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**VOLUME II: TRANSLATION OF THE *LOGIC OF PHILOSOPHY***

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ACTION, MEANING, AND ARGUMENT:  
A DEVELOPMENT OF PRAGMATIST, EXPRESSIVIST, AND INFERENTIALIST THEMES  
IN ÉRIC WEIL'S *LOGIQUE DE LA PHILOSOPHIE*

ACTION, SENS ET ARGUMENT :  
UN DEVELOPPEMENT DES THEMES PRAGMATISTE, EXPRESSIVISTE ET INFERENTIALISTE DANS LA  
LOGIQUE DE LA PHILOSOPHIE D'ÉRIC WEIL

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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

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# **INTRODUCTION**

*Philosophy and Violence*

## A. — REFLECTION ON PHILOSOPHY

### I. MAN AS REASON

#### *The meaning of the definition of man*

There likely exists a greater number of definitions of man than of any other animal, and with good reason: isn't it man who defines? How could he not seek out with great care what he himself is?

The formulas are therefore — naturally, so to speak — numerous. There is one however that seems to get more widespread use than the others. It's not that this formula more easily succeeds at getting unanimous support—on this point, it barely has any advantage over its rivals; it's more popular because it is hallowed by the religious and philosophical tradition and forms, historically, the ground of our civilization, of our thought, indeed of our feelings, to the extent that one can have feelings for a concept, even if it is the concept under which we categorize ourselves.

This definition is man as an animal endowed with reason and language, more precisely endowed with reasonable language. The Greek *logos* refers to speech, the Latin *ratio* is more the faculty of calculation and reflection; both, however, for us, merge, and have already long since merged, and if there are still two aspects that an attentive observer can distinguish, it is nonetheless true that they are aspects of the same “concept”.

Yet, the historic (and academic) success of this definition is surprising. Isn't it at once more scientific and more prudent to say of man, as has also been done, that he is the animal whose forelimbs are formed in such a way that one of his digits is opposed to the others, that he is the laughing animal, that he is, among the higher animals, the one whose sense of tact is predominant? The characteristics stated in these latter definitions—without speaking of others that are more modern, but that perhaps oppose less clearly the definition that we

initially cited—are easily noted and hardly lend themselves to confusion. Are reason and reasonable language equally trustworthy as distinctive signs? This isn't evident.

Therefore men of science — and we add: *as such*, because ordinarily, once outside of their laboratories and their studies, these men speak and think like your average individual — are wary of this [4] classic definition and leave it to philosophers, to those who are, in their opinion, the spokespeople of common sense, people who formulate what the whole world thinks, that is to say, unchecked and without method. They themselves stick to the truly distinctive, well-defined, clear characteristics their science provides them with or allows them to separate out.

This, in itself, wouldn't at all be serious: if the philosopher is the one who formulates what the whole world thinks, he fills a very useful function, and what he does in this function will be of the highest interest to those that he represents, that is to say, to the whole world, including the men of science in their everyday lives, in that ordinary existence that underlies their activity as specialists.

But, what is more serious, philosophers, and therefore probably also their mandators are not very convinced by their proper definition; in any case, they reserve their doubts, if not on the subject of the formula's value, at least in what concerns the right and the possibility of applying it to all individuals that still fall, for the whole world, under the concept of *Man*. Man is reasonable, but are men? The philosopher, if he is selfish and sincere, must respond with a decided *no*; otherwise he would longer have any function to fill. We don't quite know what it is to be reasonable; but, whatever it be, philosophers are eminently so, and what would become of them if this definition were taken from them?

Even if philosophers were to lack either selfishness or sincerity, they would still admit that the concrete person, the individual, isn't reasonable full stop. Certainly, man is not deprived of reason; but he possesses it to a more or less elevated degree: perhaps he'll never come to the total possession of complete reason; it is nonetheless certain that he can be deprived of it, that we encounter animals that have everything that is human in the sense of scientific definitions, even language, and who don't possess the essential in the philosophical sense: the mad, the moronic, the *homines minime sapientes*. However regrettable it may be, this fact is unassailable: hasn't man, at certain moments and in certain places, been devoid enough of reason to kill philosophers?

