

Only Love Has a Future

Presentation in Germering, Germany
Bert Hellinger
January 20, 2005
Translated by Tabea Clemens

On a personal note – Bert Hellinger

I wish to extend a warm welcome to you this evening. Tonight's topic is '**Only Love Has a Future**'. Before I get started on the actual subject matter, I would like to say a few things on a personal note. I have never done this before. It is the first time I am doing it in this setting. However, the current situation demands that I share a few things about myself.

The Past

The first part concerns my past. I witnessed Nazism firsthand from start to finish. Therefore, I am one of the few contemporary witnesses that are still alive today. I know what I am talking about. I recall clearly how my father returned from work one evening and as he was walking through the door he said to my mother: 'Hitler was appointed Chancellor of the Reich.' He was very troubled. He had absolutely no idea what that would mean for us. Soon after, we experienced firsthand what it meant. One Sunday, we decided to take a trip to The Bergisches Land – a mountain range near Cologne where we lived at the time. We attended early mass and were waiting for the tram after leaving church. That is when a brownshirt from the Nazi Storm Troopers (SA) approached my father and made a comment. My father made a comment in return. At that the SA man shouted at my father and wanted to arrest him. The tram arrived at that very moment. The conductor immediately closed the door after we had boarded the tram and departed. The SA man, however, mounted his bicycle and followed the tram shouting and yelling all the while. The tram conductor skipped the next few stations until we had lost the SA man. The passengers applauded him. In Cologne, that was still possible at the time which was not the case later. I was seven years old.

When I was ten years old, I moved to a Catholic boarding school in Lohr a. Main, Bavaria but attended the municipal high school for secondary education in town. A brief story may illustrate what kind of institution the boarding school was: Following the annexation of Austria into the German Third Reich a poll was conducted. Apparently, a few of the Fathers in the boarding school as well as a few Sisters who worked in the kitchen had voted 'No'. It turned out that it wasn't a secret ballot and that the voting slips had been intercepted. That night, there was a big torchlight parade organized by the SA. Afterwards, one group of SA-men stopped in front of the boarding school and scrawled slogans in big lettering on the wall that read: 'This is a house where traitors live.' and 'We voted 'No'.' They then smashed about 200 windows including the ones of the dormitory where we were sleeping. Two of the Fathers were taken into protective custody the next morning, and we left for school holidays.

In 1941, the boarding school was closed, and I joined my parents in Kassel, Hesse where they had relocated in the meantime. In Kassel, I joined a small group that was part of the Catholic youth movement which had been banned several years prior. It was apparent that we were being kept under surveillance by the Gestapo – the secret state police. My entire class was drafted near the end of year 7. Initially as laborers and then into the armed forces – the Wehrmacht. One night – it was in the very beginning during Labor Service – one of the commanders walked through the door and headed straight towards me. He started to engage me in a conversation about the German philosophers Nietzsche and Hegel. Me as a 17-year-old – I was 17 at the time – knew very little about them of course. I did, however, know something. During our conversation he stated: ‘Hegel foresaw today’s nation.’ I replied: ‘As far as I know, Hegel detested the thought of a nation.’ Suddenly, he burst out: ‘*You* detest the nation.’ It was then that I realized: ‘This is an interrogation, and he is a Gestapo officer.’

A year later, while I was stationed in France as part of the Wehrmacht our class was sent the school leaving certificates. We had been exempted from finishing the final year of school as we were serving in the armed forces. However, they requested a certificate of good conduct issued by the Labor Service. I was denied the school leaving certificate because my certificate of good conduct stated: ‘**He is a potential social parasite.**’ Can you comprehend what it means to be declared a public enemy during those times? It meant: ‘I was considered fair game.’

What I experience at times today reminds me of that dreadful situation back then which is most unfortunate.

When my mother learned about the issue with the school leaving certificate she went to the principal of the school and said: ‘My son is a soldier in the Wehrmacht. He is risking his life and you deny him his certificate?’ The principal felt ashamed and handed her my school leaving certificate. My mother had fought like a lion. I was stationed on the Western front on active service then – in combat mission. Next to me, many comrades were killed or gravely wounded. I barely escaped death myself for instance when we had to walk through a minefield because there was no other alternative. I was taken prisoner by the American troops just before reaching Aachen in North Rhine-Westphalia. I was interned in a POW camp in Charleroi, Belgium. There were 1600 prisoners. We worked ten hours daily in an enormous supply deposit run by the American troops. To punish German soldiers, we were only given half of the calorie intake necessary for the work we carried out by order of Eisenhower. Some of us dared to escape. They were often caught and immediately executed by Firing Squad. I attempted to escape after a year had passed and succeeded. I was finally free just before turning 20 years old. My brother on the other hand was classified as missing in action (MIA). I was no longer in danger because Germany had already lost the war. I would not have been safe otherwise.

Many dare to call me a Nazi and place me in the same category without having experienced something similar. They did not have to face a totalitarian system at the risk of one’s life. Still, they dare to verbally attack and vilify me.

Present day

I would like to move on to the present day. Why am I being slandered with malicious and spiteful attacks against my person that are fueled by a will to annihilate? Well, the main allegation is that I acknowledge that the perpetrators are human beings just like me – this is the major offense. How did I adopt such a stance? Firstly, I aim to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. He sat with sinners at the table. Some took offense to that. He repealed the differentiation between good and evil. For example, by saying: ‘Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.’ This is proper love that excludes no one. This is the kind of love that has a future. And it is about this love that I wish to speak about today.

