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* it is argued that man is an "intermediate being" who is "in between" conceptual-linguistic ideality and actuality. The reality of the individual is the point of dialectical interaction between the possible and the actual. What this seems to mean is that man is conceived of neither as a determined, completed actuality nor as a purely 'ideal' being. The implications of this interpretation of the self lead to the notion that all possibilities

lie within actuality (immediate, concrete being). This notion is related to Heidegger's phenomenology of man in the sense that this phenomenology begins with, and is "rooted" in facticity. Pure possibility is empty. If absolutely everything were only possible, if there were only possibility, nothing at all would be and the very notion of possibility would be negated. Possibility has meaning in relation to actual individuals in an actual world. In this sense, what seems to be suggested, first by Kierkegaard and then by Heidegger, is that man must be understood as a dynamic synthesis of facticity and possibility. Possibility is, in Kierkegaard's terms, "higher than actuality" in the important sense that possibility is the basis for freedom in an actually existing individual. Possibility is higher than actuality in an individual's life insofar as what we have already actually chosen or done, what we have become, is a *fait accompli*. But possibility entails freedom: it is the hope and openness of the individual. For both Kierkegaard and Heidegger, a pervasive assumption is made: man is imbued with a primordial capability, capacity, or possibility.

There is a sense in which Heidegger's way of describing human possibility is convincing. Certainly, it seems quite appropriate to aver that man does not "have" possibilities in the way in which physical objects may be said to have dispositional properties. Man understands himself directly in terms of possibilities once he has attained self-reflection or self-consciousness. These possibilities cannot, in any clear way, be classified as perceptible, intersubjectively verifiable attributes or properties insofar as they are possibilities of choice, decision or action. A unique trait of man is that he has direct access to his possibilities insofar as he "lives" them. Heidegger insists that man's actuality is defined by, or impregnated by, his potentialities in the sense that he is capable of disclosing or uncovering unrealized potentialities in his dynamic, projective existence. *Dasein* is, for the most part, what he *can* be. The logic of the concept of choice seems to entail the notion of alternative possibilities or unrealized possibilities.

The dynamic movement of human existence is towards the realization of possibilities that are discovered in reflective self-consciousness. This movement towards the potential self is by no means inevitable. It is, rather, a spiritual process that requires a willed, repetitious resoluteness. It involves an intensification of subjective individuation in the face of numerous temptations to renounce responsibility for oneself, to flee from the tension of existence and fall into irresolution, passivity or nihilistic indifference.

It would seem that neither a linguistic analysis of the meanings and

usages of 'possibility' or modal terms expressing possibility and an ontological analysis of the difference between human possibility and other modes of possibility nor an ontology of human possibility supports the assumption that all human possibility is reducible to empirical possibility. And if our knowledge of such a form of possibility is not in any obvious sense, derived from psychological or causal laws, then man may be said to have direct access to possibilities that are crucial for his existence and his self-understanding. A linguistic analysis of possibility, as well as an ontology of possibility, leads to the question of the nature of man's being.

If man is capable of discovering in self-reflection a primitive possibility, then man is free. For, a freedom for possibilities must itself be based upon a more elementary freedom or possibility. If an individual is truly capable of choice, then he must be capable of deciding to realize (or strive to realize) an unrealized possibility. Freedom and choice are grounded in possibility. A subjective teleology can be initiated. Thus, behavioristic or 'objectivistic' accounts of human action or behavior are only partially correct. They are accurate insofar as they focus upon behaviors that can be elicited independent of desire, choice, or resoluteness. Naturally, there are many human behaviors (or reactions) that occur independent of choice and are accounted for, or may be accounted for, in terms of responses to external stimuli. But man does not mechanically respond to external stimuli (except in specific physiological responses) nor does he discover spiritual possibilities that are the result of conditioned learning, reinforcement, etc. If the initiation of an action or a choice lies within the power of the individual, then a subjective teleology is possible. Even if we grant, as we must, that there are states of consciousness that manifest identifiable behavioral criteria, it is also the case that there are profound motivational aspects of human behavior that manifest no observable behavioral criteria and which, nonetheless, influence our behavior in significant ways. If we emphasize the factual or empirical possibilities of an individual, we will naturally be inclined to a form of behaviorism. However, both the language of possibility and the attempt to account for the emergence of possibility lead us to the notion that man does possess (or "live") distinctive possibilities that elude a purely empirical analysis.