This can explain the hesitation of men of science: what can we make of a definition where the *specific difference* either suits or doesn't suit the object of definition, and what's more, is of an uneasy usage since the decisive concept is more obscure than the concept

which needs to be defined, and since that difference admits degrees going from zero up to an indefinitely large value, but probably never attains unity (if unity indicates totality) and degrees which can't be measured, because the scale of measurement would need to be fixed by the same reason whose being is so unclear and by men in whom reason, in every concrete case, is so questionable?

But, perhaps, this also explains why men and philosophers hold this definition so dear. Indeed, the correct scientific definition must, above all else, allow us to recognize what it describes. Yet, men often ask themselves if this object is a stone or an organic body, if [5] that one is an animal or a plant, and it's important to them to be able to correctly distinguish these objects; but with respect to themselves, they don't know doubt, or they only know it in situations that they qualify as extraordinary precisely because then they are uncertain if what they encounter is a man, a god, an apparition, or an ape; still they prefer, in these cases, to limit the human domain to what they know with certainty as—the expression is telling—their fellow man. They know with absolute certainty that they themselves are men and that what is like them is indubitably human, and they know this immediately, without reflection. If they exclude beings who, for biologists, for example, carry all the characteristics of man, it's therefore because here, a definition that allows the recognition of the object by *differentia specifica* doesn't seem interesting to them: since to be man is an honor (for are they not themselves men?), the definition of man should not be too simple in its application, and what gives the definition its scientific force in the eyes of the man of science becomes a dangerous weakness from the point of view of common sense: it is inadmissible that every being that shows such traits be *ipso facto* man and thus my equal. Man in science's sense must merit the title of man in the *human* sense.

Man is an animal endowed with reason and language: this therefore means and is destined to mean exactly what earlier seemed surprising, namely, that ordinarily, men don't exercise reason and reasonable language, but that they *must* in order to be *fully* men. Natural man is an animal; man as he wants to be, as he wants others to be so that he recognizes them as equals, *must* be reasonable. What science describes is only the matter, to which it is still necessary to impose a form, and the *human* definition isn't given so that man can be recognize man, but so that he can be realized.

### *The dialectic of being, man, and reason*

It suffices to project what we've just said onto a single plane to arrive at paradoxical “dialectical” affirmations. The simple juxtaposition of theses will then allow us to describe

man as the being who is what he's not and who's not what he is: he is nature, given and describable, all the while being in search of his genuine being, which is never given and cannot be described; he is essentially reason and reasonable language, all the while always being beneath the standard of reason. Far greater and far worse: he is even the being that isn't, since he is essentially his own becoming, and since this becoming isn't a natural and describable becoming, rather it is its own self-realization.

Certainly, such a novel definition which takes into account all the data (and non-data) can't help but have the largest appeal. But as new as it is, it suffers the inconvenience of still being a definition and of thus being in contradiction with itself: we would have defined man as the being (and the only being) for which no definition can be given, even by himself, but who de-fines himself [6] at every moment (at every moment where he wants to be himself), de-fines himself, that is to say, puts a term and limits between what he wants and doesn't want to be.

Perhaps this contradiction isn't too serious — nothing, in the end proves that the contradiction is a fatal flaw, as long as it doesn't lead to confusion and ambiguity — and here we could even find another formula for our definition, saying, for example, that man is characterized precisely by that well-defined contradiction. But in fact the real objection isn't there. The definition of man that we have called the human definition in order to oppose it to the scientific definition, aimed at bringing man to conceive of his being as perfectible in its essence, as *needing* to be realized. No doubt, our new definition doesn't neglect this; but how does it allow proceeding to the realization of man for which it was developed? It doesn't. Man knows that he *is* not once and for all, that he can't become (legitimately, if he accepts this definition for himself) a thing, a given object, that he can only realize himself provided that he not forget that he isn't real in the way that the things (*res*) are that we define positively by their genus and by their specific difference or by the process that allows their generation. What will he do with this knowledge, what can he do? Not wanting to be what he is, not being content, not settling? But wanting to be what? Searching when and where? Going in which direction? The definition doesn't give him an answer, and nor does it seem able to indicate how to arrive at a solution to these problems, which are the only ones that interest the person who understands himself according to this concept. When all is said and done, what remains but the simple rule stipulating to man, which man stipulates to himself, to be reasonable? Have we made even the slightest progress from the beginning?

