Heretical Essays

IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

JAN PATOČKA

Translated by Erazim Kohák

Edited by James Dodd

With Paul Ricoeur's Preface to the French Edition

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Paul Ricoeur
Preface to the French Edition of Jan Patočka's Heretical Essays[1]

The French-speaking public knows little of Jan Patočka except as a name: he is renowned as the Czech philosopher, student of Husserl and Heidegger, long forbidden to teach and to publish, who was thrust onto the public stage when the signatories of Charta 77 designated him as their spokesman, and who died at the hands of the police after a series of forced interrogations.[2] Yet who is familiar with Patočka as philosopher? Perhaps some readers know of him as one of the most knowledgeable students of the thought of Comenius, a founder of the philosophy of education in the Renaissance. Undoubtedly, others have read his work published by Nijhoff in the *Phaenomenologica* series, *Le monde naturel*,[3] and will discover here in these essays an unexpected development of this academic work. Yet who, outside of the circle of his numerous and fervent students in Prague, students that one can find in all academic disciplines and all the intellectual horizons outside of the university, knows that Patočka was a teacher of the stature of a Merleau-Ponty? The *Heretical Essays* will without a doubt persuade everyone. If I evoke here the memory of Merleau-Ponty, it is because it appears to me that, in the works of the successors of Husserl and Heidegger, the *Heretical Essays* occupies the same place as the *The Visible and the Invisible;* namely, by showing a path that

stays faithful to as well as diverges from the two standard versions of phenomenology. Beyond that, these essays, like the posthumously published writings of Merleau-Ponty, have that dense beauty of certain figures of Rembrandt, emerging out of the vibrant obscurity of the background. Readers are unable to pull themselves away from the sense of grandeur even when their progression is retarded by a certain impenetrability and the nonlinear character of the presentation.

It is not difficult to access those pages, very original and at times intriguing, which trace the quasi-simultaneous origin in western Europe of *politics*, *philosophy*, and *history*. The integrated destiny of these three dimensions of European humanity in effect constitutes the most apparent thread running through the thicket of this text. Here one again encounters that tone of Hannah Arendt's in *The Human Condition* and *The Origins of Totalitarianism*; more than the same tone, a common thematic: namely, that politics is always of another order than economic management or the projection of humans in work; that the end of politics is nothing other than life for the sake of freedom, not life for the sake of survival or even for well being; that political humans are as such historical beings in that, in the final analysis, history is witness to the realization of freedom in a public space opened by freedom for freedom; finally, that philosophy is free thought applied to the conditions of the possibility of politics and history, as we have known it since Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*.

As long as readers hold fast to this golden thread of the underlying unity that joins together politics, history, and philosophy, they do not feel at a loss. They are content in having discovered a very original development of the work of Arendt with regard to the destiny of Europe since the Greek *polis* and the *imperium* of Rome, and above all with regard to the suicide of Europe in the two great world wars. Yet when they reach the strange, frankly shocking passages about the dominance of war, of darkness and the demonic at the very heart of the most rational projects of the promotion of peace, likened in this occasion to the power of the day, readers feel

transported into a sphere alien to the still very Aristotelian plea of Arendt for a free democracy. They find themselves suddenly placed in another horizon of thought, brought about by Patočka's bold reading of contemporary political reality in terms of the Night and the rehabilitation of Heraclitus' dictum "*Polemos* is the father of all . . ." Here the readers come upon the second lecture, more radical than one which would limit itself to tranquilly circumscribing the concepts of politics, history, and philosophy, looking for correlations between them. This second lecture brings to the fore the fundamental theme of the preceding one: namely, the emergence of history out of the *prehistorical.* As before, it has to do with the destiny of the triumvirate of politics, history, and philosophy; yet this emergence is now seen from the perspective of a unifying theme that is incomparably more difficult to grasp, that of the *problematic* character of historical humanity as opposed to the naive, absolute certitude of the humanity of prehistory. In tracing the theme of the three dimensions of European humanity back to the more intractable theme of the problematic character constitutive of historical humanity, the Husserlian and Heideggerean origin of these essays becomes evident; also, one can recognize wherein lies Patočka's heresy, a point of rupture not only with vulgar Marxism—that is too obvious—but, more decisively and dramatically, with the views of Husserl and Heidegger about history.

In fact the question of the prehistorical condition of humanity is closely related to the attempt to restitute the natural world that is present in both of the classical versions of phenomenology. The heresy lies precisely in the new definition of the natural world as the world of prehistory, which in turn is a consequence of the characterization of history as problematic.

Take up the question again from the other extreme: the question of the natural world. It is precisely with this question that the *Heretical Essays* begin, though it is not clear to the readers why they should follow the author into a discussion little known outside of phenomenological circles.

The natural world is not—as stressed from the first page on—that which science calls nature, that is, the aggregate of

objects accessible to empirical science; nor is it that which positivist materialism takes to be an absolute outside which, in one way or another, is mirrored in the interiority of thought. In this rapid exposition that begins the first essay Patočka is still following his teacher Husserl, though only for the moment. For Husserl, the natural world is prescientific, not prehistorical; it is the world of life, lost by objectification, a world which we would be able to recover, or at least aim at, by means of a regressive, questioning method, like the one practiced by the founder of phenomenology in his final work, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Thus the natural world remains a question of theoretical reason. This is why Husserl "never reached humans in the concrete phenomena of work, production, action, and creation."[4] Worse, Husserl, again in the *Crisis*, was incapable of overcoming the idealism of the *Cartesian Meditations*, continuing to make consciousness, now indefinitely multiplied by the play of intersubjectivity, the point of access to prescientific life. As a consequence, the philosopher who turns towards the constitutive phenomena of the world of life reduces himself or herself to the vision of a disinterested subject.

With this critique of Husserlian idealism Patočka is clearly in agreement with Heidegger. With Heidegger, he is convinced that it is the human being as a whole, in his capacities of knowledge, action, and sentiment, that is open to the world. More fundamentally, this *being-open* to the world is not a psychological or mental phenomenon but is ontologically constituted prior to our consciousness of the world. The meaning of phenomenology itself is thereby fundamentally altered: the phenomenon to which we are open in being-in-the-world cannot be deprived of its mysterious character; what shows itself is only that which emerges out of the *concealment of Being*. At the same time there comes to the fore a historicity that must be conceived as a mode of historical being anterior to any historical consciousness, thus to historical knowledge as well, to historiography. As such, the openness to the world depends on human activity which gathers, develops, and trasmits it by way of *traditions*. Thus the hope to recover, underneath the strata

of objective knowledge and world views, something that is invariant proves itself to be a deception; rather, one must avow that all historical worlds where the emergence and eclipse of the being of beings gathers itself are "natural."

It is here that Patočka's thought takes its departure from that of Heidegger: the concealment of being, in the later Heidegger, meant the alternation between a revealing and a concealing that determined that the world of beings is to be taken to be now Nature, now Subject, now Spirit. For Patočka, it means the loss of all security, a loss which completely exposes man and his freedom. This is what he calls the problematic condition characteristic of the age of history. This new interpretation of Heidegger is reinforced by the interpretation of Husserl: the natural world is not the prescientific world, but the prehistorical world; that is, the nonproblematic world.

It is not that the world of prehistory is oblivious to all narrative activity. The nonproblematic world is not without accounts, annals, or chronicals; yet their function is precisely to maintain the style of life of the prehistorical man: "Annalistics capture the past as something important for the successful future comportment of the grand household which cares for itself."[5] The vital cycle of reception and transmission is not broken; historiography can move indefinitely within the tranquil circle of eternal return. The birth of history is thus not that of historiography; nor is the prehistorical world without historiography.

Nor is it that the world of prehistory is without transcendence, gods, the sacred, cults, and rites. On the contrary, its fundamental vision is that of the separation of a region where the gods reserve immortality for themselves, leaving mortality to man. Wisdom, according to this vision of the world, consists in the modesty of desire, the acceptance of mortality and amity with the gods, which makes the break between their immortality and our mortality bearable. It is in this sense that the man of prehistory is sheltered; the knowledge of immortality protects him from the despair into which his mortal condition would throw him.

This interpretation of the world of prehistory as a being led into captivity by the amity of the gods reinforces, at the cost of a complete reorientation, Arendt's analyses of the absence of the historical horizon of the man of work. This horizon is borne by the reproduction of life and the consuming-consumption of the products of work. One grasps not only that the captivity of a nonproblematic life is not broken by work as such, but that the cycle of work and that of myth are related on a deep level. The shelter of work is the same as that of the fleeting apparitions of divinity. One does not read such things in Hannah Arendt. This is why, after having adopted from her the triad of labor, work, and action, Patočka substitutes his own conception of the three movements of life, each harboring its own temporality: the first is that of acceptation, where every excess is compensated by a reparation, as stated in the famous dictum of the Ionian pre-Socratic philosopher Anaximander.[6] The second is that of defense, to which appertains the economy of work, insofar as work is at once a weight that man takes on himself for the whole of his life as well as the alleviation of a burden; this alleviation, confined to the rapture of Eros, never reaches the point of breaching the borders of prehistorical existence where the immortality of the gods is the consolation for the mortality of man. The third fundamental movement of life is the movement of truth which, still within the world of prehistory, attests to the difference between the natural and that which is above nature, thus discerns within divinity the possibility of being open, of openness. Yet it is only within the order of the problematic that it is possible to recognize this ability of openness, already at work in the world of prehistory, as such; here it loses its tutelary function and exposes man. In the order of the problematic, political life becomes, as Arendt said, a life directed towards the future, a momentum, a rising up. Yet Patočka adds, with an emphasis on the tragic, that "Here, life does not stand on the firm ground of generative continuity; it is not backed by the dark earth, but only by darkness, that is, it is ever *confronted* by its finitude and the permanent precariousness of life. Only by coming to terms with this threat, con-

fronting it undaunted, can free life as such unfold; its freedom is in its innermost foundation the freedom of the undaunted."[7] In contrast to the warrior who is still sheltered from the danger he confronts by the stable grandeur for which he risks himself, in the case of the problematic human the goal is a "*free* life as such, one's own or that of others; it is, essentially, an unsheltered life."[8] At this point the danger is that, after having refused to idealize consciousness, the philosopher idealizes the Greek *polis*. It is here that Patočka leaves behind his teachers and enters, with a quasi-Nietzschean tone, the properly tragic dimension of his meditation on problematicity. In fact it is under the aegis of Heraclitus, already evoked above, that the author discerns, at the foundation of this "givenness of meaning" that is the spirit of the West itself, the role of discord and struggle. Yes, *polemos* is truly the father of all and common to all. "*Polemos* is at the same time that which constitutes the *polis* and the primordial insight that makes philosophy possible."[9] One sees that Heraclitus, like Patočka, is not a philosopher of brute existence or terrorist action, but one who thought the origin of all relation from an extreme shaking. It is this thought that marks the caesura between historical life and the life of prehistory. Beyond this critical point, life must be understood not from the point of view of the day, that is, of accepted life, but from the point of view of the night, that is, of *Polemos*.

The danger is no longer to fall into idealism, but to cede to nihilism. Patočka is perfectly aware of this. In the pages devoted to the notion of the meaning of history, he begins by agreeing with Heidegger that the question of "meaning" is not that of "signification," in the logical and linguistic sense of the word, but a question that is posed only by and to beings capable of putting in question—and in play—their own being. Yet he goes further in saying that that which is shaken, for the problematic man, is the totality of meaning accumulated by the man of prehistory up to the Christian era: "that explicit questioning which is philosophy is by far more risky than the submerging conjecture which is myth."[10] The loss of the certitude of the condition of prehistory leads today to the shaking of all accepted meaning.

Haunted by nihilism, Patocka saw a way out in the notion of problematicity itself, a concept which appeared to him to evade both the dogmatic "nonmeaning" of the cynical disciples of Nietzsche as well as the dogmatism of any straightforward apologetic of "meaning." The loss of "meaning" is not the descent into the "meaning-less" but an access to the quality of meaning implied in the search itself. Thus Patočka rediscovers the Socratic theme of the "care of the soul" and the "examined life." Meaning within the condition of problematicity is, he says, a "proper meaning," a meaning neither too modest nor dogmatic, which gives courage for a life in the atmosphere of the problematic. Access to this meaning requires nothing less than a *metanoia*, a conversion, but in the philosophical sense rather than the religious. Having reached this point we can ask ourselves how it is possible to return from the contemplation of such depth by a solitary sage back to political and historical responsibility in the more ordinary, everyday sense of the term: the relation that Patočka establishes, in the second half of his essays, between his philosophy of the problematic and his properly political views with regard to the destiny of Europe, is entirely dependent on the capacity to completely transfer from the individual to the whole of European society the meditation on the relation between meaning, nonmeaning, and searching. Despite its length, the following quotation merits being singled out:

> The possibility of a *metanoesis* of historic proportions depends essentially on this: is that part of humanity which is capable of understanding what was and is the point of history, which is at the same time ever more driven by the entire positioning of present day humanity at the peak of technoscience to accept responsibility for meaninglessness, also capable of the discipline and self-denial demanded by a stance of uprootedness in which alone a meaningfulness, both absolute and accessible to humans, because it is problematic, might be realized?[11]

The entire sequence of the *Heretical Essays* devoted to Europe and European heritage is nothing other than an extended exercise in application, in an "unfolding of embryonic possibilities present in this shaking."[12] What tormented

Patocka was the destiny of western Europe beyond nihilism. It is necesary to accept that the prospects are not bright; the diagnosis is more certain than the cure. As we noted above, the pages dedicated to the two world wars and to War, created by the power of Night, are the most impressive:

> In this century, war is the full fruition of the revolt of the everyday. [. . .] War as a global "anything goes," a wild freedom, takes hold of states, becoming "*total.*" The same hand stages orgies and organizes everydayness. The author of the five year plans is at the same time the author of orchestrated show trials in a new witch hunt. War is simultaneously the greatest undertaking of industrial civilization, both product and instrument of total mobilization (as Ernst Jünger rightly saw), and a release of orgiastic potentials which could not afford such extreme of intoxication with destruction under any other circumstances.[13]

Patočka wanted to rid us of any illusion about peace: in the perspective of the day, peace is a transition, a welcome hiatus; but in the twentieth century it is a veiled period of war itself: "It is a visible proof that the world is perfectly ripe for perishing."[14]

What, then, in this advance of the Night, corresponds to a collective plan, to the lucidity of the solitary philosopher? Patočka has only a single formula that counts as a response: "the solidarity of the shaken for all their contradiction and conflict."[15] In this view, the privileged experience is that of the front, as it was worked out and commented on by Ernst Jünger and Teilhard de Chardin: "[T]here might also be a certain prospect of reaching the ground of true peace from the war engendered by peace. The first presupposition is Teilhard's front-line experience, formulated no less sharply though less mystically by Jünger: the positive aspect of the front line, the front line not as an enslavement to life but as an immense *liberation* from precisely such servitude."[16]

But then an anguishing question arises: "Why has this grandiose experience, alone capable of leading humankind out of war into a true peace, not had a decisive effect on the history of the twentieth century, even though humans have been ex-posed to it twice for four years, and were truly touched

and transformed thereby? Why has it not unfolded its saving potential?"[17]

There is no answer to this question, other than the reiteration of the act of faith. I can only, with fear and trembling, repeat the formula of this credo given above of the dogmatism of "meaning" and the "meaning-less": "The solidarity of the shaken can say 'no' to the measures of mobilization that make the state of war permanent. . . . The solidarity of the shaken is built up in persecution and uncertainty: that is its front line, quiet, without fanfare or sensation even there where this aspect of the ruling Force seeks to seize it."[18] This thought extends the Socratic theme of the "care of the soul" and of the "examined life" beyond the sphere of the individual. But does that mean that a Socratic politics has a chance? This is the more radical question that western Europe can take from the heart of that which was once the center of Europe.

First Essay: Reflections on Prehistory

At the time when mechanistic physics began to run into difficulties, the positivistically oriented philosopher Richard Avenarius elaborated the problem of the "natural conception of the world".[1] This problem and themes related to it—the "natural world" (later, in Husserl, the *Lebenswelt*, the world of our life), and others—proved to have an impact that reached far beyond the limits of Avenarius' philosophy. Their intent was to express a turn away from the "artificial" view of modern mechanistic (meta)physics which claimed that the perceptually accessible, surrounding world is a subjective reproduction of a true reality, of the real as it is in itself and as it is grasped by mathematical natural science—which would inevitably imply an empirically inaccessible subjective interior in which the exterior is reflected in virtue of causal efficacies originating from the physical world. The result was the attempt to turn away from such an interior and to take as reality itself the surrounding world, just as it presents itself. This in turn led to the problem of a structural description of this "human world," the world of "pure experience," of its "components" and of the relations that bring such elements into contact with one another, and so on (subsequently utilizing in part modern tools of relational logic, of the mathematical concept of structure, etc.). The solution that first suggested itself was the so-called "neutral monism," worked out variously by thinkers from Avenarius and Mach down to Russell, Whitehead, the Russian intuitive realists,[2] and the Anglo-Saxon neorealists.[3] According to this

conception, both objective reality and the reality of lived experience are "composed" of the same "elements" and become either "objective" or "subjective" depending on the context into which such elementary data are placed (relations to a privileged complex of data called "the central nervous system" or "organism" on the one hand, or to the aggregate of all other data on the other). This attempt to substitute functional and structural relations in general for causal dependence between subject and object retained, in other respects, the overall schema of reality, universally seen by mathematical natural science, and in its consequences led to hypothetical constructs so complex that it was virtually impossible to recognize the "natural world" of our everyday experience therein. Neutral monism not only retained the unitary conception of reality which became dominant in modern mathematical natural science but further accentuated it and carried it out consistently against the vestiges of Cartesian dualism in mechanistic physics. The mathematico-natural scientific unitary conception was to be even freed of certain difficulties with which mechanism could not cope: the opposition of primary and secondary qualities and the existence of qualitative determinations of the universe in general. The unity of effective reality was preserved even in the new twist that Bergson gave to the problem of the objectivity of the so-called secondary qualities whose rehabilitation he so energetically favored. Bergson rejected atomism as such, even in this "logical" form, in favor of a conception of the world and of experience as a qualitative continuum which cannot be divided without a simplifying distortion and falsification. To be sure, the human mind, for practical reasons, does make such a selection for the purposes of our projects and the needs of our activity; however, in the final analysis, a deep intuition that turns from practice back to true experience can assure itself of coherence with the totality of the world (the continuity of inner durée will never desert us entirely). Nevertheless, the descriptions of "concentration" and "freeing" of duration seem to indicate that this "intuition of the durée" itself still retained more than one trait borrowed from

the mechanistic schema.[4] — The turn away from "solving" the problem of objectivity by causal effect of an exterior on an interior appeared subsequently in numerous other philosophical schemata which sought, in different ways, to combine atomism (in the form of a monadology or other metaphysical themes) with a conception of continuity, or perhaps of the relation to the universe as a whole. All sought to base themselves on relations other than causal ("prehension," "gnoseological harmony," and others),[5] but they conceived these relations themselves as objective or as based on objective relations, always believing they had restored the "natural world view" of ordinary human reason.

These attempts led to an impasse by their inability to explain why the universum is not continually present to us and what role the body plays in our coming to terms with our surrounding world. It also became evident that in this way we can ill account for the accessibility of the absent and the unreal, for self-understanding and self-knowledge, not to mention history and spiritual relations which unfold wholly within the "natural" world and not within the mathematically reconstructed world of the mathematical natural sciences.

All that seemed circumvented by the new twist that Husserl's phenomenology gave to the problem. Husserl was the first to see clearly that the question of the natural world has to do with something that is familiar yet remains unknown, that the "natural world" must first be discovered, described, and analyzed. Secondly, he discovered that the natural world cannot be grasped in the same way that natural science grasps things, that it requires a fundamental change of attitude, an orientation that focuses no longer on things but on their phenomenal nature, the way they manifest themselves. Thus, it turned out further, the question is not one of the world and its structures but of the phenomenon of the world; that it has to do, first of all, with a description and an analysis of the way in which the world presents itself, then with an explanation of why it presents itself this way. For appearance always takes place as an appearing to someone, so the task is one of investigating the

foundation of appearing, of manifestation. This is why Husserl shifted the whole problem unexpectedly to the terrain of transcendental idealism. While up to that point idealism, above all as neo-Kantian critique, had appeared inseparably bound up with the image of the world presented by modern mathematical natural science, Husserl's phenomenology showed that the universe of the concrete self-manifestation of what-is[6] is always rooted in prescientific life and is originally the correlate of this pretheoretical life. Idealism appealed to Husserl precisely because it made possible an explanation of the concrete originary presence of what-is in relation to consciousness; the transcendence of objects being thereby explained as an essential correlation of acts of "intentional life" and their objects, thus by an immanent transcendence of a sort since such acts of consciousness are characterized precisely by intentionality, that is, by the fact that they "bear" within themselves an "objectival meaning" by virtue of which they are always acts of the consciousness of an object of a particular kind. Thus in the depths of the naive, natural way that the world presents itself we find or "there appears to us" another phenomenon, a "pure phenomenon" which phenomenology brings to light but which invariably remains hidden in our ordinary posture focused on the reality of things. This pure phenomenon is not simply a correlate of "natural consciousness" which, as one object among others in the world, is linked to them by causal relations and figures in psychophysical apperception as a property or aspect of an organism, but it is, rather, a correlate of an absolute "transcendental" consciousness responsible for any manifestation of any object whatever, including the organism as well as real, objectified consciousness. In the course of the development of phenomenology, transcendental consciousness was broadened into "transcendental intersubjectivity" so that the relation between consciousness and the world of things was inverted: in place of little islands of consciousness in a sea of a first naturally, then natural-scientifically conceived objectivity, we came to think of an ocean of intersubjectivity surrounding the continent of the objective world which served to mediate

between individual transcendental "streams" of experience. This subjective turn precisely within the problem of the natural world led to an extreme idealism and to the replay of a number of post-Kantian themes of absolute idealism (the problems of intersubjectivity are strongly reminiscent of Schelling in his transcendental idealist period),[7] though employing wholly other, nonconstructive methods. Thus the originary presence of objects before actual consciousness could be explained, yet there remained the problem whether these objects themselves were not subjected to an explanation foreign to them; whether there did not remain, as against the original phenomenon, a certain vestige of mentalism insofar as the passive and active syntheses whose "achievement" it is that the manifestation of things before us appears to make sense only if we arrive at them on the basis of something that is mentally "*reell.*"[8] And a remnant of mentalism always indicates a vestige of the Cartesian division of existents, a leftover of the conception on which the tradition of mathematical nature science was founded. For all the emphasis placed on the importance of the task of grasping the natural world, no structural analysis of it was ever carried out, one never reached humans in the concrete phenomena of work, production, action, and creation.

Heidegger took over and recast the Husserlian idea of the need to pose the problem as one of the manifestations of that which manifests itself and of the structure of that being to which it manifests itself. At the same time, he understood the being to whom phenomena manifest themselves, the human being, as a wholly distinctive structure that distinguishes itself from all others in that it understands being, in the sense that it relates to being, comports itself with reference to it (that it is this relation). That way alone can it be "open" to what there is (to which being belongs). That does not mean that it somehow reproduces or reflects what there is, but rather that the "achievement" of this being's understanding of being is the self-presentation to this being of what there is by itself as it itself is. Humans in their inmost being are nothing other than this "openness."

Openness designates the possibility (basic possibility) of being human: the possibility that what there is (both of the kind humans are not and of the kind humans are—being in openness) can manifest itself to them of itself, without any mediation by something other. (That does not mean that there can be no mediate presentation; but any such presentation, such indication, presupposes a primary appearance to which and in which it refers: language, for example, makes apparent something that appears to us by itself.) It is an essential trait of being human that what-there-is can appear to humans, become a phenomenon for them—that is, show both *that* it is and *how* it is. Thus humans are neither the locus where what there is arises in order to be able to manifest itself (themselves) in the original, nor are human "souls" some entities in which phenomena would be reflected as the effects of an "external world." Humans offer existents the occasion for manifesting themselves as they are because it is only in their being-here that an understanding of what it means to be is present—and so a possibility which things of themselves lack and which has no meaning for them—the possibility of coming to their own being, that is, of becoming phenomena, of manifesting themselves.

This concept of the phenomenon (as a deep phenomenon, i.e., understanding Being)[9] prevents us from taking what appears as subjective things, thereby in principle overcoming the metaphysics of modern (mechanistic, though not that only) natural science. At the same time, all idealism in the sense of a "subjectification of the given" becomes impossible. The same holds for positivistic attempts at a "neutral monism" which depend throughout on a false conception of the phenomenon, as if the world were an aggregate of entities and entitative relations which are simply there, and as if their manifestation could be explained by the interrelations of such beings. As if the problem of originary givenness, of the presence of being, could be resolved by what there is simply being there. The same, though, holds for Bergson's qualitative world which resists fragmentation into functional argumentation but which

cannot really comprehend manifestation. Not even Husserl himself, the philosopher who first pointed out that a thing itself as such, together with its meaning and all its contingent and essential characteristics, develops into a phenomenon, could fully do justice to the phenomenon. He did see that things present themselves and he also noted that this implies a "mode of givenness" and a structure of the being of the thing, but he still conceived of it "mentalistically" as the "animation" of the *reell*-ly given by a meaning-bestowing intention. This, to be sure, allowed him to go on using, for "noetic analysis," the traditional psychological terminology of presentification, thought, imagination, etc. alongside concepts derived from the originary perception of the openness of being-human (*Dasein*) in the world[10] but it blinded him to the question of Being and of its continuity with manifestation.

Here we cannot offer even a basic sketch of "openness." Let us, though, at least note an aspect of fundamental importance: the structure of openness entails a double conception of the phenomenon. The openness of human being-in-the-world, first of all, lets what-is appear, manifest itself, become a phenomenon.

Secondly, though, if what-is is to show itself forth as such, that is, in its being, it must be possible for being, too, to present itself and become a phenomenon. Being, however, is originally and for the most part "there" in such a way that it retreats into obscurity before the existent whose manifestation it made possible, that is, so to speak, Being conceals itself in what there is. Concealment in its various forms—hiddenness, absence, distortion, dissimulation—is an essential aspect of a phenomenon. Every phenomenon must be understood as a lighting, a coming forth from concealment, and never otherwise. Concealment penetrates the phenomenon and more: it is what first releases from itself the being which manifests itself.

If we strip Husserl's "noematic sphere"[11] of the sense of the immanent transcendence we come close to what Heidegger calls the open region (overlooking Husserl's one-sided preoccupation with objects). It is this sphere which represents, in a

particular "epoch," the possibilities of the phenomenalization of what is uncovered. The region of openness is not identical with the universe of what-is, but is, rather, that which can be uncovered as existent in a particular epoch. That means that it is the world of a particular epoch, if by "the world" we understand the structure of the way that what there is can appear to humans at a particular age.[12]

This "as what" the existent can appear is at first concealed, as we said, in the existents that manifest themselves. The manifestation as such, the what-is in its phenomenal content—color as color, tone as tone—is an ontic phenomenon. The phenomenon is never without a structure, without the as what it appears. However, that something ontic manifests itself always means that the ontic phenomenon which imposes itself receives its phenomenal character from something concealed, from the ontological phenomenon which manifests itself only under certain special circumstances, and then, to be sure, it also manifests itself of itself (and does not only conceal itself in the ontic phenomenon).

The phenomenon, manifestation, and concealment are thus very tightly linked. There is no manifestation without concealment. Concealment is primary in the sense that every manifestation can be understood only as an un-concealment.

Appearance in the primary sense of the ontic phenomenon is always an appearance of what there is. There is no primary representation of existents by something "mental." Presentification, remembering, fantasy, dreaming, etc. are psychological labels formulated from the viewpoint of a realistic conception of the psychic and need to be rethought from the viewpoint of openness. In them, something that is always enters the sphere of openness in a particular way; always as a phenomenon against the background of its concealment, as an "entering into" a particular horizon (unconcealed concealment), as a "fall" or a "fascination" and "captivation" by a certain horizon which either wholly conceals itself or is uncovered as such.

However, there is also a derivative phenomenality. It does not consist in the self-givenness of something that is, but rather

in a showing forth of something that manifests itself of itself; a phenomenality which manifests manifestation and therein secondarily something that manifests itself primarily. We have such a derivative phenomenality in language, especially in statements or propositions. Propositions do not bear *within* themselves a meaning which could be said to be contained in them but, rather, point to something that manifests itself directly. As such, they can become a reservoir of what manifests itself and so can serve to pass on what has been seen, becoming the foundation of a comportment which represents a widening of openness and which serves it.

Human comportment aimed at the development of openness and its realm, perhaps its tradition, is not, however, contained solely in language, in propositions and their formations. There are modes of development and transmission of openness in religion, myth, art, and sacrifice. We cannot elaborate upon that here. Each of these activities, each such comportment, contains a special mode of unconcealment of what there is or perhaps of being. In cult and myth things are stripped of their everyday significance as tools of living and take on the role of free, originary existents. In the creative arts, the "material" as such stands forth as what it is only once it has broken out of the context of its daily roles and takes on the role of what lets the world stand out as world. The opening of the world, however, is ever historical in all its forms, contingent on the self-manifestations of phenomena and on the doings of humans who preserve and transmit. Openness is ever an event in the life of individuals, yet through tradition it concerns and relates to all.

Now it is perhaps becoming clearer how we are approaching the problem of the natural world, how it is reconstituted apart from any materialism (which understands what there is in terms of natural scientific reality and seeks to reduce being to it) as well as of any idealism. The things we encounter are grasped as themselves, though not independently of the structure of *as what* they appear, nor independently of the emergence of essential concealment into openness. In the play of manifestation/

unconcealment, they show themselves as what they are, thus demonstrating their seriousness. Their manifestation, however, is itself historical, and that in two ways: as the uncovering of what is and as the emergence of the structures of being which thus cannot stand out into openness other than historically.

Now we can also say why Heidegger does not resolve the problem of the natural world (or, as later Husserl calls it, *Lebenswelt*, the world of our lives), even though admittedly the concept of openness is the most promising basis for a solution thus far. Heidegger's analyses of phenomenon and openness do not face this problem specifically but rather the fundamental philosophical question of the meaning of being, of the foundation of all phenomenality as such. For that reason he traces primarily those modalities of open human comportment which have the character of a thematic discovery of what-is and of being, such as, for instance, practical uncovering, showing forth, language and proposition, philosophy, science and technology, art. Thus alone or primarily thus can we find points of reference for dealing with the question of being and its elaboration that would do justice to its phenomena. On the other hand, there are surely modes of open human comportment whose meaning and content does not aim primarily at gaining and transmitting openness. The natural world, the world of human life, can only be comprehended as the totality of the fundamental modes of human comportment, of their presuppositions and sedimentations.[13] As a human world it is the world of phenomena in the sense defined (not as subjective phenomena, but as the uncovering of what is and of being) and to that extent it is accessible only to open comportment. Open comportment, however, ever dependent on phenomena, is of a temporal-historical nature; it is always in movement, coming out of the darkness and flowing into the darkness of concealment, and with respect to meaning breaks up into various partial movements. Only one of these is oriented to the theme of openness, manifestation, unconcealment, and its transmission. Others focus on the rooting of humans in the open realm of the common world of humans and on the protection and

preservation of that world. Only an examination and a comprehension of the mutual relations of all these movements would provide a picture of the natural world, the *Lebenswelt*, the world of human life. We are still far from having resolved this problem.

It is also possible at this point for us to indicate in what sense the problem of the natural world appears to us to be unsolvable. If the problem were understood in the sense that underneath layers of the "artificial," that is, of a constructivistically conceived world, we should rediscover the primordial-original as something invariable, then everything suggests that there is no such invariant. What-is is always a synthesis—not, to be sure, a subjective, but an ontico-ontological synthesis. That means that in all human uncovering of being, originating in history, there emerge ever new historical worlds which themselves, qua syntheses, must be something original—that means that they do not possess a common part or component that remains unchanged when it becomes a part of a new whole. We do not even perceive in the same way as ancient Greeks even though, physiologically speaking, our sense organs are the same. Humans in a secularized epoch see not only diferent things but see them differently than one who can say *panta plērē theōn* ("everything is full of gods")[14] or who invites a stranger to his kitchen because there, too, do gods dwell.[15] Historical worlds do perhaps approximate each other at the level of everydayness, but that level is in no sense autonomous. Husserl, however, understood the world of our life, the *Lebenswelt*, as invariant in this material sense; apart from that he sees only interpretations, "pictures" or "images" of the world (for instance, that of modern mathematical natural science) which refer to a special, particular world corresponding to the activities of a specialist. It is, however, extremely doubtful that we thus do justice not only to the phenomenon of the originary presence of things in the world and the world's fundamental regions, but also to the phenomenon of the historical character of the content of the world itself, of the fading away and reemergence of the content of the world in connection with the

ontological key of access; the primordial historicity of the world does not manifest itself in its fullness. If we could speak of an invariant at all, it would surely only be in a formal sense—there are no invariant *components*; only the ontico-ontological synthesis, the unconcealment of what-is, is constant. All the historical worlds are "natural," only certain activities (such as technology) and the *explanations* of the world that correspond to them are artificial, if they seek to base themselves not on phenomena as such but rather on derivative constructs.

We could also speak of the natural world in a somewhat different sense; if we were to understand by it the world prior to the discovery of its problematic character. The nonproblematic world is one in which concealment is not experienced as such. That does not mean that such a world would not have or know secret things, the sacred, or the mysterious; on the contrary, it can be full of such things, they might even play a decisive role—but it lacks the experience of the transition, of the emergence of what-is as phenomenon out of obscurity into the openness in the course of which even that which allows what-is to become manifest shows itself and thereby and only thereby sets questions about what-is on a firm foundation. For only the uncovered being of what is gives us a measure of what is and what is not, letting us judge what there is in terms of something firm and evident.

The preproblematic world is also a world of a pregiven meaning, modest but reliable. This world is meaningful, that is, intelligible, because there are therein powers, the demonic, the gods that stand over humans, ruling over them and deciding their destiny. Humans are not at the center of the world, they are not what it is all about. Only with reference to what transcends them are humans given their place; however, they do receive it and are content to accept it. What thus places humans in the world is decisive in it and determines both human destiny and doings. We can bring such a "natural world," lying somewhere before the beginnings of our history, nearer to us by turning to the experiences and reports of the so-called "natural" peoples; though we must examine such reports as to their

phenomenal content. The natural peoples live in a world that is very different from ours, and it is difficult for us to see through it ontologically. The superhuman is there present in opposition to and as an obvious counterpart of the human (just as "to the right" exists only as a counterpart to "to the left," above to below, day to night, workday to holiday). In this world humans can encounter spirits, demons, and other mysterious beings, but they do not encounter the mystery of manifestation as such. The basic framework for the possibility of such natural dwelling on earth is to exist unproblematically. This characteristic of natural life has always been conspicuous: the natural peoples accept where we hesitate, seeming to understand before questions are even posed. It is obvious to them that their lives are intelligible and that living is worthwhile. In this way their life resembles that of nonhuman animals who obviously live in order to live, yet differs from it in its hidden possibility of problematization which can always be brought forth, though they neither do bring it forth nor intend to do so. Thus problematization is present, though concealed, in a sense repressed, yet more than a mere privation. Between humans and the world, individual and group, community of humans and the world there are recognized relations which to us seem fantastically arbitrary, contingent and nonfactual, but which are systematically and strictly respected. It is a highly tangible life which has no other idea of life than living (as its goal), and which in any case is so taken up by the concerns of providing daily bread, of using what the environing world offers, that the achievement of these tasks takes up almost the whole of daily life.

Now there is a certain level of this life in self-evidence which reaches almost the very limit of problematization. That happens when humans become settled and systematically seek to secure their life *pro futuro*, in a way which involves all and so precludes the autonomy of individuals and small groups. That is how the early high civilizations arise. In them there also arises a social memory that outlasts the individual: writing. On the foundation of written texts it becomes possible to construct works of language which are like a secondary world, relating itself to

the primary one. Humans bestow on their sayings the duration of the tile or the stone; these works, these myths through which humans unwittingly explain the world, gain validity as they travel from one people to another, becoming the property of all.