The sense of subjective capacity or potentiality seems to accompany all of our significant choices or decisions. Descriptively, man's lived-experience is teleological, is directed towards the future, the possibles that are objects of choice. This sense of capacity is, for Kierkegaard, the source of a willed or intentional repetition that

gives direction and purpose to life in the face of temptations to boredom, despair, or indifference. In the broadest sense, the subjective possibility of man may be said to be the condition for the possibility of meaningful experience, thought, and action. It lies at the heart of the *conatus* that Spinoza (and Unamuno after him) identified as the will to persevere in existence. Even though a variety of psychological theories or methods assist us in illuminating the facticity of man or the psychic dimension of the self, it is, in the final analysis, to ourselves (as self-reflective persons) that we must turn if we would disclose those potentialities or possibilities that are unique spiritual possibilities that make an authentic existence possible. And it is in the interior of existential possibility that we will also find that freedom that makes choice and decision possible. If Kierkegaard is right in contending that "freedom means to be capable" or is "the capacity of being able to choose,"⁷ then it is at the heart of human possibility that freedom is brought to life.

Possibility and Value

If the previous analyses of the language of possibility and existential possibility have some validity, it would seem that there is a close relationship between distinctive human possibilities and a variety of intentional acts. Of such intentional acts, acts of valuation are clearly expressions of unique human possibilities. While both our factual and existential possibilities may be seen as 'objects' of valuation, the empirical possibilities to which we are subject are not brought about by intentional, valuation acts. Only *ex post facto* do we value or disvalue what has happened to us as purely empirical beings. Practical action, too, is guided by the projection of possibilities as values. However, spiritual or existential possibilities are central to our existence insofar as they express aspirational ideals or are motivational bases for *how* we choose to exist. When we project an "ideal self" or an "authentic self" as a goal for our personal existence, we are projecting significant personal values. If Kierkegaard and William James are right in claiming that we live towards the future, then a primary source of our personal values is our distinctive subjective possibilities. Although subjective possibility is not the source of *all* of our values, it is a precondition for the act of valuation. Valuation is an intentional act that is, for the most part, directed towards the future or the realm of possibility. This does not

⁷ Soren Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers*, eds. and trans., H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong, London, 1970, II, p.62.

mean that valuation is not also directed towards objects, events, persons or ideals in the past or towards phenomena presently apprehended. Appreciative valuations are often directed towards the "now" or to a memory that is prized or treasured. And it is also typically projected towards the past. One thinks of those who esteem "what has been," who value, say, the Hellenic age or the medieval world. However, in regard to the becoming of the individual, it is generally the case that valuation is primarily directed towards future possibilities. Most collective systems of values are projections into the "world" of the future or the possible. If, then, we are seeking the most fundamental origin of valuation, the condition for its possibility, it is plausible to seek it in man's basic capability, capacity or possibility. The discovery of possibility in the self is the basis for a commitment to a specific value or a general system of values through a choice or a decisiveness that is itself rooted in our "potentiality-for," our existential possibility.

Valuation presupposes possibility. In individual life we project, posit, or postulate possibilities as values to be sought. In order that valuation or a value-orientation be possible, there must be possibility in the world and in the self. If everything in the universe is dominated by necessity, if everything occurs as it *must* occur, then, in a strict sense, there are neither possibilities nor real valuations. In a realm of necessity values would be superfluous and impotent. If the subjective or collective pursuit of values is meaningful, there must be real alternatives, variations or options. What is intended as an object of valuation must be contingent. What is true of collective social values, religious systems of value and all forms of creative or intellectual values is true *a fortiori* of personal or subjective values: they must have reference to contingent possibilities or ideal possibilities. In describing an individual's striving for self-realization we discover an interrelationship among possibility, freedom, purpose, and value.

It is in Dilthey's thought that we see precisely this attempt to relate "categories of life" to descriptions of individual development. Power or *Kraft* is said to be discoverable in man's lived-experience and related to purpose, possibility, and value. Man finds himself, Dilthey averred, free and active in his relation to the future and "feels" himself confronted by unlimited possibilities.⁸ Dilthey's notion of "power" as a basic category of life is consonant with both

⁸ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Stuttgart, 1948, VII, pp.193-194.

Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's conception of a fundamental "potentiality-for" in the being of man. In Dilthey's thought, the unified, psychophysical individual is able to discover in self-reflection "powers" that he projects as possibilities. These possibilities are values that are goals for purposive action. Dilthey properly emphasizes the "feeling" of freedom and potency that we experience when we make choices that are significant for the direction, purpose and meaning of our life. In his phenomenology of man's lived-experience Dilthey has insightfully seen the interaction of "power" (or potentiality), "purpose," "possibility," "value," and freedom. There is no doubt that there is a close conceptual and existential relationship between possibility and value.

It has been maintained that it is in the future that the essential character of value is manifested, that the essence of value is to create possibilities for ourselves and to seek to realize them.⁹ To be sure, this creation is not *ex nihilo* insofar as it is an act traceable to the existential possibilities of an actual individual who is concerned with the creation of meanings and purposes for himself and perhaps for others as well. Even though this cognitive-imaginative power to create possibilities for ourselves is also the ground of destructive, irrational, or negative values, it is a central expression of human freedom. The difference between a negative and a constructive use of freedom or possibility is the gradual, inevitable loss of the spiritual dimension of the self, the disintegration of the critical, self-reflective person in the abuse of freedom. It is man's subjective possibility that is the source of that freedom which may lead to the development of an authentic self or to the self-negation of an integrated self. It was Kierkegaard who stressed that the paradox of human freedom is that it is through freedom that we may lose the capacity for choice, the capacity for freedom itself. Repeated disastrous choices may lead an individual to the point at which "even the capacity of being able (*kunnen*) to choose" is lost.¹⁰

There is suggested by Kierkegaard and later elaborated by Heidegger a distinction between factual or "factual" possibilities and authentic possibilities that is questionable in the context of value considerations. Although the apparent point of the distinction was to stress the intrinsic value of the inward transformation of the self, it leads to ambiguities when attention is focused upon the expression of subjective, spiritual values in concrete life. Surely, it is possible that at least some subjective possibilities are expressed through

⁹ Louis Lavelle, *Traité des Valeurs*, Paris, 1951, pp.349, 386.

¹⁰ Soren Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers*, II, p.73.

factual possibilities that one seeks to realize. In the creative, constructive activities of man there is often a factual objectification of subjectively apprehended possibilities posited as values. An individual sincerely dedicated to aiding others, to the creation of beauty, to the reform of civil laws, or to any socially relevant value may also be seeking to realize personal, subjective values that shape a life-project. The radical separation of an authentic subjective existence from a putative inauthentic public existence in what Heidegger calls the "we-world" seems to generate a kind of moral schizophrenia. Kierkegaard's personal life-project to lead men, by indirection, from nihilism or aestheticism to what he first called "an authentic ethical existence" and to a rejuvenated life of faith would have died with him if he never took up the pen. It was through the medium of language, by means of the printed word, that he transmitted his existential communication. By doing so, he sought to realize his own unique project. But, at the same time, he realized factual possibilities in a world of fact, in a public, social world. A person's factual possibilities often reflect and express the inner self insofar as they proceed from self-reflection and self-understanding. They are projected as values to be realized through choice in a world in which their negation is always possible.

Even if the inwardness of the individual is untouched by the world, factual possibilities (that may express spiritual possibilities as well) do not depend only on the sustained project of the individual, but they depend upon a variety of empirical (natural, social, or historical) factors over which one has little or no control. If one seeks to express a subjective possibility in the world, individual control is conditioned by a network of causal influences that may distort or undermine an original intention. Since our lives are intertwined with the lives of others, the project of becoming a self should have some direct or indirect bearing on the way we relate to, and treat, others. Despite the difficulties in expressing subjective, personal projects in the world, it is not an impossible enterprise even in a world of imperfect individuals and institutions. In spite of the dangers of the distortions and falsifications of social existence, it is possible to realize some personal values in the world and to be with others in such a way as to respect the personal reality of others or, as Kierkegaard expressed it, to let others be in their subjective actuality. Kierkegaard's paradigm of the existential thinker, the subjectively existing ethical individual—Socrates—deeply affected the world in which he sought to achieve self-knowledge, self-mastery, and rational self-control, and illustrated in his life the danger of seeking to express authentic existence in the public world or the *polis*.