It may be however that, despite the appearances, we haven't progressed in vain. We don't know, it's true, what reason is, nor what it is to be reasonable. But we have discovered



what being reasonable is not: it's not the quality of a thing, of an object that man encounters, that he finds in the world like he finds trees and the green, then red, and finally the brown color of their leaves. Reason isn't described externally, as an *other*, reason describes itself to the extent that it *describes*: it sets itself in motion, it produces itself, it is only object because — and to the extent that — it is subject, and it is only subject by separating itself from all that is only object and opposing itself to that.

Every predicate that we could assign to reason would therefore be, not so much false, but rather senseless: reason would poorly interpret itself as soon as it started interpreting itself. If it *is*, its being will not be (if it's allowed to use old, but still useful, terms) *in act*, it would be *pure act*. The conclusion appears inevitable, and the fact is that none of the great philosophers believed it possible to rid themselves of that reality above everything that we call real or at least of the idea of a reality which transcends every given — and this means *every* without any restriction, on the plane where we can form sums and sets. [7] The One, the pure act, God as He in himself is, Substance, archetypal intellect, Reason: always, philosophers have ended up (if they haven't started by this) with *what isn't* because *this indescribable super-being* this *unspeakable* (it isn't by accident that these terms come back endlessly, and always in their etymological meaning) appeared, to them, to ground all description and all discourse and all being.

This is not a proof. But this constitutes a rather strong presumption: it would be astonishing that the agreement of men that so many differences separate, was entirely fortuitous and didn't hide, at least, the truth of a *problem*. Added to this is the fact that, naturally so to speak, we find ourselves before the same difficulty, the same question — which is clearly not of an authority comparable to the question of the agreement between men to which we have alluded, but which is nevertheless worrying, because now we ourselves have to confront this problem, and it is far more worrying than any authority, because it's a problem for us.

### *Reasonable language as a tool of negativity*

So be it: we will have to speak of reason, if we want to know what man is (and we repeat: not for science, but for himself, in his life).

But is it true that reason interests us? Certainly not in itself, certainly not exclusively; let's not forget, we will need to speak of this, because we needed to admit that the concrete person, the individual, me and you and the others, is not reasonable, and perhaps never will be. This person, that is to say: me, you, them, we must be reasonable, must make ourselves

reasonable. One has to ask themselves, what is this X which must be elevated to the rank of reasonable, to the participation in reason.

Perhaps we will advance more easily by this path, since the direct path, the one which, in appearance, led towards reason in its purity, has shown itself to be impassable: we know only that something must be done, that we must go somewhere, but we don't know how and where. Would it not be preferable to try to fix the starting point? It might be that lacking a point of arrival the position of this point indicates the direction to us.

Man is a being, an animal, which wants something from himself and for himself; one will have guessed what it is about, one will have recognized this feature which, in Hegel, is called the *negativity* of man. Man is a being like the others, a living being; but while being like the others, he is not exclusively like them. He has needs, but he also has desires, that is, needs that he formed himself, that are not in his *nature*, but that he has given to himself. The sexual instinct is found in him like in all animals; but he isn't satisfied with the possession of a partner, he wants to be loved by his partner. Like every organism, he needs nourishment, and can only nourish himself with certain substances; but it doesn't suffice that he sate his hunger, he transforms what nature offers him. He struggles with his kind for his habitat, for females, [8] for nourishment; but it isn't enough for him to have chased off the competitor, the adversary, he wants to destroy him or force the rival to submit to him and recognize his mastery and domination, to make in his place what, until now, he had made for himself, to transform what nature immediately presents to man, to search, produce, prepare the nourishment, the home, to mind the women, to raise the young.

In other words, man doesn't know what he wants. But he knows full well what he doesn't want: as we have found earlier, man is not what he is. Yet, the meaning of this formula now becomes clear: man isn't what he is because he doesn't want to be what he is, because he isn't content to be what he is, to have what is. He is the speaking animal, one of the speaking animals, but he is the only animal who employs his language to say No. Besides him, other living things know how to express themselves and make themselves understood by their peers, even by other species: only man knows how to speak of what is not, and, to be honest, knows only how to speak about what is not. He speaks of what is not yet, of what no longer is and he fails dismally as soon as he tries to speak of what is; all judgment that isn't a judgment of identity (and who formulates such judgments?) is a lie, when we take it as a judgment and not as an expression of a human sentiment, of a desire, of a passion, of some interest: a lion isn't a feline, it isn't even a lion, it is *that there*, and to speak that lie

that it's a lion only makes sense to refute that other coarser lie according to which *that there* would be an eagle in the snake family.