Here we need to ponder whether a reflection on this mode of a natural world might not help us understand what history is. Here, though, considerations of being human in the world which focus solely on unconcealment, its preservation and extension, are not enough. To be sure, our starting point will still have to be open being in the world. Within it, though, we must focus first on that original, primordial project of the natural, unproblematic man, on life simply as it is contained in the self-evidence of received meaning, in the traditional way of life, its forms and modes. This life is accepted in its finitude and toil, approved as what is appropriate and destined for humans, an acceptance that entails a great practical consequence: the human world is a world of work and exertion. Here we need to attempt to take up, phenomenologically, the analyses of "practical, active life" carried out by Hannah Arendt and inspired by Aristotle's distinctions between *theoria, praxis*, and *poiēsis*.[16]

It is no accident that, in *Being and Time*, there are indeed examples taken from handcrafts, that Heidegger speaks of "tools" (*Zeug, Zuhandenes*) and of contexts of utility and appropriateness,[17] but he nevertheless never speaks of the work which Arendt showed to be inseparably bound with the simple maintenance of self-sustaining life. In her investigations, where she distinguishes work, production, creation, and action as the grand dimensions of active life, humans are analyzed with regard to those possibilities of being in the world that do not have unconcealment, disclosedness ("truth") in all its forms as their theme. Among those, the project of life simply for the sake of living is perhaps the most important: work has to become the fundamental mode of being in the world because humans, like all that lives, are, in this respect, exposed to a constant self-consumption which therefore requires an equally constant satisfaction of an ever-clamoring need. This leads to a special set of

problems: work of one's own and that of another; problems of the use of and freedom from work. The fundamental trait of this region of problems is the bondage of life to itself: the "physical" necessity of existing in such a way that life is devoted to the care of life, to the service of life. That is one of the ways in which the finitude of human life is ever present, bowing before nothingness and death; finitude is present, however, in an indefinite form, precisely due to this activity which in its preoccupation covers up its own theme. Thus unlike animal life—which uses up its modest openness in seeking prey and sustenance in general—work is continuous with the problematic character of life while at the same time obscuring and preventing us from seeing it. The animal does not work, even though it is concerned for itself and cares for itself, at the same time securing itself and its family; thus the fulfillment of life is not a *burden* for the animal, while for man, by contrast, it is such a burden. Human work presupposes a free disposal of space and intervals of time, and for all its monotony it is not stereotypical but rather directed towards and by a goal. Work, then, is not a burden simply because of the physical exertion involved—since what is needed is not readily available and work inevitably encounters resistance—but also because a certain mode of being is *forced* upon us and we experience it as an imposition. Paradoxically, work lets us feel our freedom; its character of burden is derived from burden as a more basic trait that has to do with human life as such, the fact that we cannot simply take life in indifference but must always "bear" it, "lead" it—guarantee and stand for it. Work which (according to Arendt) is *always* originally work for *consumption*,[18] is possible only on the basis of a free being in the world. Yet, at the same time, it can break and repress the development of this freedom and all the problems linked to it. The world in which the bonding of life to itself takes place on the basis of a concealed freedom is the world of work; its proto-cell and model is the household, the community of those who work to assure their sustenance (and, later, to free one of them from this bondage). The great empires of the ancient world, the first high

civilizations and cultures, were in this sense monumental households. Life in them was devoted above all to the reproduction of life, to the preservation of its vital flame. Nothing suggests that humans here raise a claim to anything beyond that.

If we understand work in this sense, then work proves to be not only a nonhistorical factor but actually one working against history, intending to hold it at bay. It was work that for a very long time was most able to keep humans within the context of bare, mere survival. It is not the case that humanity can be explained in terms of work, even though work is possible only on the basis of the openness of human life. History cannot be explained by work, but it is only in history that work enters into that unity with production which made it dependent on history. To be sure, already in the first civilizations we can observe a difference between work and production. Only on the basis of production does the human world acquire the character of the perennial, a firm skeleton underneath the invertebrate, inconstant form of vital reproduction. The city wall, the marketplace, the temple, the written word are expressions of this life made firm. Overall human self-understanding, however, remains primarily determined by the world of work which thus manifests its predominance. Understandably, production itself is subjected to work in the sense that it serves the nourishment of the producers; it thus finds itself in a necessary relation of exchange with the work of workers. The regulation of this exchange, the organization of the society of those who work, is necessarily the task of a center which finds itself in an advantageous position to set itself free of the servitude of both work and production, and as such raises itself above ordinary human destiny.

In the dialectic of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel links the beginning of history with the panic of the servile consciousness that becomes aware of its bondage to life and renounces itself and freedom for the sake of a life which, from then on, belongs, as subservient, to another self-consciousness (that of the master).[19] We have, however, a far more impressive testament to the original slavish self-

understanding, of humanity subjected to subservience to life in the life form of the first high civilizations, as it appears in the mirror of their poetico-mythical productions. A human here is a life perennially threatened, dedicated to death, and devoted to work—that is, to unceasingly turning back this threat which in the end is always victorious. In the margins of humanity seen from this perspective, however, there appears as its opposite a life which escapes this constant menace, a life which can experience various types of need but which is not subject to death, and for that reason is triumphant over even the most acutely felt needs: such a life is not a human but a divine life. Originally, according to the old Babylonian epic of Atrachasis, the gods had to do all the work themselves; they tried to shift this burden to lower divinities but were unsuccessful. Thus they had to invent death; they killed one of the lower gods and used his flesh and blood to create humans, who now received toil as their lot while the gods retained for themselves a pure, unclouded life. Human life, by contrast, is one of self-maintenance through work, exertion, and pain, and the link between work and life is death. Society is, for that reason, theocratic: only the gods or sons of gods, not subject to the lot of ordinary humanity, are in fact free, living without effort off the work of others. Nothing can bridge the distance thus created, between gods and mortals there can be no reciprocity, no mutual recognition and respect. Likewise, such recognition does not exist among the subjects: they are there to work, to serve in various levels of effectiveness and constitute a well-organized household capable of great achievements, achievements of essentially one kind—the maintenance of all the members of the society in life, with the price that they will neither demand nor recognize more to life for themselves.

In this context we can also recall the myth of the creation of man in Genesis, as Walter Bröcker interprets it.[20] Here, too, God created humans to tend God's garden, securing for godself the pure life of eating the fruit of the tree of life, while humans were prevented from it by the prohibition of plucking the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The

transgression of the prohibition bears with it the expulsion from the paradise of ignorance, that is, the ignorance of the unavoidable lot of death, as well as the bondage of humans to the destiny of laborious work and the pain of birth.

If we are better to understand the meaning of divine transcendence of labor and human mortality, we need to return to the Atrachasis myth.[21] The gods are not in principle above all labor, yet for them it is not a condition for life as such but rather only for a good life in an ordered world in which they enjoy the respect and sacrifices that are their due. In this sense they also need a community with humans, a community which is, of course, one of opposition, of contrast. Thus the works of the gods are also superhuman, having to do with the order and preservation of the world; they are not works of the constant concern for daily bread. Death, on the other hand, is the product of a divine violence against one of their own; thus, to the human mind, it is something that transcends mortal destiny. Individuals die but the human species preserves itself in a generative continuity through the passing of generations. In this way, humans participate in the divine order. It can happen that the gods at times feel neglected or irritated by men, it can happen that at times they forget themselves to such an extent that it occurs to them to eradicate humanity altogether. Therein lies the origin of the interpretation of a certain event that could well have been a flood and the preservation of humanity afterwards. Such destruction is an example of the work of the gods; the god of wisdom, however, knows ahead of time that humanity must not be destroyed and so signals a chosen one in a premonitory dream, letting him build a saving ship and embark thereupon with all his family. The chosen one, in order to prevent misunderstanding or conflict among the gods, becomes immortal; but not his heirs, so that humankind would be preserved. The meaning of the flood itself is to make humans aware of the precariousness, the dependence of their position; but also that the gods are shocked at the devastation that reached to the very root of the world order, and so return to an unequal community with humans, an alliance that permits

devastation only as a punishment for transgression. Since that time, the flood represents the threat of death not only to each individual, but to the entire human species in the form of global catastrophes which, without exterminating all of humanity, indicate to all individuals that they are threatened so that they can never secure their lives by their labor. Thus evil is in the world by the will of the gods as a perennial threat suspended over the heads of humankind. There is, however, also divine help as humans fight against this evil and limit it. It is a divine ordinance both that evil should menace humanity and that evil should be resisted by humans struggling against it within the limits of their power.

Thus it is possible to suppose that behind the Gilgamesh story of the battle with global evil stands the legend of the flood and that this episode is not merely introduced into the epic for external reasons. Gilgamesh is no god in the strict sense of the word: he is only two-thirds divine, that is, he is free of the care for daily bread and is here to do superhuman deeds that have to do with the order of the world, but he is subject to death. His primary, quasi-divine task is to maintain the order of the world, in the sense of goodness. He takes up the task first by building a city where humans are protected from poverty and enemies. That, though, requires a recourse to violence and more toil and work than humans are normally willing to bear. To accommodate the prayers of mortals, the gods call on him to perform other deeds: first to test his strength against the human-beast Enkidu, a powerful enemy whom he turns into his helper and protector; then to test his strength against the world-evil Humbaba who lurks in the regions of the West, ever lively in wait, ever alert and ready, waiting to sally forth: a protégé of the earth god Enlil, who, of all the gods, pressed most vigorously for the flood. Since, on the order and with the help of the god of the sun, Humbaba is defeated and killed, Enkidu is chosen to be the reconciling sacrifice and must himself pay the price of death. The same fate, though, has an even greater impact on Gilgamesh himself who, like the first man in the book of Genesis, realizes for the first time the full measure of

his mortality and, in panic and fear, strikes out for the very edge of the world in search for immortality. (We pass over the episode of the heavenly bull and the mocking goddess Ishtar, since it is only a duplicate with the same meaning as the struggle with the world-evil Humbaba; in place of Enlil there is the fertility goddess Ishtar, in place of Humbaba the "heavenly bull.") On the way to the one man who, by unanimous agreement of the gods, had been rendered immortal, occurs the characteristic episode (missing in the later version in Assurbanipal's library): the "divine innkeeper" Siduri recounts quite explicitly whereof a human is and is not capable. "Whither runneth thou, Gilgamesh? The life thou seekest thou shalt not find! When the gods created humans, they gave them death as their lot, taking life into their own hands. Thou, Gilgamesh, fill thou now thy stomach, enjoy thyself day and night! Daily canst thou hold feasts, dance and play day and night. Have clean clothes, a washed head, be cleanly bathed! Look to the child on thy arm, let thy companion find pleasure in thy arms—such are the works of humans!"[22]

This speech is not hedonistic, as it is at times said to be, but rather a delimitation of human possibilities from the perspective of a finite life that is bound to itself. This maximum is the standard of a well-ordered household, of private "happiness" limited in time, overshadowed by the prospect of the end. This prospect does not make human life meaningless as long as humans take their place in the framework of the life of the gods. Even heroic deeds cannot give more than a transient support to this ever recurrent vision. The immeasurable wandering to the end of the world ends when Gilgamesh, exhausted by great deeds, cannot resist what is gentlest of all: he yields to sleep, the brother of death, the gradual exhaustion which, like fatigue and aging, accompanies life. He returns to the only one of his deeds that proved to be viable, to his mighty city wall and the founding of an empire that, most reliably if only temporarily, provides humans with protection.

This poem represents the self-understanding of a humanity for whom the world belongs to the gods whose unanimity

determines the lot of individuals and of humankind alike. The world, seen from the human perspective, is a great household managed by the heroes who, together with the gods, seek to keep global evil within limits and, in spite of heroic deeds, share with humans the lot of mortality. This common lot is not experienced as solidarity (for all his grieving over Enkidu, Gilgamesh in his panic thinks only of himself, is only terrified for himself) but as the dark power of finite life, ever exhausting itself, ever requiring care and protection.

Thus there is no sharp boundary between the world and the "great household" of the empire. The city's walls may be the work of human hands, but it belongs, like everything else made and done by humans, to the one house occupied by the unequal society of gods and humans. There is no boundary in principle between the world and the empire, for even the empire itself must be understood on the basis of something that is not the work of humans, of the unfree life that is given to them as their lot; the ruler himself is active not only within the human community and through it, but it is he who mediates between humans and the rest of the order of the world.

The content of this reflection, then, is the fascination with death and, in this context, also with work which, ever facing the threats from without and the self-devouring of life within, results in the exhaustion of life by the "great household." We must, however, take into consideration that it is the gods who consign humans to the fate of death, and that on the basis of a sacrifice of a god. True enough, the human condition is irreversible, but something still higher exists in the relation of humans to death's dark empire. This something higher does come from the gods, yet its realm is the relation between the dead and the living. In this relation there is something like immortality, though it relates not to individuals but rather to all who are linked in the generative bond of filiation. In a sense they are one, a type of testimony that what arises out of the dark realm by individuation always bears the seal, the mark of the nonindividual. Individuals, after their death, if they do not simply vanish, are there merely as "appearances," as something

that appears to the living, as a being-for-them, for the others. For that reason remaining an individual after death depends on those who continue to relate to the dead in ways that preserve this being-for-them: for example, seeing the dead in a dream, speaking with them in prayer, hosting them at a funeral banquet. To be sure, the living are led to this comportment by being at one with the dead on the other side of individuation: the individual being is the reality of the species that functions somewhat as a middle term between the undifferentiated great Night and the autonomy of the individual. Thus how the living behave towards the dead and the living, the ancestors and the descendents, is not a matter of indifference to this community of the living and the dead. The real, actual form of the life of an individual depends on the ancestors; on the descendents as a derivation in image which is the actual form of the relation of the living to the substrate of the species. The father who brings children into the world relates, in accepting them and caring for them, above all to the surviving supraindividual substrate of the species which releases individual lives out of itself and takes them back into itself. But he stands in relation to himself as well, as that mortal who depends on his descendents in the personal life after death that is at once precarious yet at the same time rooted in the most powerful, ever present supraindividual life of the substrate which the Romans will later call *lar familiaris*.[23] In all that all individuals prove themselves links in a sequence of "acceptations": they come into life not only conceived by and born of those who live, but also accepted by them and dependent on their care, and they leave life equally dependent on those whom they had themselves accepted. In this dependence we stand not only in the context of the world of life which is subject to the bondage of work, but rather life, this landscape of individuation and work, is itself a part of the dark landscape of the world to which the gods, too, had access when they sent death into the world and enslaved humans to life and toil. This dark landscape of the world is thus at the same time the landscape of the fertility from which comes everything individual, the site not only of the acceptation of

descendents already born but of a preparation for them: humans do not accept only children already born but also the other with whom they enter into the generative, fertile darkness, thereby each being accepted in turn. Thus the movement of work refers to the dark movement of acceptation which itself appears to refer to a still more basic movement from which all that is in our day arises out of the nonindividuated night.

More than a century ago, Fustel de Coulanges demonstrated that this chain of perceptions essentially remained the foundation of the (patrician) family in antiquity, in Greece as well as Rome. To be sure, Fustel spoke of a "belief in immortality," linked to the tomb cult and including the survival of the dead in the grave.[24] This interpretation is untenable, since the idea of the survival of the individual himself is demonstrably linked to Plato's idea of the "care of the soul." However, modified in the manner suggested above, this conceptual foundation of the family of *eupatrides* [25] can retain its validity; this is especially true of the many consequences that Fustel drew from it, such as the origin of family institutions and rites, soil ownership, adoption, client relations, etc. It was Hannah Arendt who called attention to the most important modification, one brought about by later ideas, when she pointed out that the sphere of the house ceased to be the core of the world as such, becoming simply a private domain alongside and juxtaposed to which there arose, in Greece and Rome, a different, no less important public sphere.[26] Starting from this thesis, we shall, in what follows, endeavor to demonstrate that the difference is that in the intervening period history in the strict sense had begun.

Recent historical research, following the deciphering of the old Mycenaean script, seems to show that the social organization of the entire Aegean region was, but for marginal differences, basically the same as that of the high Near Eastern civilizations and so that this applied to the early high civilizations of Greece as well.[27] If our earlier reasoning holds, it would imply that these brilliant civilizations with their admirable architecture and their artistic achievements generally, not the least their poetry, were also simply great households

aiming at no more than the preservation of life and at work. Naturally, a high level of production was also present, though in such a way that it was decisive neither for self-understanding nor for life's goals, but rather remained in the service of an orientation given by work. Whatever seems to go beyond that came not from the works of humans but from the fact that the primordial bond between mortals and gods, the life-giving and at the same time dangerous powers of the earth and the sky, remained unbroken and that human self-preservation took place in the glow of this undisturbed natural world. With respect to this world, though, humans are not free, having therein no space which would be their own, their work, and no goal or purpose which would rise above the maintenance of life. The emergence of art means no more than that humans have accepted their place within life's bondage to ease the task of the gods and avoid dissention among them in caring for the maintenance of the world's order. Art is a service to the gods just as all of life is, since a perenially precarious life does not depend on humans. The toil that provides for human needs is the sole necessary condition, wholly absorbing all human living, but an event like the flood cannot be compensated by toil. Art is the divine dimension, by its presence ever reminding humans of their lot.

In that sense the world of Near Eastern mythology reaches far beyond the Near Eastern region. It is even the basis of further poetic reflection, represented by the Homeric epics. Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* work with Near Eastern mythical elements transmitted to them by Mycenaean poetry. According to one probable hypothesis, we can trace in the *Iliad* the theme of the flood—and of the perishing of humankind generally—transformed into the reflective theme of Ionic and post-Mycenaean times about the perishing of the generation of semi-divine heroes and of the social and personal life of the theocratic household of the heroic rulers. That means, furthermore, that those conceptions became a part of our historical tradition not only through the Biblical narratives but also through the *Iliad*—not to mention the *Odyssey* with its theme of wandering to the very end of the earth—in a barely

recognizable mutation, to be sure, but still effective as the starting point for further reflection.

Thus this tradition attests to a prehistorical world of which we can speak as "natural" in the sense just described. It is natural in the sense of accepting the community of all it contains as something simply given, something that simply manifests itself. It is a community of gods and mortals, the shared life-space of those dependent on the nourishing earth and the heavenly lights and of those who are not so dependent and who thus constitute the most wondrous mystery of this world. They are not dependent—yet their mode of being is such that a community with humans can be an advantage to them since what humans do ultimately for the sake of their own survival, the Sisyphian toil in service of self-devouring life, is the work of the gods, a participation in preserving the world order, linking what is above with what is below, earth and the lights, the visibly created with the realm of darkness. The gods are the most mysterious of all, for they conceal themselves, thus manifesting their power; and yet the highest power is possible only as free dwelling on the earth, free of death.

Is not this view essentially truthful? Does it not grasp human life in its essence? What more can humans comprehend than this grand backdrop of their inescapable integration in the involuntary maintenance of life? Perhaps one thing only: what it is that constitutes the great household, the great community, is in some sense clear (as it is clear why both the darkness of the grave and of not having been born as well as the superior realm of the gods recede into the background), but it is not clear what brings it about that all this emerges and manifests itself—that neither stands forth before us nor reveals itself to us. To uncover what is hidden in manifestation entails questioning, it means discovering the problematic character not of this or that but of the whole as such, as well as of the life that is rigorously integrated into it. Once, however, that question had been posed, humans set out on a long journey they had not traveled hitherto, a journey from which they might gain something but also decidedly lose a great deal. It is the journey of history. At

its inception, humans are the powerless serfs of life, but they do have the natural world with its gods, their service that suits the gods, and art as an expression of their service and of their bond with the sacred. In setting out on their new journey, humans place all that at stake.

Second Essay: The Beginning of History

Karl Marx says somewhere that there is really only one science, which is history, meaning thereby that understanding the evolution of the world would be true knowledge. Such a claim, however, is either a reduction of history to the abstraction of the temporal process as such (which raises the question of the time frame within which this process takes place) or it is a bold speculation which attributes to all the processes of nature the role of a preparation necessary for the process of history, that is, for the special case of meaningful or meaning-related events. Becoming, however, is meaningful or meaning-related only when someone cares about something, when we do not have before us sequences merely observed but rather ones which can be understood in terms of an interest in and relating to the world, of an openness for oneself and for things. We first encounter hints of an interest in the animate sphere. Yet the process of the evolution of life, generally accepted today, can be called meaningful in this sense only at the cost of a great speculative effort. Of all that we know from experience, only human life can be interpreted as meaningful in this sense. Even its least movement can be understood only in terms of an interested self-relation grounded in an openness for what there is. Does that, though, already mean that human life, simply as such, shares in positing history, that history as such is simply given with it? Hardly anyone would be likely to claim that, even if they were to believe, on the basis of rigorous analysis, that historicity belongs to being human as that which prevents us

from taking humans, wherever and whenever we encounter them, for "finished" natural formations and forces us to see in them free beings who to a great extent form themselves. Yet there undoubtedly exist—or at least until quite recently existed—"nations without history." The question of history strictly speaking must be understood more narrowly.

The usual attempt at answering that question points to the phenomenon of collective memory which either first emerges with writing or has its strongest support in it. That, though, would mean deriving the meaning of events from the meaning of a narrative about them. However, the meaning of a narrative about events is different from the meaning of what is narrated. The meaning of events is an achievement of those who act and suffer, while the meaning of a narrative lies in understanding the logical formations pointing to those events. The meaning articulated in this understanding is relatively context independent, since, within certain limits, it can be understood in the same way by other persons in other places, ages, and traditions while the meaning of an event lies in the development of the situation itself. It might well be that genuinely historical acts and evènts need to be set in the context of tradition and narrative; in that case, though, the meaning of a narrative is intelligible in terms of historical acts and not the other way around. Let us assume, however, that not every narrative and so not even every narrative about the past aims primarily and thematically at actual events in history—if so, we would be dealing with the curious phenomenon of an ahistorical history, a historical narrative without a history. We believe that the original keeping of annals, as it was practiced in the Near East, Egypt, ancient China, etc., is precisely such a historical narrative without an actual history: the reason being that its purpose and meaning was the preservation of the lifestyle of prehistorical humanity, a humanity whose life's meaning was given and prescribed, defined basically by the acceptance, transmission, preservation, and securing of life. Such a life can unfold in complex and massive social formations, in grand empires with complicated hierarchies and bureaucracies, and yet be

essentially no more than a giant household or aggregate of households gathered around the central cell of the royal house. Its entire vital functioning, the meaning of what takes place there, need never transcend the household and its cyclic rotation of birth, reproduction, and sustenance, together, to be sure, with the inevitable complementary movement of continuous preservation of life through work and production. Annalistics captures the past as something important for the successful future comportment of the grand household which cares for itself in this sense; it is primarily composed of ritualistic writings, cultomantic records, observations of what is fortunate and unfortunate in events and acts. As long as humans live in such a way that this vital cycle of acceptance and transmission, of the preservation and securing of life, exhausts the meaning of what is done, we can say that it moves in the rhythm of perennial return, even though in reality tradition functions, inventions take place, and the style of life changes to the point of producing a change as fundamental as the collective memory just mentioned.

Even though the life of such societies is focused on the acceptance and maintenance of life, even though it is rooted in the immediacy of being human, for which openness itself is not revealed or life problematic (as we sought to portray it in the preceding essay)—such life centered on subsistence is not without the third movement of life, that of truth, though without the explicitly thematic orientation characteristic of a historical epoch. Precisely because humanity here lives only in order to live, not to seek deeper, more authentic forms of life; precisely because humans are focused on the movement of acceptance and preservation, this entire life remains something of an ontological metaphor.

We distinguish three fundamental movements of human life, each of which has its original form, its (thematic or athematic) meaning, its own temporality indicated by the predominant temporal dimension: the movement of acceptance, the movement of defense, and the movement of truth.[1] The movement of acceptance consists in the human need to be accepted and

introduced into the world, since the human entry into the realm of open, individuated being has the character of something prepared and fitted together (*harmonía*). For most things—elements, natural entities, realities not created by the human hand, indeed for most of animate being—acceptation has no inner significance; fitting in is here, in modern biological terms, a mechanical adaptation. The being of humans, their entry among individuals in the vastness of the universe, cannot be like the being of such existents—i.e., being in such a way that they would be incapable of being affected by it in their very core, so that being would be a matter of "indifference" (that is, neither indifferent nor non-indifferent, but simply lacking all meaning for them). Their being is non-indifferent from the start; that is, they "sense" their strangeness, they are sensitive to their "un-rightness," to their inauthenticity (*adikia*) and demand "justice" (*dikē*), actually finding it in the good will of their kin who accepted this new existence even before it was in a full sense present; accepted it already by existing together and so constituting the potential fold of space into which a new existence can be brought. Human acceptance is that *didonai dikēn kai tisin allēlois tēs adikias* ("according right to each other and putting aside unrightness") of which the ancient fragment of Anaximander speaks.[2] *Adikia* is that initial key to understanding with which an existence "positions itself" with respect to the lightning of individuation, of entry into the universe. The *adikia* it feels—the penetration, the onset—is compensated by others who accept it and constitute the world for it as the warm and kindly hearth, symbolizing the keeping of the flame of life. At the same time, *adikia* is compensated in turn, with regard to the others, by the existence that has been accepted. This compensation takes place in all to whom this existence is devoted, whom it loves and whom it itself accepts in turn.

Now, it is clear that the second movement, that of defense (which could also be called the movement of self-surrender) is necessarily correlated with the first. We can only accept the other by risking ourselves, by attending to the other's needs no

less than our own, by *working*. Work is essentially this self-disposal of ourselves as being at the disposal of others; it has its source in the factual dependence of life on itself which is precisely what makes life an ontological metaphor. It is not possible to *be*, that is, to carry out the onset into the universe of individuated things, without the movement of acceptation and self-surrender: *dikē kai tisis* ("justice and retribution"). As soon as we become links in the chain of acceptation, we are *eo ipso* potential participants in work; already the child prepares for it; this preparation is already itself incipient work.

The fundamental trait of work, however, is that it is involuntary; we accept it under duress, it is hard, it is a burden. The harmony, the fitting together without which we cannot be, is *palintonos harmonie*, a linkage of opposites.[3] Life is inescapably bound with a burden, which means that *tisis tēs adikias* ("retribution for injustice") simultaneously itself engenders *adikia*. If we want to live, we have no choice. The fundamental choice, to live or not to live, thus bears within it a burden; it is this burden which then finds further, more tangible expression in the unfree, laborious character of work.

The burden which is thus at the basis of the finite placement of humans amid the universe of what-is, of their "intrusion" among existents, points, however, to an *alleviation*, to a relief. The burden which humans accept and which inevitably accompanies them throughout life is itself accepted in an atmosphere of alleviation; the rhythm and interpenetration of burden and relief are the scale of the sense of life on which we oscillate as long as we live. Alleviation can assume various modes, ranging from a mere pause and momentary forgetting to the forms of the ecstatic and the orgiastic. In the utter lightness of euphoria (the word itself points to a movement that is unhampered and takes place with total ease) it is as if all burden disappeared, we are borne as if by a whirlwind to which we yield without reservation. The movement of acceptation, though, includes the ecstasy represented by *erōs*: it is at once the surrender that means acceptance, which includes as well the will to be accepted—thus the creation of a refuge that makes possible the

acceptance of a new existence, even if that is not its intent or focus—as well as that increasingly intense abandon that lets us touch upon the realm of the undifferentiated in ecstasy and participate in it as in the bliss of being—the bliss of which Zarathustra's *Nocturnal Hymn* sings.[4]

Now, it is characteristic of humans before history that they understand their entire life in terms of something like an ontological metaphor, that they do not differentiate between the night which is a fact of experience and night as the darkness out of which the lightning of being strikes; between the earth that bears fruit and nourishes and the earth that is the backdrop of all that is, of the world which is not identical with any single factual existent which, in turn, shows itself only against the backdrop of the world. For them, what-is and being, phenomena and the movement of their manifestation, converge on a single plane, reminiscent of the language of poetic metaphor: here, relations that elude common empirical experience are expressed with twists of such experience, though with the help of conjunctions, distinctions, and variations that are impermissible in the ordinary world and are not thematized as such. Indeed, thè lack of thematization is even greater here since the reader of poetical works anticipates metaphors as metaphors, as linguistic tropes, while mythical humans do not recognize in them the level of that which is being rendered and the level of the rendering itself; they do not distinguish between meaning and object, speech and that which is being said. Nonetheless this ontological metaphor manifests itself in something that cannot be explained by any theory of myth and mythology that starts out from the assumptions of a world cleft by the vagaries of metaphysical philosophy into an opposition between sense experience and more or less rational constructs. Such a theory cannot come to terms with the prehistorical in a positive sense (that is, without leading to amputations or yielding to mysticism); for it is clearly manifest that, even if prehistoric humanity is no less capable of doubting and criticizing than the historical humans of the scientistic epoch, its world is full of gods and powers, and that all of this is accepted as obvious even though

no one has ever seen them or offered proof of their presence. The higher, the "transcendent," the "supernatural," known even if not experienced like ordinary experience, itself stems from the duality of the ontological metaphor. Amid the world of beings there manifests itself a presence of Being which is understood as higher, incommensurate, superior, but which is not yet clear *as such*. Rather, it shares with beings the same region of one and the same world in which everything is simultaneously and indistinguishably manifested and concealed.

Thus it is evident that in the "natural world" of prehistoric humans the movement of truth makes itself felt as well, though it remains thematically subordinated to the movements of acceptance and defense (or disposing) of the self. The movement of truth affirms itself precisely in this predominance of powers within a "single" world; as a proper relation to manifestation as such—that is, to that which makes manifestation possible—it shows itself in the difference between the supernatural and the natural, the divine and the empirical. At the same time, the movement of truth is the source of art, the expression of its open, futural character, the character of a *that which is coming*; for the divine is that which opens all else, like the Earth and the Heavens, though it itself is not among the things that have already presented themselves to us—it is in that sense that the divine is always "on the way." It is to this that humans relate in image, dance, and song. By contrast, the movement of acceptation, the onset into the world which contains the opposites of *adikia/dikē*, burden/alleviation, is grounded essentially in the past; the movement of defense and self-disposal in the present. Understandably, each of these movements contains within it the whole of temporality, without which it would not be a movement; yet in each there holds sway a different "extasis," a different "horizon." The clearest illustration of the temporality of the movement of acceptation is perhaps the example of the ancient patriarchal family of Hellenic or Roman antiquity: the father, raising up from the ground the infant laid at his feet, carries out an act of acceptation which bears within it a relation to all the horizons of temporality—he sees in this act, a decision

of life or death, not only the possibilities of the child but the possibility of his own existence in it, his own finitude. All of that, however, is included in the continuity of the *lars* of the home whose existence is the point of departure for the whole act of acceptation and is that to which the circling of the movement of acceptation returns.

Thus as long as humans move in the sphere of "mere life" and its concerns, intrinsic to which is the assurance of the sustenance of the entire *familia*, then "belief" in the gods is the only way to dwell in the world and to understand the universe, the sole truth appropriate to it. (The anthropology of the Left Hegelians shows a sense for this when it gropes around the human family for the secret of the protofoundations of religion. However, it blocks its access to the problem by adopting from idealism the doctrine that "having a view"[5] is the fundamental mode of the mediation of humans and the world, as well as the doctrine that alienation is the source of the objectification of these "views.") Now the question is: to what and to what extent does the realm of the divine extend in a given world? Not surprisingly, it involves in the first place all that has to do with the order, sustenance, and organization of society, for it is precisely that which constitutes the privilege of the gods, and there is no barrier that would separate off human society from the universe. In fact, we see that the earliest empires are theocracies with divine rulers or rulers in the role of managers of divine households—either way, these rulers mediate between the divine and the human. For that reason there can be no substantive separation or difference between the empire and the universe. Pharaoh commands not only the labor of humans but the regular course of the floods; the Emperor of China is as responsible for natural catastrophies as he is for social ones; the great king of Persia gets along with the gods of all of his subject nations; of Xerxes it is said that he had the Hellespont whipped for disobedience. (Later, when Plato designs the true commonwealth, the community of philosophers, on the basis of the universe of divine Ideas, it means something completely different, even if this ideal universe is

recommended as a model to imitate; sensible reality—and the community of the state is such a reality—can never be integrated into the Ideal. The foundation of the community upon Ideas exempts it precisely from continuity with the rest of the sensory world; in this respect, in raising the community of the state out of "nature," Plato will follow the tradition of the Greek *polis.*)

It seems, of course that the events of high civilizations with their written traditions differ basically from the events of "natural" humanity, since writing and its transmission indicates a will to conscious preservation of a complex system of life, a determination to oppose all change—something comparable to an effort at human regulation of the course of events, thus putting forth a hitherto absent goal. Yet the will to tradition, an immutable tradition, precedes writing; writing is not itself a new goal but simply a new, extremely effective medium for the petrification of life forms. The will to permanence is essentially sacral and ritualistic, having to do with a fundamental characteristic of prehistoric truth, i.e., the cosmic-ontological metaphor: originally, writing is, above all, related to the empire and to rituals; these are realms which, as we tried to indicate earlier, are closely bound to one another. It is customary to divide the earliest written texts of the Near East (including the Mycenaean) into palace texts, juridical texts, literary texts, and letters; that does not mean that, for example, palace texts should be considered profane in our sense of that word. The ruler who knows and directs carries out a superhuman activity, creating order and life; he not only makes possible the life of the society as a whole, but shelters a certain part of the earth from devastation. Thus writing, with its petrified memory, does not arise in the context of human acts aimed at endowing life with a new meaning. Nonetheless, it brings about a new presence of the past and the possibility of the far-ranging reflection that is exhibited in poetry and its immense influence throughout the entire *oikoumenē*[6] of the time. For these reasons it is wise to distingush three levels of human events: the nonhistorical, which occur in the anonymity of the past in a purely natural

rhythm; the level of prehistory on which a collective memory is preserved in the form of a written tradition; and the level of history proper. Prehistory, however, is the presupposition of history not only for reasons having to do with the presence of the past in explicit documents but, first and foremost, because history represents a distancing from and a reaction against the period of prehistory; it is a rising above the level of the prehistorical, an attempt at a renewal and resurgence of life.

In an article that appeared in French, "La transcendence de la vie et l'irruption de l'existence,"[7] and was not included in the collection *Dasein und Dawesen*, Oskar Becker seeks to divide the doings of human life into three levels analogous to some extent to what we are presenting here. He recognizes a "basal civilization" which, though unable to escape it, breaks the "circle of the present situation" of animate life by introducing into it through language and tool usage existence with its horizons of retention and anticipation, though solely for the purpose of sustaining life in its "small rhythm," without far reaching goals. Secondly he recognises a "low civilization" which he characterizes, with reference to Schelling,[8] as the intrusion of freedom (as freedom for evil, an intrusion of sensual passion and of *libido dominationis*, together with the awareness of guilt as it shows up in Genesis and in Babylonian poetry), but also, with reference to Freud's dominance of the "pleasure principle." Finally, he recognizes the historical age proper, in which the principal theme is the unfolding of the possibility basic to human beings, to win or lose themselves.

It does not seem appropriate to distinguish the rise of the great empires (and of "lower civilizations" in Becker's sense) from primordial humanity by the intrusion of a "freedom to evil," by the new dimension of passion and guilt. The early empires do not differ from natural humanity by any new dimension of human life not present on the preceding level, in the way that the human level of speech and tool use differs from animal life forms. The early empires differ only in following the same aims *in an organized manner*, attributing to human existence the same meaning of common sustenance

which purely natural humans attribute to it randomly, instinctually. The impression of something radically new in the rise of the great empires of the ancient Orient is due in part to their making use of what gestated through the long neolithic period, preparing humans for the settled mode which became organized and crystallized in empires. However, the overall meaning and direction given to the doings of humans remained constant—the transmission and preservation of life, life itself in its self-consumption and reconstitution—or, in a traditional image, the preservation of the flame of life. Still, the great empires do represent an essential propaedeutic for a different conception of life's meaning. This new way, to be sure, does not develop in them; yet the aggregation of individuals, their organized interdependence, their ongoing interaction and verbal communication, the human mode of making manifest what presents itself, all create a possible room for living beyond oneself, for legend, for glory, for endurance in the memory of others. Organized life generates the foundation for a human immortality or at least for what comes nearest to it. Insofar as organization needs to be reinforced by the written word, writing, too, is a precondition of this higher stage where life relates explicitly to memory, to others, to life among them and in them, beyond the limits of one's own generative continuum.

Here, then, where life is no longer its sole own purpose but where there is the possibility of living for something else, lies a rupture which is not merely quantitative. Hannah Arendt pointed to this rupture in her profound reflections on the role of labor (and subsequently of work) in human life by way of its primordial opposition to political life.[9] Because the family is the original locus of labor, political life, life in the *polis,* initially unfolds on the necessary foundation of the family *oikos* (house, household). Yet in the contradiction between its self-enclosed generative privacy and the will to public openness there is already a continuity, generated and maintained by free human activity. This new human possibility is based on the mutual recognition of humans as free and equal, a recognition which must be continuously acted out, in which activity does not have

the character of enforced toil, like labor, but rather of the manifestation of *excellence*, demonstrating that in which humans can be in principle equal in competition with each other. At the same time that means living fundamentally not in the mode of *acceptance* but of *initiative* and preparation, ever *seeking the opportunity* for action, for the possibilities that present themselves; it means a life in active tension, one of extreme risk and unceasing upward striving in which every pause is necessarily already a weakness for which the initiative of others lies in wait. This new mode is protected from the unfreedom of natural cyclicity by the domestic security offered by the *oikos*, the household that provides for life's needs; as protection against its own inner trend to rest, routine, and relaxation it has the stimulus of the public openness which not only offers opportunities but also ever lies in wait to seize them.