A second point mattered to me. Through my work I observed that there is a deep connection between perpetrator and victim. The first time I realized that was during a workshop in Bern, Switzerland. We had set up a constellation for a man and his family. The man then said: ‘I need to add something: I am Jewish but no member of my family died. We lived in Switzerland.’ But his mother committed suicide and he himself was suicidal too. It was apparent that deep down in their souls both he and his mother were being one with the Jewish victims. I proceeded to set up seven representatives for the murdered Jews and behind them at a two meter distance seven representatives for their murderers. I then asked the representatives for the victims to turn around and face the representatives for the murderers. I did not intervene from that moment onwards. It resulted in a movement emerging from deep within the soul between perpetrator and victim. The perpetrators were overwhelmed with enormous pain. Recognizing their pain, the victims in turn extended their hands and embraced the perpetrators. One of the perpetrators said: ‘Well, there is just one of them here. There are hundreds more who I need to face.’ Suddenly, we could see clearly how both perpetrator and victim were being one deep down connected through a profound love. How is that possible? Both perpetrator and victim could see that they were at the mercy of a higher power that was behind them. One of the perpetrators said: ‘I feel like I am a finger of a mighty hand that belongs to a mighty power and I am completely at its mercy.’ This was my first experience of that nature. It was from that moment on that I could no longer oppose perpetrators and view them as being different or classify them as monsters. As if they were not being driven by a different power behind them as well.

At this point, I would like to speak about the situation in Germany since I was a witness to it. With few exceptions, the entire nation was caught up in a massive movement and followed Hitler. Not because he ensnared them – because he himself was part of a big movement. After the war once all the dreadful crimes were brought to light, many did not want to acknowledge that they themselves had been a part of it. They placed blame on a few individual perpetrators and retreated. Mentally, they even allied themselves with resistance fighters. Even now they often act as if they are indeed resistance fighters and act aggressively against those they consider to be fascists. In doing so, they often behave just like the Nazi perpetrators did: Arrogant and prepared to annihilate anyone with opposing views.

After realizing that victims and perpetrators are drawn to one another, I was able to serve peace in many countries. Needless to say, first of all in Israel. I was invited three times to workshops in Israel and I followed the exact same process I described earlier. I had the victims and perpetrators face each other. It was as clear as it was the last time: They had to approach one another and simply could not avoid it. There was a woman e.g. who said: 'My father was murdered by an Arab.' I chose a representative for her father and one representative for his murderer. The murderer was afraid. All of a sudden, the father reached out and offered his hand for him to take. Both took a step towards one another and embraced each other. Then the father dropped to the floor like a dead man and the Arab, the murderer, laid down beside him. They reconciled in death.

One of the most tremendous experiences I made during these constellations: Not only are the dead – the dead victims and the dead perpetrators – *able* to find common ground but they *want* to. Unless their descendants carry what belongs to the dead and want to repeat the whole drama – thereby hindering reconciliation. This did not apply to Israel only, I experienced the same in Turkey in the conflict between the Turks and Armenians. It was identical in Japan when I grouped the perpetrators and victims of one side together to face the perpetrators and the victims of the other side. If you make space for the movement of the soul you can sense and see that the soul in its depth longs for reconciliation. The soul wants to connect what was once disconnected.

What objections might there be? The presumption of a clear conscience. All these heinous acts, all these attacks were committed by humans after all who believed their conscience was clear and thought they were innocent. They believed their clear conscience would give them the right to attack and even annihilate others. And we can see that all major conflicts derive their power from a clear conscience. The destructiveness of one party opposing another stems from a clear conscience. You see, both have a different conscience – but each a clear one.

I served peace in many countries that way. The same movement happened in Spain e.g. in the Basque Conflict. The Basque who constellated was totally open for reconciliation. The following day, however, he was slipped a note with a warning and a death threat. Why? Because he was loving and he wanted to overcome separation.

I experienced something similar in Spain regarding the civil wars and the descendants of the civil war parties. Subliminally, the conflict continues and many are still waiting today that there finally may be peace. It was the same principle in many other countries. It gives me strength to continue on my path despite the accusations against me.

Okay, this concludes my personal matter. I am going to continue with today's topic as previously indicated. But perhaps I will read out a short text first to set the tone and to show what it means to truly love and which form of love has a future. I wrote this text recently. It is called:

Everything

Everything can only be everything because it is connected to everything. That is why anything is connected to everything.

Therefore, nothing can be separate.

It is only separate because it is connected to everything, because in it everything else is also present. That is why I am everything simultaneously. Everything cannot be without me and I not without everything.

What does it mean for the way I live, the way I feel, the way I am?

In every human, I see all humans and in doing so I see myself in them as well. I sense within me all other humans too, everyone for who they are. With every single human I meet, I meet all humans and in them myself.

So how could I reject something in them without rejecting myself in them? How could I find delight in them without finding delight in myself in them? How could I wish somebody well without wishing myself and all other humans well at the same time? How could I love myself without loving all other humans?

Those who see everyone in everyone also see themselves in them, meet themselves in them and find themselves in everyone also. Consequently, those who harm others harm themselves also. Those who hurt others hurt themselves also. Those who encourage others encourage themselves also. Those who withhold from others withhold from themselves also and those who diminish others diminish themselves also.

Those who truly love others love everyone. Therefore, benevolence is the love for it all simultaneously including the love for oneself. It is pure love and fulfilled love because this love encompasses all in everything – especially oneself.