Presented in this manner, the fact can appear shocking. But it must not be forgotten that all those who have sought absolute truth have finished in discovering that language is a lie and that silence alone is that coincidence with the other that is absolute truth: From the most ancient Hindus to the dullest of Plato's, of Aristotle's, of Buddha's and of Parmenides' disciples, it has always been admitted that truth isn't formulated but is lived, is lived therefore outside of language. Because language isn't an instrument destined to state what is, but to express what doesn't satisfy man and to formulate what he desires; its content isn't formed by what is, but by what isn't. Man isn't satisfied to transform what is given to him — the bee does as much —: the mode of transformation, insofar as it is given, as it is *natural*, is transformed in turn and man creates what later reflection will call technique. Not only does he change nature, but his negativity also changes the ways of changing, he is never content with what he finds and what he possesses. Yet, the specific human tool of this transformative and negative activity is language or, if we prefer a more current and less clear term, thought, reason: that which denies what is immediate.

So, we will be able to replace our definition of man by another, equivalent, but more concrete: man is the being who, with the help of language, of the negation of the given (negation that he expresses and which he therefore has at his disposal, which isn't by itself a mode of transformation given once and for all) searches satisfaction, more exactly — because we haven't the slightest idea what satisfaction could be — [9] searches to free himself from dissatisfaction. His true name will therefore not be *homo sapiens*, but *homo faber*, not the being who *knows*, but rather the being who *does*, who *makes*, the *artisan*-being (and not worker, because it isn't work nor even the work of transformation that distinguishes man). Language is reasonable if and when it allows this intervention of man in the given, this transformation of nature — nothing more, nothing less: only efficiency counts. Being reasonable, this means: being capable of realizing one's own negativity, not only saying *no* to what is, but producing from what is, that which is not yet, a new object, a new process, both freed from what was hindering in the thing and in the mode of transformation that nature had offered.

*The negation of negativity:*

*the language of the philosopher as freedom from dissatisfaction*

We have therefore done well by no longer choosing what man says about himself as starting point, but what he does in his life: if we haven't found the answers to all of our questions, if, in particular, we still don't know where man's activity leads, we have learned what it consists of and we start to see what this reason is that was supposed to characterize man and that itself, at present, receives the beginning of a definition from the philosopher, who formulates what everybody, let's not say knows, but does all the time. It is the philosopher who expresses this, who puts it into discourse, who speaks of it in a coherent way; it is he who discovers and proclaims the hidden unity of what men think without knowing that they think it.

However, language is the tool of negativity, every judgment bearing on the present is false as judgment and true only in the measure that it expresses an interest, a desire, a dissatisfaction of man, and the philosopher's speech cannot be otherwise. If man is the being who isn't satisfied with the given, he won't be satisfied, either, with his own given being which consists in negating the given. Once a *nature* of man is given, it will be transformed by man's activity; once man's character is given — and this is what happens in and through the philosopher's language — man, being the one who negates every given, is unsatisfied with this being which claims to be his. He only expresses it to surpass it, to transform it, to negate it — to negate himself; once he understands his own life as the active expression of his dissatisfaction, he will raise himself up against this dissatisfaction and against this same activity: he will no longer seek to rid himself of what dissatisfies him, but to create contentment through the victory over this same dissatisfaction and negativity.

Therefore, everything receives a new meaning and function. The philosopher, from mouthpiece of good sense, becomes the educator, the doctor, the master of a humanity suffering from its own dissatisfaction; from tool always to be put to use, always to improve, reason becomes the active and universal remedy in the very instant of *conversion*, of the change in direction: it suffices to no longer be dissatisfied to be satisfied; [10] What's the use of acting if the celerity doesn't serve the runner, if the courage doesn't help the combatant, if the quickest horse doesn't save his rider from worry, since worry is in the saddle behind him?

Nothing is less fortuitous than the popular usage that awards the title of philosopher to the person who is content and who doesn't look to modify what is. Nothing is more

legitimate than the sense in which we currently take the word reason: he who is reasonable doesn't want what is not reachable, that is to say, who has renounced looking for contentment in the pursuit, indefinite and interminable, of successive satisfactions, who admitted that all satisfaction and all elimination of a given dissatisfaction will only lead to producing other givens, themselves also unsatisfying, only in another way, since, eternally, the given, even modified, even negated, is only modified and negated with the help of and with the result of another given. "I no longer want *that*", and we rid ourselves of *that*; it is no *longer*, and what was *not yet* has been realized; but what was *not yet* becomes what must *no longer* be; and another *not yet*, and another desirable and desired takes its place: never will man be content.