Arendt contrasts labor, preventing the extinction and decay of life which consumes without establishing anything of permanence, with work which builds a firm, permanent structure of life, shelter, and community, the indispensable places of a home. Something fundamentally different arises on this foundation, freeing humans from mere self-consumption and dissolution in transience—a life that freely defines itself so that it could define itself also in the future and in others, independently of that foundation. From that moment on this life is essentially and in its very being distinct from life in acceptation; here life is not received as complete as it is, but rather transforms itself from the start—it is a *reaching forth.*

It is, however, essential for such reaching forth that it neither considers itself nor is a small island in an accepted life but, on the contrary, that it justifies and grounds all acceptance, all passivity. While political life draws its free possibilities from the home and its work, the home in turn cannot exist without the community which not only protects it but gives it meaning. Political life as life in an urgent time, *in a time to* . . . , this constant vigilance is at the same time a permanent uprootedness, lack of foundation. Here, life does not stand on the firm ground of generative continuity, it is not backed by the dark

earth, but only by darkness, that is, it is ever *confronted* by its finitude and the permanent precariousness of life. Only by coming to terms with this threat, confronting it undaunted, can free life as such unfold; its freedom is in its innermost foundation the freedom of the undaunted. To be sure, one might object that this is a part of the life of any warrior on whatever level, even the most "natural"; however, warriors prior to the emergence of political life find their support in a meaning woven into the immediacy of life, fighting for their home, family, for the continuum of life to which they belong—in them they have their support and goal, those provide them with the shelter from the danger they need; in contrast to that stands the goal of a *free* life as such, one's own or that of others; it is, essentially, an unsheltered life.

Life unsheltered, a life of outreach and initiative without pause nor ease, is not simply a life of different goals, contents, or structures rather than a life of acceptance—it *is* differently, since it itself opens up the possibility for which it reaches; while *seeing* this liberation, both the dependence of the one and the free superiority of the other, sees what life is and can be. Without aspiring to the superhuman, it becomes freely human. That, however, means life on the boundary which makes life an encounter with what there is, on the boundary of all that is where this whole remains insistent because something quite other than individual entities, interests, and realities within it inevitably emerges here.—Such life does not seek to escape its contingency, but neither does it yield to it passively; since it has glimpsed the possibility of authentic life, that is, life as a whole, the *world* opens itself to it for the first time—it is no longer merely an involuntary background against which that which concerns us shows itself; rather, it itself can now stand forth, as the whole of that which opens up against the black backdrop of closed night. This whole now speaks to humans *directly*, free of the muting effect of tradition and myth, only by it do they seek to be accepted and held responsible. Nothing of the earlier life of acceptance remains in peace; all the pillars of the community, traditions, and myths, are equally shaken, as are all the answers

that once preceded questions, the modest yet secure and soothing meaning, though not lost, is transformed. It becomes as enigmatic as all else. Humans cease to identify with it, myth ceases to be the word of their lips. In the moment when life renews itself *everything* is cast in a new light. Scales fall from the eyes of those set free, not that they might see something new but that they might see in a new way. It is like a landscape illuminated by lightning, amid which humans stand alone, with no support, relying solely on that which presents itself—and that which presents itself is everything without exception. It is the moment of creative dawning, "the first day of the creation," mysterious and more pressing for enfolding and bearing with it the astonished.

That means that the renewal of life's meaning in the rise of political life bears within it the seed of philosophical life as well—if Plato and Aristotle are right in saying that *thauma archē tēs sofias* ("wonder is the beginning of wisdom").[10] Aristotle, to be sure, also tells us that the lover of myths is also a philosopher in a way; though he will be one only if he seeks to awaken a sense of wonder, of awe over what *actually* is; the wonder of being is no fable, it manifests itself only to those who dare come to the boundary of night and day into the gate to which *dikē* holds the key, and such a daring one is at the same time *eidōs phōs*,[11] the human who knows.

Arendt offers a powerful interpretation of the passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics* that deals with the fundamental possibilities of free life (*apolausis*, *bios politikos* and *bios filosōfikos*)[12] from the perspective of liberation (from life's privacy with its bondage to the self-consumption) by life in the *polis*: political life at a stroke confronts humans with the possibility of the totality of life and of life as a totality. Philosophical life grafts itself to this trunk and brings forth what is enclosed within it. Perhaps, though, from these reflections, based on Aristotle's distinction of the active life, we could deduce the very beginning of history in the proper sense of the word. We can speak of history where life becomes free and whole, where it con-

sciously builds room for an equally free life, not exhausted by mere acceptance, where after the shaking of life's "small" meaning bestowed by acceptance, humans dare undertake new attempts at bestowing meaning on themselves in the light of the way the being of the world into which they have been set manifests itself to them.

These reflections should not be understood as an idealization of the Greek *polis*, as if it arose from the spirit of selfless devotion to "the common good," analogous to the perspective of the guardians, as it is postulated—not described—in Plato's *Republic*. For one, the genesis of the *polis* is not a process that can be precisely localized, attributed to these or those individuals; anonymous assumptions, contingencies of particular situations play a role here that cannot be quantified. Until the Persian Wars, for instance, the Athenian *polis* is something that crystallizes gradually in conflicts with its neighbors as well as in the struggles of political parties in which *tyrannis*, opposed to the spirit of the *polis*, plays anything but a minor role.[13] Yet precisely the circumstance that the *polis* arises and sustains itself amid internal and external struggles, that it is *inter arma* that it finds its meaning and that long-sought word of Hellenic life, is characteristic for this new formation and new form of life. Here, in very specific conflicts on a modest territory and with minimal material means is born not only the Western world and its spirit but, perhaps, world history as such. The Western spirit and world history are bound together in their origins: it is the spirit of free meaning bestowal, it is the shaking of life as simply accepted with all its certainties and at the same time the origin of new possibilities of life in that shaken situation, that is, of philosophy. Since, however, philosophy and the spirit of the *polis* are closely linked so that the spirit of the *polis* survives ultimately always in the form of philosophy, this particular event, the emergence of the *polis*, has a universal significance.

We can find evidence of the link between philosophy and the spirit of the *polis* among the protophilosophers themselves.

The spirit of the *polis* is a spirit of unity in conflict, in battle. One cannot be a citizen—*polites*—except in a community of

some against others, and the conflict itself gives rise to the tension, the tenor of the life of the *polis*, the shape of the space of freedom that citizens both offer and deny each other—offering themselves in seeking support and overcoming resistance. Action itself, however, is in turn basically nothing but struggle, defense against others and attack whenever an opportunity arises. In such continual conflict and struggle there arises in the *polis* a power that stands above the opposed parties and on which the meaning and glory of the *polis* depends: the lasting fame among mortals, *kleos aenaon thneton*.[14]

Heraclitus speaks of that which is "common to all," which "nourishes" all "human law," that is, the *polis* in its general functioning and particular decisions.[15] What though is this divine law? "We need to know that *polemos* is what is common, and that conflict is the right (*dikē* = *eris*), and that everything takes place through *eris* and its impetus."[16]

Polemos is what is common. *Polemos* binds together the contending parties, not only because it stands over them but because in it they are at one. In it there arises the one, unitary power and will from which alone all laws and constitutions derive, however different they may be.

Yet the power generated by strife is no blind force. The power that arises from strife is a power that knows and sees: only in this invigorating strife is there life that truly sees into the nature of things—*to phronein*. Thus *phronēsis*, understanding, by the very nature of things, cannot but be at once common and conflicted. To see the world and life as a whole means to see *polemos*, *eris*, as that which is common; *xunon esti pasi to phroneein*: "insight is common to all."[17]

To speak, to lend words to the insight into the common origin means to speak "with understanding" (*xun noō*).[18] That, though, means "to accompany things with such words as will divide each according to the way it is, and to tell how it is with them."[19] To delimit a thing according to its being, however, means to see it in terms of the way it enters into openness (the realm of the individuated cosmos) by emerging out of darkness; it means to see the lightning of being over all that is, the

open night of what-is. That, though, is the work of the one who is wise, the work of the philosopher. In the philosopher all *aretē*, all excellence, (the mark of free life characteristic of the *politēs*) is gathered. "*Sōphronein* is the greatest *aretē* and wisdom is to say what is uncovered (*ta alētheia*) and to do what is thus understood in its fundamental nature."[20]

Polemos, the flash of being out of the night of the world, lets everything particular be and manifest itself as what it is.[21] Thus the greatest contradiction cleaves together in a unity which is above all, which manifests itself in all and governs all. Humans, however, encounter this One[22] and become wise only when they themselves act, accomplishing their deeds in the atmosphere of freedom ensured by the law of the *polis* which, in turn, nurtures itself on the one law of the Divine[23] whose name is *polemos*.

Thus *polemos* is at the same time that which constitutes the *polis* and the primordial insight that makes philosophy possible.

Polemos is not the destructive passion of a wild brigand but is, rather, the creator of unity. The unity it founds is more profound than any ephemeral sympathy or coalition of interests; adversaries meet in the shaking of a given meaning, and so create a new way of being human—perhaps the only mode that offers hope amid the storm of the world: the unity of the shaken but undaunted.

Thus Heraclitus sees the unity and the common origin of philosophy and the *polis*.

Therewith the question of the origins of history seems decided. History arises and can arise only insofar as there is *aretē*, the excellence of humans who no longer simply live to live but who make room for their justification by looking into the nature of things and acting in harmony with what they see—by building a *polis* on the basis of the law of the world which is *polemos*, by speaking that which they see as revealing itself to a free, exposed yet undaunted human (philosophy).

Thus the history of the West and history as such have a truly dignified beginning, one which shows not only where the great rupture between prehistoric life and history is situated, but also

on what level historical life must sustain itself if it is not to succumb to external and internal threats. This beginning then reaches out to future historical outreach, especially by teaching what humankind does not wish to comprehend, in spite of all the immense hardness of history, does not want to understand, something that perhaps only latter days will learn after reaching the nadir of destruction and devastation—that life need be understood not from the viewpoint of the *day*, of life merely accepted, but also from the view of strife, of the night, of *polemos*. The point of history is not what can be uprooted or shaken, but rather the openness to the shaking.

At this point we need to come to terms with two conceptions of history derived from the creators of phenomenology which seem deeply different from ours because both speak explicitly of philosophy alone as the starting point and, in a sense, the core of history.

Edmund Husserl speaks of European history as a teleological nexus whose axis is the idea of rational insight and life based on it (i.e., a life in responsibility). In his view, this teleological idea distinguishes European culture from all others; at the same time, the idea of a life in reason, the insight-ful life, singles out Europe from among other cultures as the essential among the contingent. Insight and reason are the "inborn" idea of humanity as such; thus the European spirit is at the same time universally human. European culture and civilization are universally valid; the others only particular, however interesting they may be.

From that it appears to follow that history as an unfolding and gradual realization of this teleological idea is essentially the history of Europe, and of the rest of the world only insofar as it enters the field of European culture. Another consequence appears to be that the beginning of history must coincide with the beginning of European culture; this is consistent with Husserl's speaking of Greek beginnings, understanding thereby the "original founding" of the European teleological idea in Greek philosophy.

At first glance this conception seems to revive the naive

rationalism of the eigtheenth century for which enlightenment, light, is the sole source of life. In truth, it is integral to the entire cast of Husserl's phenomenology and phenomenological philosophy. What meaning can history have within phenomenology? Phenomenology is a doctrine concerning not only the structure of what-there-is but also *that* it is, as well as how it manifests itself and why it appears to us the way it does. History can be nothing more nor other than the necessary skeleton of this unconcealment, of this appearing of what-is. This appearing can only culminate in the manifestation of its own nature, in revealing itself—and that is philosophy, not a specific philosophy but the very process of philosophizing. It is a part of the nature of things that what-is thus manifests itself not only rationally but through reason. Husserl's phenomenology is reminiscent less of Enlightenment rationalism than that of Hegel.

It is ironic that Husserl wrote the work which contains his phenomenological conception of history on the eve of the second global conflagration that definitively displaced Europe from its leading role in the world. It is true that at the same time it made European science and technology a global link. Yet European civilization became a global link in precisely that form which Husserl's *Crisis of the European Sciences* showed to be decadent, that in it a loss of meaning takes place, the loss of that very meaning-bestowing teleological idea that, for Husserl, makes up the inner, spiritual essence of Europe.[24]

Phenomenology cannot see history as something substantive, making it one of its central themes, without manifesting therein its entire basic conception, methodical as well as material. In the course of his intellectual career, Husserl increasingly stressed the genetic over static analysis, as well as the role of passive genesis, the genesis of all presumably merely given components of lived experience in internal time consciousness. Everything that is static points to a genesis and so to history. Thus history is the deepest content level which phenomenology can reach; yet if we understand history as something like free acting and deciding, or perhaps its fundamental

presuppositions, then we need to say that Husserl's genesis, though transcendental and precisely as transcendental, can know only those structures which can be grasped in the reflection of the impartial, disinterested spectator, that is, of a subjectivity that is fundamentally ahistorical in our sense of the term. If the "phenomenon" of phenomenology is the deep phenomenon—not the "vulgar" phenomenon that simply manifests itself, but rather its concealed enabling presuppositions in transcendental genesis—then we need to note that grasping it presupposes a fundamentally "ahistorical" subjectivity because it is a disinterested one. That involves further the very conception of reflection as grasping subjective structures by turning the objectifying regard "inward," to the "noetic" aspect—as if the act-structure, which is the original source of the opposition between "noesis" and "noema," were binding for all phenomena and as if intentionality were the final word concerning the subjectivity of the subject.

By contrast, Heidegger's conception is historical, not only in the sense that phenomenological analysis leads to a definite genesis but most of all in rejecting the disinterested spectator as a presupposition of phenomenologizing. Instead, it focuses on an interest in being as the starting point and the condition for understanding the deep phenomenon, the phenomenon of being. Thus that interest is the condition on the one hand of the revival of the ontological question on a phenomenological foundation and, on the other hand, of the right understanding of the significance of phenomenology in general.

For Heidegger phenomenology is not a content but a method, the name for an investigation which bases all its claims on direct manifestation and demonstration. That does not, however, mean that what it investigates is something self-evident, something obvious. Quite the contrary, the proper "phenomena" of phenomenology are originally concealed because they have to do not with existents which manifest themselves but with their being, with what makes them possible and with their mode of being which has yet to be brought to light. That "bringing to light," however, is possible precisely and only

because humans are not as alien to their relation to being—and so to being in general—as for instance natural objects or human artifacts. This relation is anything but disinterested; it is not and cannot be a mere observation report. That is precisely the meaning of the formula that humans in their being are *concerned* with their being. Their own being is given to them as a responsibility, not as a curiosity. Humans have to carry on their being, carry it out, and they are depending on whether they accept this task or seek to ease it, escaping from it and hiding it from themselves. We can also express that by saying that *Dasein* (= the nature of being human) is its own purpose. Evidently this initial analysis is already historical in a wholly different sense than Husserl's transcendental genesis. This "carrying out" that is not observation is not for that reason blind. It has its distinctive mode of seeing in which our "comportment," our practical dealing with the practical things of our surrounding world, is only the final, most noticeable component that stands out like the tip of an iceberg into our everydayness. The usual act-theory of intentional consciousness cannot clarify even this comportment and acting: it stresses or leaves only as much of it as can be noted by either a direct or internal glance. Actually this comportment is only a grasping of those possibilities, possibilities of a relation to oneself among things and by means of things which must already be accessible to us in some sense. They can be accessible, open only in an actual situation, in that factual "here" which is different for each one of us and in every moment. In it, mood sets the tone of our possible comportment toward that being amid which we have been set with respect to our ability of coming to terms with it. Thus this "primal fact of how we are" at a stroke, and nonintentionally, nonthematically opens for us the mysterious situatedness among things as well as that whole to which we ever relate, the whole of a relation to ourselves through the possibilities of encountering things and fellow humans. Yet just as this comportment always already presupposes the situatedness amid what we did not create, what must have been here already, so it also presupposes that we understand both that towards which

we comport ourselves and why we do so. Since practical understanding is primary and alone truly intelligible and since in it things are what "meet" or "suit" our possibilities, that in turn presupposes that possibilities as such, that is, as ours and still to come, as an intelligible, meaning-generating continuum, are already present. In the very "moment" when we are set among things, we hold before us this "schema" according to which we understand what there is. Thus again it is not an understanding and an explanation of what we encounter, some apperception which is continually synthesizing the formerly noted with the presently noted, but rather always sees the present already in the light of what is there "ahead of us," though not as an object but as that which "we are to grasp."

As we can see, comportment with respect to individual existents presupposes an understanding of a certain whole of being which is open to us in the "schema" of our possibilities, as well as felt as a whole in the feel of our disposition. Neither the schema nor our disposition are intentional objects nor anything autonomous, yet without them we cannot grasp concretely our life's task—we cannot, without them, grasp life as freedom and as originary history. Not intentionality but transcendence is the original trait of life which differentiates itself from the being of individual existents which have no concern for their being, thus do not exist for their own sake nor have any "for the sake of"—or have only a glimpse of it, as animals might. Transcendence, with its mutually required moments of disposition, projection, and comportment, is, however, the transcendence of humans towards the world, to the whole of what is brought to light, what is projected and to which there always belong existents who are like us—who are a relation—as well as those existents that lack this trait. The world, as Kant was the first to say, is neither a thing nor an aggregate of experienced things—not because it is a mere "deductive" idea incapable of being instantiated in experience but rather because it is given in the wholeness of transcendence, in this "original history," to use Heidegger's expression. The world is not the object of experience because it cannot be given, it is not an entity; by its very

nature it is not something that "exists." The transcendence towards the world, however, is originally not given by the activity of thought and reason, as it was for Kant; its foundation, rather, is freedom.

Thus in the conception of both of these phenomenologies we can note the age-old philosophical opposition between the primacy of the intellect or of freedom as constituting the inmost nature of human spirit, and the question of the philosophical grounding and nature of history is necessarily linked to it. Heidegger is a philosopher of the primacy of freedom and in his view history is not a drama which unfolds before our eyes but a responsible realization of the relation which humans are. History is not a perception but a responsibility. However, he does not understand freedom either as a *liberum arbitrium* or as a laxness in the realization of duty, but in the first place as a freedom of letting being be what it is, not distorting being. This presupposes not only an understanding for being but also a shaking of what at first and for the most part is taken for being in naive everydayness, a collapse of its apparent meaning to which we are led by the emergence of being itself in the form of the radical "no" and in the explicit posing of the question of being. The uncovering of being is the experience from which philosophy grows as the ever renewed attempt at life in truth. Freedom, in the end, is freedom for truth, in the form of the uncovering of being itself, of its truth, and not only of what-is (in the form of open comportment and the correctness of statements). Freedom is not an aspect of human nature but rather means that Being itself is finite, that it lives in the shaking of all the naive "certainties" that would find a home among what-is so that they would not need to admit to themselves that humans have no home other than this all-revealing and free being which for that very reason cannot "be" as particular existents are. It is Being in its mystery and wonder—that Being is. The uncovering of Being itself, however, takes place in philosophy and in its more primordial, more radical questioning. This uncovering thus inevitably brings it about that not only the range of accessible existents but the very world of a particular

epoch is subject to change. Since the rise of philosophy, history is more than aught else this inner history of the world as being, as distinct from what-is, yet as appropriate to it as the being of what is.

What is surprising about this opposition of the two phenomenologically proceeding philosophies is that for all that fundamental discrepancy of their starting points, perception here, freedom there, they both arrive at the idea of the central place of philosophy in history. And since both understand by philosophy the philosophy of the West, both arrive at the centrality of Europe in history.

History is not intelligible without free responsibility. Both philosophies know and acknowledge that. Yet only one sees the origin of responsibility in the purity of evidence, in the subordination of mere opinion to evidence; the other sees it in not closing our eyes to the demand of making a free road and place for freedom, for the being present which is set free of the ordinary and superficial forgetting of the mystery of the being of what is.

Whence that concurrence of the historical thesis of these two philosophies, so different in all else? Why do both consider philosophy so central that they see in it the true origin of history? The reason probably is that both are philosophies of truth: truth is their central problem which they have no intention of resolving from supposedly self-evident propositions but from phenomena, from that which presents itself. One, however, sees truth as perfect clarity which knows no obscure places, only questions susceptible to answers while the other, inspired by the finitude of being, is open to the eternal mystery of what-is, and which, precisely in this mystery, inspiring questions that remain questions,[25] seeks to preserve its fundamental truth, the uncovering of the being of what-is to which thus inevitably belongs its concealment, as the Greek expression *a-lētheia* expresses it.

Thus at its core Heidegger's philosophy is as closely linked to philosophical thought as Husserl's phenomenology. It is, however, better suited to serve as a starting point for

philosophizing about history, due to its point of departure from freedom and responsibility already in being human, not only in thought. At its center there are problems, like that of escaping from that fallenness into things, into the world with which the dominant contemporary philosophies of history are thoroughly engaged. As a philosophy of finite freedom and as a reminder of what stands above the world, making it possible, it is kin to idealism, but it provides a deeper and more "realistic" grounding for the historical outreach of humans because it is the only consistent doctrine capable of accounting for the autonomy of what-is against all kinds of subjectivism, including that which derives from the ordinary materialistic conception of the relation of object and subject as consisting in causal efficacy in the external world. Most of all, it can shed light on the nature of historical action and open our eyes to what history is all about. The reflections that follow will attempt to explicate several problems of older and contemporary history in light of motifs taken over from it. The author alone, to be sure, must bear responsibility for his deductions.

Third Essay: Does History Have a Meaning?

We often speak of the meaning of particular human events, of the meaning of life, of history, of various institutions, of democracy, without either defining or attempting to define the concept of meaning—evidently because, on the one hand, we sense we need such a concept but, on the other hand, it seems somehow self-evident. We need such a concept because all those matters are problematic and need to be explained and we are not indifferent to the divergence of possible explanations. The concept of meaning shares its (apparent) obviousness with all basic concepts which are so common that their nature resists the ordinary way of defining as the rules of definition in traditional logic would have it. Such are the concepts of being, of happening, of appearing. Meaning clearly belongs among such terms and it is undoubtedly its difficulty and at the same time its inescapability which leads us frequently to resort to a time-honored way of sparing ourselves closer analysis, which is to assume the self-evidence of such inescapable conceptual tools.

Our attempt at an analysis of meaning will set out from the relation between the concepts of meaning (sense) and significance (reference). Among logicians, it was Frege[1] for whom significance indicates an objective relation, meaning the conception of the object: a quadrangle and a paralellogram are two meanings with the same significance, like evening star and morning star. That shows that even logic could well use a distinction between the two terms, with meaning being linked more closely with the way we conceive of something and significance having

more objective connotations. On the other hand, it seems that—except in logic—we tend to restrict significance to the region of *logos* while meaning suggests something more real, pertaining for instance to feelings and actions; we speak of whether suffering has a meaning—rather than a significance, or of the meaning of a particular action, for instance the silence of German statesmen concerning their war aims during the first world war (distinguishing this sharply from the significance of this silence for the prolongation of the war and so on). Meaning is what enables us to understand that these goals had to be concealed—for instance a desire to change the entire existing world order: a significance for . . . follows from meaning so understood as its consequence. This is what justifies Heidegger's definition of meaning as that which makes something intelligible.[2] According to that, meaning would be something that offers a reason for another phenomenon, though not simply in the sense of a formal logical deduction, but in the sense of material intelligibility as well. This material intelligibility includes the motivation of an act but also that deeper background of living and acting we have in mind when we speak, for instance, of the meaning of suffering, the meaning of anxiety, the meaning of corporeity. In all these instances meaning is not something obvious but rather something we need to reach through an explanation which draws back whatever curtain at first keeps us from seeing it, what conceals, distorts, obscures it.

The motivation of an act poses the question of the relation between meaning and purposefulness. Fundamentally, the motive of an act is the purpose pursued by an agent and, further, the inclination from which that purpose follows. Hatred and the desire to eliminate the hated person are the motivation and purpose that dictate murder as a means towards that elimination as the purpose. Thus it is clear that every purposive action is meaningful, yet not every meaning is purposive or based on a purpose. A purpose is a causal connection which becomes meaningful by being taken up into the meaningful context of human motives and acts. Thus we cannot identify

meaning with purposefulness or attempt to explain the former by the latter. On the other hand, an action can be purposive and yet lose its (original) meaning: so it seems, for instance, that modern science with its unrelieved objectivism has lost its inner meaning and legitimates itself only by external purposes derived from its possible applications. Conversely, human acts can be purposeless or counterproductive and yet be meaningful: the pathological comportment of hysterics and neurotics generally has a meaning which can be understood, yet it is not purposeful. Mistakes we make in acting are understandable, yet they are not purposeful, though they presuppose a purpose and an (erroneous) choice of (inappropriate) ends.—To seek to derive meaning from purpose and purposefulness means to subordinate meaning to the category of causality since purpose can be understood, with Kant, as a mental causality. If, however, meaning is not reducible to purpose, we are then far more justified in believing that purpose is causality raised up to the region of the meaningful while the question whether that is the only mode of effectiveness of meaning remains open.

That brings up the question of the relation between meaning and value once more. Values such as truth, goodness, beauty are not of themselves purposes and goals though their realization can certainly become the goal and purpose of human action. Basically, though, values mean nothing other than that being is meaningful, and they indicate what "gives" it meaning: truth means that being is intelligible and accessible to understanding and explanation; beauty means that the emergence of being in the human world manifests the mystery of being as something perenially enchanting; goodness that the world may include an unselfconscious or self-forgotten favor and grace. So it is with the entire infinite variety of values that constantly address us, attract and repel us, and which "cause" it that for us, for the most part, being is not some indifferent occurrence but rather "speaks" to us, says something to us, is the object of positive or negative interest. Thus value is nothing but the meaningfulness of what-is formulated as if we were speaking of something autonomous, as if we had to do with

some "quality," as we used to call it, while in reality the point is that nothing can appear to us except in a meaningful, intelligible coherence, in the framework of our openness for the world, which means fundamentally that we are not in the world as indifferent observers, as witnesses, but that being in the world is the point of our being in its innermost sense.

In our context, the concept of value is important in virtue of a specific aspect—that which presents itself as something autonomous, as a positive existent that is what it is under all circumstances. Plato's Ideas of beauty and of the good "make" whatever there is beautiful and good to the extent that it participates in them. In that sense what-is may be problematic, Ideas cannot be. The meaningfulness of what-is is guaranteed even though individual existents can become worthless.

The meaningfulness of what-is remains intact as long as values themselves remain thus unproblematic—whether they are conceived, as in Plato, as that which bestows meaning on what-there-is, or as flowing from the perfection of God the Creator, as in Christian theology influenced by Neoplatonism. As long as value is understood as an eternal spring of meaningfulness, Idea, or God as that which bestows meaning on things, human acts, and events, it remains possible to interpret the experience of the loss of meaning as a flaw not in that which bestows meaning but of that on which it is bestowed. That is an advantage which represents a barrier against the nihilism of meaning. The weakness here lies in the need to have recourse to metaphysical concepts while meaning and its loss are phenomena of concrete experience. To have recourse to metaphysics means to treat meaning as something ready-made and to give up for good the question of its origin (not in a temporal-empirical but in a structural-philosophical sense).

It is different if we take the experience of the loss of meaning, which undeniably does occur in our life, in all seriousness. Then that experience indicates not only our inadequacy, our inability to grasp meaning, to understand it, but rather the radical possibility that all meaning may be lost, that we might confront the meaning's point zero. Things have no meaning for

themselves, rather, their meaning requires that someone "have a sense" for them: thus meaning is not originally lodged in what is but in that openness, in that understanding for them; an understanding, though, which is a process, a movement which is no different from the movement at the core of our life. Certainly, things are beautiful and true in themselves, but not for themselves: it is only we who have the possibility of bringing them into a relation to their own meaning because we are in such a way that our own life can become meaningful for our own selves while things are not endowed with this relation to themselves, "making no sense" in their case.

If so, is it not then we ourselves who bestow meaning on things? Is not our relation to them, mediated by our own relation to ourselves, a matter of "bestowing meaning on the meaningless"? Could it not mean then that if there is an experience of absence of meaning, it depends entirely on us and on the openness we are? And if we are closed up, so that things "mean nothing to us," is it not then that the bestowal of meaning falls silent and the world manifests a nothingness of meaning? And if it can be shown that this experience is at the same time the fundamental opening up for the wholeness of our lives, for the freedom of our own existence, does that not show even more forcefully that the origin of all meaning, its ground zero, is in us and in our power?

Still, the idea that we create meaning so that the meaninglessness or meaningfulness of what-is is in our power, runs counter to the phenomenally based idea of an openness for what-is and its meaning. In particular, the bestowal of meaning on things is not a function of our will and whim. It is not up to us, is not within our power to keep things from appearing meaningless under some circumstances and, hand in hand with that, to keep meaning from speaking to us from things if we are open to it. We are, though, no less open for the meaningful than for the meaningless, and it is the same beings which manifest themselves now as meaningful, now as meaningless, signifying nothing. What does that mean if not the *problematic nature* of all meaningfulness? What, though, is the significance of this

problematic nature if not that our very openness for things and for others warns us that we should not yield to the inclination to absolutize particular ways of understanding meaning and the meaningfulness appropriate to them?

Here a few comments about the relation between the concepts of meaning and of being might be in order. There is an extensive analogy as well as a profound difference between the two. Like meaning, so being, too, has the trait of pertaining on the one hand to those existents which by their very nature are possible only in relation to it and to those existents which, again by their very nature, are independent of such a relation. Just as it is those beings which are primordially related to their own being who bring the things that merely are into a relation with their being, by understanding them as something and subsequently by formulating propositions about them, so too it is the beings open for being who relate them to their integral meaning by understanding them in their significance, not only in an aesthetic contemplation but also in their practical activity. It has, however, been phenomenologically demonstrated that we achieve an explicit relation to being only by having things lose their significance for us, when they "lose their meaning." It would seem that the meaningfulness of things and our explicit approach to being, its uncovering, preclude each other. Being would stand out only where meaning ends and so would be by its very nature something meaningless.

W. Weischedel has shown that meaningfulness is never possible as something individual, characterizing this or that individual entity independently of any broader context.[3] Every individual meaning refers to a global meaning, every relative meaning to an absolute meaning. Because the meaning of things is inseparable from our openness for things and for their significance, we can say that wherever this openness is absent the world cannot speak to us and, as a result, human life as dwelling in the world is not possible. It follows further that human life is not possible without either a naive or a critically acquired confidence in an absolute meaning, a global meaning of the totality of what-is, of life and of events. Where human

life is confronted with absolute meaninglessness it can only surrender and give itself up. V. Mrštík therefore speaks of "that dreadful immobility of suicides."[4] The antinomy of meaning and meaninglessness, of meaning and being, seems so to suggest that life is only possible thanks to the perennial illusion of total meaning which certain experiences show precisely to be an illusion. Truth would thus prove fundamentally hostile to life, in an irreconcilable opposition and conflict with it.

We know that the conflict of truth and life is one of Nietzsche's fundamental theses, though the philosophical justification he offers for it is different. To be sure, for Nietzsche truth means precisely that absolute meaning which contradicts the nature of what is, which is the will to power, self-transcendence as the constant activity of life. In spite of this conceptual difference we can say that Nietzsche sensed the contradiction between the being of what-is and absoluteness of meaning, even though he does present this absolute meaning as something hostile to life, and so from our viewpoint incorrectly. This contradiction is for him a signal and a symptom of nihilism, the devaluation of the highest values, a decay of what hitherto had given life meaning. For him then the apparent solution is to embrace nihilism, proclaiming the world nonsensical in the name of a creative life which can so constitute a segment of what there is that it acquires a *relative* meaning.[5]

However, if our earlier analyses of the antinomy of being and meaning, meaning and meaninglessness are accurate, then it is impossible and illusory to resolve the problem of nihilism by a recourse to a relative and particular meaning. In its practical unfolding, life cannot rest on a relative meaning which itself rests on meaninglessness, since no relative meaning can ever render the meaningless meaningful but, rather, is always itself dragged into meaninglessness by it. An authentic life in utter nihilism, with the knowledge of the meaninglessness of the whole, is impossible, becoming possible only at the cost of illusions.

The theses of a nihilism so conceived, however, are no less dogmatic than the theses of a naive unbroken faith in meaning!

It is not just that scepticism consistently carried out must also include a scepticism about scepticism and so find itself in a lack of justification, at least pending definitive proof. We need also ask just what the phenomenon of a loss of meaning itself means. In Heidegger's analysis of our fundamental disposition, which is anxiety,[6] we learn that it presents the possibility and also—*albeit but for a moment*—the reality of a confrontation with nothingness. Why only for a moment? Because anxiety means nothing other than the moment of crisis from which we must either return to the world and that means to meaning and significance, or depart into "that dreadful immobility" of absolute, deep boredom, the *taedium vitae* from which there is no return. To return, however, does not mean to come back to things just as they were. They will never again be unproblematic, unbroken, as once they appeared. It is similar to and yet in a sense different from Plato's liberated cave dweller. He, too, must return, though it is not quite clear why. Here, by contrast, the return itself is something comprehensible because it means life itself. However, the stepping out of imprisonment, out of everyday preoccupation, does not here represent a discovery of the positive *par excellence*, of beings which are eternal and so free of all relativity, but rather the discovery of being beyond all existents and their significance, the being that is nothing existent but rather appears, from the standpoint of what is, as mere nothing, mere wonder—the wonder that there is being at all, that which makes possible that step back from all that is which makes human life what it is, a constant distancing from entities and possibilities in this space and in virtue of it a relation to them.

Passing through the experience of the loss of meaning means that the meaning to which we might perhaps return will no longer be for us simply a fact given directly in its integrity; rather, it will be a meaning we have thought through, seeking reasons and accepting responsibility for it. As a result, meaning will never be simply given or won once and for all. It means that there emerges a new relation, a new mode of relating to what is meaningful; that meaning can arise only in an activity

which stems from a searching lack of meaning, as the vanishing point of being problematic, as an indirect epiphany. If we are not mistaken, then this discovering of meaning in the seeking which flows from its absence, as a new project of life, is the meaning of Socrates's existence. The constant shaking of the naive sense of meaningfulness is itself a new mode of meaning, a discovery of its continuity with the mysteriousness of being and what-is as a whole.

It is not only individual life which, if it passes through the experience of loss of meaning and if it derives from it the possibility and need for a wholly different self-relation to all that is, comes to a point of global "conversion." Perhaps the inmost nature of that rupture—which we sought to define as that which separates the prehistoric epoch from history proper—lies in that shaking of the naive certainty of meaning which governs the life of humankind up to that specific transformation which represents a nearly simultaneous—and in a more profound sense really unitary—origin of politics and philosophy.

Prehistoric humanity is not particularly demanding in deciding what is meaningful—on the contrary, it is quite modest in its valuation of humans and of human life, yet the world seems to it in some sense orderly, justified. Experiences of mortality, of natural and social catastrophes, do not shake it. For life to be meaningful, it is enough to know that the gods have reserved the best for themselves: eternity in the sense of immortality. The worth of the universe is in no way less because it includes death, pain, and suffering, just as it is not disturbed by the perishing of plants and animals or by everything being subject to the rhythm of generation and perishing. That does not preclude, under extreme circumstances, the feeling of panic in the face of death when humans become aware, in the face of a dead friend, that the same fate awaits them, yet the quest for some other meaning, such as life eternal, is a matter for some demigod, not properly a human one. Humans—actual humans—return from such adventures to their human context, to their mate and child, to their grapevines and their hearth, to the small rhythms of their lives wedged amid the great storms

in which wholly different beings and powers rule and decide. The doings of humans have to do with making life secure for themselves and for those close to them. That is what their bondage to the perennial maintenance of life suggests to them—the humility which teaches them to reconcile themselves with the lot of servitude to life and the toil of never-ending labor. At that price humans can live at peace with the world and not see their life as meaningless, only as marginal with respect to what decides about it, as naturally meaningful as the lives of the flowers of the field and the beasts of the forests. Conversely, if it were not animated by humans, the world would be impoverished and joyless for truly cosmic beings. That is how the gods themselves speak, horrified by the devastation to which they subjected the world in the flood.