Even though one of Heidegger's apparent intentions in *Being and Time* was to synthesize fact and value in a fundamental ontology of human existence, it is precisely the relationship between value and fact that is hidden in his phenomenological ontology. It was in his early *Habilitationsschrift* that he had suggested that a metaphysical analysis of human consciousness would bring about a unification of fact and value if the common basis of both could be preserved in a fundamental dimension of Being.¹¹ *Being and Time* was to have overcome the bifurcation of fact and value by incorporating facticity and valuation in an existential phenomenology of *Dasein*. Unfortunately, the treatment of values in this extensive phenomenology of the modes of being of man is unsatisfactory and ambiguous even though the account of facticity is powerful.

In the context of criticizing the Cartesian conception of the world as an expression of a "thing-ontology," Heidegger asks, "What, then, does the Being of values or their validity . . . really amount to ontologically?"¹² In subsequent analyses this question is never answered in any detail. Furthermore, an impossible relationship between Kant's "Metaphysics of morals" and Heidegger's avowed non-ethical existential phenomenology of man is suggested. It is said that "even the theory of value, whether it is regarded formally [Kant] or materially [Scheler], has as its unexpressed ontological presupposition a 'metaphysic of morals' —that is, an ontology of *Dasein* and existence."¹³ It is suggested, then, that the "validity" (*geltung*) of a theory of value or of "the Being of values" is derived from an implicit or explicit conception of the being of man and existence. On the other hand, the suggestion that a theory of the being of man and existence is equivalent to a "metaphysic of morals" (clearly, a Kantian project) undercuts two basic claims that are made about *Being and Time*: that it is not an ethics or a moral philosophy and that it is an ontology derived from a phenomenology that has the express function of overcoming metaphysics. What seems to have happened here is that valuation has been interwoven into a fundamental ontology of man in such a way that the separation of fact and value is avoided. Thus, even though the discussion of values in *Being and Time* is very brief, there is a sense in which the elucidation of meaning (*Sinn*) in human existence does preserve what

¹¹ M. Heidegger, *Die Kategorien und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus*, Tübingen, 1916, pp.235-236.

¹² M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans., J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, New York, 1962, p.132.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.339.

others would characterize as valuations or value-orientations. If we grant to Heidegger that valuation is not a process by which man assigns value to various phenomena, it is nonetheless suggested that valuation is an intentional process by which man expresses various aspects of his being-possible that are inseparable from the ontological condition of man. By implication, Heidegger describes the centrality of human possibility in such a way that the ontological possibility of becoming an authentic self is the condition for the possibility of valuation. Insofar as *Dasein* is the referential center of meaning, it is plausible to assume that *Dasein* discloses values as meanings in his own existence and in the world. The point that Heidegger wanted to make is that values are not labels that man arbitrarily attaches to phenomena, but are rooted in the ontological condition of man in the world. Values are neither arbitrarily selected or imposed on things nor are they *a priori* ideals that are forged by pure reason: values emerge out of human possibility, out of the lived-experience of man. In regard to the purposive pursuit of practical values in the social world, it is the case that these possibilities are rooted in a distinctive human possibility. Even though the factual dimension of human existence (which is extensive) subjects the individual to a number of possibilities that will be realized independent of his choice, it is in this same dimension of being that purposive agents seek to realize possible values that have emerges "from within," from the perspective of the lived-experience of the individual. In this sense, life itself encounters "an infinite multiplicity of positive and negative existential values."¹⁴ The purposes and meanings of individuals shape life, the factual world, and history. Insofar as the individual is animated by values and is an effective agent in the world, he relates himself to pragmatic values in a purposive manner. Practical or pragmatic values are sought for the sake of something and are traceable to the existential possibility of man. It is for this reason that Dilthey maintained that the ultimate origin of value (and valuation) is the reflective individual engaged in the life-process and that the individual is an *intrinsic value*.¹⁵ And it may be said that the basis for the intrinsic value of the individual is the freedom for possibility that is 'present' in the individual. In Dilthey's philosophical anthropology we find a central emphasis upon the experiential and conceptual interrelationship among "power" or potentiality, possibility, purpose, meaning, and value. Heidegger seems to separate