For contentment would be *presence*. But presence — as we've seen — isn't given, it can't give itself to man, man must give it to himself, in negating himself as he himself is nature and given for himself: double negation alone, negativity turned towards negativity, can allow him to be reasonably reasonable. There isn't another path that could bring him to what he is looking for, what he has always been looking for without knowing it, to freedom, not from what hinders him — because there will always be something that hinders him —, but the hindrance which is in him, which is his immediate nature. Reason ceases to be a tool, it will be man himself, and reason, in emancipating itself, in making itself, instead of a servant, the mistress of life, will liberate man at the same time, no longer from the *this* and from the *that* in nature, but from nature itself. Dominating discontent, dominating himself in his natural being, man will be free and content, because he no longer desires anything, but *is* in the face of what *is*, waiting for nothing, fearing nothing, but being sight, eyes open to the true world, good and beautiful, which gives him the existence and the possibility, the reality of the gaze and presence. Language is good, language is truly human, because it allows man to arrive at the silence of regarding, at disinterestedness.

### *Reason as presence*

What is man? Again, it's necessary to ask: he isn't the animal endowed with reasonable language, endowed in the sense that he's endowed with hands or with walking upright; neither is he artisan and manufacturer, in the sense that the bee is; if he is himself, he is reason, not only reasonable, reason chained to the body of an animal, destitute body, body having needs, blind tendencies, passions. His truly human work consists in the transformation of this compound being in view of reducing, as much is possible, the part that is only reasonable so that it is in its entirety, reason. Of course, he will not succeed completely,

absolutely; he will always have to drag along a scrap of animality; [11] never will he be entirely reason, but he will be so from time to time, he will from time to time be free, from time to time, for a few instants, he will be god, he will be present before the present world, positivity by the negation of unconscious negativity; and it is for these moments of supreme happiness, of unspeakable fullness, inexpressible, that he will live, that he will accept, as man, the hindrance from which the animal in him will never escape. He will be able to fall silent, not because he has abandoned, but because he has succeeded; he will no longer use reason, not because he will have become unreasonable, but because he has become reason.

Thus, coming full circle, the circle is closed: man is in effect a reasonable animal. So the voyage was not taken in vain. For what was incomprehensible when we were setting off has now received a meaning. We couldn't speak about reason: at present we know that this doesn't prove the weakness of reason, but its supreme force, which we hadn't understood as such. We were caught in a prejudice, a judgment that didn't even show itself to us as judgment; yet, it is not *judging* that matters, but *seeing* and seeing oneself: man is reasonable animal, but that isn't a judgment as science states them, a project that sets its sights on transforming the world or on a negation of errors, but the expression of the highest aspiration, the most human aspirations of man: man when he declares himself reasonable, doesn't speak of a fact nor does he claim to speak of a fact, but expresses the final desire, the desire to be free, not of need (which he will never be free of, and this doesn't bother him any more than need bothers an animal) but of desire. It is man that man must transform, by reason and in view of reason, and the philosopher is man *in statu nascendi*, the budding sage, the negative animal that will finish by negating the animality in himself: reason doesn't give satisfactions because reason *is contentment*. Or, to formulate the same result otherwise, man is only *homo faber* to make himself *homo theoreticus*, being that sees, being to whom what is is revealed in presence, being which is outside becoming and destruction, being which attains the *nunc stans*, true eternity, which isn't the infinite duration of what doesn't endure, but sight that seizes all in its unity: it's not by weakness, it's by transcendent force that this sight is beyond language, always negative and negating, —that it is unspeakable.