History differs from prehistoric humanity by the *shaking of accepted meaning*. We would be asking erroneously if we were to ask what caused this shock; it is as vain as asking what causes humans to leave their sheltered childhood for a self-responsible adulthood. As we can see from testimonies such as the panic of Gilgamesh at the death of his comrade, humans of the prehistoric epoch retreat to the accepted peace with the universe by restricting their wants, just as an adolescent can retreat into the safety of infantilism. The possibility of a shaking presses in on them but is rejected. They prefer a modest integration into the whole of what is, and their social existence in community is appropriate to it, not deviating from the whole and the forces that govern it. Even that which, or better, those who rule over the human realm are of a divine nature while humans proper are destined to their service while from them and through them they then receive all that they need, physically or meaningfully, for their existence. There is no specifically human region of beings that would be reserved for humans and their quest for responsibility for themselves, least of all is the human empire that. Whenever humans attempt to create such a region, the humility of accepted meaning that characterized humanity up to that point cannot persist. In accepting responsibility for themselves and others humans implicitly pose the

question of meaning in a new and different way. They are no longer content with the bondage of life to itself, with subsistence as life's content and service in the sweat of their brow as the lot of beings fated to episodicity and subordination. Thus the result of the primordial shaking of accepted meaning is not a fall into meaninglessness but, on the contrary, the discovery of the possibility of achieving a freer, more demanding meaningfulness.—This is then linked to that explicit awe before being as a whole, the awe-full realization that the totality of being *is*, which, according to ancient philosophers, is really the inmost pathos and origin of philosophy. Humans who do not remain in the humility of passively accepted meaning cannot be content with their fated lot and fundamentally linked with that is also that new possibility of relating to being and meaning which consists not in a predetermined, preaccepted answer but in questioning, and that precisely is philosophy. Questioning, however, presupposes the experience of mystery, of problematic being and this experience, which prehistoric humankind *avoids*, from which it takes refuge in the most profound, truth-laden myths, unfolds in the form of philosophy. Just as in acting politically humans expose themselves to the problematic nature of action whose consequences are unpredictable and whose initiative soon passes into other hands, so in philosophy humans expose themselves to the problematic being and meaning of what there is.

Thus in the historical epoch humankind does not avoid what is problematic but actually invokes it, promising itself from this an access to a more profound meaning than that which was proper to prehistorical humanity. In the community, the *polis*, in life dedicated to the *polis*, in political life, humans make room for an autonomous, purely human meaningfulness, one of a mutual respect in activity significant for all its participants and which is not restricted to the preservation of physical life but which, rather, is a source of a life that transcends itself in the memory of deed guaranteed precisely by the *polis*. It is in many ways a more risky, dangerous life than the vegetative humility on which prehistoric humanhood depends. Similarly,

that explicit questioning which is philosophy is by far more risky than the submerging conjecture which is myth. It involves greater risk because just as action is an initiative that yields itself the moment it becomes explicit—it puts itself in the hands of an unending contest of insights which lead the original intentions of those who think into the unsuspected and the unforeseen. It is more full of risk because it draws all of life, both individual and social, into the region of the transformation of meaning, a region where it must wholly transform itself in its structure because it is transformed in its meaning. That precisely, and naught else, is what history means.

Philosophy did not shake the modest meaning of the small, vital rhythm, dictated by the fascination with corporeal life and its bondage to itself, in order to impoverish humans but rather with the will to enrich them. Humans were to break free of the accepted meaning in order to rise to what had so far given meaning to the universe and to themselves as well as to other dependencies, to plants and animals, and what hitherto determined the meaning of things because it was unperishable and so divine. Philosophy offered a new vision of the imperishable—not merely the permanence, immortality, perenniality proper to the gods, but eternity. Eternity presented itself to philosophy first in the form of the imperishable wherein lies the genesis and perishing of all that is, its appearing, its waxing and waning, its fall into darkness—in the form of *phusis*.[7] To its night belongs the dawning of the *cosmos*, of the order of things as that which does not diminish but rather accentuates the mystery of being and beings. However, just as the life of the free *polis* was granted but a short time to unfold in its free daring, fearlessly aiming for the unknown, so also philosophy, aware of its bond with the problem of the *polis* and sensing in the germ already its perils and perishing, was led by a striving for a definitive and new bestowal of meaning to see in that darkness only a lack of light, the night as a waning of the day. It was led to become, in the continuous clarity of definitive certainty that runs through all theory, a perception of being in which its meaning is exhausted in a new definitive statement.

From the moment that the perishing of the *polis* had already been decided, philosophy transformed itself into what was to be its image for millenia, transforming itself into metaphysics in Plato and Democritus, into metaphysics in two modes, from above and from below, a metaphysics of the *logos* and the Idea on the one hand, a metaphysics of things in their sheer thinghood on the other, both pretending to a definitive clarity and a definitive explanation of things, both grounded in that model of clarity represented by the discovery of mathematics, that germ of the future transformation of philosophy into a science.

There is a bond between that mathematical theme, the theme of a truth seen once and for all time, precisely and by anyone under any circumstances, and the theme of Plato's metaphysical thought which is termed *chorismos* and means a separation, an abyss between the true world, accessible to the precise and rigorous insight of reason, and the approximate, apparent, impressionistic world defying a rigorous grasp which our ordinary experience treats as the only reality—our surroundings, the world around us. This view, at first strange, even bizarre, proclaiming as true reality something of which sound common sense and the overwhelming majority of humans know nothing, is actually historically one of the most influential metaphysical themes without which we would today not have not only doubtful disciplines like theology but primarily all the modern sciences, especially mathematical natural science and all the far-reaching applications thereof. We might even say that Plato exceeds Democritus and surpasses him precisely in this conception. All appearance to the contrary, modern science follows Plato more than it does Democritus.

In historical terms, however, the metaphysical duality of Plato and Democritus is most important: it means that from the beginning metaphysics already assumes two forms rather than one, and that these two will soon be joined by a third, fundamentally different form, that of Aristotle. Thus philosophy in its metaphysical form does shed that mystery which was the origin of the shock which gave rise to it—but the mystery catches up to it in the form of the mystery of the plurality of

metaphysical concepts, fundamentally different perceptions of the nature of what there is as such.

Plato's teaching demonstrates the close relation between metaphysical philosophy and politics by setting as its foremost task the construction of a state wherein philosophers, humans determined to live in truth, will be able to live without becoming entangled in a conflict equally deadly for them and for it. It is Aristotle who ultimately presents the first conceptual foundation of politics on the basis of the *polis*; but it will remain Plato's merit that even where this basis will be set aside in the life of the West—as in fact happened in the Hellenistic era and in the transition of the Roman *civitas* into a principality[8]—the state will still remain something separated from the rest of the world by a sharp divide, for the state will belong to the context of the "true" world and will derive the justification of its institutions and actions therefrom.

The most persistent experience of this period is the awareness that philosophy cannot provide human life with a higher meaning which would be entirely positive, clearly intelligible, and free of the mystery engendered by the shaking of the unquestioned primordial meaning. It is the awareness that metaphysics is misleading, that in place of the certainty it promises and humans hope for it leads to doubt. This is the period when humans, deprived of the practical meaning of life in the *polis*, turn inward, seeking there what they did not find in the *polis*—and that means also in the cosmos, which is both a part and an image of the *polis*. Between humans and the cosmos a barrier of mistrust arises, which also affects philosophy, the organ of meaningfulness. The significance of the Christian experience in history is now this: what the philosophical claim of a firm *epistēmē*, denied by scepticism, cannot warrant, what humans cannot achieve with their most strenuous efforts, is easy for God. Faith, God's word addressed to humans and the response to this word, displaces the relation to the *cosmos* as of secondary importance and ultimately as unimportant. Christian theology seemed not at all bothered that the explication of God's address to humans took place in the sphere of the tran-

scendental *chorismos* posited long ago for a wholly different purpose by Plato's metaphysics. Divine transcendence, whose conceptual foundations undoubtedly do not lie in Israel's treasury of ideas, is an inheritance of the "true world" formulated once by Plato and transformed theologically by Aristotle. The Christian faith is not a meaning sought by humans and autonomously found by them, but is rather dictated from that world. That is why it fundamentally contains also something that we do not encounter in Greek life in this form, the realization of the misery of humans incapable of generating meaning themselves and of bestowing it on themselves—an element which the Christian posture shares with ancient scepticism though in a more radical form and without that resignation which characterizes scepticism. Christians coming face to face with the human poverty of meaning, absolute and global, do not give up but assert their faith the more energetically, the more graphically that poverty is presented.

Thus the question of meaning is resolved positively by dismissing philosophy and by countering scepticism with the word from an otherwise inaccessible "true" world. On this basis there grows a new community and a new way of coming to cognitive terms with the totality of what-there-is. It is a new community, which, to be sure, is no longer simply the work of humans but in which humans do participate freely. It is not only a community of humans with each other, a mutual recognition in which they guarantee each other a spiritual perpetuation in the memory of glory. It is, rather, a community of humans with God who is their eternal memory and the perception of their essential spiritual being. It is a community in which, for all its hierarchy, all humans are equal before the face of the ultimate "true" reality; in which they are thus true fellow participants in a meaningfulness which they did not create but which they are called to bring about.

This conception of a new community naturally offers a whole range of potential historical embodiments. In its oldest form it represents a resolution of the moral dilemma of the Roman Empire whose existence, life within it, and duties

assumed towards it required a higher, absolute, justification. The Constantinian model, wherein secular and spiritual communities coincided so that the Ciceronian idea that the ideal state, the "state of true being," and the Roman *res publica* are one and the same,[9] achieves a monumental realization on a new dogmatic foundation and on the level of Roman voluntarism, is just one possible embodiment, though one whose effects, albeit in a secularized form, are still being felt today. — Not even Islam is wholly devoid of kinship with the idea of the sacred community of true being, at least in the minds of some of its philosophical representatives who sought to link the idea of prophecy, with its relation to the empire of Arabic law, to Plato's teachings concerning the philosopher-statesman (Alfarabi, Avicenna.)[10] Most important and most fruitful, though, is the bourgeoning of this theme in the context of the mediaeval West where it constitutes a problem of its own, focusing the thought of politically and historically engaged thinkers as well as of clerics. Here the actual framework of meaningful life is no longer simply given, as the world-state was for a Roman in the time of the late Empire or the empire of Islamic law for Islam: over the centuries, the relation of the earthly city and the true city is resolved in different ways on the basis of the same fundamental belief—though with different conceptions of the relation of this faith to other natural aspects and potencies of being human.

Here, then, we need to grasp the new place and significance which metaphysics assumes in the complex of Christian faith and doctrine. It may be true that it ceased to be the locus where the meaning of the whole of what there is is to be sought and where we can assume we shall autonomously find it. The significance of metaphysical thought and metaphysical inquiry, however, becomes that, within the framework provided by faith and *guaranteed* thereby, it is possible to some extent to come to understand what faith offers. Rational cognition thus reaches transcendent goals without fear of going astray, while on the other hand we can devote ourselves to all speculative daring without being led to the regions of

scepticism where meaninglessness lurks. Reason as the natural organ for the understanding of truth loses its place of pride in life, but we might claim that this loss is at the same time a gain: for it gains firm foundation, certainty, and with it daring.

The mediaeval universe is at first spatially finite, still under the influence of ancient conceptions, though it tends to spatial infinity; it is, however, definitely finite in time and its time is derived from the history of salvation which belongs fundamentally to its conception of the meaning of life and history—enclosed by the creation, the fall, salvation, and judgment.

European humanity has become so accustomed to this Christian conception of the meaning of history and of the universe that it cannot let go of some of its substantive traits even where fundamental Christian concepts such as God the creator, savior, and judge have ceased to be significant for it, and that it continues to seek meaning in a secularized Christian conception in which humans or humanity step into God's place. Karl Löwith, who forcefully called to our attention that, in the Christian era, the ancient cosmos was replaced as the source of meaning by the reconciliation between God and man, sees this clinging dependence of all meaning on history, even in the modern age, as one of the sources of the modern despair over meaning:[11] for if history is the locus of meaning, then to rely on it is like trying to hold on to the waves in a shipwreck.

According to the same author, another Christian source of nihilism is the relation to nature as a reservoir of objects given to humans to rule and care for. The idea which first meant care for things entrusted to humans turned in the modern age into a doctrine of domination and exploitation of the treasury of nature with no regard not only for nature itself but for future humankind as well.

Most important, however, is that for the Christians nature need not be that concrete reality within which they are submerged and to which they belong as to one of the fundamental loci of the epiphany of its mystery but rather, at least since the age of nominalism, an object of judgment and speculation. Nature is not given and evident but rather distant and alien, to

be formed by the means of our psyche. The locus of meaning and being is God in God's relation to the human soul: nature is the locus of cold, abstract reflection. Thus with respect to nature modern humanity builds not on antiquity, especially not on Greek antiquity with its aesthetic conception of geometry, but rather on the Christian mode of regarding it with a cool distance and distrust. In the last phase of the Christian view of nature, Divine proximity to the human soul is taken for a divine guarantee of what is now becoming—or really, has become—the main concern for the trendsetters: the existence of nature and of mathematically evident models which enable us not so much to perceive nature but to calculate it. Nature as such, nature as autonomous being, ceases to be of interest, it ceases to be the object of observation, becoming instead something formal—the object of mathematical natural science.

Nature, in mathematical natural science, is not something that presents itself spontaneously, it is not a phenomenon but an object of construction and experimentation which present nature within the limits of rigorously defined anticipations which cannot be realized as such but which make calculation possible. Nowhere in nature can we observe pure momentum in the strict sense and yet the law of momentum holds and rigorous kinematics would be unthinkable without it. Given the immense, really miraculous achievements of mathematical methods in physics and natural science in general, this becomes the source of a new, soberly audacious view of the whole of reality which recognizes no beings other than those at which we arrive by such mathematical reconstruction of the world of the senses in which we naturally move. Thus, with the help of the Christian conception of meaningfulness and nurtured by Christianity, a new conception of reality grew in the womb of the Western European society. This conception gradually turned away from the innermost source of the Christian order of meaning so that concepts such as God, creation, the fall, and salvation came to seem meaningless to it. Beyond that, it gradually reached the point of a complete divorce between meaning

and reality. Reality in the strict sense, the reality of effective scientific cognition, now appears as devoid of meaning.

Mathematical natural science with its utility and its genuine effectiveness in so many aspects of life has become an essential part of the reality of contemporary humankind without which our life would become impossible. However, though we cannot live without it in a physical sense, it is not clear that we know how and that we can live with it and solely on its basis. If Weischedel is right in claiming that it is literally physically impossible to live with a sense of absolute meaninglessness, and if mathematical natural science, as it has grown over the three centuries since the rise of modern mechanism, represents, for a growing number of our contemporaries, the norm of what there is, then it is understandable that for all the expansion of the means with which to live, our life is not only empty but at the mercy of the forces of destruction.

In his great work devoted to the crisis of the European sciences, Husserl showed how mathematics itself, with its formal character focused ever more on mere form and structure, leads humans to the point where the methodological nature of its application to the natural scientific experience is not clearly seen, and so inevitably to a dissolution of all concrete perception into a smokescreen of formulae. Natural science thus becomes a nihilism of nature once it turns into a mere factographic discipline of unintelligible even though comprehensively manipulable data. Such a science cannot justify itself as a meaningful activity and necessarily derives its meaning from elsewhere, from without, from a "social demand" which, as we know, can be at least problematic in its meaningfulness or even testify to the same nihilism whose symptom it itself is as the rule of the society which is making the demand.

Mathematical natural science as a discipline and as the model for being scientific is—or until recently has been—one of the chief bastions of modern nihilism. Husserl tends to describe for the most part its negative side, the way it dissolves natural reality; there is, however, also an immense *effectiveness* to this technoscience that appears to single out from reality and

to see in it only an arbitrarily usable reservoir of potencies and powers. This network of effects, this con-ception[12] does not avoid humans who themselves function within it as an accumulator and a relay. Thus society presents the same image of the mobilization and accumulation of forces which periodically discharge themselves in immense conflagrations, leading each time to more extensive and finally universal, global complexes of force.

Representatives of the scientific community frequently wax indignant at the "misuse of science" in our time: in reality, a science which has lost its own inner meaning cannot reclaim something of which it has purged itself: in its own eyes and by its own criteria, such "misuse," in fact a relative and thus meaningless bestowal of meaning, is something perfectly legitimate.

In our time, not only individuals but entire societies seek to defend themselves against meaninglessness with the help of derivatives of the old Christian meaning, such as our philosophy of history, for the most part stillborn like Comte's Cult of Humanity or Durkheim's animistic pantheism,[13] or by force and defiance seek to enforce meaning where *ex datis* there can be none, as in the case of Marxism. Not Marxism as a teaching, as a critical social science, rather, as the "sacred" doctrine of new, restructured, and aggressive societies, exploiting the corroding scepticism of the old. Founded doctrinally on Feuerbach's materialism, it shares its ambiguity.[14] Either, with modern science, it can understand by "matter" something essentially meaning-less, devoid of meaning, which is consistent with the division of reality into an effectual material base and a derivative ideology, to which we could attribute effectiveness only at the cost of inconsistence. Alternately, it can follow the old hylozoic model,[15] but that entails not a constructive dialectic method but rather a trust in phenomena as such, an entirely different philosophical and scientific orientation and a wholly different stance and approach to the world. Actually, this is an unwitting example of the Nietzschean contradiction embodied in the prescription that if there is no meaning, we need to create it "by imposing an order on the portion of the world within

our reach." This is a contradiction clearly demonstrated in Weischedel's reflection about the degrees of meaningfulness: each particular meaning, if it is to be genuine meaning, presupposes a total and absolute meaning, but a relative and partial meaning can never bestow meaning on the whole because particular meaning can be consistent with and a product of meaninglessness, while only total meaningfulness can keep all individual beings from drowning in meaninglessness. Perhaps the most terrifying experience of meaninglessness is that presented by the devastation of partial meaningfulness, by the catastrophes of societies and spiritual worlds painstakingly built up over the generations. And if Weischedel's other idea, which we sought to justify earlier by uncovering its phenomenal source in what we would like to call the apparent antinomy of life and being, that acting and living are impossible without a sense of meaningfulness, is also correct, then it contains a clarification of why, in spite of the growing accumulation of force and tools, our life leads to catastrophic conflagrations or to surrenders which, with respect to meaninglessness, essentially amount to the same. It also explains why, precisely in the global age when Europe, from its own historical necessity, its own entanglement with meaninglessness, is leaving the center of history, there must prevail an anonymity of nihilism choking all the desperately nurtured hopes and their philosophies.

Today's polarized world might at times seem like the battlefield of two nihilisms in Nietzsche's sense of the word: the stage of a struggle between an active and a passive nihilism: the nihilism of those who are hampered by inconsistent remnants of antiquated meaning and those who unscrupulously carry through the transvaluation of all values from the standpoint of strength and power. Yet today's dominant philosophies, one overt, the other covert, conceive of humans and their essential interests as a biological organism, a part of the material world, though not as we live our corporeity but as we appear in the perspective of a meaning-less, basically natural scientific theory: as an organism maintaining a metabolic exchange with its context and reproducing itself. Thus it seems as if the whole

movement of history, after all the drive for absolute meaning in politics, in philosophies of a metaphysical cast, in religion that probed as deeply as Christianity, ended up where it began—with the bondage of life to its self-consumption and with work as the basic means of its perpetuation. With respect to that bondage we have sought to show that contentment therewith and therein is what distinguishes prehistoric humanity from history proper. We would be confronted with the paradox of a history resulting in a prehistoricity, consistent with the peculiar circumstance that nations and civilizations which for millenia persisted in a prehistoric state (as China) and which are now entering into history can well draw on some elements of their prehistoric life, with corrections, to be sure, and perhaps even derive from it a significant portion of the energy with which they are entering into the new arena.

Yet it is not so. Prehistoricity is not characterized by a deprivation of meaning, it is not nihilistic like our times. Prehistorical meaning may be modest, but it is not relativistic. It is a meaning which is not centered on humans but rather relates primordially to other beings and powers. In that modest meaning humans can live in a human way and at the same time understand themselves as they understand a flower or a beast of the field. They can live at peace with what there is, not in a devastating struggle with it that sacrifices life's possibilities, stored up over countless eons, to what is most mundane and most utterly meaningless about human existence.

Thus our reflections seem to become lost in a hopeless pessimism. All the phenomena we have cited seem to exude meaninglessness as the ultimate outcome of human striving for truth, that is, for authentic meaning. "Dogmatic" nihilism appears to be the last word of human wisdom which thus seems coextensive with the views of the present-day *monsieur Homais*, the archetypical *petit bourgeois.*

Nihilism, however, proves truly dogmatic as soon as it insists on meaninglessness as the final and indubitable fact, and if its doubts concerning dogmatically posited meaning do not equally entail the possibility of a scepticism about such

scepticism. In light of that recognition dogmatic nihilism proves to be a correlate of dogmatic assertions of meaningfulness, of those theses for which metaphysics takes credit, together with dogmatic theology, so much the worse if "revealed."

From this perspective, history would not represent the gradual unfolding of the meaninglessness of the universe, at least not necessarily, and it might perhaps even be possible for humankind to bring about a meaningful existence consistent with it—on condition of a gigantic conversion, of an unheard-of *metanoein*.[16]

Humans cannot live without meaning, and without a global and absolute meaning at that. That means: humans cannot live in the certitude of meaninglessness. But does not that mean that they cannot live with a sought for and problematic meaning? That precisely this life in a problematic context is a part of meaningfulness in an authentic sense, not in a privative or a dogmatic one? Perhaps Socrates knew this, perhaps that is why the characterization of Socrates by a contemporary thinker as perhaps not the greatest but as the most authentic philosopher is so aptly profound. And Lessing, when in the choice between "having the truth" and "seeking the truth" prefers the latter, might he not have had the same in mind?[17] The situation takes on a distinctive coloring when, with Weischedel and with his teachers before him, we realize clearly that questioning and rendering problematic are not merely subjective acts and attitudes but presuppose problematicity as something further and transsubjective, as a transsubjective situation. And, ultimately, is there not at the very core of reality itself something like the mysterious and the mystery? Is mystery necessarily something subjectively private while actually it means such clarity that it can outshine all that seems clear in our everyday life? Is not the infinite depth of reality possible only because we cannot see its bottom, and is not just that a challenge and an opportunity for humans in their reach for meaning which is more than the flowering and perishing of the lily of the field in the eyes of the gods?

The possibility of a *metanoesis* of historic proportions depends essentially on this: is that part of humanity which is

capable of understanding what was and is the point of history, which is at the same time ever more driven by the entire positioning of present day humanity at the peak of technoscience to accept responsibility for meaninglessness, also capable of the discipline and self-denial demanded by a stance of uprootedness in which alone a meaningfulness, both absolute and accessible to humans, because it is problematic, might be realized?

Let us conclude by summing up:

We distinguished, first of all, meaning as that which arises in understanding and knowing as a persisting sediment, that is, significance, conception. (Meaningful means of communicating meaning, as in the first place language, also fall under this heading.) Secondly, there is the meaning contained within the thing itself, that with which the thing addresses us and responds to our possibilities, enabling us to come to terms with it or through it with others, comporting ourselves intelligibly towards things and persons. Concerning this meaning we then need to ask whether it is absolute, global and all-comprehensive, or always merely relative to and conditioned by something else (for example, by biological life), so that it stands and falls with it. Within the matrix of such factical meaning we distinguish in turn between meaning for which humans are marginal and meaning which has humans as its center. The relative meaning of the things of our surrounding is centered on humans, relative to human life. Humans need not necessarily be marginal to absolute meaning, they are not that if that in humans to which meaning can speak corresponds to that which bestows meaning on all there is.

The experience of the loss of meaning leads to the question whether all meaning is not anthropocentric and relative to life. If that were the case, we would be facing nihilism. The meaning we thought we had grasped in it all, in the whole and the parts of whatever is accessible to us, proves to be limited and void. Such a shaking of meaningfulness can only lead to the stagnation of life unless we can find a way out of the denial of meaning. Since the shaking of a given meaning comes about together with the experience of being as that which cannot be

considered anything that is, it is easy to formulate nihilism as an antinomy of being and meaning: the experience of the emergence of being would then be at the same time the experience of the utter meaninglessness of what-is.

Actually we are dealing only with the uncovering of meaning that can never be explained as a thing, which cannot be mastered, delimited, grasped positively, and dominated, but which is present only in the *seeking* of being. For that reason, too, we cannot encounter it directly in things, directly along with them as relative and positive meaning. The basis of this meaning, in Weischedel's terms, is problematicity; in Heidegger's terms, the concealment of what-is as a whole as the foundation of all openness and all uncovering. Thus it is this mystery that expresses itself in the shaking of naively accepted meaning (whether the relative meaning of immediate human comportment and action or the absolute meaning of myth). Thus the shaking of naive meaning is the genesis of a perspective on an absolute meaning to which, however, humans are not marginal, on condition that humans are prepared to give up the hope of a directly given meaning and to accept meaning as a way.

What is important for our question about the meaning of history is that the problems here sketched apply not only to individual life but to history itself as well. History arises from the shaking of the naive and absolute meaning in the virtually simultaneous and mutually interdependent rise of politics and philosophy. Fundamentally, history is the unfolding of embryonic possibilities present in this shaking. For that reason, for those who are oriented to life in its immediacy, history appears to end in the nihilism of a deprivation of meaning. In understanding being as it manifests itself in existents, characteristic of modern objectivist science, that is, of science that gives up the idea of any relation to meaning as asymptotic, this trait appears to stand out forcefully. Such objectivism, however, is internally contradictory and science itself shows signs of overcoming it. The discussion of this question, however, belongs to another treatise.

Fourth Essay: Europe and the European Heritage until the End of the Nineteenth Century

In an unfinished work of his youth, *Die Verfassung Deutschlands*, Hegel says that, though in recent times the basis of statehood is neither a unity of law nor a unity of religion, there had been times when, even in rather unemotional Europe, religion had been the fundamental condition of statehood and that at times this bond acquired such force that, more than once, it transformed, at a stroke, even nations that had been alien to each other and had lived in national independence into a single state "which was not only a holy Christian community, nor just a coalition harmonizing interests for its own sake, but was a secular power, a state which conquered its homeland, a homeland of both temporal and eternal life, in a war with the East, *as a single people and a single state.*"[1] Thus, for Hegel, writing at the turn of the nineteenth century and on the verge of the final collapse of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation,[2] Europe is not a state, though once it had been one. Europe here means *western* Europe, united once by the crusades against the Islamic world (though, in the Third Crusade, also against Byzantium). Though it was war that forged and hardened European unity sufficiently that a sense of it persisted even in the age of European particularism and disintegration into sovereign modern states; Hegel and other Europeans of

his age do not for a moment doubt the spiritual origins of this European unity, and their conception is surely correct. What does it entail? The unity of western Europe, forged in a military expedition, constituted internally by the duality of spiritual and secular power under the supremacy of the former, is but one of the versions of the idea of the holy empire of which there are three versions: beside the west European one also a Byzantine and an Islamic one.[3] In its Christian version, the idea of the holy empire crystallized on the basis of the historical theology contained in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* and in Paul's *Epistle to the Romans.* The internal struggles for the waning Roman Empire, both in its margins and at its Mediterranean center, for that vital nerve of the world of the time, come to be understood in spiritual terms in the seventh century due to the split of the East and the West and of the Arab expansion. Western Europe delimits itself against the Byzantine East first politically, then spiritually in the struggle for ecclesiastical independence and sovereignty with respect to secular power, something achieved here alone. The Islamic version, bound to the prophetic ideal and so approximating the Judaic conception, was marginalized in the course of the Crusades as was, temporarily, Byzantium, while the newly defined formation occupied itself with its own organization, its inner ordering, its consolidation, its colonization of the available northeastern expanses which, especially after the weakening of Poland and the vanishing of the Kiev Russia after the Tartar invasions, had no alternative focus on which to base themselves.[4]

What, though, was at the core of the idea of the *holy empire*? Nothing other than the spiritual heritage of the Roman Empire, perishing from the alienation between the state organism and the public on which it had been grounded. The Roman Empire unquestionably brings to an end the Hellenistic age together with the imperialism borne by the conviction of the superiority of the Greek spirit and of its achievements. Those achievements, however, are for the most part summed up in Greek philosophy which, in its Hellenistic phase, at least in its quintessential dimension, Stoicism, took for its chief task

the transformation of the classical philosophy of the Socratic-Platonic tradition into the educational leaven of the universal state which Rome ultimately most successfully represented. Granted, the core of Rome is the obsession with the idea of an empire, of a state in its autonomous form, free of any grounding in ethnic, territorial, or governmental foundation, or at least that is the form growing out of its persistent military and organizational effort and in which it finds its definition. Understandably, Rome's greatest figures are animated by this goal, so defined. Yet in its beginnings Rome was not yet essentially different from the Greek *polis* which Aristotle still takes it to be and, for such a *polis*, the Stoic-Platonic idea of cultivation to the common good, to universality, of a state of justice and equity, founded on truth, on insight, becomes something of a commonplace and unquestioned, at least among the educated strata. Cicero and Seneca represent literary evidence of this commonplace assumption while the protagonists of Cicero's philosophical dialogues represent the tendency to identify Roman statehood with the cultivation central to the mainstream of Hellenistic philosophy.[5] The idea of the *holy empire* attests, on the one hand, to the catastrophic failure of this program; on the other hand, its persistence in a new form: no longer as this earthly state of the caesars with its all-too-human vacillation between arbitrary will and a will to justice, between natural despotism and the "natural law" on which civil law is based, but rather as a city based directly on a truth which is not of this but of the other world and whose norms and primordial model are set not by human but by divine power and by a sacred history entering into human history and drawing it into itself.

Thus the heritage of the Roman Empire itself carries on another heritage, one which Roman and Hellenistic heritages had taken over from the Greek *polis* and which culminates in the striving for a community of a perceived truth and justice as the highest moral idea of ancient philosophy. This idea, though, matured in reflection into the greatness and the failure of the *polis* and the global significance and misery of the Greeks with-

in their characteristic social framework in which they defied mere quantitative superiority only to discredit and destroy both themselves and this framework with distrust, envy, and fear of being surpassed and obscured. The destiny of the truthful and the just, of those who opt for a life in truth, renders the idea of such a new human community indispensable: only in such a commuity of truth will they be capable of living without perishing in a conflict with reality. The world thus wallows in evil and in passing judgment over the just, condemns itself.

What, though, makes humans just and truthful is their *care for their soul.* Care for the soul is the bequest of ancient Greek philosophy. Care for the soul means that truth is something not given once and for all, nor merely a matter of observing and acknowledging the observed, but rather a lifelong inquiry, a self-controlling, self-unifying intellectual and vital practice. Greek thought distilled the care for the soul in two forms: we care for the soul so it could undertake its spiritual journey through the world, the eternity of the cosmos, in complete purity and undistorted sight and so for at least a brief while achieve the mode of existing proper to the gods (Democritus, later Aristotle), or, conversely, we think and learn to render our soul into that firm crystal of being, an untarnished steel crystal in the view of eternity, which represents one of the possibilities of the being which bears within it the source of movement, of deciding its being or nonbeing, that is, dissolution in the uncertainty of instinct and unclarified tradition (Plato).[6]

The care of the soul is the practical form of that discovery of the Whole and of the explicit spiritual relation to it that comes about already in the Ionian protophilosophy: here, the discovery of the cosmos reached the form of a philosophical ideal of a life in truth that can be expressed in the words of the last great *diadochos*[7] of this lineage, Edmund Husserl: to subordinate opinion to observation and not vice versa. This also renders comprehensible and confirms, in light of the entire rise of Europe, the conviction of that same philosopher concerning the "uniqueness of European culture," that alone among all the cultures of the world it is a culture of insight, one in which

it is seeing, insight, that plays the decisive role in all the essential matters of life, cognitive and practical alike.[8] Such a historical formation is always at least codetermined by insight constantly displacing its opposite, the anonymous tradition ever fading into darkness. Altogether we can thus say that the European heritage remains the same in the various forms in which the care for the soul is transformed in the two great historical catastrophes, that of the *polis* and that of the Roman Empire. We could then also say that this heritage helped transform these two catastrophes from purely negative phenomena into attempts at overcoming that which had grown sclerotic and incapable of life under the historical conditions of the time and, in adaptation, into a generalization of the European heritage as well. For in the Roman Empire the care of the soul assumes the form of striving for a rule of law throughout the global community affected by the empire, for the most part directly, for the rest at least by its demands and its influence. The Western Christian holy empire then gives rise to a much broader human community than the Roman-Mediterranean had been while at the same time disciplining inner humanity and giving it greater depth. The care for the soul is thus what gave rise to Europe—this thesis we can hold without exaggeration.

The great turning point in the life of western Europe appears to be the sixteenth century. From that time on another motif comes to the fore, opposing the motif of the care of the soul and coming to dominate one area after another, politics, economics, faith, and science, transforming them in a new style. Not a care *for the soul*, the care to *be*, but rather the care to *have*, care for the external world and its conquest, becomes the dominant concern. It is not the purpose of these lines to develop the dialectic of the Christian *motifs* of life which had originally constrained this care to have, the will to rule. Unquestionably, the expansion of Europe beyond its original bounds, an expansion that replaced mere holding of the competing non-European world at bay, contained within itself the seed of a new life pernicious to the older principle. Eastward,

this European expansion did not bring about a transformation of the principles of European life; that change takes place amid the *westward* suppression of Islam, leading to discoveries beyond the seas and to a sudden wild *scramble* for the riches of the world, especially of the New World, left at the mercies of Europe's ingenious military organization, weapons, and skills. Only in conjunction with this expansion of Europe to the West does the essential reformation of the orientation of Christian practice, turning from the sacred to the secular, acquire that political significance that will manifest itself in the organization of the North American continent by Protestant radicalism. In less than a century, Bacon will formulate a wholly new idea of knowledge and cognition, profoundly different from that which motivated the care and concern for the soul: knowledge is power, only effectual knowledge is real knowledge, what used to apply only to practice and production now holds for knowledge as such; knowledge is to lead us back to paradise, the paradise of inventions and possibilities of transforming and mastering the world to suit our needs while those needs remain undefined and unlimited;[9] soon thereafter Descartes will say that knowledge is to make us the masters and owners of nature. In contrast with the medieval conception that based power on authority and was best embodied in that distinctive formation that called itself *The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation* and constituted something midway between public and international law, the state or, better, the states now become defensive and armed institutions for the securing of common property (as Hegel was to formulate it later).[10] The particularism of this conception remains indebted to some medieval trends but leaves them far behind. The simultaneous organization of economic life along modern capitalist lines is part and parcel of the same style in principle. From that time on the expanding western Europe lacks any universal bond, any universal idea which could be embodied in a concrete and effective bonding institution and authority: the primacy of *having* over *being* excludes unity and universality while the attempts to replace them with power prove vain.

Politically, this finds expression in a new system in which the Empire is pushed from the center to the eastern periphery while France takes over the role of the center as a firmly organized power representing a counterweight to the vastly overgrown global domains of Spain and England on both sides of the Atlantic.[11] When the vast power of New England begins to take shape and with it the dawn of a new human order, free of subordination, exploitation, and abuse of humans by each other, a tremor of hope passes not through the New World alone but through all of Europe. At almost the same time, however, at first inconspicuously, subsequently that much more forcefully, Europe becomes exposed to a pressure from the East. From the sixteenth century on, Russian Muscovy assumed the Byzantine heritage of eastern Christianity, the heritage of the imperial church, and together with it a claim to an immense territorial expansion which replaces Europe's vague Eastern border with a mighty power, organized imperially and imperiously from above, limited only by the coastline of the Asian continent; a power which henceforth would seek first to define, distinguish, and secure itself with respect to the West, then to make use of it while seeking to threaten, dissolve, and dominate it. After France took advantage of the Thirty Years' War, the shattered remnant of the Empire, looking eastward and spellbound by the Turkish threat,[12] at first remained oblivious to the growth of the gigantic mass which from the eighteenth century onward would weigh heavily on all its fortunes and so indirectly on the fortunes of Europe. For the time Europe labors prodigiously on recasting ideas, institutions, means of production, and state and political organization; this process, known as the *Enlightenment*, represents basically old Europe's adaptation to its new position in the world, to the emerging economic order, to the penetration of Europeans into new realms with consequent new demands on faith and knowledge. The most profound product of this entire movement is modern science, mathematics, natural science, history, all of it animated by a spirit and a mode of knowing wholly different from its predecessors. The Renaissance science of Copernicus, Kepler,

Galileo is still recognizably continuous with medieval *theōria* as a dimension of the care for the soul. Yet in science itself, in mathematics foremost, there is a spirit of technological domination emerging, a universality of a wholly different type than the ancient universality of content and modeling: a formalizing universality imperceptibly shifting to an emphasis on product over content, on mastery rather than understanding. This science proves ever more to be fundamentally a technique, aiming at technology and application. The more this mode of thinking advances, the more clearly it suppresses the holdovers of the "metaphysical" thought which, still in the seventeenth century, dominated European philosophy as the French and Dutch thinkers and others influenced by them sought still to attain the old goal with new means; in the eighteenth century, France and the United States take the lead in a drive of radical Enlightenment, in France already secular. The idea of a revolution, of a radical transformation of human affairs, the possibility of a life free of hierarchy, in equality and freedom, growing probably out of the reality of New England and the successful revolt of the British colonies, is at the root of the revolutionary posture as the fundamental characteristic of modern times as such; France accepts it from these hands and, in its own revolution, lends it in part already an overtly social character, indicating that nothing will be spared in the upheaval. The radical French Enlightenment, tearing down the foundations of spiritual authority, could not stop short, as many had wished, before the edifice of society and of the state order. In England and parts of the continental West, the alliance of industry, technology, and the capitalist order leads to a breakthrough of the technical revolution: henceforth the leap after secular wealth acquires a new meaning—the creation of an immense technological-military superiority that nothing in the non-European world can match: henceforth the global market serves not only European well-being but European physical power whose first shattering outbursts are the Napoleonic revolutionary wars striving to actualize, on a new secular and rational basis, the universal meaning of France as the European center which now

extinguishes the last illusory vestige of the Roman Empire. Continental Europe and England can no longer defend themselves except by appealing openly to the might of Russia which for a long time to come arbitrates their conflicts, proposes their balances of power, and profits most extensively from Europe's conflicts and failures. At the start of the nineteenth century, having dispensed with the northeastern powers of seventeenth-century Europe, Sweden, and Poland, eliminating the latter ever more consistently from the scene, intervening by its support of the rising Prussian power in the deep cleft between the powers of the former Roman Empire, Prussia, and the Habsburg lands, indirectly destroying the historic organisms of that empire's eastward system (as the Czech state), Russia took a stance deep in Europe as a dam against the first americanization, as we could call the revolutionary and postrevolutionary Europe; both of Europe's heirs collided for the first time on European soil in the second decade of the nineteenth century, not yet as political antagonists but as principles.[13]

Hegel would occasionally address the question whether America or Russia would prove the heir of Europe; but such reflection about the future acquired a content only when the problem came to be seen in terms of the social drive to equality and rational organization, and it was de Tocqueville who first saw it in those terms.[14] European thought thus came to know the United States sooner and more profoundly than Russia, and that is understandable since the United States was America europeanized while postrevolutionary Europe was Europe americanized. The western world had long to wait and, basically, is still waiting today for a deeper relating of the Eastern world to Europe, analogous to de Tocqueville's understanding. Before, though, we describe Europe of the nineteenth century as a battlefield, already overshadowed by the future with its new territories and the new powers that grew out of Europe and rendered its future problematic, we have to note the attempt to think through and bring into question the very Enlightenment ideal of western Europe which took place on German soil, that is, on the soil of the disintegrating Roman Empire, first in the

Prussian context where the Enlightenment survived in the form of a military state making rational use of traditional structures, that is to say, in the form of a highly paradoxical synthesis of the old and the new.