¹⁴ W. Dilthey, *op. cit.*, pp.201-202.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.255-256.

authentic, existential possibilities from factual, practical, or pragmatic possibilities in such a way as to restrict, if not prohibit, the expression of spiritual possibilities (or values) in the "world of the they" or the realm of *das Man*. Dilthey, on the other hand, wants to preserve the positive values of a culture or civilization as the "spiritual expressions of life" that are possibilities realized in the socio-historical order.

In an obscure way Heidegger seems to incorporate Dilthey's notion of the intrinsic value of the individual in the sense that the capacity to "win oneself," as well as a self-affirmation of the 'value' of one's life in authentic states of being, suggests that the authentic, subjective existence of *Dasein* has an intrinsic value that nothing can subvert. Despite the fact that he prefers not to speak of 'values' or 'intrinsic values,' Heidegger certainly presents his phenomenological description of an authentically existing *Dasein* as if it depicted the realization of the intrinsic value of human existence 'lived' between birth and death. The characterization of *Dasein* as projecting himself towards the openness and uncertainty of the future implies that the spiritual movement of *Dasein* is towards the realization of possibilities as values. And the central 'value' in the account of the becoming of man is virtually identical with that of Kierkegaard's "ethically existing subject" (in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*): striving to bring to fruition one's potentiality for becoming a self.¹⁶

The ontological foundation for personal values is the same as that for conceptual or imaginative possibilities: the possibility 'in' the being of man or man's "being-possible." If man were incapable of disclosing his own existential possibilities and projecting them as values, he would have no real, personal future. He would, that is, resemble a physical, natural, or empirical entity that is subject to a multiplicity of possibilities. If an individual intends to live his possibilities or project them as goals to be attained, then he can be said to value something (possibilities, goals) *in futuro*. The intentional act of positing existential possibilities as values that guide the direction of one's life seems to arise out of the very sense of subjective potentiality we have described. For the most part, individuals who project possibilities as values are projecting what Scheler called *Personwerte*. The projects that animate individuals are closely related to a person's spiritual development and cannot be considered merely

¹⁶ The symmetry between Kierkegaard's impressionistic portrait of the "ethically existing subject" and Heidegger's more elaborate description of an authentically existing *Dasein* is a subsidiary theme of a recent work of my own. Cf. George J. Stack, *Kierkegaard's Existential Ethics*, University, Alabama, 1977.

as contingent possibilities that one might casually want to realize. They are possibilities that encompass fundamental values of the self. The existential possibilities that Kierkegaard alludes to are not simply any kind of factual possibility. They are possibilities the realization of which would lead to a transformation of the self, to a honing of integrity, resolve, continuity, and psycho-spiritual depth. What is true of Kierkegaard's injunction to "become subjective" is also true of Heidegger's authentic individual who strives, through repetitious resoluteness, to realize his potentiality for becoming a self. The disclosure of subjective human possibilities does not entail normative tendencies. If it did, it would make *choice* irrelevant. However, the distinctive human potentialities that may be posited as values for one's life include, if Kierkegaard and Heidegger are right, individuating potentialities—choice, decisiveness, resoluteness, anxiety in the face of the possible or the possibility of death, choosing to have a conscience, taking up responsibility for one's life, etc.—that intensify subjectivity and promote moral self-consciousness. The most important of the "person-values" identified by Scheler are those that pertain to the person himself insofar as *Selbstwerte* or "self-values" are considered to be independent of other values. Personal values are distinguished from other values in the way in which existential possibilities are distinguished from factual possibilities to which a person is subject; they are distinguished from other values simply by virtue of the fact that they must be posited or realized by one's own autonomous agency.