## II. MAN AS VIOLENCE

### *The unity of philosophical problems*

We know that philosophy, since men have devoted themselves to it, has fed itself on the substance of these reflections. We also know what enormous work it provided in order to elaborate and to make its discourse explicit. For, being philosophy and not being unaware that there isn't [12] a discourse of wisdom, but only an introduction to wisdom, a destruction of negativity by negativity itself, a call to conversion, an abandonment of language by means of language, it has always been obliged to turn itself towards discourse — discourse essentially ironic, even there where it does everything to appear not to be: it is not discourse that matters and discourse knows it, and it also knows that what matters to it can't be *said* since it would distort and betray what matters if it tried to say it instead of *indicating* it by speaking of the contrary and in doing as if discourse took this contrary seriously so that it exposes the inadequacy and the nonsense of this contrary nonsense and so that it pushes man onto the path that leads him to reason, to presence, to contentment. No philosophical system (unless we want to recognize as philosophical systems bodies of doctrine that only claim to formulate the rules of science and to organize the transformative activity of man in nature), no system is the exception, and all tend only towards contentment.

It may be, it is even highly likely, that philosophers themselves have sometimes forgotten what their undertaking is about and they have simply continued to treat the problems that discourse posed for their predecessors, more conscious than them, as simple “technical” questions, or they have looked to “revolutionize” the tradition, without fully understanding that they were only returning to the origins. This isn't of great importance, and neither is it that philosophers have often contradicted themselves: their struggles, by the identity of the stake and the goal, by the fact (and the consciousness) that their disagreements only concerned the means and not the end, confirms, instead of refutes, what has just been said. Contentment and discontent, reason and animality, being (presence) and non-being (becoming), freedom and given — all philosophy turns around these poles; sometimes preoccupied by this pair rather than that other, but obliged to follow the unity of the sequence, each will finish, if it doesn't want to renounce the solution to its principal problem, by resolving them all.

*The philosopher and the ordinary man. The refusal of philosophy*

We could stop at this point, if there weren't still a problem that makes us hesitate — a problem or rather a very simple, very banal, observation: that's to say, that men look at philosophers like curious beings, remarkable (in a good or a bad sense), as humans that aren't like them. He who says to his interlocutor: "You are a philosopher" certainly doesn't have the intention of saying something hurtful or even disagreeable, but he seems to always want to indicate that the other, being a philosopher, understands nothing about the serious things of life, that he succeeded in building himself an existence in which he finds himself at ease, that he is right, that he has reason on his side when he sets himself to speaking, but at the end of the day ... This man who qualifies himself as ordinary in that way is good and embarrassed if we ask him to finish his sentence and to formulate clearly what he has, to speak like him, [13] in the back of his mind. To tell the truth, he doesn't have in mind what, to him, seems so curious in the philosopher's case, and therefore he couldn't come out with it; he isn't without awareness of his weakness: the other is intelligent, he knows how to express himself, there is no point in contradicting him, he is too strong and will always finish by showing you that you're wrong. But after all, all on the inside, in the back of his mind, further from discourse and reasonable language, the ordinary man knows or, if it's necessary to leave the word knowledge to the philosopher who would all too easily prove that the ordinary man knows less than nothing since even the philosopher knows nothing, the ordinary man is certain that "all this", all that the philosopher says so well, is perhaps very well for the philosopher, but has no importance in ordinary life. "You, you are a philosopher" is a compliment that makes fun of its recipient.

The philosophers, no matter what they say, aren't less sensitive than the rest of mortals; they feel that mockery and become worried by it. They don't doubt that they're right and that they're able to explain why they're right and what it is to be right. Men will end up by proving them right — it's thus that they work up the courage — if only men want to listen to them. Let them be challenged by any difficult, misleading, traditional, argument, it is of little importance to them: they are certain not only that they'll manage, but that they'll turn the argument on their adversary, in such a way that in the end that adversary will be obliged to grant them what they assert.

But they must admit, they encounter worse than arguments. They find themselves before a wall of politeness (only the clumsy among their interlocutors will be rude), and they are told: "You, sir, you are a philosopher", and the philosopher understands very well what



this is meant to signify: “Sir, you bore me; let’s speak of serious things or let’s go our separate ways.” In a word, the philosopher is certain to convince the other if the other wants to listen, but the fact of the matter is that the other doesn’t want to listen.

What then must the philosopher do? It’s not difficult to give a response: he must leave people alone and find his salvation and realize his own contentment, come to the silence filled with presence. What does it matter to the person who looks for wisdom that others look with him or that they prefer to run from satisfaction to satisfaction, never sated, never content, always pushed forward by a negativity that they don’t understand in its being as a given fact, as the human data — data, even though human? The philosopher will no longer speak except to himself, inasmuch as he hasn’t succeeded in setting himself completely free, or he will speak to those who know themselves to be discontent and unsatisfied and who ask him for advice and healing. As for the others, let them do what they please: all the better for them that they succeed in plunging themselves in their activities to the point that they be distracted from their unhappiness and their obsession. Once again, what does it matter to the one who marches towards wisdom?