The power and the depth of the Enlightenment surely lay in what older knowledge, focused primarily inward, in human terms, had neglected, in the new idea of an active, effective, and fruitful knowledge yielding ever more fruit. Such knowledge could not be taken lightly or be superficially patched together with the older European principles of knowledge and faith. On the other hand, a synthesis practiced solely from the viewpoint of immediate utility, as was done in the Anglo-Saxon countries, was not acceptable, any more than resorting to radical amputations short of intending the French revolutionary path. German philosophy, drawing on Kant and on the spirituality kin to it, made one more attempt to turn around the spirit of Europe: the Enlightenment was to be accepted, though only as a means for understanding nature, the domain of lawlike regularity which does not reach to the core of things; where this phenomenal world is analyzed in its phenomenality (that is, in its natûre), there the old European principle of the care for the soul comes into its own once more, the philosophical contemplative *theōria* which frees us for the spiritual and moral realm wherein lies the inmost human rooting and calling. With this breakthrough which does not cancel the Enlightenment but delimits it and weakens its human significance, the thrust of German poetry and music strikes out in the same direction while in philosophy it grows more radical in systems of unheard-of idealism and metaphysical radicalism we need not characterize in detail here.[15] This spiritual Germany offers itself to western Europe as the land in which spirit can find a refuge after the crisis of revolutionary anarchy and undergo the cure which freedom needs to sink roots in reality through understanding. However, the spiritual totality, though powerless of itself, will generate ambiguous thought forms which the *real* struggle for the European heritage will be able to utilize as it unfolds: the idea of spiritual individuality (which will be used

for ongoing particularization and national conflict in Europe), the idea of the state as an earthly divinity which brooks no limitation of its sovereignty. Thus the grand German attempt will result in reinforcing those tendencies of European disintegration against which it was originally intended. German conceptual schemata, powerful and valid as a *critique*, as ideas *delimiting* the domain of the Enlightenment, prove themselves incapable of resolving political and social problems *within the framework* of the Englightenment and must be reduced in this context to mere tools of battles over political and social reality.

After a sharp whiff of global air provided by the revolution and the postrevolutionary Napoleonic wars, Europe, initially under the pressure of imperial Russia, returns to a discredited "legitimacy," no longer credible to anyone; since opposition to French despotism demanded an appeal to the particularity of local traditions and the spontaneity of ethnic communities, this hypocritical return marks the beginning of a new, motley and in part very chaotic course of events which can be summed up under the label of the national and nationalistic movement. In the west of Europe, with its long centralized and linguistically unified state formations, this movement would quite naturally become linked with the factual need of the industrial revolution for state protection of enterprise and speculation, states coming under the influence of bourgeois capitalism; with central and east-central Europe enviously observing this development which becomes its model while the principled universalism of revolutionary radicalism takes refuge in the sphere of social revolution, in the emerging socialism. All these trends form a multiform and often eclectic mixture whose sole certainty is the untenability of the *status quo.*

With regard to the revolution and the Napoleonic epoch on the one hand, to Russia on the other, popular writing in Europe is generating concepts of "global power," "global state system," while Russia, successfully defending its imperial stance against the first attempts of Western influences to volatilize it, develops ever more clearly its own political heritage, taken over from the Byzantine imperial Christianity, into the vision of tak-

ing over from a decadent, disintegrating Europe, an idea to which it would cling in the main throughout the nineteenth century, enriching it with such European components as fitted the general conception. Fundamentally, Russian thought is in agreement as to the European heritage to which the Russian state is called, the divergence of views concerns only the means this calls for; Peter the Great's old idea of using Europe without yielding to it, dominating it instead, carries within it both the possibility of a closer inclination to the West and that of an inward turn and of awaiting for opportune moments.—That part of European essayistic writing that continued to keep an eye on Russia and its powerful influence on Europe, personalities like Moses Hess, Haxthausen, Fallmerayer, but especially the conservative Catholic essayistic authors such as Jörg, Marlo, Konstantin Frantz, who still do not turn away from a nostalgia of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation—does contain within it a seed of Europeanism, of efforts towards a European unity, at least in the form of a solidarity of Western states in face of the Russian colossus; Frantz also pointed out the basic agreement of his own inclinations with the traditionalism contained in Comte's positive philosophy (he was not familiar with positivistic politics); such germs, which a liberal, Julius Fröbel, joins with his American experience, lacked an organizing force against the dominant trends of European reality.[16]

Thus in the bourgeois capitalist Europe the greatest force of the European West, that is, of the Enlightenment, science (natural science and history) and technology, is integrated into the particularistic reality of the nation state, whose model on the continent is France. It is the France of the Third Empire that played a fatal role in this development to particularity; this includes its ephemeral successes, such as the insincere alliance of European states against Russia in the Crimean War and the partial and momentary repression of Russia, since these lulled Europe's attention and gave rise to a false self-confidence of the Powers trusting their industrial, technological, and scientific superiority.[17]

As we have already noted, the intrinsic universalism of the radical Enlightenment took refuge in socialist thought and in

the socialist movement. Marx, especially after his "Hegelian transcendence of Hegelian thought,"[18] never ceased denouncing the hypocrisy, half-heartedness, irrationality and, most of all, the cynicism and moral chaos unleashed in European societies by the bourgeois-liberal *status quo.*

All the weaknesses of the French solution of the European problem are intensified by the Prussian solution of the German problem, which once more drove France out of the center of Europe,[19] once again replacing it with Germany in that role, though now in a new form, bearing the stamp of the west European nation state; while this Prussian Germany continues to bear within it as a seed of discord its feudal traditions, unconstrained by a genuine social transformation, beyond that a conservative admiration for the Russian colossus to which Prussia owed its rise within Germany and in Europe, together with a need to recast itself in a short order into the role of the shield and sword of at least southeastern Europe. The bourgeois solution, a nation state as protector for ever growing industrial production, is at the same time demonstrating here, far more than in the European west, its inner contradiction because this growth at the same time reinforces what used then to be called "the fourth estate," its self-confidence and its irrepressible organization. This ever-intensifying conflict leads to a hitherto unknown level of social tension, making permanent the strong-handed rule represented by the Bismarckian coalition of 1879 against the inevitable majority of the people. (It is Halévy's familiar thesis that one of the chief roots of the war of 1914 is to be sought in the effort to overcome this internal difficulty by mobilizing society for international political goals, thus clearing the track for German energy).[20]

Evidently in the Europe of the nineteenth century the political crisis deepens just where questions seem to be being resolved: the German question, the Italian question;[21] far from calming Europe, their resolution actually sharpened its particularisms, rendering them deadly within the narrow confines of Europe. The social crisis, too, comes to a head and the indispensable industrial proleteriat presents its demands ever more

forcefully. The "resolution" presenting itself at that moment, considered by some the height of global statesmanship, the globalization of Europe's problems, projecting the division of Europe upon a division of the world, could only make the hitherto latent antagonisms manifest, committing the resources of the entire world to the deadly dangerous undertaking of European competition, and that at the moment when the world beyond Europe became aware that it, too, could learn from the contemporary Europe of the masses, of universal suffrage and great bureaucratized parties the art of increasing their own political weight and itself stand up to Europe.

The profound third dimension was the ever keener awareness of the *moral* crisis of the then contemporary Europe. That European state institutions, that the political and social structures of Europe rest on something that society in its actual practice long since denied all trust and obedience was sharply raised and articulated only in revolutionary radicalism as a part of its revolutionary program. Even this radicalism, though, continued to cling in its beliefs to conceptual derivatives of the European heritage as hard to believe as the conceptions from which they are derived. God is dead, yet the material nature, producing with lawlike necessity both humankind and its progress, is no less a fiction and it has the special weakness that it includes no mechanism that would restrain individuals in their individual effort to escape and make themselves at home in the contingent world as if no one were to come after them, having their little pleasures of the day, their pleasures of the night. Dostoyevski's protagonist spelled it out: there is nothing, everything is permitted![22] What Dostoyevski resists by appealing to traditional Russia with its broken soul and with individuals who humble themselves before the great community which weighs them down and charges them with suffering for purification, Nietzsche expresses with a keen intensity for the Europe of his time: let us be truthful, facing the fact that we are nihilists, not making ourselves believe what is not—thus alone will we be capable of overcoming the moral crisis which underlies and contains all else.

> What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what cannot fail to come: the rise of nihilism. This history can be told today already: necessity herself is at work here. This future speaks even now in a thousand signs, this destiny announces itself everywhere, all ears are straining to hear this music of the future. Our entire European civilization has for a long time now been moving with a torturous tension, growing decade after decade as to a catastrophe: restlessly, forcefully, impatiently: as a stream which wants to reach its end, which no longer reflects, which fears to reflect.[23]

For Nietzsche, nihilism is rooted precisely where Dostoyevski would have us return: in the Christian devaluation of this world by a "true" world, of life, will, deed by morality and by the commandment, "Thou shalt": we need to break free of all other worlds and all excuses which set truth above reality, we need to consent with all our strength to life and reality; reality, though, means self-transcendence, it is power intensified; that will lead to the new level of being, to humans stripped of the escapes, refuges, and weaknesses of the past, superhumans rooted in a reality which is impenetrable because it is eternal.

Nietzsche's offensive against contemporary European civilization as nihilistic is, to be sure, itself nihilistic and considers its passing through nihilism its sincerity and its merit. Its radical character persists even today when its titanic gesture of individuality seems comical, while its critique of progress and of the Enlightenment as crypto-nihilism remains valid. Thus the diagnosis of European society of the nineteenth century as nihilistic sums up all the crises of the time: the political and the social crises are rooted in a moral crisis.

Dostoyevski proposes Byzantine Christianity, Nietzsche an eternal return of the same as the solution to the crisis. Yet the very foundation of Christianity, the rediscovery of eternity, presupposes a repetition of something which once was real at the very beginning of the European era: the soul as that within us which is related to that unperishing and imperishable component of the whole which makes possible truth and in truth the being not of a superman but of an authentically human being.

Fifth Essay: Is Technological Civilization Decadent, and Why?

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries are the age of an industrial civilization that has swept away—definitively, it now seems—humankind's other, older attempts to shape, even to produce their lives without the help of science and technology (of technology based on science and in a sense even fusing with it). This has carved so vast a cleft across the continuity of human history that some modern Enlightenment thinkers perceive the recent age of barely three hundred years as a timid beginning of the true history of humanity while all else is shunted off to prehistory. The humans of the industrial age are incomparably more powerful and have at their disposal a far greater reservoir of energy than humans of earlier ages, reaching into the subatomic regions which nourish the stars because the Earth is no longer enough for them. They live in an incomparably greater social density and can make use of it to intensify their attack on nature to force her to yield ever more of the energy they intend to integrate in the schemata of their calculations and the levers of their hands.

The mighty growth of industrial civilization appears as a trend which no difficulties can hinder, be they external or internal. The external obstacles, reflected in perhaps the sharpest and most modern idiom, physicalistic and quantitative, in the deliberations of the Club of Rome,[1] concern the exhaustion of the global supply of raw materials, demographic growth,

environmental pollution, and the impossibility of expanding the nutritional basis, with the exponential nature of growth trends indicating a possibility of not-too-distant catastrophes. Still, the alarming outlook, against which there are admittedly no incontrovertible arguments so far, has not evoked any fundamental interest in contemporary society, as rationalists were wont to expect. The internal obstacles, resulting from the way this civilization affects the nature of being human as such and which manifests itself in those human hekatombs (myriatombs, actually)[2] that have no analogue, have so far become historically manifest with any clarity only as a motive for seeking and finding as rapid ways of forgetting in further intensification of our achievements. European societies have evidently not only never been as rich but also have never in history carried out so vast a social undertaking as in the "postwar" time (that is, in the era following the second world war), as if this benefit could make up for the retreat of Europe from the center of history (meaning thereby the old Europe, the European West as it grew out of the Western Roman Empire). Yet on the whole this unheard-of progress proved unsatisfying and the demands on the world's wealth and therewith on the structure of a society which seems to resist such demands continue to expand. The optimism of this trend, full of vitality, defying attempts to tame it, appears more powerful than any objection that the development itself can provoke. Nor is there any shortage of objections; we could say that an entire scientific scholarly discipline, modern sociology, is basically an outgrowth of an awareness of the danger, or even of a sense of the pathological nature, of the development of the industrial civilization up to now. To some this pathology appeared as something transient, something that future development would itself cure in virtue of the inner logic which they believed they could detect therein; so Auguste Comte saw the crisis of society in a lack of social consensus, of a spontaneous harmony of perspective which, he claimed, would return as the common mode of thought would inevitably become more positive, more scientific.[3] Karl Marx was no less confident, though he trusted in a different

evolution: the inevitable disintegration and burial of the mode of industrial production toward which capitalist society is driven by its very functioning. Others, though, believed that they could see evident symptoms of pathology in the increasing incidence of suicides and mental disorders;[4] today we could add drug abuse, the revolt of the young, and the destruction of all social taboos, all of which manifest an evident conversion at anarchy as their limit.

Yet before we can answer the question posed in our title, we need to agree on a criterion, a standard by which we could judge something decadent or positive. We do not wish at this time to examine the whole question of value judgments and of their relation to the problem of truth. We shall rest content with noting that decadence and its opposite are not mere abstract "values" and "moral concepts" but, rather, are inseparable from human life in its intrinsic nature, its very being. A life can be said to be decadent when it loses its grasp on the innermost nerve of its functioning, when it is disrupted at its inmost core so that while thinking itself full it is actually draining and laming itself with every step and act. A society can be said to be decadent if it so functions as to encourage a decadent life, a life addicted to what is inhuman by its very nature.

What manner of life is it, though, which mutilates itself precisely when it seems full and rich? The answer has to be sought in the question itself.

What would human life have to be if something like that were to be possible—if life were in truth other than as at first it appears to itself? That *things* appear differently than they are is a function of their presenting themselves always one-sidedly, at a distance, in a perspective, and as a result can assume an appearance they share with other things. That we appear to ourselves as other than we are must be based on something else. Humans are not alien to themselves as things and their mode of being appear alien to them. Humans *are* themselves. If they are to appear to themselves as otherwise, they must become estranged from themselves and this process of estrangement must be something intrinsic to their mode of being. Thus there is

something about the human way of being that humans find estrangement somehow "more pleasant" or "more natural" than their own being. Being themselves is something that "comes naturally." It is always an achievement. In a sense, we can say that even self-estrangement is in the last instance an achievement. It is a "relief," not a "natural" lightness but the result of a certain "act."

Humans cannot *be with the spontaneity* of nonhuman existents; they must *accomplish* their life, must *lead* it; they must "be done with it," "come to terms" with it. Thus it seems that humans stand ever between two equivalent possibilities. That, though, is not the case. Estrangement means that *there is no* equivalence but, rather, that only one of the possible lives is the "right" one, our own, irreplacable, the only one that we ourselves can act out in the sense that we truly bear it, that we identify with its burden—while the other is avoidance, escape, deviation into inauthenticity and relief. Thus the perspective of "choice," decisionism, is from the start a false, objectivized, and objectivistic perspective *from without.* The true "perspective" is one of nonequivalence for which there is a fundamental difference between the responsibility which *bears* and "exposes itself" on the one hand and avoidance and escape on the other. Thus the reality of human life does not allow a perspective from without, the perspective of a "disinterested observer."

One other distinction is needed besides this distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic.

The opposition, authentic/inauthentic, is based on the recognition that we can never be not interested in our own being: our own responsibility always captivates us, occupies us: a decision has been made about us before "we have decided." True, authentic being consists in our ability to let all that is be as and how it is, not distorting it, not denying its own being and its own nature to it.

There is, however, also the distinction between the ordinary, the "everyday," and the exceptional, the holiday. The exceptional, the holiday also unburdens, though not by escaping from responsibility but rather by revealing that dimension

of life in which the point is not the burden of responsibility and the *escape* from it but where, rather, we are *enraptured*, where something more powerful than our free possibility, our responsibility, seems to break into our life and bestow on it meaning which it would not know otherwise. It is the dimension of the demonic and of passion. In both, humans are placed at risk; however, they are not simply escaping from themselves into the "public realm," into the ordinary everyday, into "objectivity," they do not become estranged in the everyday manner. It is not a self-estrangement but rather being swept along, enraptured. Here we are not escaping from ourselves but, rather, we are surprised by something, taken aback, captivated by it, and that something does not belong among things and in the ordinary day in which we can lose ourselves among the things that preoccupy us. Here we experience the world not only as the region of what is in our power but also as what opens itself to us *of itself* and, as experience (for instance of the erotic, of the sexual, of the demonic, of the dread of the holy), is then capable of penetrating and transforming our life. Face to face with this phenomenon we tend to *forget* the entire dimension of the struggle for ourselves, forget responsibility and escape, letting ourselves be drawn into a new, open dimension as if only now true life stood before us, as if this "new life" had no need to care for the dimension of responsibility.

Thus the distinction of the sacred and the profane is distinct from that of authenticity-responsibility and escape. It has to be related to responsibility by means other than escape, it cannot be simply overpowered, it has to be grafted on to responsible life.

The distinction sacred/profane is important also because the profane is essentially the realm of work and of the self-enslavement of life, of its bondage to itself. The demonic, orgiastic dimension is fundamentally opposed to the sense of enslavement experienced by humans alone and expressed most powerfully by the need to work. Work is always forced labor. Work is concern for oneself, the demonic is heedless. To the life which is bound to itself, to the self-bondage of life, there belongs an

orgiastic pendant, life engendering what we cannot procure and what is not at our disposal. For that reason the orgiastic dimension is not absent simply because responsibility as such is not discovered or taken into account, where we avoid it, but, rather, there it becomes pressing. Its inevitability and its rule extend from the "primitive" natural peoples to our own day.

Thus the sacred, the domain of the holy, represents an other, different counterpart to the everyday. Durkheim's sociology stresses, for instance, that in totemic societies such as he studied in Australia, reality breaks down into two basic categories, that of the profane with which humans deal "economically" and that of the sacred, including totems, their symbols, their representatives among humans.

For anyone familiar with Durkheim's analyses, the description of the orgiastic scene of the explorers Spencer and Gillen, as Durkheim interprets it, is unforgettable.

> It is easy to imagine that on this level of exaltation people lose all self-consciousness. Since they feel ruled, drawn along by some external power which makes them think and act otherwise than in ordinary times, they have understandably the feeling of being themselves no longer. It seems to them that they have been made anew: the decorations with which they drape themselves, the masks covering their faces, express this inner transformation outwardly more than they help bring it about. And since all of a company feel transformed at the same time and in the same way . . . it appears to all as if they really had been carried over into a special world, quite different from the one in which they normally live. How could such experiences, especially when repeated daily for weeks on end, help but convince the experiencers that there really exist two diverse and incompatible worlds? In one of them they laboriously carry out their everyday life; the other they need but enter to stand in relation to extraordinary powers which galvanize them to the point of frenzy. One is profane, the other is the world of the sacred.[5]

The positivist prejudice that attributes to the everyday world a primacy over the other world cannot keep us from recognizing in this interpretation a sharp, precise presentation of a phenomenon.

The demonic needs to be brought into a relation with responsibility as originally and primarily it is not. The demonic

is demonic precisely in its ability to deepen the self-estrangement to which, on the other hand, it points: humans estrange themselves by becoming bound to life and its objects, losing themselves among them. Ecstasy is an ek-stasis from this bondage, but it is not yet freedom. Ecstasy can pretend to be freedom and at times it does—from the perspective of overcoming this orgiastic sacredness it is precisely then that it is seen as *demonic.*

No special proof is needed that sexuality belongs to this dimension of the demonic opposition to the profane everydayness—orgiastic cults almost always have a sexual aspect, on the other hand sexuality contains within it the same differentiation of two worlds, of a double reality which is the chacteristic consequence of an orgy as Spencer and Gillen describe it.

At the same time, sexuality illustrates how inevitably the orgiastic realm is brought into a relation to the sphere of responsibility. This bringing into relation to responsibility, that is, to the domain of human authenticity and truth, is probably the kernel of the history of all religions. Religion is not the sacred, nor does it arise directly from the experience of sacral orgies and rites; rather, it is where the sacred qua demonic is being explicitly overcome. Sacral experiences pass over religious as soon as there is an attempt to introduce responsibility into the sacred or to regulate the sacred thereby.

All that originally takes place and can take place ever again without any explicit clarity about the mode of being of the responsible beings that humans are. Explicit clarity about humans cannnot be achieved without an explicit relation to being. Religious and sacred forms of experience do not always include such clarity. They are experiences of breaks, of inversions and conversions in which the being of humans asserts itself without explicit clarity, without a fundamental criterion of what is and what is not. For that reason, in the question of being human religious conversions (and all that goes with them, for instance artistic experience) do not have the fundamental importance of the *ontological* experience of philosophy. Perhaps for that reason, too, it may turn out that religion is

subject to temporary obscurity until its problems have been resolved philosophically.

The opposition of the sacred and the profane, of the feast and the workday, of the exceptional and the ordinary is not the opposition of the authentic and the inauthentic but rather belongs among the problems responsibility has yet to master. Every form of humanity on whatever "level" recognizes some form of the opposition between the ordinary and the exceptional, but not everyone also seeks to rise above decadence. The ordinary and the special can mean simply that we are rid of the ordinary; does that, though, mean that we have thereby also achieved our inmost, full and irreplaceable being at which the word "I" points with its mysterious hint? We believe that *I* in this sense emerges at the dawn of history and that it consists in not losing ourselves in the sacred, not simply surrending our selves within it, but rather in living through the whole opposition of the sacred and the profane with the dimension of the problematic which we uncover in the responsible questioning in a quest for clarity with the sobriety of the everyday, but also with an active daring for the vertigo it brings; *overcoming* everydayness without collapsing in self-forgetting into the region of darkness, however tempting. Historical life means, on the one hand, a differentiation of the confused everydayness of prehistoric life, of the division of labor and functionalization of individuals; on the other, the inner mastering of the sacred through its interiorization, by not yielding to it externally but rather confronting internally its essential ground to which human unclarity, that refuge of our life's routines, opens the way when it has been shaken to the very foundations. That is why the emergence of epic and especially of dramatic poetry is so important among the foundations of the historical process, since here humans follow first with the inner and then the outer eye the events in which they can participate only by yielding to the orgiastic. History originates as a rising above decadence, as the realization that life hitherto had been a life in decadence and that there is or that there are possibilities of living differently than by toiling for a full stomach in misery and

need, ingeniously tamed by human technologies—or, on the other hand, by striving for private and public orgiastic moments, sexuality and cult. The Greek *polis*, *epos*, tragedy, and philosophy are different aspects of the same thrust which represents a rising above decadence.

Precisely because history first means this inner process, the emergence of humans who master the original dilemma of human possibilities by discovering the authentic, unique *I*, that history is foremost a history of the soul. For that reason history is almost from the beginning accompanied by a reflection on history; for that reason Socrates designated the *polis*, which is the proper place of history, as also the proper place of the care for the soul. For that reason already earlier Heraclitus, angered that his *polis* destroys the best, those who alone are capable of rising above decadence in defiance both of everydayness and of the orgiastic leap into darkness, spoke of the bounds of the soul (that which gives it its form) which cannot be found along any (ordinary) path, for its *logos*, the expression for it, is too deep.[6] For that reason, the central theme of Plato's thought is the state, which for him was at the same time the model by which it is possible to reveal externally the structure of the individual soul. For that reason Plato's philosophy is at its core focused on the soul as that which first makes it something firm and definite. We might suppose that the special character of ancient society favored the special character of ancient philosophy in its classical phase. Plato's thought, decisive for the ontological character of this philosophy as a metaphysics, is, according to Eugen Fink's apt description,[7] an attempt to think light without shadow (in the last instance, to be sure, because there can be no doubt about the duality of reason and necessity in the world of fact as Plato sees it). That means that philosophy can dedicate itself to its inmost life's task, that of being the nonecstatic, nonorgiastic counterpart and inmost resolution of the problem posed by everydayness, regardless of the structure of the society—reason, understanding, has here only this function and can find its fulfillment in it since in living reality there is so much that is nonordinary that there need be no fear that the

pathos of the everyday might overwhelm and choke out its opposite. This ontology is for that reason a philosophy of the soul which, by *perceiving* that authentic, transcendent being differs from our reality of mere transient, changing opinion by virtue of its character of eternally immovable being, first gains its own unitary core, capable of resisting the pressure of various questions and problems which would otherwise drive the soul hither and yon. Unity is the essence of the soul, achieved by thought, an inner dialogue, a dialectic which is the proper method of insight and the essence of reason. That is why philosophy must be at the same time the care for the soul (*epimeleia tēs psuchēs*), ontology and theology—and all that in the care for the *polis*, for the optimal state. It retains this structure even when the nature of its proper object shifts from *idea* to *energeia* (in Aristotle) and transcendence shifts from the world of ideas to god or gods. Here philosophical theory still lives up to its calling to be the realm in which our I arrives at itself as well as at the lived experience its being which it has grasped at last. (The transcendence of the divine part of the world is then made more emphatic by the inability of the world to reach the divine and of the divine to think the world—this transcendence is an expression precisely of that "spiritual" overcoming of everydayness to which philosophy fundamentally contributes.)

Plato's doctrine of the soul has still other aspects. Eugen Fink calls attention to one of the most important in his analysis of Plato's allegory of the cave.[8] This presentation, especially in its dramatic part, is a reversal of the traditional mysteries and of their orgiastic cults. Those cults already aimed if not at a fusion, then at least at a confrontation of the responsible and the orgiastic. The cave is a remnant of the subterranean gathering place of the mysteries; it is the womb of Earth Mother. Plato's novel idea is the will to leave the womb of Earth Mother and to follow the pure "path of light," that is, to subordinate the orgiastic entirely to responsibility. Hence the path of the Platonic soul leads directly to eternity and to the source of all eternity, the sun of "The Good."

There is another aspect linked to this. The Platonic "conversion" makes a vision of the Good itself possible. This view is as unchanging and eternal as the Good itself. The journey after the Good, which is the new *mystery* of the soul, takes the form of the soul's internal dialogue. Immortality, inseparably linked with this dialogue, is thus different from the immortality of the mysteries. For the first time in history it is individual immortality, individual because inner, inseparably bound up with its own achievement. Plato's doctrine of the immortality of the soul is the result of the confrontation of the orgiastic with responsibility. Responsibility triumphs over the orgiastic, incorporates it as a subordinate moment, as *Eros* which cannot understand itself until it understands that its origin is not in the corporeal world, in the cave, in the darkness, but rather that it is only a means for the ascent to the Good with its absolute claim and its hard discipline.

As a result of this conception, in Neoplatonism the demonic—*Erōs* is a great *daimōn*—becomes a subservient realm in the eyes of the philosopher who has overcome all its temptations. Hence a somewhat unexpected outcome: the philosopher is at the same time a great *thaumaturge*. The Platonic philosopher is a magician—a Faustus. The Dutch historian of ideas, Gilles Quispel, derives from this one of the principal sources of the Faust legend and of Faustianism in general, that "endless striving" which makes Faust so dangerous but which ultimately can save him.[9]

Another important moment is that the Platonic philosopher overcame death fundamentally by not fleeing from it but by facing up to it. This philosophy was *meletē thanatou*, care for death; care for the soul is inseparable from care for death which becomes the true care for life; life (eternal) is born of this direct look at death, of an overcoming of death (perhaps it is nothing but this "overcoming"). That, however, together with the relation to the Good, identifying with the Good while breaking free of the demonic and the orgiastic, means the rule of responsibility and so of freedom. The soul is absolutely free, that is, it chooses its destiny.

So a new, light mythology of the soul grows on the basis of the duality of the authentic/responsible and the exceptional/orgiastic: the orgiastic is not removed but is disciplined and made subservient.

It is understandable that this entire complex of motifs could not but acquire a global significance in the moment when the end of the *polis/civitas* in the form of the Roman principality posed the problem of a new responsibility founded on the transcendent even within the framework of the social, in relation to a state which could no longer be a community of equals in freedom. Freedom is no longer defined in terms of a relationship to equals (other citizens) but to a transcendent Good. That also poses new questions and makes new solutions possible. The social problem of the Roman Empire is ultimately acted out on a foundation made possible by the Platonic conception of the soul.

The Neoplatonic philosopher Julian the Apostate on the imperial throne represents—as Quispel saw, probably rightly[10]—an important turn in the relation between the orgiastic and the discipline of responsibility. Christianity could overcome this Platonic solution only by an about-face. Responsible life was itself presented as a gift from something which ultimately, though it has the character of the Good, has also the traits of the inaccessible and forever superior to humans—the traits of the *mysterium* that always has the final word. Christianity, after all, understands the Good differently than Plato—as a self-forgetting goodness and a self-denying (not orgiastic) love. It is not the orgiastic—that remains not only subordinated but, in certain respects, suppressed to the limit—yet it is still a *mysterium tremendum. Tremendum*, for responsibility is now vested not in a humanly comprehensible essence of goodness and unity but, rather, in an inscrutable relation to the absolute highest being in whose hands we are not externally, but internally. The freedom of the wise man who has overcome the orgiastic can still be understood as demonic, as a will to separation and autonomy, a resistance to total devotion and self-forgetting love in which the true image of God consists. The soul

now does not simply seek itself in the ascent of an inner dialogue but also senses its danger. In the final analysis, the soul is not a relation to an object, however noble (like the Platonic Good) but rather to a Person who sees into the soul without being itself accessible to view. What a Person is, that really is not adequately thematized in the Christian perspective. However, it is powerfully presented in images and "revelations," especially in the form of the problem of divine love and of the God-Human who takes our transgressions unto godself. Transgression, too, acquires a new meaning: it is an offense against the divine love, a dishonoring of the Highest, which is a personal matter and demands a personal solution. The responsible human as such is *I*; it is an individual that is not identical with any role it could possibly assume—in Plato this is expressed in the myth of the drawing of life's lot; it is a responsible I because in the confrontation with death and in coming to terms with nothingness it takes upon itself what we all must carry out in ourselves, where no one can take our place. Now, however, individuality is vested in a relation to an infinite love and humans are individuals because they are guilty, and *always* guilty, with respect to it. We all, as individuals, are defined by the uniqueness of our individual placement in the universality of sin.

Nietzsche coined the saying that Christianity is Platonism for the people and there is this much truth in it, in that the Christian God took over the transcendence of the onto-theological conception as a matter of course.[11] In the Christian conception of the soul, though, there is a fundamental, profound difference. It is not just that, as St. Paul would have it, the Christian rejects the Greek *sophia tou kosmou*[12](metaphysics) and its method of inner dialogue—eidetic intuition—as the way to that being which belongs inseparably to the discovery of the soul. The chief difference appears to be that it is only now that the inmost content of the soul is revealed, that the truth for which the soul struggles is not the truth of intuition but rather the truth of its own destiny, bound up with eternal responsibility from which there is no escape *ad secula*

seculorum. The intrinsic life of the soul, its essential content, comes not from seeing ideas and so from its bond to the being which agelessly, eternally is, but rather in an openness to the abyss in the divine and the human, to the wholly unique and so definitively self-determining bond of divinity and humanity, the unique drama to which the fundamental content of the soul relates throughout. The transcendent God of antiquity combined with the Old Testament Lord of History becomes the chief personage in the inner drama which God makes into the drama of salvation and grace. The overcoming of everydayness assumes the form of the care for the salvation of the soul which won itself in a moral transformation, in the turn in the face of death and death eternal; which lives in anxiety and hope inextricably intertwined, which trembles in the knowledge of its sin and with its whole being offers itself in the sacrifice of penance. Implied, though never explicitly thematized and never grasped philosophically as a central question, is the idea that the soul is by nature wholly incommensurate with all eternal being, that this nature has to do with its care for its own being in which, unlike all other existents, it is infinitely interested; and that an essential part of its composition is responsibility, that is, the possibility of choice and, in this choosing, of arriving at its own self—the idea that the soul is nothing present *before*, *only afterwards*, that it is historical in all its being and only as such escapes decadence.

By virtue of this foundation in the abysmal deepening of the soul, Christianity remains thus far the greatest, unsurpassed but also un-thought-through human outreach that enabled humans to struggle against decadence. The actual forms of life in the Christian era, both external (social) and internal (conceptual), are, however, linked with the problems of the Roman Empire (originally analogous to the Greek *polis*, though thanks to its own success gradually transformed from a mere *res publica* into an *imperium*, alienating the masses of its citizens whose lives that change stripped of content) and with its downfall. This downfall, however, was not only something negative, the destruction of an elitist civilization, dependent on an

increasingly oppressive and crisis-prone slave system, and the transformation of its economic and social order. It represents at the same time the *birth* of Europe in the present sense of the word. For us, a revolutionary philosophy of economic dialectics has obscured the reality that the foundations of our revolutionary epoch lie in a transformation brought about by an external destruction and not by an internal eruption; the internal social transformation was largely a peaceful one, consisting in a progressive shift of the burden of labor from a *thing*, which is what a slave was, a being denied moral standing, to a being who, in family and property, however exploited, however modest, had an autonomous, potentially free character, the standing of a person. (Still the Hegelian and Comtean philosophies of history remained aware of the significance of this transformation and were fully conscious of its central significance.) It was thanks to this transformation that, after centuries of confusion, the European and especially the western European social mass reappeared as an awesome expansive power, that the potentials therein contained found expression in new social and political structures with immense impact: in internal colonization of the land, in the rise of cities wholly different from the ancient *polis*, cities where labor is guided by the idea of a tool and its perfecting, thus shifting the *burden* of labor from persons to things; in the expansion into the regions lost by the Roman Empire—the Mediterranean and the East—as well as into those which it never possessed: central and northeastern Europe.

What, however, interests us most in our context is that an entire school of modern sociology, inspired by de Tocqueville, insisted and still insists that the modern development tends towards a democratic equalization, an equality of opportunity, preferring well-being to "greatness." What is the basis of this trend? Medieval society was hierarchical in origin, resting on the remnants of Roman municipal organization and Germanic conquest, but its real basis was the new attitude toward work, one based on rural colonization and urban production. The ecclesiastical hierarchy served the function of transcending the tedium of everydayness by introducing a dimension of

authenticity, at times dissolving orgiastic tendencies, at other times (as in the Crusades) chanelling them. Understandably, the urban element proved the bearer of some new possibilities in the process. Its new attitude to work and the sceptical use it made of ancient rationalism helped generate a new conception of knowledge as ultimately practical and mastering nature. That was echoed by a distinctly practical tendency of Christian theology which emphasized that humans are not on this earth only or primarily to contemplate it but rather to serve and act. European expansion shifted from the form of Crusades to exploration beyond the seas and in the grasp for the wealth of the world; simultaneously, the internal development of production, of technologies, of commercial and financial practices led to the rise of an entirely new kind of rationalism, the only one we know today: a rationalism that wants to master things and is mastered by them (by the desire for gain).