In turning to Sartre's analyses of possibility and value, we find further support for the derivation of valuation from human possibility. Certainly, there is some validity to the claim that "the self is value" in the sense that it is "consubstantial" with consciousness as the "lack" that is its possibility.¹⁷ However, such a notion seems to obscure the positing of subjectively apprehended possibilities as values. For, it is one thing to suggest that possibility is the origin of value and valuation and quite another to claim that because the self is consubstantial with the possibility of consciousness it is "value." Against this view of Sartre's, it has been contended that human possibility or distinctive human potentiality is the ground of valuation, but it is not itself value. The generalization in Sartre's phenomenology that value (presumably including the value of the "self" that can be created through choice) is simultaneously present with the "nonthetic [or non-positional] translucidity of consciou-

¹⁷ J. P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. H. Barnes, New York, 1956, pp.93-94.

ness" is understandable as a basic pre-reflective sense of value that is experienced as a diffuse "feeling" of possibility. If there truly is such a pre-reflective sense or feeling of value, it would seem to be a vague value-feeling that lacks any meaningful content. In addition, to hold that "my possibility can exist as *my* possibility only if it is my consciousness which escapes itself toward my possibility"¹⁸ suggests a process involving a passive yielding to possibility through a "movement" of consciousness that clearly does not refer to "my" possibility. The profundity of Sartre's phenomenology of consciousness or the *pour-soi* is found in his description of the symmetry (not to say 'identity') amongst consciousness, freedom, transcendence, and possibility. But the difficulty he encounters is in relating abstract freedom, abstract transcendence, and abstract possibility to the concrete existence of the individual as "being-in-the-world." For this reason, Sartre's phenomenology of consciousness does not clarify the nature of valuation. It is, rather, in his analyses of concrete freedom that we discover a more convincing account of man's projection of ends as possibilities to be realized. It is said that as soon as consciousness attempts to know what it is, it "posits that it can be other than it is."¹⁹ If we circle around Sartre's unusual conception of consciousness as "nothingness," we can understand him to be saying that a self-reflective individual discloses possibility in consciousness, as well as projects that may be posited as values to be sought. If we turn our attention solely to the description of consciousness as "no-thing," we see not an individuated consciousness, but an impersonal consciousness that, to use Sartre's colorful language, "secretes" possibility. Existential possibilities would be the intentional "objects" of reflective consciousness and would provide the "values" that serve as projects to be realized in concrete action. Certainly, it is not inconsistent with Sartre's thought to say that the individual becomes a self in the process of seeking to realize (and realizing) series of projects that are valuations. Man "makes himself" to the extent that he expresses his freedom (grounded in an unconditioned "consciousness) in choices of posited value-possibilities. But it is only as the discoverer of personal value-possibilities that the self may be said to be (not, as Sartre claims, "value") the positing agent who projects values as goals to be attained.

There is a confluence of existential thought in regard to the view that human possibility is the origin of freedom and value. Kierkegaard sees man's fundamental potentiality-for as rooted in the being

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.85.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.480.

of man and Heidegger sees man's potentiality-for as uncovered by man's self-reflective understanding. Finally, Sartre derives human possibility from a pure, unconditioned consciousness that illuminates all phenomena by virtue of its powers of negating and positing. However, even in his account of human reality, it is in the actualization of possibilities "in the world" through the exercise of concrete freedom that human possibility and human values are paradigmatically revealed. All of these interpretations of the basis, nature and origin of human possibility point to the general notion that the reflective consciousness of, as well as the experience of, possibility, freedom, and value is an interrelated process.

The self-reflective or experiential grasp of subjective, existential possibilities is the primary source of the act of valuation and of those person-values that seem to suffuse other values. This emphasis upon person-values does not preclude the projecting of impersonal values, collective values or the appreciative valuation of individuals, events, achievements, institutions, or aesthetic objects that may not be clearly or directly related to an individual's personal development. However, there is a sense in which *Personwerte* do play a pivotal role in the positing of other values even if it may not be the case that personal values are apprehended by virtue of *geistiges Fühlen* or "spiritual feelings."²⁰ Rather, such values may be discovered through reflection upon existential possibilities and may be intentionally projected as goals that the psychophysical individual seeks to attain. Perhaps, as we have argued, it is this capacity to disclose and identify ontologically distinctive subjective possibilities that is the discovery of a freedom for possibility and the source of the creation of personal values.

State University of New York at Brockport.

²⁰ Max Scheler, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bern, 1954, II, p.128. For a discussion of *Personwerte* see: *Ibid.*, pp.116-120.