But behold: the philosopher isn’t wise, he doesn’t have (or he *isn’t*) wisdom, he speaks, and even if his discourse’s sole goal were eliminating itself, that doesn’t keep him from speaking up to the moment where he will be finished, and outside the perfect moments of accomplishment. He has nothing else to do. He negates discourse through discourse, negativity [14] through negativity, which comes down to saying that his discourse must have a subject, a material that his philosopher’s negativity can devour. We knew it, but the philosopher’s discourse had made us forget: it isn’t starting from reason that we had understood what reason was or could or should be, it is starting from the active life, that life for which reason was only a tool. The paradoxical fact is that were there no men that philosophy bores, the philosopher himself would die of boredom. As the negativity of the ordinary man, of *homo faber*, depends on the fact that he finds what he can deny and transform in front of him, just as the philosopher feeds himself on that which he denounces as abominable.

It’s beautiful to live in the presence of the One. But who would feel that beauty if he hadn’t already lived in the ugliness of the *not yet* and of the *never again*, if he didn’t remember that, if he didn’t know that he will return there inevitably? We don’t attain silence *filled* with presence in renouncing discourse and in moving it purely and simply further away. It may be that such an existence outside of discourse is possible; it’s however evident that we can know nothing of the existence of the *yogi*: the philosopher we are dealing with speaks and wants to speak and always remains silence’s apprentice; hasn’t he understood man as

the animal of reasonable discourse? It may be that an *empty* silence frees man from all suffering, but it will also necessarily liberate him from contentment, and there will be no sage, there will only be *nothingness*.

Curious fact — the story of which would not be easy to clarify —, philosophers have a tendency to forget the origins of philosophy, to repress, like a shameful memory, the story of its birth. That is understandable; it's important to them that they free themselves, and since they don't see their liberation in the transformation of what is, but in the transformation of their own given being, they are more carried, to not say exclusively, to negate what they negate rather than looking closely at it, rather than elucidating why they negate, how they negate, to what extent they negate. They say that they negate unconscious negativity, and this is true; but they should add that, thanks to their negation of the original and primitive negativity, this ceases to be unconscious. Admittedly, the man of the ordinary and everyday life suggests to the philosopher that he bores him and that there are more pressing things to do, that's to say, to *live* instead of ceaselessly preparing oneself to *be*. But the philosopher should see the recognition of his own influence in that declaration: without him and without his discourse the man who doesn't want philosophy for himself would have never been able to declare what he just did because he would be submerged in his life and because that life would not be visible to him. Yet, philosophers don't like that effect of their action, which reminds them of what they desire to forget: the origin of philosophy in desire and in primitive negativity. They cannot but concede that it isn't without importance that they deny such discourse of primitive negativity, that they deny it now and here; but speaking about it to them displeases them all the more.

For the consequences of such a confession are far-reaching. It isn't only that philosophy is not outside of time and history: after a small moment of reflection, philosophers will respond, and correctly, that philosophy is but the path, and that the path, [15] evidently, changes according to the point of depart, but that the finish is always the same, that it is in time that we free ourselves from time, but that there is no longer time for he who is free. What is infinitely more serious, what is serious plain and simple is that philosophy is no longer the sole possibility for man from the moment we must admit that it grows from a soil that can produce other plants and other fruits and which indeed produces them. Man *can* decide to become a philosopher, nothing is more certain, because we can tranquilly come to the conclusion from existence to that possibility; but the same principle equally proves that man *can* not make himself a philosopher. And as the philosopher taught him to speak

reasonably, the man of everyday life, the one that doesn't want to make himself philosopher, is perfectly capable of *reasonably* taking care of his affairs, which are not those of philosophy.

*Scientific reason of ordinary man and philosophy*

*Reasonably*: we see that it is no longer at all a question of the reason that looked to realize the philosopher but of this other reason of which we had spoken in the first place, the reason that is the servant of life, of desire, of need, this reason which hadn't satisfied the philosopher. But why then hasn't it satisfied him? Because the philosopher *wanted* to be philosopher, because he *wanted* the term *reason* to have a meaning, because he had made a choice and it was not that of the everyday life. Yet, everyday life repays him in opting, and knowing full well now, for the days of this life and against the philosopher's reason. Calmly, everyday life applies itself to dismissing the philosopher and his idea of reason, and calmly and with no remorse everyday life takes advantage of the philosopher's work.