The origin of this modern (non-Platonic) rationalism is complex. A moment of far-reaching significance in it is the unresolved problem which the Christian era took over from antiquity: transcending the everyday and the orgiastic. Christian theology rejected the Platonic solution, though this theology did accept extensive elements of a solution launched along Platonic lines.

Platonic rationalism, the Platonic effort to subject even responsibility itself to the objectivity of knowledge, continues to affect the nether layers of the Christian conception. Theology itself rests on a "natural" foundation, understanding "the supernatural" as a fulfillment of "the natural."

The distancing of humans from "nature," which is no longer the locus of being human but rather something from which humans are separated by their unique unmediated relation, their relation to God, now enables them to perceive this "nature" as an "object."

Within the framework of nature so conceived, humans then strive for their freedom—understood Platonically as that over which they stand because they grasp it in eidetic insight. Hence the "mathematical" conception of nature and its new

appearance, in the making since the fourteenth century and definitively triumphing in the seventeenth, when it achieves its main interpretive successes. Galileo is, notoriously, a Platonist. It is Plato's metaphysics of the immortal soul that makes it possible for the domination of nature by the human soul to find a place in the Christian world with its unresolved problem of metaphysical philosophy and Christian theology.

Thaumaturgy, astrology, alchemy, and the Paracelsian[13] medicine of the Renaissance are likewise Platonic. Faustian tendencies claim their own and tempt humans to break the bond with the divine by the demonic.

On the other hand, the Christian attitude to life's practice, its valorization of practical life against theory, makes it possible to integrate even the Platonic "mastery" of nature into practical contexts and so to create a truly effective knowledge that is technique and science in one—modern natural science.

Transformations in the Christian spiritual core itself, the transition first from a Christianity of and for the nobility to an ecclesiastical autonomy and then to a lay Christianity, made it possible for Christianity—with Reformation's ascetic attitude to the world and with the pathos of personal certification by economic blessings—to contribute to the rise of that autonomy of the productive process that characterizes modern capitalism. That capitalism quickly sheds the constraints of its religious impetus and allies itself fundamentally with a superficial modern rationalism, estranged from any personal and moral vocation. It comes to be characterized by an immensely successful mathematical formalism. Its most successful aspect focuses on a mastery of nature, of movement, and of force. That is the modern mechanism which capitalism was only too glad to turn into a cult of the mechanical, so contributing to what came to be known as the industrial revolution. This revolution then penetrates throughout and ever more completely determines our lives. Given its differentiation of vocations and interdependence of interests, European humanity and by now already humanity as such simply are no longer capable of physically surviving but for the mode of production that rests increasingly on science

and technology (and, of course, increasingly devastates the global, planetary store of energy), so that rational domination, the cold "truth" of that coldest of cold monsters, today wholly obscures to us its origin, eliminating our traditional ways of overcoming everydayness in a nonorgiastic and so truthful mode (a deeper form of truth which pays heed not only to the formal guise assumed by dominable nature but also to humans in their uniqueness and profound individuality) while posing as the All in All, the steward of the cosmos.

So many spiritual themes ultimately conjoined in giving rise to an unspiritual, wholly "practical," secular and material conception of reality as an object to be mastered by our mind and hands.

What had originally in Plato been a bulwark against orgiastic irresponsibility has now passed into the service of everydayness. Therein humans flatter themselves that they are taking their lives into their own hands, and can indeed make use of causes they discovered to generate means for the facilitation and external multiplication of life and of its goods. In the process, work itself does at first enslave them more than once it did, then, though, it gradually "liberates" them until humans see the possibility of being "liberated" from it altogether.

One of the consequences which presents itself at first inconspicuously, then ever more insistantly, is boredom. Boredom is not something negligible, a "mere mood," a private disposition, but rather the ontological condition of a humanity which has wholly subordinated its life to everydayness and its anonymity.

Already in the nineteenth century Kierkegaard identified boredom as the root of the aesthetic stage, of that inconstancy which cannot become rooted in what there is because boredom drives it out of it. In the seventeenth century, in Pascal, we can already find similar themes, conceived in the face of the mechanistic conceptions advancing across the board at the time.[14]

Durkheim noted that certain phenomena of the Great Revolution manifest a spontaneous renewal of the sacred. At the time of the Revolution humans seemed seized by

something like a "religious" fervor. "This ability of the society to posit itself as divine or to found divinities was never as evident as in the first years of the Revolution. Under the impact of the common wave of enthusiasm, matters wholly secular by nature were transformed into sacred, as Fatherland, Liberty, Reason . . ."[15] That, to be sure, is an enthusiasm which, for all the cult of Reason, has an orgiastic cast, either undisciplined or insufficiently disciplined by a link to personal responsibility. Here a danger of a new decline into the orgiastic is acutely evident.

A new flood of the orgiastic is an inevitable appendage to addiction to things, to their everyday procurement, to bondage to life.

The more modern technoscience asserts itself as the true relation to what-is, the more it draws everything natural and then even everything human into its orbit, the more the ageless traditions of balancing the authentic and the captivating are set aside and condemned as unrealistic, untrustworthy, and fantastic, the more cruel will the revenge of orgiastic fervor be. It makes itself felt already in the "wars of liberation" and the revolutionary crises of the nineteenth century.[16] It is exacerbated by their commonly cruel repression. The entire earnestness of life, its entire interest in its own being, becomes compressed into the realm of social conflict. Everydayness and the fervor of the fight to the finish, without quarter, belong together. Throughout the nineteenth century this link remains largely latent, the forces of inertia remain highly powerful. However, in the twentieth century, which is something like the "truth" of the nineteenth, this contradiction clearly becomes so dominant a motive as to require no proof.

In this century, war is the full fruition of the revolt of the everyday. A growing laxness in all things and random "happening"[17] go hand in hand with it, as the new manifestation of the orgiastic. Not just the outbreak of wars and revolutions, but the disintegration of old forms of *ethos*, the insistence on the "right to one's body" or to "a life of my own," the universal spread of "happenings" and so on attest to this linkage. War as a global

"anything goes," a wild freedom, takes hold of states, becoming "*total.*" The same hand stages orgies and organizes everydayness. The author of the five-year plans is at the same time the author of orchestrated show trials in a new witch hunt. War is simultaneously the greatest undertaking of industrial civilization, both product and instrument of total mobilization (as Ernst Jünger rightly saw[18]), and a release of orgiastic potentials which could not afford such extreme of intoxication with destruction under any other circumstances. Already at the dawn of modernity, at the time of the wars of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that kind of cruelty and orgiasm emerged. Already then it was the fruit of a disintegration of traditional discipline and demonization of the opponent—though never before did the demonic reach its peak precisely in an age of greatest sobriety and rationality.

Boredom, naturally, does not retreat but rather forces its way to the forefront. Nor does it assume only the refined forms of the aesthetic and of romantic protest, but also the clear form of consumer offerings and the end of utopia (brought about by "positive" means). In the form of compulsory recreation, it becomes one of the characteristic collective metaphysical experiences of our age (while others include the experience of combat or Hiroshima).

What else does it mean, this gigantic Boredom which cannot be covered up even by the immense ingenuity of modern science and technology which it would be naive and cynical to underestimate or ignore? The most sophisticated inventions are boring if they do not lead to an exacerbation of the Mystery concealed by what we discover, what is revealed to us. The powerful penetrating ability of the human mind uncovers with an undreamed-of insistence, yet what it uncovers is right away seized by the everyday and by understanding of being as in principle already fully uncovered and cleared, that understanding which at a stroke turns today's mystery into tomorrow's common gossip and triviality.

The problem of the individual, the problem of the human person, was from the start the problem of transcending the

ordinary and the orgiastic. It implied simultaneously that humans cannot be identified with any role they may assume in the world. Modern individualism, as it stretches from the Renaissance on (according to Burckhardt and many others[19]), was an attempt not to penetrate beyond and beneath every role but rather to play an *important* role. Bourgeois revolutions battle over roles (equality is equality of roles! and freedom is the possibility to choose whatever role suits us!). Modern individualism is increasingly being unmasked as a collectivism (universalism), and collectivism as this false individualism. Thus the real question concerning the individual is not at issue between liberalism and socialism, between democracy and totalitarianism, which for all their profound differences equally overlook all that is neither objective nor a role. For the same reason, a resolution of their conflicts cannot resolve the problem of setting humans in their place, resolving their wandering alienated from themselves and from the place that belongs to them.

This bewildered wandering is manifest, among other things, in modern homelessness. For all the vast production of the wherewithal of living, human life remains homeless. Home is understood ever more as a shelter, a place to sleep over so we can return to work the next day, the place where we store the fruits of our labor and lead our "family life" of which there is ever less. That humans, unlike all other animals, build dwellings, because they are not at home in the world, because they lean out of the world and for that reason are charged with a calling within and towards it, anchored in deep layers of the past which have not passed as long as they live on in them—all that vanishes in the face of modern voluntary and enforced mobility, the gigantic migrations which by now affect nearly all the continents. The greatest homelessness, however, is in our relation to nature and to ourselves: Hannah Arendt used to point out that humans no longer understand what it is they do and calculate. In their relation to nature, they are content with mere practical mastery and predictability without intelligibility. In a sense, in their natural sciences they left the earth long before cosmic flights and so have in reality lost contact with

that ground beneath their feet to which they had been called. Thereby, though, they also gave up their own selves, their distinctive place among all that is, which consists in being the living beings we know who relate to their being, who really are this relation. Being ceased to be a problem once all that is was laid out before us as obvious in its quantifiable meaninglessness.

Humans have ceased to be a relation to Being and have become a force, a mighty one, one of the mightiest. Especially in their social being, they became a gigantic transformer, releasing cosmic forces accumulated and bound over the eons. It seems as if humans have become a grand energy accumulator in a world of sheer forces, on the one hand making use of those forces to exist and multiply, yet on the other hand themselves integrated into the same process, accumulated, calculated, utilized, and manipulated like any other state of energy. At first sight, this image seems mythological: what is force if not a concept for the human mode of predicting and controlling reality? Yet that precisely is the crucial point, that understanding the world as Force makes mere forces something more than a correlate of human activities. Hidden within Force there is being which has not ceased to be that light which lights up the world, though now only as a malevolent light. If we understand being merely from the perspective of the existents among which it belongs, and we do so understand it because being for us is what is forever, radically and agelessly ruling over all, what is thus contingent on the primordial beginnings which to master means to master all, then in present day understanding Force is the Highest Being which creates and destroys all, to which all and everyone serve.

Thus a metaphysics of force is fictitious and inauthentic, an anthropomorphism, and yet this criticism does not do it justice. For precisely this practical deification of force makes it not only a concept but a reality, something which, through our understanding of things, frees up all the effectiveness potentially contained in things; makes it an actualization of all potentials. Thus force becomes not only something that is but all of reality: everything is only in its functioning, in the accumulation

and discharge of potentials, while all other reality dissolves, qualities, comprehension for things (for the knowing subjects who themselves no longer "comprehend" but only transform) . . . Thus force manifests itself as the highest concealment of Being which, like the purloined letter in E. A. Poe's familiar story, is safest where it is exposed to view in the form of the totality of what-is; that is, of forces that organize and release one another, not excluding humans who, like all else, are stripped of all mystery.

A great contemporary thinker presented this vision of being absorbed in what is in his work without being trusted or noted.[20] The next and last chapter of our essay about history will seek to show how this is reflected in contemporary historical events and the alternatives they present.

As to the question whether the industrial civilization is decadent (as a whole and in its character as a scientific and technological revolution), the answer now seems easy. Still, we hesitate about it. It is true that it did not resolve the great, principal human—and so also its own— problem, namely, not only to live but to live in a humanly authentic way, as history shows we can, but that it has actually made the situation more difficult because the matrix of its possibilities does not include the relation of humans to themselves and so also to the world as a whole and to its fundamental mystery. Its concepts encourage superficiality and discourage thought in a deeper, fundamental sense of the word. They offer substitutes where the original is needed. They alienate humans from themselves, depriving them of dwelling in the world, submerging them in the everyday alternative which is not so much toil as boredom, or in cheap substitutes and ultimately in orgiastic brutality. The age reduces understanding to the monotonous model of applied mathematics. It generates a conception of a force ruling over all and mobilizes all of reality to release the bound forces, a rule of Force actualized through global conflicts. Humans are thus destroyed externally and impoverished internally, deprived of their "ownness," of that irreplaceable I, they are identified with their roles, standing and falling with them.

On the other hand, it is also true that this civilization *makes possible* more than any previous human constellation: a life without violence and with far-reaching equality of opportunity. Not in the sense that this goal would anywhere be actual, but humans have never before found the means of struggle with external misery, with lack and want, which this civilization offers. Not that this struggle with external want could be resolved by those social ways and exclusive means which the age offers. Even the struggle with *outer* need is an inner struggle. The chief possibility, however, which emerges for the first time in history with our civilization, is the *possibility* of a turn from accidental rule to the rule of those who understand what history is about. It would be a tragic *guilt* (not a misfortune) of the intelligentsia if it failed to comprehend and grasp this opportunity. History is nothing other than the shaken certitude of pre-given meaning. It has no other meaning or goal. For the bad infinity of the precarious human existence in the world, however, complicated today by a global emergence of the masses, accustomed to flattery and escalating their expectations, such a goal and meaning will largely do to make them facile victims of manipulative demagogues.

The second main reason why the technological civilization cannot be simply labeled decadent is that the manifestations of decadence which we have noted and described in it are not simply its own work but a bequest of preceding ages out of whose spiritual problems and themes it made up its dominant matrix. Our sketch of the rise of the modern age and of its fundamental metaphysical character was intended to show as much. Modern civilization suffers not only from its own flaws and myopia but also from the failure to resolve the entire problem of history. Yet the problem of history may not be resolved, it must be preserved as a problem. Today the danger is that knowing so many particulars we are losing the ability to see the questions and that which is their foundation.

Perhaps the entire question about the decadence of civilization is incorrectly posed. There is no civilization as such. The question is whether historical humans are still willing to embrace history.

Sixth Essay: Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War

The first world war provoked a whole range of explanations among us, reflecting the effort of humans to comprehend this immense event, transcending any individual, carried out by humans and yet transcending humankind—a process in some sense cosmic. We sought to fit it into our categories, to come to terms with it as best we could—that is, basically, in terms of nineteenth-century ideas. The second world war provoked nothing of the sort; its direct causes and the course it took were (apparently) only too clear and, most of all, it did not end, mutating instead into something peculiar which looks neither quite like war nor quite like peace, and the revolution which in a way commented on this state did not let anyone catch their breath to speak the word which would "define each thing according to its essence and would tell us about the state of the matter." Besides, a sort of a conviction spread among us that there must be some true, that is Marxist, explanation of the second world war, something hidden in the conceptual treasuries of the Party which guides the movement of history. No one seemed to mind that in reality there are no such explanations . . .

It is not the task of these lines to provide a critique of the specific formulae forged to account for the first world war. I

would rather point out that all of them, whether they spoke of the conflict of the Slavs and Germans, of an imperialist conflict growing out of the final stage of capitalism, of the result of exaggerated modern subjectivism seeking a violent objectification, or perhaps of a conflict between democracy and theocracy, shared one trait in common: all approached war from the perspective of peace, day, and life, excluding its dark nocturnal side. From this perspective, life, especially historical life, appears as a continuum within which individuals function as the bearers of a general movement which alone matters; death means a change in functions; and war, death organized en masse, is an unpleasant but necessary interlude which we need to accept in the interest of certain goals of life's continuity but in which we can seek nothing "positive." At most, as Hegel said (and Dostoyevsky repeated), it can serve as one of the salutary tremors that civic life needs lest it become sclerotic and fall asleep in its routine. However, the idea that war itself might be something that can explain, that has itself the power of bestowing meaning, is an idea foreign to all philosophies of history and so also to all the explanations of the world war we know.

The explanations of the war of 1914–1918 were always constructed with the help of nineteenth-century ideas, but those are ideas of the day with its interests, ideas of peace. It is not surprising that they proved incapable of explaining the fundamental phenomenon of the twentieth century, so different since that century is an epoch of the night, of war, and of death. Not that we would not need to refer to its antecedents in seeking to understand it. Such antecedent ideas, programs, and goals, however, can only explain the origin of that awesome will which for years drove millions of humans into a fiery furnace and other countless millions into preparations, gigantic and unending, for this monumental *auto-da-fé*. They are no use in explaining the intrinsic content of this century and its deep addiction to war.

As with all European wars, so also the war of 1914–1918 had as its background a definite general human conviction striving violently to manifest itself, to be acted out. This, too,

was an ideological war, though its idea, inconspicuous in its negativity, is hard to locate. Wars such as Napoleon's were still rooted in revolutionary ideas, reflecting the Enlightenment in a special, militarily technicized mode, and the Enlightenment was the common conceptual property of the time as well as a global conviction, the positive idea that the world is ruled by reason. Just as the Thirty Years' War was marked by the common conviction that the split within western Christendom must be definitively resolved, and just as the crusades rested on the conviction of the superiority of western Christianity, based in its inner truthfulness. The shared idea in the background of the first world war was the slowly germinating conviction that there is nothing such as a factual, objective meaning of the world and of things, and that it is up to strength and power to create such meaning within the realm accessible to humans. The preparation for war proceeded in this spirit; the will to preserve the status quo on the one hand, the will to transform it radically on the other. Understandably, derivatives of other, older convictions of Christian origins were also present, democratic ideas of the Enlightenment on the one hand, theocratic-hierarchic ideas on the other; yet when we look at the state of affairs realistically, noting that the democratic states of Europe were also the most vigorous representatives of Europe's imperial idea, their claims to democracy begin to appear as components in their defense of the global status quo. That stands out most clearly in their alliance with the most endangered member of the imperial status quo of the time, which was, naturally, czarist Russia. In any case, it was not for such derivatives that humans went to do battle, those tended far more to affect the unfolding of the course of events and the intensity of the will manifest in them. Only with the entry of America and of the socialist revolution into the course of the war did there appear, on the side both of the Allies and of the opposition, forces opposed to the status quo in whose name the war ended and, by its inconclusive ending laid the foundations for new or renewed conflicts.

In this respect it is important that, if we think of the process of the war and of the will that led to its unexpectedly long

duration in this, the only realistic way, then the side that fought against the status quo and so, appearances to the contrary, must justly be called revolutionary, is Germany after Bismarck. Despite all appearance to the contrary: is this configuration, led by conservative Prussia and its military caste, with its ossified bureaucracy, its incredibly narrow-minded Lutheran orthodoxy, a revolutionary element, the bearer and agent of world revolution? Do not all the facts speak against it, including the social history of the war? If we were impressed by the common conception of revolution, accepted primarily in economic and social theories, in historical materialism, in the socialism of the nineteenth century, which itself understood revolution politically and modeled it after the revolutions of the eighteenth century (notably the French, less so the American), then this thesis could be nothing but a forced paradox. Yet of all the peoples of the world (except for the United States), this Germany, for all its traditional structures, is the configuration that most closely approximated the reality of the new technoscientific age. Even its conservatism basically served a discipline that, contemptuous of equalization and democratization, vehemently and ruthlessly pursued the accumulation of building, organizing, transforming energy. Ernst Jünger's *Der Arbeiter* contains an implicit suspicion of the actual revolutionary nature of the old prewar Germany.[1] It is above all the ever deepening technoscientific aspect of its life. It is the organizing will of its economic leaders, its technocratic representatives forging plans leading inevitably to a conflict with the existing global order. These flow quite naturally into a definite historically prepared mold—did not the war of 1870 show that what had hitherto been the center of western Europe, France, was no longer capable of fulfilling the role of the state unifying the heritage of the Roman West, that Austria, the last vestige of the old empire, could easily fall prey to such plans and that the "concert of Europe" was in this perspective an obsolete political concept?[2] Thus it came quite naturally to seem that this imperial Germany was traditionalistic, merely reviving the claims of the old empire on the new basis of that nationalism which

sustained the war of 1870–1871. Its internal opposition, the socialists, equally naturally saw in it a hotbed of greedy capitalist magnates, subsequently the typical representative of global capitalist imperialism bent on seizing all the riches of the globe and all its productive forces. In reality, they themselves collaborated in organizing the new society of work, discipline, production, and planned construction leading in all respects to the releasing of ever further stores of energy. Long before the war, this Germany had already transformed Europe into an energetic complex. For all the intelligence with which other European countries, France especially, moved in the same direction, their transformation in this respect was more gradual, humanized by their desire for individual life, a tendency which Sieburg captured in his *Gott in Frankreich* still long after the war.[3] The conservative structures of prewar Germany provided a great service in this respect, helping bring the transformation about in a disciplined manner, without great upheavals, so that the masses yielded to it, for all the gnashing of teeth among political leaders, indeed, the political organization of the workers by party bureaucracy soon fell into the same rut and moved in the same direction. The revolution taking place here had its deep driving force in the conspicuous scientification which all prewar experts on Europe and on Germany saw as the chief trait of its life: a scientification which understood science as technology, actually a positivism, which for the most part managed to neutralize even those traditions surviving from the Germany of the first half of the century, the Germany of the fading old empire, traditions of history, theology, philosophy, or even managed to couple them to this new locomotive.

Appearances again to the contrary, the Achilles' heel of this entire effort was its military machine. It was also well on the way toward a managerial mode of work and thought, though here a great deal stood in the way. There was the fascination with tradition and its concepts, schemata, goals. On the one hand there was a great sturdiness and persistence, on the other a domineering rudeness and a total absence of imagination. The war was conducted mechanically, victory won by

organization, tenacity, and order there, wherever the army encountered a lack of these traits in its opponent. Slothful thinking led to flaws in contingency planning, as in the lack of an offensive plan for the eastern front. The "rot" of trench warfare, too, can be credited to the German general staff—though the presuppositions for a war of movement in the form of motor technology already existed by 1914, only the French managed to make partial use of them in the battle of the Marne. All the "ingenuity" was devoted to increasing firepower which, in the end, necessarily favored the defensive.

The instinctive orientation of the war to the West attests one thing—that it was a war against the status quo whose center was the European West. For this purpose it was not enough to defeat Russia, to "be done with it." It was necessary to strike where there was a threat of competition from other, analogous organizational centers. Hence, perhaps, the fascination with the West, hence the betting on the nonsensical Schlieffen Plan, on submarine warfare, on the "Great Offensive" of 1918.[4] The idea of letting the opponents spend themselves on the defensive somewhere along the Rhine while definitively conquering the East as a basis for the constitution of a macrospace which would not leave sufficient resources for counterattacks either never occurred or did not prevail.

The first world war is the decisive event in the history of the twentieth century. It determined its entire character. It was this war that demonstrated that the transformation of the world into a laboratory for releasing reserves of energy accumulated over billions of years can be achieved only by means of wars. Thus it represented a definitive breakthrough of the conception of being that was born in the sixteenth century with the rise of mechanical natural science. Now it swept aside all the "conventions" that inhibited this release of energy—a transvaluation of all values under the sign of power.

Why must the energetic transformation of the world take on the form of war? Because war, acute confrontation, is the most intensive means for the rapid release of accumulated forces. Conflict is the great instrument which, mythologically

speaking, Force used in its transition from potency to actuality. In this process humans as well as individual peoples serve merely as tools. Is not precisely here the root of the cosmic sense of warfare which Teilhard de Chardin captured so powerfully?

> The front is not simply a flaming line where the accumulated energies of hostile masses are released and mutually neutralized. It is also the locus of a distinctive Life shared only by those who dare step right up to it and only for as long as they dare remain there.[5]
>
> It seems to me that one could show that the Front is not simply a line of fire, the interface of people attacking each other, but that it is also in some way the "crest of the wave" that bears the world of humans toward its new destiny . . . it seems that there one finds oneself at the extreme limit of what has happened and what is to be done.[6]

Teilhard's mysticism of matter and life bears the stamp of combat experience.

It is the forces of the day which for four years sent millions of humans into hellfire, and the front line is the place which for four years hypnotized all the activity of the industrial age which a participant of the front, Ernst Jünger, called the age of the worker and of total mobilization.[7] These forces themselves never die, only exhaust themselves, indifferent whether they are destroying or organizing. Fundamentally, their "impulse" is rather to organize, to get on with the task from which the war only distracts them. "War aims" is an inaccurate expression: they are the aims of peace, though, of course, of a *pax teutonica* or a *pax americana* or whatever. Yet humankind was forced to live for four years at the front and, Teilhard says, whoever lived through the front has become a different person. Different in what sense?

The descriptions of the experience of the front vary and reflect different considerations. For our purposes, we shall select those of Jünger and Teilhard de Chardin.

Both Jünger and Teilhard emphasize the upheaval by the front line, which is not an immediate trauma but a fundamental transformation of human existence: war in the form of the front line marks humans forever. A second common trait: the front line is horrifying and everyone in the trenches is eager for

rotation (even according to the standards of the general staffs, surely not overly sensitive, it is not possible to last longer than nine days), yet in the depth of that experience there is something deeply and mysteriously positive. It is not the fascination of the abyss and the romance of adventure; it is no perversion of natural sentiments. The person on the front line is gradually overcome by an overwhelming sense of meaningfulness which would be hard to put into words. It is a feeling capable of persisting for many years. According to Jünger, it persists through the return of the peaceful, particularistic, national, and chauvinistic mentality, with the question neither resolved nor silenced.

It has, understandably, its phases and degrees of intensity. Those degrees of intensity play an important role in the history of later times. The first phase, which few can transcend, is the experience of meaninglessness and unbearable horror. The front line is absurdity *par excellence.* What we had only suspected here becomes reality: all that humans hold most precious is ruthlessly torn to shreds. The only meaning is that of a proof that a world capable of producing something like that must disappear. It is a visible proof that the world is perfectly ripe for perishing. We will follow, body and soul, anyone who can earnestly promise to make this impossible in the future, all the more radically the more removed his promise is from the present-day social realities that had led to something like this. This type of experience and its consequences, this type of active revulsion immortalized by Barbusse,[8] lies at the root of the great phenomenon of *fighting for peace.* This phenomenon acquired its first historically significant and historically underestimated form in the negotiations surrounding the peace of Brest-Litovsk and burgeoned especially during and after the second world war. The determination to put an end to the entire reality that makes something like that possible indicates that here, too, humans glimpse something "eschatological," something like the end of all of the values of the day. Yet no sooner is it glimpsed than this "other" is again caught up, sequestered by the context of the day. No sooner do humans

confront the shaken world than they are not only grasped by its forces but also mobilized for a new battle. The meaninglessness of life and war up to now bestows meaning on a new war, the war against war. Those who refused the front line which had been forced upon them, themselves force themselves to another front line for future years, no less hard and cruel. The war against war seems to make use of new experiences, seemingly acts eschatologically, yet in reality bends eschatology back to the "mundane" level, the level of the day, and uses in the service of the day what belonged to the night and to eternity. It is the demonic of the day which poses as the all in all and manages to trivialize and drain dry even what lies beyond its limits.

So in 1917, with the intrusion of the radical revolutionaries into the first Russian revolution, actually, of the first Russian collapse, a new war begins, perpendicular to the one fought hitherto against the status quo: a new struggle that is supposed to uproot the status quo on both sides, according to a different conception of peace than the Germans had in mind. Still, it was the German attack on the status quo which created the preconditions, made possible and radically supported this new attack, and thereafter the strategy of war becomes one of waiting and expecting a mutual weakening, even destruction of two opponents chained to this life and death struggle. The exhaustion of the one and the victory of the other will be a merely tactical moment in a different battle; victory will be an illusion preparing a future defeat, defeat will be the ferment of battles to come. A victorious peace is an illusion in which the victor morally disintegrates. The war evidently goes, for in the land of the revolution the same destruction of all conventions is at work at full speed. It is the same disregard for life, the same poison of suspicion, slander, and demagogy that had become common in the days when the front line dominated all, using as a means of combat not only firepower but all the weaknesses of the opponent, all the possibilities of driving the other to an internal collapse so that (at least temporarily and seemingly) the victors would achieve their goal. What triumphs, though, in this ruthless struggle is again Force, using peace as a means of

combat, so that peace itself becomes a part of war, that deceptive stage which defeats the adversary without a shot—luring the opponents to slow down their mobilization while the other opponent, actual or potential, remains alert, maintaining a mighty, agonizing momentum purchased at the expense of lives, liberties, and destruction. Force, however, triumphs here as well by creating a new powerful form of reciprocal tension, a tension on two simultaneous levels, with a power to mobilize which had hitherto been muted by the defective organization of one of the participants; that participant now becomes the organizational realm par excellence, unhampered by those muting factors represented in the rest of the world by respect for tradition, for former ways of comprehending being which now appear as outworn superstitions and a means of manipulating others.

The ineffectual attempts of the European West to turn the war eastward led directly to its renewed flare-up in the West. The war neither died nor slept, only changed for a time into smoldering embers, for the insufficiently defeated, insufficiently destroyed Germany remained capable of replaying the entire drama of 1914 with an even more absurd military machine, even greater lack of an overall plan, even more impromptu acts of violence and fostering of hate, even more inconceivable acts of revenge and *ressentiment*. With that, it gave its defeated first world war opponent an opening for a revenge on a truly global scale: for that opponent had in the meantime switched from peace to war footing and could hold out where once it had weakened. The West, having sought to channel force in that direction, in the end had to pay with its own destruction and blood for the victory of this competitor, heedless of being at the same time in a continuous war with that competitor. So what Germany had begun, the transformation of the global *status quo*, finally came about, though not in favor of Germany but of its weaker opponent from the first world war. This whole new constellation, this pathetic maneuvering, could not but bring on the definitive collapse of Europe. At the dawn of the Age of Energy, Europe—western Europe, grown from the

heritage of the western Roman Empire—achieved the signs of global dominance. Europe was everything. After the first war, that Europe yielded place to *its successor*, nurtured on the realization of what Europe had longed for and never achieved, liberty—in favor of the United States. Now Europe entirely vacated its global position, lost its empires, its prestige, lost its self-confidence and self-understanding. Its feeble partner in the first war proved a capable heir, for in the discipline of a prolonged mobilization, of first a smoldering and then a burning war, it transmuted itself anew into what it has traditionally been and is, the successor of eastern Rome, ruling both human bodies and their souls.[9]

How do the day, life, peace, govern all individuals, their bodies and souls? By means of death; by threatening life. From the perspective of the day life is, for all individuals, everything, the highest value that exists for them. For the forces of the day, conversely, death does not exist, they function as if there was no death, or, as noted, they plan death impersonally and statistically, as if it were merely a reassignment of roles. Thus in the will to war, day and life rule with the help of death. The will to war counts on generations yet unborn, conceiving its plans from their viewpoint. So peace rules in the will to war. Those who cannot break free of the rule of peace, of the day, of life in a mode that excludes death and closes its eyes before it, can never free themselves of war.

The grandiose, profound experience of the front with its line of fire consists in its evocation of the night in all its urgency and undeniability. Peace and the day necessarily rule by sending humans to death in order to assure *others* a day in the future in the form of progress, of a free and increasing expansion, of possibilities they lack today. Of those whom it sacrifices it demands, by contrast, *endurance* in the face of death. That indicates a dark awareness that life is not everything, that it can sacrifice itself. That self-sacrifice, that surrender, is what is called for. It is called for as something relative, related to peace and to the day. The front-line experience, however, is an *absolute* one. Here, as Teilhard shows, the participants are assaulted by *an*

absolute freedom, freedom from *all* the interests of peace, of life, of the day. That means: the sacrifice of the sacrificed loses its relative significance, it is no longer the cost we pay for a program of development, progress, intensification, and extension of life's possibilities, rather, it is significant *solely in itself.*

This absolute freedom is the understanding that here something has already been achieved, something that is not the means to anything else, a stepping stone to . . . , but rather something above and beyond which there can be nothing. This is the culmination, this self-surrender which can call humans away from their vocations, talents, possibilities, their future. To be capable of that, to be chosen and called for it in a world that uses conflict to mobilize force so that it comes to appear as a totally objectified and objectifying cauldron of energy, also means to *overcome force.* The motives of the day which had evoked the will to war are consumed in the furnace of the front line, if that experience is intense enough that it will not yield again to the forces of the day. Peace transformed into a will to war could objectify and externalize humans as long as they were ruled by the day, by the hope of everydayness, of a profession, of a career, simply possibilities for which they must fear and which feel threatened. Now, however, comes the upheaval, shaking that peace and its planning, its programs and its ideas of progress indifferent to mortality. All everydayness, all visions of future life pale before the simple peak on which humans find themselves standing. In face of that, all the ideas of socialism, of progress, of democratic spontaneity, of independence and freedom appear impoverished, neither viable nor tangible. They achieve their full meaning not in themselves but only where they are derived from that peak and lead back to it in turn. Where they lead humans to bring about such a transformation of their whole lives, their entire existence. Where they mean not the content of everydayness but an image of the cosmic and the universal to which humans attain by the absolute sacrifice of themselves and of their day.

Thus the *night* comes suddenly to be an absolute obstacle on the path of the day to the bad infinity of tomorrows. In

coming upon us as an *insurmountable* possibility, the *seemingly* transindividual possibilities of the day are shunted aside, while this sacrifice presents itself as the authentic transindividuality.

A second consequence: the enemy is no longer the absolute adversary in the way of the will to peace; he is not here only to be eliminated. The adversary is a fellow participant in the same situation, fellow discoverer of absolute freedom with whom agreement is possible in difference, a fellow participant in the upheaval of the day, of peace, and of life lacking all peaks. Here we encounter the abysmal realm of the "prayer for the enemy," the phenomenon of "loving those who hate us"—the solidarity of the shaken for all their contradiction and conflict.

Thus the most profound discovery of the front line is that life leans out into the night, into struggle and death, that it cannot do without this component of life which, from the point of view of the day, appears as a mere nonexistence; the transformation of the meaning of life which here trips on *nothingness*, on a boundary over which it cannot step, along which everything is transformed. Thus in the experience of a front line cannoneer, as an important contemporary psychologist describes it,[10] the topographic character of the landscape changes so that abruptly *there is an end to it* and the ruins no longer are *what they had been*, villages and so on, but have become what they can be at the given moment, shelters and reference points, so the landscape of life's fundamental meanings had been transformed, *it has acquired an end* beyond which there can be nothing further, higher, more desirable.

Why has this grandiose experience, alone capable of leading humankind out of war into a true peace, not had a decisive effect on the history of the twentieth century, even though humans have been exposed to it twice for four years, and were truly touched and transformed thereby? Why has it not unfolded its saving potential? Why has it not played and is not playing in our lives a role somehow analogous to that of the fight for peace after the great war of the twentieth century?

To that the answer is not easy. It is even more difficult because humankind is so permeated and fascinated by the

experience of war that the outlines of the history of our time can only be understood in its terms. The second war eliminated the distinction between the front line and the home front; aerial warfare was capable of striking anywhere with equal cruelty. The nuclear reality is making the attainments of the last hot conflict potentially definitive as long as they are backed by a strong and intelligent enough imperial will. For some time there was talk about the Hiroshima complex—it was no more than a concise summary of the war experience, the experience of the front line, in the spectacular intensity of a destructive end of the world. Here even the humblest participants could not avoid the eschatological impression of that event. And the effect on history? Thus far the visible impact we could attribute to this fundamental transformation and conversion, not comparable with anything else (as Teilhard puts it) has been nil. We continue to be fascinated by force, allow it to lead us along its paths, fascinating and deceiving us, making us its dupes. Where we believe we have mastered it and can depend on it for security, we are in reality in a state of demobilization and are losing the war which cunningly changed its visage but has not ceased. Life would so much like just to live at last, but it is precisely life itself which gives birth to war and cannot break free of it with its own resources. Whither do such perspectives lead? War as the means of releasing Force cannot end. It is vain to seek safety in our enclosed region when there are no self-enclosed regions, when Force and technoscience open up the entire world to their effect so that every event echoes throughout the globe. The perspective of peace, life, and the day has no end, it is the perspective of endless conflict born in ever new, ever the same, forms.

The gigantic work of economic renewal, the unheard-of, even undreamed-of social achievement which blossomed in a Europe excluded from world history, shows that this continent has opted for demobilization because it has no other option. That contributes to the deepening of the gap between the *blessed haves* and those who are dying of hunger on a planet rich in energy—thus intensifying the *state of war*. Helplessness,

the inability to win in a war conceived from the point of view of peace, are clearly evident among the erstwhile masters of the world. To shift matters to economics is a short-term, short-sighted deception because it is a part of demobilization even where it mobilizes armies of workers, researchers, and engineers: ultimately, all are subject to the crack of the whip. The recent energy crisis made that especially evident.

In the new relations of nuclear armaments and constant threat of global destruction, the war can shift from hot to cold or smoldering. This smoldering war is no less cruel, often it is more cruel than a hot one in which front lines scar entire continents. We have shown how war takes "peace" into itself in the form of demobilization. On the other hand, a permanent mobilization is a fate the world finds hard to bear, hard to look at in the face, hard to face its consequences, even when they are quite clear. Those who here *will* to keep their will whole, uncorroded, find themselves forced to separate truth and the public realm, have forced upon them a state of war, dictatorship from within and from without, secret diplomacy, lying, and cynical propaganda. It might be pointed out that the extreme means of mobilization, where systematic terror was reflected in show trials and in the destruction of entire groups and strata, in the slow liquidation in forced labor and concentration camps, has been gradually abolished: the question, though, is whether this abolition represents a true demobilization or, on the contrary, a war that establishes itself as permanent by "peaceful" means. War is here showing its "peaceful" face, the face of cynical demoralization, appealing to the will to live and to have. Humanity is becoming a victim of the war already launched, that is, of peace and the day; peace, the day rely on death as the means of maximal human unfreedom, as shackles humans refuse to see but which is present as *vis a tergo*,[11] as the terror that drives humans even into fire—death, chaining humans to life and rendering them most manipulable.

For the same reason, though, there might also be a certain prospect of reaching the ground of true peace from the war engendered by peace. The first presupposition is Teilhard's

front line experience, formulated no less sharply though less mystically by Jünger: the positive aspect of the front line, the front line not as an enslavement to life but as an immense *liberation* from precisely such servitude. Currently war has assumed the form of that half peace wherein opponents mobilize and count on the demobilization of the other. Even this war has its front line and its way of burning, destroying persons, robbing them of hope, dealing with them as with material for Force being released. The front line is the resistance to such "demoralizing," terrorizing, and deceptive motifs of the day. It is the revelation of their real nature, it is a protest paid for in blood which does not flow but rots in jails, in obscurity, in life plans and possibilities wasted—and which will flow again once the Force finds it advantageous. It is to comprehend that here is where the true drama is being acted out; freedom does not begin only "afterwards," after the struggle is concluded, but rather has its place precisely within it—that is the salient point, the highest peak from which we can gain a perspective on the battlefield. Those who are exposed to the pressure of the Force are free, far more free than those who are sitting on the sidelines, anxiously watching whether and when their turn will come.

How can the "front-line experience" acquire the form which would make it a factor of history? Why is it not becoming that? Because in the form described so powerfully by Teilhard and Jünger, it is the experience of all individuals projected individually each to their summit from which they cannot but retreat back to everydayness where they will inevitably be seized again by war in the form of Force's plan for peace. The means by which this state is overcome is the *solidarity of the shaken*; the solidarity of those who are capable of understanding what life and death are all about, and so what history is about. That history is the conflict of *mere life*, barren and chained by fear, with *life at the peak*, life that does not plan for the ordinary days of a future but sees clearly that the everyday, its life and its "peace," have an end. Only one who is able to grasp this, who is capable of conversion, of *metanoia*, is a

spiritual person. A person of spirit, however, always understands, and that understanding is no mere observation of facts, it is not "objective knowledge" even though even a free person must also master objective knowledge and integrate it with what matters and what is subordinate.

The solidarity of the shaken—shaken in their faith in the day, in "life" and "peace"—acquires a special significance, especially in the time of the releasing of Force. Force released is that without which "day" and "peace," human life defined by a world of exponential growth, cannot exist. The solidarity of the shaken is the solidarity of those who understand. Understanding, though, must in the present circumstances involve not only the basic level, that of slavery and of freedom with respect to life, but needs also to entail an understanding of the significance of science and technology, of that Force we are releasing. All the forces on whose basis alone can humans live in our time are potentially in the hands of those who so understand. The solidarity of the shaken can say "no" to the measures of mobilization which make the state of war permanent. It will not offer positive programs but will speak, like Socrates' *daimonion*, in warnings and prohibitions. It can and must create a spiritual authority, become a spiritual power that could drive the warring world to some restraint, rendering some acts and measures impossible.

The solidarity of the shaken is built up in persecution and uncertainty: that is its front line, quiet, without fanfare or sensation even there where this aspect of the ruling Force seeks to seize it. It does not fear being unpopular but rather seeks it out and calls out quietly, wordlessly. Humankind will not attain peace by devoting and surrendering itself to the criteria of everydayness and of its promises. All who betray this solidarity must realize that they are sustaining war and are the parasites on the sidelines who live off the blood of others. The sacrifices of the front line of the shaken powerfully support this awareness. To reach the point when all who are capable of understanding would feel inwardly uncomfortable about their comfortable position, that is a meaning that can be reached

beyond the human peak of resistance to Force, its very overcoming. To achieve thereby that the component of the spirit, the "technical intelligentsia," primarily researchers and those who apply research, inventors and engineers, would feel a waft of this solidarity and would act accordingly. To shake the everydayness of the fact-crunchers and routine minds, to make them aware that their place is on the side of *the front* and not on the side of even the most pleasing slogans of the day which in reality call to war, whether they invoke the nation, the state, classless society, world unity, or whatever other appeals, discreditable and discredited by the factual ruthlessness of the Force, there may be.

At the dawn of history, Heraclitus of Ephesus formulated his idea of war as that divine law which sustains all human life. He did not mean thereby war as the expansion of "life" but as the preponderance of the Night, of the will to the freedom of risk in the *aristeia*,[12] holding one's own at the limit of human possibilities which the best choose when they opt for lasting fame in the memory of mortals in exchange for an ephemeral prolongation of a comfortable life.[13] This war is the father of the laws of the *polis* as of all else: it shows some to be slaves and others to be free; yet even free human life still has a peak above it.[14] War can show that among the free some are capable of becoming gods, of touching the divinity of that which forms the ultimate unity and mystery of being. Those, though, are the ones who understand that *polemos* is nothing one-sided, that it does not divide but unites, that adversaries are only seemingly whole, that in reality they belong to each other in the common shaking of the everyday, that they have thus touched that which lasts in everything and forever because it is the source of all being and is thus divine. That is the same sentiment, the same vision which Teilhard sees before him when he experiences the superhuman divine at the front line. And Jünger writes at one place that the combatants in an attack become two parts of a single force, fusing into a single body, and adds: "Into a single body—an odd comparison. Whoever understands it affirms both self and the enemy, lives at once in

the whole and in the part. That person then can think the gods who lets these colored threads slip between their fingers—with a smiling face."[15]—Is it an accident that two of the most profound thinkers of the front-line experience, so different in other respects, arrive independently at comparisons which revive Heraclitus' vision of being as *polemos*? Or does something open up to us therein of the meaning of the history of western humanity which will not be denied and which today is becoming the meaning of human history as such?

Author's Glosses to the *Heretical Essays*

(i)

Our reflections about the "prehistoric period"—are they not a product of an intellectualism combined with an illicit delight in a speculative mode of philosophic thought, in contrast with thought closer to life, in the sciences, in technology, in jurisprudence, and in organizational thought? Why should we attribute to the emergence of philosophy such a truly epochal significance, giving birth to history as such (and so to epochs), and why in particular to philosophy in that special form, the philosophy of Greek antiquity (which, actually, also included other significant forms and cultural achievements)? What of the towering achievements of poetry, of the plastic arts, what of religious turmoils and movements, is not all that history? Does not the history of art speak of an evolution of art long before the dawn of philosophy, is there not a history of religion in a rich differentiation of religious experience long before the emergence of the Greek *polis* and the Ionian *historia*?

Furthermore, is it not as unfair as inconsistent to attribute a special importance to politics in relation to philosophy, to declare philosophy and politics in nearly the same breath to be the founders of history strictly speaking when in terms of collective social influence we might be far more justified in attributing that role to religion, which, as in the case of Israel, clearly had the decisive word in the formation of the bearers of history, such as nations? And is it not the height of unfairness as well as of blindness to relegate that decisive religious experience

to a phase of the human past which has only the "small" human meaning, which may be absolute but which is unquestioned and naively unbroken, a meaning simply given and found without seeking? Is there not a whole range of evidence that precisely in the sphere of religion it is *conversion*, something like death and rebirth, that is, finding a fundamentally new meaning, that is the focus of all experience? History may be at its core a history *of the world* in the sense of an antecedent complex of our human possibilities, but then it will be primordially a history of religion. Alternatively, we would need to give up this entire conception and fall back on the common opinion which not only basically does not deal with the question of the origins of history but does not even attribute to it the central significance which we sought to stress. Rather, it only notes its significance for historiographical research, that is, a subjectively methodological one: the beginning of tradition verifiable in writing.

Perhaps in answering these understandably insistent questions it will be best to start by pointing out that we are not speaking of a *non*historical but of a *pre*historical humanity. Prehistoric humanity is a transition: it is close on the one hand to nonhistorical life in the poverty of its living only to live, on the other hand it anticipates the threshold of a new, deeper but also more demanding and more tragic mode of living. Let us consider whether the threshold of "living just to live" is not crossed when prophets arise, risking their life for a religious rebirth, dedicating it to a life-absorbing asceticism, protesting against the powerful and the violent. There are prophets who with full insight work out a firm norm of life not for individuals as exceptions but rather for entire extended communities, that is, a renewal of social life which we would ordinarily unhesitantly identify as historical. In such phenomena, prehistoricity appears as a prefiguring, a "metaphoric" reference to a mode of life which for essential reasons is not rooted in "mere life," a reference to a life in freedom—yet it is not life in freedom because freedom as a real theme is absent. That it is possible to sacrifice one's life for life's values—among which our kind, our tribe, may be more prominent than the individual—that we can

show all too easily with examples from animal life. To be sure, religion is nothing biological, nothing vegetative or animate, it is an absolute meaning, though not centered on humans. For humans, however, it offers a meaning whose *practical* content is living just to live, or, in Kant's terms, heteronomy. Humans enjoy the protection of a ruling power or powers, they find themselves in their realm, raised thereby to contents which would exceed their posibilities (considered apart of such powers). At the same time, they are also subject to a harsher norm, to strict conditions not conditionally or episodically but in the whole of their life. Once humanity sets out on this journey, it never leads it back, it is a total transformation of life in all its aspects. And yet the boundary of life for life *is not* crossed, the motivation of this movement of transformation lies in life *before* the transformation, in its suffering (as with the Gautama), in its dangers, in particular social dangers posed by neighbors and their violence (as primarily in ancient Israel). What is threatened and what threatens are self-evident and given, it is not something seen only in a more profound experience. At most we might speak of *sensing* a new significance of being threatened—yet on the whole we remain after all in the "natural world" and in its "accepted meaning."

We can speak of freedom by contrast only with an upheaval aimed at the former meaning of life as a whole, *creating* a new "for the sake of," a new *ou heneka*, because the problematic nature, the *question* of the "natural" meaning has confronted us clearly. It is no longer a matter of *sensing* or *preaching* or *prophesying*, nor a reliance on an "unshakeable" faith; it is a matter of *seeing*, and that seeing is not a matter of simply looking at something we can keep at a distance and *merely* observe. While previous meaning is shaken and understood as the "small meaning," there simultaneously emerges a thrust for a new meaning, with an evident urgency. The evidence is not an evidence of seeing, of looking. It is a leap into new meaning which is realized in the clarity of the problematic situation. If Socrates comes to the conclusion that courage means knowing what to fear and what not to fear, then it is intellectualistically expressed, but at the

same time it expresses the meaning of life problematized as it had never been in religious experience. It is meaning in the mode of questioning because the question is built up on an awareness of the problematic nature of meaning.[1]

Therefore freedom, which is always a freedom to let what is be what and how it is, but ever anew and to greatest depth, is a *seeing* freedom, not merely sensing and most of all not believing, proclaiming, and insisting. The transformation of the world here takes place in a way which does not robe this process in mystery but where image and concept re-veal what there is. That is not a matter of an "intellectualism" which reaches what had not been suspected, what is new, by a geometric means, with coldly objective constructs and consequences which are equally accessible to all observers. Nor is it necessarily that metaphysics which would like to replace ever new upheaval with an unambiguous definition and possession of being (in "eidetic intuition," as in Plato).

Myth, religion, poetry do not speak out of an awareness of the problem but *prior to it,* out of fervor, enthusiasm—outright divine "possession." Philosophy speaks from an awareness of the problematic nature to a problematic awareness. Thus it cuts deeper into human life, into the realm of human possibilities—the fact that humans have discovered the dimension of the problematic and that as the dimension in which true "knowledge" is built up (but not: in which it is hidden!), rather than in religious conversion or in artistic ecstasy which might be derived from religious ecstasy in any case. Only here is life radically renewed because only here does it explicitly discover freedom as an other, our own, different from the common, accepted meaning and explicitly as something that is to be *carried out*, as a possibility we can *accomplish*, never just accept.

The reason for the special position of politics is that political life in its original and primordial form is nothing other than active freedom itself (from freedom, for freedom). The goal of striving here is not life for the sake of life (whatever life it may be) but only life for freedom and in it, and it is understood, that is, actively grasped, *that such a life is possible.* That,

however, brings this original politics into a wholly different proximity to philosophy than that of religion and art, however great their importance in spiritual life. If then spiritual life is the fundamental upheaval (shaking of immediate certainties and meaning), then religion *senses* that upheaval, poetry and art in general *depict and imagine* it, politics turns it into the practice of life itself, while in philosophy it is grasped in understanding, conceptually.

However, philosophy in this form—as the radical question of meaning based on the shaking of the naive, directly accepted meaning of life, which it follows by the question of truth and drives this problematic nature ever further—developed *only* along western lines. That then is the decisive reason for our supposition that history in the strict sense emerged first as western history and that it was guided by the complexity of its own problems to include within itself ever further peoples and their territories—until in our time it is becoming universal and global. Universality does not stand at the beginning of history as a common humanity which simply "develops" more rapidly here, less rapidly there, following the same order, as Comte thought, but rather stands at the end of European history or, more exactly, at the end of history as European (as derived from the European).

Here we need to return to those "other modes of thought, closer to life" we mentioned at the start (technology, jurisprudence, organization). In their elementary form, they all developed out of life's needs but in that magnificently effective form in which the Roman world opened its *oikoumenē* to them or in the modern form, where the entire planet and its "cosmos" are at their disposal. They are always already molded by philosophy and by political tradition (tradition of the *polis*). Just as the spirit of Rome, which gave rise to almost all modern states and to the Roman church and which lives on in the contemporary quest for a global validity and a global state, so also modern technology, which might make such plans possible, grew out of philosophical roots (naturally in constant interaction with other traditions) and is unthinkable without

them. That it at the same time points to the crisis of those roots, that is another problem. However, the force that constitutes history does not derive from an elementary version of such conceptual forms. Rather, it draws on the realm of freedom, and primarily of philosophy.

(ii)

The idea that history is the domain of acting in freedom and that freedom consists in grasping the possibility of letting things be what they are, letting *them* reveal themselves, to present themselves, in the willingness to *be the ground of their manifestation*, ready for the shaking of the familiar and "given" certainties so that what *truly* is can become manifest. At first, this idea seems vulnerable to the charge of that historical subjectivism which prevailed in the historical disciplines before the discovery of objective methods for inquiring into the objective conditions of such "subjective" posits as freedom and its awareness. A phenomenological methodology in history seems like a version of idealistic sobjectivism, only terminologically new and worse, because it not only considers something as subjective as understanding, as consciousness, the driving force of history, but places this understanding at the mercy of any interpretation which happens to suit a given "shaken" individual. The idealist method falsely presented reason as the driving force of history but claimed an objective, universal validity. An existentially oriented phenomenology is marked not only by a subjective, that is, nonobjective principle, but also by giving up any claim to universal validity.

What, however, is this criticism of subjectivism actually supposed to mean? What did it mean when it was raised against idealism? "The being of humans is not determined by their consciousness but conversely, their consciousness is determined by their social being."[2] Philosophical idealism is criticized for being uncritical in defining the being of humans as consciousness. We need to ask, though, whether it is really sufficient for explaining actual human vital processes without which there can be no consciousness. Here it turns out that not only

existence but even the form and content of consciousness are determined by something deeper—their social being. This being is defined as *relations* of production which are said to be objective, *independent* of consciousness, dependent on forces of production. The forces and modes of production are objective factors. They can be observed with the objectivity of a natural scientist but not scientifically. They are governed by dialectics, by a form of law which has so far been only sporadically mentioned in natural science since, allegedly, a "metaphysical" method still prevails there. Apparently, however, it is coming to the fore in the life of society. Dialectics is the theory of objective conflicts, tensions, contradictions. The "being" of a thing is contradictory. Consequently, so is consciousness.

The social reproduction of life is a complex phenomenon affecting various spheres, from natural forces and materials to human societies, their divisions and relations, and needs to be analyzed accordingly. Marx analyzes it dialectically. He presents the production of goods as a dialectical process in which consciousness plays its role, and a negative one at that. What starts as a *relation* turns under the conditions of capitalist production into a *thing*, turning a social, human relation into something autonomously objective. The illusion or, better, the deception of consciousness thus consists in positing consciousness as something objective. However, what is objective are not *things* but relations and their dialectics, tensions, reversals, movement, and development.

The important point now is that being human cannot be reduced to consciousness and its structures. We need to transcend consciousness in order to reach being. But what is being? And, especially, what is the social being of humans? If we show that it is necessary to transcend individual consciousness on the basis of certain phenomena, does that already show us *just what is* that primordial being which consciousness reflects?

Social being of humans . . . that means: intersubjectivity in its concrete, specifically economically social and economically dependent functions (production, "production of life") and relations (class relations). This intersubjectivity, it is said, can

and need be understood dialectically. Dialectics is suitable to it for several reasons. First of all, it shows (in Schelling and especially in Hegel's *Phenomenology*) that consciousness can become alienated by objectifying its own movement. If we apply this to the economic problem of price and value, we shall arrive at a concrete dialectic of goods. Secondly, already old prematerialistic dialectics has shown that individual consciousness, subject, is not self-sufficient and transcends itself necessarily into objective spirit, a subject-object or better, object-subject. Thus dialectics shows, by the internal movement of individual consciousness, how it is intersubjectively conditioned. Furthermore, even the old dialectics showed that every stage in the evolution of the "spirit" (that is, of society) has its world, false as long as it is not total, and so can be used in the "materialistic turn" for unmasking the "ideology" of the ruling class. Finally, it is especially useful because it offers a *logic* of history, its *necessary course* as a course of inversions, of negation and negation of negation, as the basis for a theory of revolution as a means for eliminating all social antagonisms, all contradictions, and for launching of a new historical epoch in the sign of freedom (humans set free of need, of material enslavement, and together with that of the need to enslave and be enslaved).

Dialectics itself was originally an instrument reached by an analysis of the relation of subject and object in order to uncover the absolute, the infinite, at its foundation.[3] Hegel thereby created a new version of the metaphysical onto-theology which he formulated as *logic*. The "materialist turn" of dialectics seeks to preserve this inner necessity of a dialectically logical process, though of course in history and in its fulfilment in the condition of the highest real and conscious freedom. For this reason, it builds on that sphere of human life in which law, material dependence, objectivity, and its structure are most evident, the economic sphere. To present a theory of this region with the rigor of natural science was the goal of English political economy. Unfortunately, this economy had an empirical foundation with its relativism, useful only for relative prognoses. Materialistic dialectical logic must either also descend to an

empirical level, or it will introduce an ineradicable element of dogmatism into critical theory as it seeks to master the problem with the new, historical dialectical logic.

What is important is that there is neither a dialectic nor an empirical proof that "the social being of humans" is coextensive with the economic process and relations, but rather this necessary presupposition of the materialistic conception of history is at its core a presupposition, something that is supposed beforehand, that is a postulate, not a proven or an evident thesis.

The conception of history which holds progress for an absolute necessity which requires the sacrifice of individual subjectivity (Schelling spoke of "working off the subjective spirit") is so widespread that we can, without exaggeration, consider it a latent or an overt historical philosophy which dominates contemporary humanity. Nadezschda Mandelschtam showed in *The Century of Wolves*[4] what role it played in the capitulation of the intelligentsia before regimes which claim dialectics as their official ideology.

Let us look once more at the formulation that "in social production of their lives humans enter into certain necessary productive relations independent of their will."[5] This basic formula of historical materialism may err by being fundamentally ahistorical. If Hannah Arendt is right that we need to distinguish sharply between work, whose goal is to sustain life and its order, and production, aimed at the lifeless for the purpose of adding to the human world what is hard and permanent, what it needs for support, defense, and attack on the natural environment, then formulae like "production of life," production applied to life, are misleading. It is not that in work individuals could be considered less dependent on "the object." (It is questionable to what extent the term "object" is adequate for those realities which working humans encounter, the earth, material, instruments . . ., to what extent those are all "objects" for a "subject." The relation subject-object is, after all fundamentally contemplatively theoretical!) Quite the contrary, no one is as human and as aware of dependence as a worker. Work has ever been understood as a burdensome fate which may have

also its good side but which is essentially the *enslavement* of humans. Rather, it is because it becomes possible *to see work as production* only at the definite time when work really becomes conjoined in a unity which takes over the changing and unending nature of work and the primary orientation to lifeless nature from production—an orientation to the earth not as a mother but as a thing and a material which is to be exploited and utilized. That, however, becomes possible only in the modern capitalist industrial system which is itself the fruit of a historical development with its long stage of *separation* between work and production. It was in this separation that history took its first steps when work, the realm of the household, freed certain individuals *for political life*, as we sought to explain earlier. If some people claim to see in that the dependence of politics on economics, fine, but they must admit that something new is taking place here, that we are dealing with a *mutual* dependence and not a one-sided one right from the first invention of politics. We have sought to show that the invention of politics does not simply coincide with the organization of work on a foundation of religion and power. That is the source of empires, but not of *politics* which is possible only with the conception of *bestowing meaning on life out of freedom and for it*, and that, as Hegel said, cannot be brought about by a solitary *one* (a ruler, the pharaoh) being "conscious of freedom."[6] Humans can be that only in a *community* of equals. For that reason, the beginning of history in the strict sense is the *polis*.

The saying about the "social production of life" is such a glaring testimony to the *mutual* influence of economics and politics that debates about which came first, as it is usually posed, are sheer scholasticism. The moment politics arises, economics acquires a new, utilitarian meaning. Not in the sense that politics, the realm of the discovery of freedom and the ground of truth (for we are speaking of *real* freedom, of life which *really* is not lived only for life) would be merely some kind of a reflection of economic conditions. It is precisely the "higher level" which is reflected in the lower, its condition, its rise and fall project themselves into economics; while on the

other hand if we identify the historical dialectics broadly with class struggle, then we have to admit that this struggle takes place in the *political sphere* and that it is fundamentally a struggle *in the sphere of freedom for broader access to freedom.* Class struggle as such thus cannot be used as evidence for an *economic* conception of history.

If, though, the class struggle is not an economic but a "spiritual" and "existential" matter, then it cannot be isolated from other spiritual dimensions which erupt in the sphere of freedom. There is not only struggle but also solidarity, there is not only society, but also community, and community has other bonds besides a common enemy.

We do not mean to claim that dialectics is thus deprived of all substance, there does exist a *problem* and *problems* of dialectics. Yet historically effective metaphysical and materialistic dialectics seem to us to violate a most important principle, which, having been explicitly formulated in the philosophy of the twentieth century, represents one of its genuinely original aspects. It is the principle of the *phenomenon.* We need to philosophize on the basis of phenomena and not of hypothetical *constructs out of principles.* Dialectics is a live problem as long as it helps us see, read, explain phenomena. It becomes lifeless as soon as it seeks to transcend that limit in the direction of absolute philosophizing or the absolutization of certain historical positions which can result only in a mystification.

What does phenomenon mean? Phenomenon is what we see, what is present in our experience, "what presents itself," within the limits of the way it presents itself. For that reason dialectics is a part or possibly a pendant of phenomenology wherever we can *exhibit* the dialectics of what presents itself in experience. It is not the other way around, that the doctrine of phenomena would depend on idealistic or materialistic dialectical logic.

Thus the question of human social being is also in the first place a *phenomenological* question. Here we need to pay some attention to phenomenology. In the work of its founder, Edmund Husserl, phenomenology also posed the question of

the social being of humans (in the form of the problem of intersubjectivity) and, like dialectics, set out from an analysis of consciousness, but of consciousness as a phenomenon, that is, wishing to show how it really presents itself, without remnant (originally continuing Descartes' idea that the only true certainty is the self-certainty of consciousness).

Husserl sought to use phenomenology to broaden, deepen, enlighten the terrain of consciousness, the traditional terrain of philosophical interpretations. Here we encounter once more the contradiction between the finite and the in-finite as a contrast of the "transcendental" and the mundane consciousness, within consciousness itself, though somewhat differently than in the old German Idealism. The being of humans, Husserl seeks to show again, is consciousness, but only if we carry through its "purification" from that which places it as a thing among others, involving causal relations. Then we have before us consciousness as the basis of "pure phenomena," that is, a new grounds for interpretation absent in the schema of subject-object. Husserl's phenomenology can thus really be considered a new version of philosophical subjectivism. We can then consider humans and their subjective consciousness on this basis as bearers of physical acts (in *lived,* not physiological corporeity), as well as of spiritual acts which do not have a thing character because they are essentially different from things in the way they present themselves, in their "phenomenalization." Husserl believed that on the ground of this consciousness, purified by special procedures and taken through necessary transformations, he could then present a rigorously comprehensible and scientifically verifiable analysis of the *nature* of humanhood.

Husserl's basic idea, as we noted earlier, is that philosophy must be based on *phenomena*, on what presents itself, what is present to our view, our insight. It cannot be based on principles, on general terms and theses, which must ever remain hypotheses, even if they are necessary for explaining individual realities. However, *the way we use them* in our daily practice as well as in our sciences gets in the way of phenomena. In our daily practice we use them to sustain life and its claims. In the

sciences we use them for causal ordering, for predictability (which ultimately is also a kind of practice, as technology, technique, and their intermeshing with theory show). If we are now to grasp purely that which shows itself, phenomena, we must carry out a suspension, an "*epochē*" of all interests and of all belief in objectivities as such beyond what simply presents itself. The *epochē* is neither a denial of existence nor a doubt about it, nor a pure abstraction, rather, it is a free act which does not have to do with things and as such is always possible. Its extent and reach are universal: it extends to the whole "general thesis" of our natural belief in the world which characterizes our ordinary comportment as mundane, finite beings which thereby posit themselves as finite. Whence, though, that power of freedom, that *suspension* of what is at first valid to us, unproved but undeniable? The *epochē* is something more negative than negation which is always also a thesis: in the *epochē* nothing is posited.[7]

Let us now show that Husserl's reflection itself leads us to the need to *transcend* reflection and to leave behind Husserl's reflective method which interprets the *epochē* as an introduction to a reduction of "the world" to pure consciousness and takes the task of philosophy to be the "constitution" of all objectivity within the lawlike structures of conscious lived experience. Does reflection really reach the depth of lived experience? Can lived experience be grasped throughout by consciousness, is experience ultimately the same as consciousness?

Some phenomenologists today claim that from Husserl's "transcendentally genetic standpoint" we can define the ultimate nature of consciousness only negatively, that the being of consciousness at its innermost core is *nothing*, because *all* objectivity as an object of consciousness is the achievement of consciousness which it must itself *carry out*. The ultimate foundation of all consciousness is no object; what ultimately makes the cogito possible is no cogitatum. We are standing before pure, objectively undefinable *being*.

Yet is not this negative result precisely a result of the decision for absolute reflection, a result of a will to total absence of

prejudice and of the effort to reduce human being to mere observation and recording?

Is not this outcome in its negativity—in the impossibility of grasping the activity which constitutes objectivity in a positive way—at the same time a sign of the necessity of *transcending* the terrain of reflection and of setting out where phenomena promise something more positive?

Radical reflection results in incomprehensibility, nonobjectivity. Yet we had spoken of *achievements.* What is the fundamental character of our acting, of our achievement? Do we not need to gain philosophical clarity *precisely about that*? Is not the apperception in which experience matters at the same time a step into the world, and is not this world the world of our possible life in it, a life which we must *carry out*—and have to because we *can*? Is not this possibility the most fundamental ontological characteristic of being human? And is not existence, as something with *which we are charged*, something we fundamentally do not produce but rather take into our responsibility, at the same time that which we have been seeking, to which we point with the claim that our "thought," our "consciousness," depends on being and not the other way around? Consciousness, that is, the subject which has an object before it, is a reflective grasp and an observational characterization of the result of something that is in the first place an *achievement*, and that not in the sense of a creative constitution but rather in the context of life which is always already in a world it did not create and cannot create, into which it is placed nonetheless as into its own, one it has to take over, come to terms with it with respect to its possible wholeness? With a respect which is as necessary and inescapable as its primordial and basic facticity, indeed, is identical with it?

What is Husserl's *epochē* from that perspective? It is one of the deeply negative acts of our consciousness which demonstrate how deeply rooted in it is an understanding for *no*, for a negation deeper than all logical negations. This negation as such is possibly that phenomenon from which we need to start if we are to grasp what is based on consciousness but what itself

is not consciousness: the being of humans. Consciousness is after all consciousness because *something* presents itself to it. The presentation itself, however, does not ordinarily present itself. If *presentation is to present itself*, we need in a sense to transcend the very sphere of what can be grasped in consciousness. Why? Because the radical *no, nothing*, does not exist and can never be an object, and yet from it comes all the power needed for presentation. Even Husserl's *epochē* testifies to it. Presentation can present itself to us only against the background of *nothing*. However, nothingness is never something we have as a presence, that is, in the present. We can only reach for it in anticipation. In that anticipation we relate to death as the ultimate possibility, the possibility of a radical impossibility of being. That impossibility casts a shadow over our whole life yet at the same time *makes it possible, enables it to be a whole*. Now it becomes manifest what is a component of our being: that it is the being of possibility. There are two basic possibilities: relating explicitly to the whole and to the end. That does not mean thinking about death. It means, rather, rejecting that way of life which would live at any price and takes *mere life* as its measure, and that means "the world" and life therein. The other possibility is one of *not relating*, that is, seeking to escape it and so foreclosing our most fundamental possibility. All of such "acts" are not consciousness with its subject-object structure but something more fundamental, existence whose being is in *understanding* (not observing and registering!) things, others, oneself.

Once we have reached that being in possibilities, and if one of the two basic possibilities is the possibility of breaking free of the dependence on life and on the contrary linking that life to something free, something capable of accepting responsibility and respecting responsibility, that is, the freedom, of others, will it not then become necessary to explain precisely *history*, that is, the most basic human *achievement*, from *this* dimension of human *being*, and not from consciousness?

The requirement that being define our consciousness is not met where human life is considered solely as integrated into "objective" sequences. Under such circumstances the question

of the true nature of being human is passed over, together with the whole fundamental problem of philosophy, that is the problem of being as such, passing over a dimension of life as if life were on the one hand an objective basis on which it depends and on the other hand a subject which observes it and fixates it by its observation.

Precisely history, this domain of changing social being of humans, the terrain of traditions in which we establish continuity with our achievements positively and negatively, by rejecting or by continuing, the *social being* of humans can manifest itself as *essentially free*, accessible to us "objectively" to the extent that we can retrospectively note what of it has been transmuted into firmly set facts, but cannot reduce it to those facts alone and perhaps seek to explain it without remnant in terms of some region of fact.

We have thus restricted ourselves to a basic philosophical response to the criticism of our conception from the standpoint of the materialist philosophy of history. We did not mean to present either a systematic philosophical critique of this philosophy of history, nor a sociological one, though it might be tempting and needed. As to sociological critique, an interested reader can find enough of it all around, though a different basic conception of history is hard to come by today. If we have nonetheless attempted something on that order within our feeble powers, it is only to be expected that everyone will think of the obvious objections from the viewpoint of the philosophy which today governs not only states but minds as well. That is why we have attempted this brief explanation.

Translator's Postscript to the English Edition of *Heretical Essays*

My translations of Jan Patočka's works have ever been a labor of Chaucerian *devocion*, not to a particular text or to a way of philosophizing, but to a thinker who became a symbol in an arid time. Through the long years when professional philosophy in my country was constrained to an uncritical glossary on Marxism-Leninism, a handful of proscribed philosophers, Jan Patočka, Milan Machovec, Ladislav Hejdánek, sought to keep the spirit of philosophy alive in living room seminars and writings circulated in typescript. Thanks to them we could still say that there is not only "dia-mat" but also Czechoslovak philosophy.

All that I knew only by hearsay. All through that time I lived in exile in the United States, teaching philosophy at Boston University. When I learned that Jan Patočka died in the wake of a police interrogation, just short of his seventieth birthday, I swore a mighty oath to make Patočka's thought available to my English-speaking colleagues. Czechoslovak philosophy will not be silenced by murder.

The result of that decision were lectures, articles, a book, *Jan Patocka: His Thought and Writings*, and most of all translations. Only a fraction of those ever saw print. For the most part, I translated for my students and, like my colleagues in Prague, circulated the translation in typescript. They included three of Patočka's books and numerous articles, enough that by

the mid-eighties I was able to offer seminars and directed readings. Gradually, though, I returned first to my own philosophical interests, then, after the collapse of the Communist regime, to my own country. My typescripts migrated into a file cabinet, a fondly remembered fragment of another life in another world, long ago and far away.

There they would have remained but for a double coincidence. One was that a younger colleague, then a graduate student, James Dodd, took an interest in Jan Patočka and offered to undertake the tedious labor of providing my typescript translations with a critical apparatus needed for a book edition. The second coincidence was that Open Court publishers took an interest in publishing the three books I had translated. And so we labored: I translated, James Dodd edited, and Kerri Mommer, philosophy editor at Open Court, coordinated our labors which, God willing, will result in an English edition of three of Patočka's basic texts, his *Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology*, his lectures on *Body, Community, Language, World,* and the present volume, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History.*

As the bàsis for my initial translation of the *Heretical Essays* in 1978 I used a barely legible typescript copy of the samizdat *Edice Petlice* edition of 1975, smuggled out of Czechoslovakia and too faint even for photocopying. I had first to transcribe it on an ancient manual typewriter whose sole advantage was that it had a Czech keyboard. Then in 1980 a Czechoslovak exile publisher, Edice Arkýř in Munich, brought out a printed version which I used to correct my misreadings of the earlier version. Finally, in 1990, when freedom returned to our land, the Czechoslovak Academy of Science published a new edition, edited by ing. Ivan Chvatík and dr. Pavel Kouba, perhaps our two best-qualified students of Patočka. Theirs is the edition which I used as the definitive text in preparing the final revision of my second translation, presented here.

Translating Patočka's late writings is something of a challenge. Especially after the heartbreak of the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the forcible restoration of the

regime we had long since outgrown, Jan Patočka's thought was increasingly influenced by the dark romanticism of Nietzsche and Heidegger. Philosophical terms, as Patočka uses them, do not claim to have an unequivocal denotation but rather to point to a depth of being/meaning which defies being enclosed in words. An adequate translation would thus need not only to reproduce a factual content but most of all to evoke an experience analogous to that evoked by the original. That is quite a challenge—rather like trying to translate poetry without reducing it to prose.

At first, I attempted an interpretative translation which would be as readily intelligible to an English reader as the texts of John Dewey or Richard Rorty. The result was clear, crisp, factually accurate—and wholly wrong. Then I started to analyze Patočka's Czech style and experiment with English locutions which would not only reproduce the content but would convey something of the evocative power of the text. I have decided for the most part to retain his multi-layered sentence structure, as uncommon in Czech as it is in English, and his idiosyncratic punctuation which makes some extended sentences read like lecture outlines. All that belongs to the evocative power of the text.

Throughout, I have striven for maximal fidelity to the text consistent with intelligibility and readability in English, with only one exception. When speaking of humans generically, Patočka commonly uses the term *člověk*, meaning a human being without reference to gender. However, were I to translate Patočka's singular with an English singular, *a human,* I would have to make him sound either sexist by using the masculine pronoun *his*, affected by using the feminine *her*, or hopelessly clumsy by resorting to the artificial term *his/her.* Any of those options would be unfair. I have therefore chosen to follow the helpful suggestion of the APA guide to gender neutral usage and have replaced Patočka's singular with a plural, translating *člověk a jeho bytí*, literally *the human and his being,* as *humans and their being.*

A being or *jsoucno,* by the way, is even more problematic

than its approximate German counterpart, *Sein* and *seiende*. It can mean *actus essendi*, the act or activity of being, as when we speak of *the human mode of being*, that is, of "making like a human." It can mean *a being*, an individual existing entity, or also the sum total of such existing entities, *what-is* or *what there is*, or more awkwardly still, *existents*. Or again, it can mean the deep underlying reality said to manifest itself in whatever there is but is not reducible to it, the *Being* of Heidegger's late writings. At first, I sought to establish a precise term for each shade of meaning. Gradually, though, I became convinced that in my attempt at clarity I was actually obscuring Patočka's intent. The ambiguity of being is not accidental: it is there in the text because it is there in lived experience. Paradoxically, here clarity obscures because the experience is not clear.

Or that, at least, is what Patočka believes. The clarity for which he strives is of a different order: a clarity of insight rather than of terms. I have given up the attempt to establish a list of definitions of the various meanings of *being*, but I have sought to live up to that clarity.

If I have succeeded, it is because of the generous help and support of many more people than I can mention. *Pars pro toto*, let me name first the editor James Dodd, whose interest gave me the second breath I needed to return to the task. Secondly, I want to thank the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in Vienna, especially its director, professor Krysztof Michalski, and the director of its Patočka Archive, Klaus Nellen—and of course Boston University, where I taught from 1960 to 1995, and which generously supported my work, both with a sabbatical leave that enabled me to work at the Institut in 1985 and, since 1991, with repeated spring semester leaves which enabled me to make a gradual transition to the homeland I had not seen for forty-two years. At Charles University, I owe a debt of gratitude to all my colleagues who helped me make that transition, and especially to Joseph Moural, who translated my *Jan Patočka* into Czech and in many discussions helped me understand the spirit of Patočka's philosophy, much as Jiří Němec had in Vienna. Then there is

ing. Ivan Chvatík and his Centre for Theoretical Studies, housing the Patočka Archive in Prague, and all who worked to make it possible. Here, though, the list would become too long. Perhaps it is because of Patočka's own generosity of spirit, carried on by his students. It is both impressive and enriching, just as Patočka's writings.

No, I have not become a convert. The philosophy of the *Heretical Essays*—and the politics it entails—remain wholly alien to me. My teachers remain Husserl, Masaryk, and Ricoeur, my philosophical framework is that of Husserl's critical reason, not of German romanticism. I remain convinced that the categories of good and evil cannot be reduced to categories of mundane and sacred or authentic and ordinary. However, I have become convinced that the categories of good and evil—the moral enlightenment of a Comenius crossed with American personalism, Schweitzer's respect for life and Aldo Leopold's *Land Ethic*—become legitimate only once they have fully confronted and transcended the vision of the cosmic night of which the dark romantic philosophers speak.

Jan Patočka's *Heretical Essays* may not represent the truth you seek. It may be, though, that such truth can emerge only in the course of the struggle with the challenge they represent. Some books enrich by what they preach, others, like Patočka's *Heretical Essays*, by what they question. Though, come to think of it, Socrates did not preach. He questioned.

ERAZIM KOHÁK

Notes

Preface

1. Translation by James Dodd. Original French version appeared in *Éssais hérétiques sur la philosophie de l'histoire*, trans. Erika Abrams (Lagrasse: Éditions Verdier, 1981).

2. In 1977, the signatories of the Helsinki accords, which included the former Czechoslovakia, agreed to recognize certain principles of universal human rights as having the binding of law in their countries. The Charta 77 movement, of which Patočka was a spokesperson, called on the Czechoslovak authorities to live up to its oft-cited obligation to these principles—since, to be sure, the reality in the Communist countries hardly represented a commitment on the part of the regimes to human rights. Those who signed the Charta, among whom included the future President of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel, were quickly suppressed. Patočka himself was interrogated extensively by the police, an ordeal that finally cost him his life shortly before his seventieth birthday. [Ed.]

3. Patočka's 1936 *Habilitationschrift*, published in French in the *Phaenomenologica* series, vol. 68: *Le monde naturel comme problème philosophique*, trans. Jaromír Daněk and Henri Declève (Hague: Nijhoff, 1976). [Ed.]

4. See below, p. 5.

5. See below, p. 29.

6. The reference is to a dictum of Anaximander's quoted in Simplicius: "for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice according to the assessment of Time."

See Kirk, Raven, Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 106–8. [Ed.]

7. See below, pp. 38–39.
8. See below, p. 39.
9. See below, p. 43.
10. See below, p. 64
11. See below, pp. 75–76.
12. See below, p. 77.
13. See below, pp. 113–14.
14. See below, p. 126.
15. See below, p. 131.
16. See below, pp. 133–34.
17. See below, p. 131.
18. See below, p. 135.

First Essay: Reflections on Prehistory

1. See Richard Avenarius (1843–1896), *Der menschliche Weltbegriff* (Leipzig: Reisland, 1891). [Ed.]

2. For example N. O. Lossky (1870–1970). [Ed.]

3. For example the British metaphysical realist Samuel Alexander (1859–1938). For a general account of neutral monism in turn of the century British thought, see. A. E. Taylor's *Elements of Metaphysics* (London: Methuen and Co., 1902). [Ed.]

4. As representative of Henri Bergson's position in this debate, see his *Matter and Memory,* trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1988), pp. 202–23. *"Durée"* is Bergson's expression for a conception of the "now" as a flowing, qualitatively determined medium, similar to William James' concept of the "specious present." It stands in sharp distinction to the mechanistic conception of time as a continuum of point-like "moments." Along with the concept of the *"élan vital,"* the vital force of which he claimed consciousness has an intuitive grasp, *durée* was employed by Bergson in the attempt to conceive of nature (especially natural

evolution) in terms of the movement of qualitative force as opposed to mechanistic processes. [Ed.]

5. "Prehension" is a concept of Whitehead's that is intended to take the place of the concept of sensation: rather than a simple given, the idea is that the environment presses in on us, thereby originally presenting itself via a series of "visceral feelings." "Gnoseological harmony" is a concept of Avenarius' that postulates a noncausal harmonizing between the individual and the environment that is being interacted with. [Ed.]

6. Patočka's terminology is heavily influenced by Heidegger, both early and late; this term "jsoucno (a)" is, for the most part, equivalent to the Heideggerean term "Seiende"—i.e., the point here is to draw a difference between "Seiende" and "Sein," between "beings" and their "being" beings, or the being of beings. The convention in Heidegger translation into English is normally to render "Seiende und Sein" as "being and Being"; however, the translator has opted here for the locution "what-is" and variants thereof, as well as, on occasion, the term "existent," in place of "being." This allows the translation to reflect the way Patočka is experimenting with similar locutions in the Czech text. [Ed.]

7. Compare F. W. J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993) pp. 155–74 (i.e., the first two Propositions of part four) to Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, second book, trans. Rojcewitz and Shuwer (Hague: Nijhoff, 1990), sec. 18h, as well as the section on the "Constitution of the Spiritual World." [Ed.]

8. *"Reell"* is a term used by Husserl to designate the sense in which something is "genuinely" a part of something else, or a component of something in a "strict" sense. For example, Husserl argues, sensation is a "*reell*" part of perceptual consciousness, i.e., in that it makes no sense to speak of sensation as something added to perceiving from without, for perception itself is "sensuous." This usage of *"reell"* (which, literally, could be translated as "real") plays an important role in Husserl's

discussion of two types of transcendence an immanence at the end of the Second Lecture of *The Idea of Phenomenology,* a passage which bears directly on Patočka's charge of "mentalism." See Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomemology,* trans. William Alston and George Nakhnikian (Hague: Nijhoff, 1964), pp. 27–32. [Ed.]

9. "Deep phenomenon": What Patočka has in mind is that the relation to being, to the being of beings, is not only something basic, presupposed in every human action, but is also nothing that can be immediately conceptualized, or brought to the surface: it is something *hidden.* Heidegger makes this point in *Being and Time* by distinguishing between "phenomenon" as "that which shows itself" and "appearance" or "semblance" which is a "privative" modification of phenomenon. Thus the meaning of *phenomenon* is not equivalent to *appearance*; "showing itself" does not mean "being obvious." Thus: ". . . because the phenomena are proximally and for the most part *not* given, there is need for phenomenology." See *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1962), pp. 50 and 60. [Ed.]

10. "Noesis" is Husserl's *terminus technicus* for the intending or intentive moments of an experience (*Erlebnis*), that is, those moments that make an experience a "consciousness of . . ." On the other hand, "noema" refers to that which is intended "in" or "by" experiences—i.e., that which is the "object" of experience, but in a very specific sense. The noema is not the object as it "is" prior to and independent of our experience of it; rather, the noema is the content of experience described solely in terms of how this content is experienced, how it is present to intentional consciousness. The thesis that there is a strict correlation between noesis and noema, between intention and that which is intended, coupled with the thesis that pure experience (i.e., pure "intentionality") is a universal "sphere of being," implies that "noetic analysis," or the analysis of the apprehending, apperceptive character of experience, results in an absolute perspective on "objectivity," which is interpreted as the meaning-order of experience in general. See *Ideas I,* pp. 211–35. [Ed.]

11. "Noematic sphere" refers to the totality of content, which in turn is in strict correlation to the totality of experience as experience, or the "noetic sphere." The noematic sphere can be described as "immanently transcendent" insofar as we can both claim that the content of experience is both present "in" experience, thus is "in a sense" *reell,* yet is not a genuine (*reell*) component "of" that experience. It is thus "*reell*ly transcendent," not "*reell*ly immanent." For a helpful discussion of the debate that Husserl's concept of noema has inspired in the Anglo-American literature, see Robert Solomon, "Husserl's Concept of the Noema," in *Husserl: Expositions and Appraisals,* ed. Frederick Elliston and Peter McCormick (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), pp. 168–81. [Ed.]

12. Two essays of Heidegger's illustrate this well: "The Question Concerning Technology" and "Age of the World Picture," in *Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays,* trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977). See also "On the Essence of Truth," in *Basic Writings,* trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 130–32. [Ed.]

13. It should be stressed that Patočka's approach to phenomenological philosophy, despite its strong resemblance to Heidegger (i.e., in the attempt to establish a standpoint of fundamental ontology outside and independent of the philosophy of consciousness; the stress on the finitude not only of what is, but of the being of what is as such, thus the talk of various "epochs" which, together, make up a "history of being" or "Seinsgeschichte," etc.) is nevertheless an attempt to give an *anthropological* account of *Dasein*—not, to be sure, in order to put forward the claim that *Dasein* must be understood in terms of the concept of human being, but rather to broaden the account of human being within the perspective of the analytic of *Dasein* as it was worked out by Heidegger in *Being and Time.* The basic question for Patočka, then, is not necessarily the meaning of being in general, to be answered by way of an analysis of the being who asks the question, but, rather, the question: "what is human being?" *Quid hominis?* [Ed.]

14. Thales, DK 11 A22: Diels, Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951); also see Kirk, Raven, Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 95. [Ed.]

15. Patočka is here referring to a traditional anecdote about Heraclitus, recounted by Aristotle in *De Partibus Animalium*, bk. 1, chapter 5, 645a17f (also included in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* as DK 22 A9). [Ed.]

16. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958). See in particular Arendt's thesis that *vita activa*, the "active life," "is not the same as and is neither superior nor inferior to the central concern of the *vita contemplativa*" (p. 17). [Ed.]

17. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 95–107. [Ed.]

18. See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 126–35. [Ed.]

19. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 104–38. [Ed.]

20. Walter Bröcker, "Der Mythos vom Baum der Erkenntnis," in *Anteile. M. Heidegger zum 60. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann, 1950). [Ed.]

21. In the following paragraphs Patočka discusses two sets of myths: the first is the Atrachasis myth, a Sumerian/Babylonian account of the origin and early history of humanity, which includes an account of a great deluge; the second the epic of Gilgamesh, which also includes the story of the flood. Both of the epics are probably more than three-thousand years old, and were discovered in the nineteenth century in present-day Iraq. See R. W. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1926), pp. 103–7, 114–21; W. G. Lambert and A .R. Millard, *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969). [Ed.]

22. This is a translation from Patočka's Czech text, for stylistic reasons. For a fuller account of this passage, and the Gilgamesh epic as a whole, see Jeffrey Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania

Press, 1982), pp. 167–69. There is also an English poetic rendition of the scene between Gilgamesh and Siduri by Herbert Mason: *Gilgamesh: A Verse Narrative* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971), pp. 54–60. [Ed.]

23. *Lar familiaris*: "family spirit guardian." [Ed.]

24. Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges (1830–1889), *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome*, translation from the French (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), chapter 1. [Ed.]

25. *Eupatrides*: Athenian hereditary aristocrats. [Ed.]

26. See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 38–49. [Ed.]

27. Patočka is probably referring to Michael Ventris' translation in 1953 of the so-called Linear B dialect, an early Minoan-Helladic (second to first millenium B.C.) form of Greek. There is an older version, called Linear A, as well as a hieroglyphic form of writing found on Crete. For a study of this as well as other archaeological evidence of early Greek civilization, see Chadwick's *The Mycenaean World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). [Ed.]

Second Essay: The Beginning of History

1. The doctrine, already touched upon in the first essay, of the "three movements" of human life, is Patočka's phenomenological appropriation of Aristotle's doctrine of the three "souls"—vegetative, animate, and rational—a point that is important to keep in mind given the importance of the concept of *phronēsis* in this essay. This doctrine is further developed in Patočka's "The 'Natural World' and Phenomenology" as well as "The Movement of Human Existence: A Selection from *Body, Community, Language, World*," both of which appear in *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings*, trans. Erazim Kohák (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989). See also, for more detailed studies wherein the idea of the three movements is developed, as well as the metaphor of "movement" in general, the German edition of Patočka's works, especially *Die*

Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz: Phänomenologishe Schriften II, ed. Nellen, Nemec, Srubar (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991). [Ed.]

2. Anaximander DK 12 A9; this passage from the fragment found in Simplicius (*Physics* 24, 13) reads "*didonai gar auta dikēn kai tisin allēlois tēs adikias*," which Kirk, Raven, and Schofield translate as "for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice." See Diels, Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951), hereafter "DK"; and Kirk, Raven, Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 108, hereafter "KRS." [Ed.]

3. Heraclitus DK 22 B51: "They do not apprehend how being at variance it agrees with itself [lit. how being brought apart it is brought together with itself]: there is a backstretched connection [*palintonos harmoniē*], as in the bow and in the lyre" (trans. KRS, p. 192). [Ed.]

4. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1978), p. 105. [Ed.]

5. The word in Czech is "představa," and is intended to be a translation of the German term "Vorstellung." "Vorstellung" has a long history in German philosophy and is difficult to translate in English without being misleading; as a *terminus technicus* for the Left Hegelians (in this context good examples would be the work of Bruno Bauer [1809–1882] and Arnold Ruge [1803–1880]), the term refers to the mode in which the world is presented—not only as an image, but how the world is thought of, what it is taken to be. Thus the sense of "having a view" on and about the world is here utilized, for it combines both the sense of "view" as "opinion" and as an act of seeing. [Ed.]

6. Related to *ho oikos*, which means "household," *hē oikoumenē* is an expression for the entire inhabited world. [Ed.]

7. Oskar Becker, "La transcendence de la vie et l'irruption de l'existence," in *Recherches philosophiques*, vol. 2 (Paris: Koyre, Puech, Spaier, 1932/33), pp. 112–30. Here, Becker makes reference to Menghin's *Weltgeschichte der Steinzeit*

(Vienna, 1931) and, with that, makes use of Fritz Kern's terminology—see "Kulturenfolge," in *Archiv für Kultur-geschichte*, vol. 17 (Leipzig/Berlin: 1927), pp. 1–19. [Ed.]

8. Becker's reference to Schelling is at *ibid.*, p. 125; also see F. W. J. Schelling, *Of Human Freedom,* trans. James Gutmann (Chicago: Open Court, 1936), pp. 56–58. [Ed.]

9. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, chapter 3 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958). [Ed.]

10. Plato, *Theaetetus* 155d; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* bk. I, chapter 2, 982b12. [Ed.]

11. *eidōs fōs.* The expression is used in Parmenides' poem (DK 28 B1), and is translated by KRS as "the man who knows" (pp. 242–43). In the context of Patocka's discussion here, *eidōs* could, and perhaps should, be understood in a broader sense than "idea" or even "something known" (i.e., in the Platonic sense, where to "know" something is to know its "idea"). Another meaning of the word is the "look" or "aspect" of something; thus *eidōs fōs* could mean: "the one who sees the aspect or look of things"—i.e., things as how they are, how they are manifest in their *Gestalt.* The gate to which díkē (justice) holds the key is also a reference to Parmenides' poem. [Ed.]

12. Aristotle's own term is *bīos theoretikos.* See *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 1, chapter 5: the three modes of life are *apolausis* ("pleasure"), *bios politikos* ("political life"), and *bios theoretikos* ("life of thought"); historically, the latter two were later known as *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa.* See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 12–17. [Ed.]

13. *Tyrannis* can be translated as "tyranny," though in ancient times this word did not exclusively imply an abuse of power; rather, *ho turranos* means a ruler who came to power by force rather than by hereditary or democratic means, whether such a seizure is just or not, or the ruler brutal or mild. For example, Aristotle, in his *Constitution of the Athenians*, chapters 14–19, praises the wise administration of the "tyrant" Pisistratus, who ruled Athens on three different occasions between 560–527 B.C. [Ed.]

14. Heraclitus DK 22 B29: "The best choose one thing in place of all else, 'everlasting' glory among mortals [*kleos aenaon thneton*]; but the majority are glutted like cattle" (KRS, p. 211). [Ed.]

15. Heraclitus DK 22 B114: "Those who speak with sense must rely on what is common to all, as a city must rely on its law, and with much greater reliance. For all the laws of men are nourished by one law, the divine law; for it has as much power as it wishes and is sufficient for all and is still left over." (KRS, p. 211). [Ed.]

16. Heraclitus DK 22 B80. It should be noted that Patocka's translations here are not always conventional. For a more traditional approach to Heraclitus translation in general, and fr. 80 in particular, see KRS, p. 193. [Ed.]

17. Heraclitus DK 22 B113. [Ed.]

18. Heraclitus DK 22 B114; "Those who speak with sense must rely on what is common to all" (KRS, pp. 210–11). [Ed.]

19. The editor of the German edition of the *Heretical Essays* notes that Patočka appears to be referring to a part of fragment B1—i.e., the famous "logos" fragment (DK 22 B1). The relevant phrase would be: *epeōn kai ergōn toioutōn hokoiōn egō diēgeumai kata phusin diaireon hekaston kai phrazōn hokōs echei*, which KRS translates as: " such words and deeds as I explain, when I distinguish each thing according to its constitution and declare how it is" (p. 187). [Ed.]

20. Heraclitus DK 22 B112. *Ta alētheia* can also be translated "that which is true." [Ed.]

21. Heraclitus DK B64: "Thunderbolt steers all things" (KRS, pp. 197–98. [Ed.]

22. Heraclitus DK 22 B32: "One thing, the only truly wise, does not and does consent to be called by the name of Zeus" (KRS, p. 202). [Ed.]

23. Heraclitus DK 22 B114: "For all the laws of men are nourished by one law, the divine law; for it has as much power as it wishes and is sufficient for all and is still left over" (KRS, pp. 210–11). [Ed.]

24. See Edmund Husserl, *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971); in particular the "Vienna Lecture", pp. 269–99, wherein Husserl treats of the "Greek beginnings" of Western philosophy and culture. [Ed.]

25. To get an idea of the difference that Patočka is stressing between these two approaches to phenomenology, compare Husserl's doctrine of the "principle of all principles" (*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, trans. F. Kersten [Hague: Nijhoff, 1982] sec. 24) to Heidegger's method of formulating the analysis of the meaning of being from within the very question of being itself (*Being and Time*, sec. 2). [Ed.]

Third Essay: Does History Have a Meaning?

1. Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference," in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, eds. Peter Geach and Max Black (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952). [Ed.]

2. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 193: "Meaning is that wherein the intelligibility [*Verständlichkeit*] of something maintains itself." [Ed.]

3. See Wilhelm Weischedel, *Denken und Glauben: Ein Streitgespräch zusammen mit Helmut Gollwitzer* (Stuttgart, 1965) pp. 268–74; also, by the same author, *Der Gott der Philosophen: Grundlegung einer philosophischen Theologie im Zeitalter des Nihilismus*, bd. 2 (Darmstadt/München, 1971), pp. 165–82. [Ed.]

4. Vilém Mrštík (1863–1912), Czech writer and critic. [Ed.]

5. For some illustrative passages, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968), pp. 9–39 (on "nihilism"); 286–93 (on "truth"). [Ed.]

6. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 227–35. [Ed.]

7. The term *"phusis"* is a remarkably rich concept in ancient Greek philosophy. The sense that Patočka is playing on here has less to do with Aristotle's definition of *phusis* as that which has within itself the "cause," or origin, of its changing (*Metaphysics* 1014b–1015a19; *Physics* 192b–194b15) than with an older conception of *phusis* as the "being" or "makeup" of something. For a helpful discussion on translating *phúsis* in Presocratic texts, see G. S. Kirk, *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 228–31. [Ed.]

8. I.e., the period in the wake of Alexander's conquests in the fourth century B.C. and Rome's transition from the Republic to the Empire in the first century B.C. [Ed.]

9. The reference is probably to Cicero's political dialogue "De Legibus," which praises the laws of Rome as the virtual embodiment of the ideals of Greek political thought. See also the famous "Dream of Scipio" in "De Re Publica," which is perhaps the most Platonic passage in Cicero's corpus: it tells of the ascent of the virtuous soul after death to a paradise of perfection. [Ed.]

10. Both Abu-Nasr Muhammad al-Farabi (c. 873–850) and Avicenna (980–1037) argued for the necessity of prophecy in political constitution—i.e., that revealed religion was the basis for revealed law, the only possible source for a workable political structure. See al-Farabi's treatise "al-madina al-fadila," translated by Richard Walzer under the title *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). [Ed.]

11. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949). [Ed.]

12. The Czech word is "po-jetí." Unhyphenated, "pojetí" means, normally, "conception" or "idea" but, hyphenated in this way, is reminiscent of Heidegger's play with various cognates of "stellen" in "The Question Concerning Technology" (such as "vor-stellen," "Ge-stell," "herstellen," etc.). "Po-" is similar to the German "um" or "ein" in that it can be used to

describe the manner in which something is "included" or "put into"—here, the reference is to the way in which, in a totality the essence of which is technology, something "is" or "can be" only to the extent that it is "placed," "set up," "put at the disposal of," etc. [Ed.]

13. Auguste Comte (1798–1857) was quite serious about creating a new religion that worshipped human being—he even had a list of "saints" that included Adam Smith: see *The Catechism of Positive Religion*, trans. Richard Congreve (London, 1858). The reference to "Durkheim's animistic pantheism" is unclear; Durkheim held that religion was an expression of the prevailing social structure which, one could say, itself has "animistic" properties—it is trans-individual, coercive, and pervades social reality. Insofar as it functions, society is cohesive, thus "healthy." For a collection of Durkheim's relevant political writings, see *Durkheim on Politics and the State*, ed. with an introduction by Anthony Giddens, trans. W. D. Halls (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), in particular the essay "Patriotism." [Ed.]

14. As characteristic of Feuerbach's materialism, see his "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy," in *The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach,* trans. Zawer Haufi (New York: Doubleday, 1972). [Ed.]

15. "Hylozoism," from the Greek "hulē" (matter) and "zōē" (life), was originally coined to describe the "natural philosophy" of the Ionian thinkers Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes: the basic idea being that matter itself, or a special fundamental type of matter, was self-formative, requiring nothing outside of itself (such as God, or *nous*) to generate the order of things. Various forms of hylozoism gained some ground in the scientific debates of the eighteenth century which, after the weakening of mechanism in general and Cartesian physics in particular, was turning more and more to accounts of nature that stressed metaphysical speculations on the nature of "force" and, in particular in the writings of Herder and Goethe, to envisaging the unity of human being and nature as a "living whole" or "organism." [Ed.]

16. *metanoein*: "change of thinking," "conversion." [Ed.]

17. "If God held truth in his right hand and in his left endless search for truth, where I would always and eternally be wrong, and said to me, "choose"—then humbly I would pick the left hand and say: Lord, grant me this; absolute truth is for Thee alone" p. 23, volume 13 of G. E. Lessing's [1729–1781] *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Lachmann and Muncker (Berlin: 1886-1924). [Ed.]

Fourth Essay: Europe and the European Heritage until the End of the Nineteenth Century

1. G. W. F. Hegel, "The German Constitution," in *Hegel's Political Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox with an introductory essay by Z. A. Pelczynski (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 158–59. Translation modified. [Ed.]

2. The Holy Roman Empire "collapsed" in 1806 when Napoleon, his armies occupying Vienna, formed the Confederation of the Rhine, made up of most of the German princes, which prompted Francis II to give up the title of Holy Roman Emperor. [Ed.]

3. See Alois Dempf, *Sacrum imperium. Geschichts- und Staatsphilosophie des Mittelalters und der politischen Renaissance* (Munich: Oldenberg, 1962), especially chapter 1: "Grundbegriffe der christlichen Geschichtsphilosophie." [Ed.]

4. Kiev was the center of Russian power from the ninth century until 1240, when the Mongols (Tartars) finally conqured Russia. [Ed.]

5. See Cicero's political dialogues "De Re Publica" and "De Legibus" (trans. Clinton Keyes), as well as the works "De Officiis" (trans. Walter Miller) and book 1 of "De Oratore" (trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham). The latter, though a treatise on rhetoric, includes many reflections on citizenship and ethics. Lucius Annaeus Seneca (?–65), Roman tragedian and man of letters, was an eclectic thinker, a faithful Stoic who was also heavily influenced by Epicurus and the Cynics. See his "Epistulae Morales," trans. R. M. Gummere. All of these works

are published by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., in their Loeb Classical Library series. [Ed.]

6. The reference to Democritus is to his *peri euthumiēs,* of which survive only a few fragments. Democritus defended a practical ethics whereby the soul attempted to achieve an inner calm, thus a peace of mind. See KRS, pp. 429–33. As representative (though not exhaustive) of the theme of the "care for the soul" in Plato, see book 10 of the *Republic*; in Aristotle, see his *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103a14–1105b18; 1177a12–1177a9. [Ed.]

7. *diadochos*: "successor." [Ed.]

8. See Edmund Husserl, "Vienna Lecture," appendix 1 to *Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971).

9. See Francis Bacon, *The Great Instauration and the New Organon,* in *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. John Robertson (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1970).

10. Hegel, *op. cit.* [Ed.]

11. After the Treaty of Westphalia at the end of the Thirty Years War, various German states maintained their independence (i.e., Saxony, Bavaria, Brandenburg), while the Hapsburg monarchs assumed the title of Holy Roman Emperors until 1806. This meant a weakening of the Holy Roman Empire, which under the Hapsburgs only had direct control over Austria, Bohemia, and much of Hungary, later Galicia and eastern parts of Hungary. Furthermore, the late seventeenth century saw the rise of absolute monarchy in France under Louis XIV, as well as newfound international influence of the French via the machinations of Cardinal Richelieu. [Ed.]

12. To give an idea of how present this threat was, the Ottoman Turks almost captured Vienna in 1683. [Ed.]

13. (a) The Great Northern War (1700–1721) was waged by Russia against Sweden, securing Russian dominance of the Baltics; (b) there were three partitions of Poland, in 1772, 1793, and 1795; (c) the Russian "intervention" on the side of Prussia in its quarrels with the Hapsburgs (which led to the

Seven Years War, a much broader European conflict), was actually a decision to be neutral on the part of the great admirer of Frederick the Great, Czar Peter III. [Ed.]

14. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper and Row, 1988). [Ed.]

15. For example, the *Sturm und Drang* movement in the late eighteenth century; the works of J. G. Hamann (1730–1788), who viciously attacked the Enlightenment, even in its German manifestation in the figure of Kant; the poetry and early idealist writings of J. C. F. Hölderlin (1770–1843), as well as the idealist systems represented by J. G. Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* (1795) and F. W. J. Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800). [Ed.]

16. Most of these are relatively obscure nineteenth-century writers, historians, and sociologists, though Moses Hess (1812–1875), socialist journalist and editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung* is somewhat known given his relation to Karl Marx. Baron August von Haxthausen (1792–1866) was a German noble who traveled to Russia and wrote several studies on Russian society; J. P. Fallmerayer (1790–1861) was a historian who wrote works on Oriental history. As representative of the group of Catholic writers Patočka cites, see two works by G. A. C. Frantz (1817–1891): *Die Wiederherstellung Deutschlands* (Aalen: Scientia, 1972; reprint of 1865 edition) and *Der Förderalismus als universale Idee* (Berlin: Oswald Arnold, 1948). [Ed.]

17. (a) Patočka is probably referring to the Second Empire, or the reign of Napoleon III, who ruled as Emperor from 1852 until 1870. The latter half of his rule was marked by being relatively progressive and liberal; it also stands out as being almost universally villified by intellectuals of the period. (The French Third Republic [1875–1940] was formed after a turbulent period following the Franco-Prussian War.) (b) The Crimean War (1854–1856) was won by a Franco-British alliance that intervened on behalf of the Ottoman Turks to check Russian expansion into Ottoman territory. [Ed.]

18. Alphonse de Waelhens, *La philosophie les experiences naturelles* (Hague: Nijhoff, 1961), p. 13. [Ed.]

19. I.e., the declaration of the German Empire in 1871 after the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War. [Ed.]

20. Élie Halévy, *The Era of Tyrannies. Essays on Socialism and War,* trans. R. K. Webb (New York: New York University Press, 1966). [Ed.]

21. I.e., the unification of the Italian peninsula, a process that occurred by way of the expansion of Piedmont-Sardinia between 1859–1870. [Ed.]

22. The protagonist Patočka is probably referring to is Ivan Karamazov, though Kirilov in *The Demons,* arguing that "If God is dead, then I am a God," to whom everything is permitted, and Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment,* make similar claims as well. [Ed.]

23. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Preface," Nov. 1887–March 1888, section 2, in *The Will to Power,* trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1967), p. 3. [Ed.]

Fifth Essay: Is Technological Civilization Decadent, and Why?

1. See two reports by the Club of Rome: Dennis Meadows, Donella Meadows, Jorgen Randers, W. Behrens, *The Limits of Growth* (New York, 1972); and Meadows, et al., *Beyond the Limits* (Post Mills: Chelsea Green, 1992). [Ed.]

2. "hekatombs . . . myriatombs"—i.e., instead of "hundreds" of sacrifices, countless sacrifices. Sacrifice is an important theme in Patočka's thought: see "The Dangers of Technicization in Science according to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger According to M. Heidegger" in *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings,* trans. and ed. Erazim Kohák (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), especially pp. 335–39. Patočka is also referring, mockingly, to the public housing developments that were erected by the Communists around Prague. [Ed.]

3. See Auguste Comte, *The System of Positive Polity,* trans. J. H. Bridges et. al. (London, 1875–77). [Ed.]

4. The turn of the last century saw a number of studies of suicide, including Émil Durkheim's famous *Suicide, a Study in Sociology*, trans. J. A. Spaulding and G. Simpson (Glencoe: Free Press, 1951). See also Tomáš Masaryk's *Suicide and the Meaning of Civilization*, trans. W. B. Weist and R. G. Batson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970). [Ed.]

5. Émil Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968) pp. 312–13. [trans. by Ed.]

6. Heraclitus, DK 22 B45; "You would not find out the boundaries of the soul, even by travelling along every path: so deep a measure does it have [*houto bathun logon echei*]" (trans. KRS, p. 203). [Ed.]

7. Eugen Fink, *Metaphysik der Erziehung im Weltverständnis von Plato und Aristoteles* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1970). [Ed.]

8. *Ibid.* [Ed.]

9. Gilles Quispel, "Faust: Symbol of Western Man," in *Eranos Jahrbuch 1966* (Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1967). [Ed.]

10. *Ibid.* Julian the Apostate ("the one who denounces the religion"), briefly Emperor from 361–63, sought to reverse the Christianization of Rome. Contemporary Neoplatonists were aggressive critics of Christianity. [Ed.]

11. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968), section 572 and book 2, section 1: "History of Christianity." [Ed.]

12. See Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, 20: "Where is the wise man? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made ludicrous the wisdom of the world [*sophia tou kosmou*]?" [Ed.]

13. Philippus Aureolus Paracelsus (1493–1541) was a Swiss alchemist and physician who wrote on medicine. [Ed.]

14. "Man's condition. Inconstancy, boredom, anxiety."—Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (New York: Penguin, 1966) p. 36. The "aesthetic stage" is the first stage of

Kierkegaard's "stages on life's way." see Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Doubleday, 1959), vol. 2, pp. 159–338. [Ed.]

15. Durkheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 305–6. [trans. by Ed.]

16. (a) The "wars of liberation" refer to a series of conflicts between 1809 and Napoleon's eventual defeat in 1814 wherein, among other problems, Napoleon faced a brutal British-backed guerrilla insurgency in Spain, war with Austria, not to mention total disaster in Russia; (b) the year 1848 saw a series of revolutionary crises in France, Italy, Austria, and Prussia, most of which were brutally repressed. [Ed.]

17. This is a reference to a relatively outdated slang expression—as in "that was really *happening*." [Ed.]

18. See Ernst Jünger, *Die Totale Mobilmachung*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Zweite Abteilung, vol. 7, essays 1: *Betrachtungen zur Zeit* (Stuttgart: Klett-Kotta, 1980). [Ed.]

19. See Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), trans. S.G. Middlemore (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1958). [Ed.]

20. This is a reference, of course, to Martin Heidegger. [Ed.]

Sixth Essay: Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War

1. Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter: Herrschaft und Gestalt*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Zweite Abteilung, vol. 8, essays 2: *Der Arbeiter* (Stuttgart: Klett Cotta, 1981). [Ed.]

2. (a) Patočka is here referring to the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), which opened the way for final German unification under Bismarck. As for the Hapsburgs, they had serious problems keeping the Austrian empire together after the revolutions of 1848; things got worse when they were defeated by Prussia in 1866, leading to the dual monarchy with Hungary in an attempt to cement their loyalty. (b) The "concert of Europe" refers to an agreement made at the Congress of Vienna by the great powers that defeated Napoleon in 1814 (Russia, Austria,

Prussia, Great Britain) to hold a series of "congresses" to discuss, and coordinate, their respective foreign policies. (c) After the Crimean War in 1856, when Austria, by remaining neutral, also wound up losing much of its credibility, the concert of Europe as a viable political concept was largely dead. [Ed.]

3. F. Sieburg, *Gott in Frankreich?* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1929). [Ed.]

4. (a) The plan named for Count Alfred von Schlieffen, chief of German General Staff from 1891–1906, to fight a two-front war: the idea was to outflank the French by swinging a large army through Belgium, surrounding the enemy and winning a quick victory, then concentrate troops on the Eastern Front against Russia. (b) The "Great Offensive" of 1918, which took place after Russia pulled out of the war and before the Americans were able to build up a significant force on the continent, was the famous gamble taken by the Germans in the hope of crushing the Western allies in a single sweep; it managed in the end only to weaken their forces, which eventually fell to the American-backed allies. [Ed.]

5. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "La nostalgie du front," in *Ecrits du temps de la guerre* (Paris: Grasset, 1965), p. 210. [trans. by Ed.]

6. *Ibid.*, p. 201. [trans. by Ed.]

7. See Jünger, *Die totale Mobilmachung*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Zweite Abteilung, vol. 7, essays 1: *Betrachtungen zur Zeit* (Stuttgart: Klett Cotta, 1980). [Ed.]

8. Henri Barbusse, *Light*, trans. Fitzwater Wray (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1919). [Ed.]

9. Patočka is speaking here, of course, about Bolshevik Russia. [Ed.]

10. Patočka is here making reference to Kurt Lewin; see. "Kriegslandschaft," in *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie* XII (1917), pp. 440–47. [Ed.]

11. *vis a tergo:* lit., "force from behind." [Ed.]

12. "*aristeia*": great, heroic actions or deeds. Historically, the books of the *Iliad* were often called "*aristeia*," i.e., the

account of the heroic deeds of the principle characters of the chapter. [Ed.]

13. Heraclitus DK 22 B29. [Ed.]

14. Heraclitus DK 22 B80: "It is necessary to know that war is common and right is strife and that all things happen by strife and necessit." (trans. KRS, p. 193). And: Heraclitus DK 22 B53: "War is the father of all and king of all, and some he shows as gods, others as men; some he makes slaves, others free" (trans. KRS, p. 193). [Ed.]

15. Ernst Jünger, "Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis (1922)," in *Sämtliche Werke*, Zweite Abteilung, vol. 7: essays 1: *Betrachtungen zur Zeit* (Stuttgart: Klett Cotta, 1980). [Ed.]

Author's "Glosses"

1. The reference is to Plato's *Laches.* However, it is Nicias, not Socrates, who proposes this definition of courage, and it is by no means clear at the end of the dialogue that it has been accepted by Socrates as a complete, or adequate, definition. See in particular 194c–201c4. [Ed.]

2. This argument is made in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology,* ed. C. J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 1986), p. 47. [Ed.]

3. Not only in Hegel, but also in the "dialectics" pursued by Fichte, Schelling, and others in the early German Idealist movement around 1800. [Ed.]

4. Nadezschda Mandelschtam, *Das Jahrhundert der Wölfe: Eine Autobiographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1971). [Ed.]

5. Marx and Engels, *op cit.* [Ed.]

6. See G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History,* trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), pp. 18–19.

7. "General thesis" refers to Husserl's concept of the "general thesis of the natural standpoint," i.e., the implicit, naively held thesis that things and the world in general are pregiven, "already-there," their order already established and continuously existing. The "*epochē*," or "bracketing," is the method by

which the phenomenologist "suspends" this thesis, or makes no more "use" of this pregiven validity in making judgments about the world in reflection. See *Ideas I*, secs. 27–32.

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