For what the philosopher has done is not in the least without interest for the interested life. With the intention of breaking free from it, he developed discourse: life doesn't want to break free at all, it wants to take advantage of a discourse which allows it to orient itself, to understand what it wants and how it can obtain what it wants, to distinguish what prevents it from obtaining what it wants. Also, philosophers have always seen, confused and a little proud, that their effort produced what seemed the most dangerous to them, to wit, science. They are entirely ready to recognize the value of science, and they would have been ungracious in failing to do so, since it's their requirement of reasonable discourse which transformed traditional knowledge first into affirmations, then into demonstrated theses; but for them, science's value consists of its educational role, in the *formation* of the individual which, desiring nothing, except to know, *to see*, detaches himself from what holds him back in the world where we look for satisfactions. But they have been painfully surprised, and continue to be after so many centuries, in observing that men show a very lively interest for geometry, not because it allows the reasonable animal to make itself less and less animal and more and more reasonable, but because it allows them to construct war-machines, that they avidly follow the progress of man's knowledge, but not at all in view of detaching themselves from that humanly natural [16] existence, but because, all to the contrary, this knowledge of the laws of the human life must help them to dominate man with the help of their passions and unconscious reactions, help them to stay impassioned and unconscious themselves and only stronger and more skillful in the pursuit of ends which, for them, go

without saying and which, for the philosopher are the least reasonable. The discourse of theoretical science, this discourse which must prepare man for seeing what *is* through what is never *present*, but is no *longer* or *not yet*, discourse which by the ascent from principle to principle, must lead to the absolute principle, to the One, this same discourse is taken as a tool in order to have a grip on the given, as an instrument of transformation of the given in itself, and becomes the path by which man, descending from the principle to the material consequences, sinks in and is swallowed up, seduced by satisfactions and successes, in the humanly natural existence, more elevated than that of all other living beings, but all the more abandoned to nature especially since man believes himself to have overcome it: he will be master of nature, but a natural master who stays the servant of his subjects.

And yet, thanks to the work of the philosopher, the man of everyday life doesn't go forth in that way by a kind of instinct; he knows what he does and he can also say why he does it: what the philosopher offers him bores him. He has no desire to renounce everything that is given to him and everything that he can produce by using the given, in order to reflect on the outmoded character of what isn't, but only becomes and perishes. He himself, he says, is of those things that become and perish, and in dealing with these things, he knows exactly what he is made for; he doesn't arrive at contentment, of course, and the philosopher wasn't wrong in this matter, but what the philosopher neglects, is that he, the ordinary man, the man like all others, doesn't want this contentment which horrifies him: only the dead and the stones and, maybe, animals are content, if being content means being without desire, not having disappointment, *being* plain and simple. But what would he do with a corpse's and a stone's happiness? Not being content, but living and feeling himself living, in satisfaction and in failure, in joy and in sadness, this is his happiness, the only that he knows, the only that he wants; proving his strength, that he defeat all resistance, that he courageously withstand adversity, this is man's only dignity. He's playing, the philosopher will tell him, he isn't reasonable: admittedly, he's playing, but he himself is the stake and he's playing a high stakes game, a game which is height of greatness itself. And, in the end, if the philosopher doesn't want to understand that it's a matter of this game and that each of us plays, whether he publicly announces it or not, the man of the street and of the public square will make him feel it deeply, in demonstrating to him by the fact that he, the philosopher, played like all the others, but that he's played poorly, that he lost and that he'll pay, as we pay a total loss, an absolutely poor game, — with his life.

*The refusal of philosophy as a problem for the philosopher*

The debt that the man who speaks in this way to the philosopher has towards him is not small. Without this education, he would have never even been able to [17] object to the philosopher's ideal and to understand what he is himself and what he wants to be. Yet, it may be that he does the philosopher the same favor, although just as unintentionally as this one had enlightened him.

Because the philosopher, having already noted that philosophy isn't man's only possibility, nor, to speak more correctly — since the concept of a unique possibility is a misinterpretation —, the only truly human reality, that it is therefore, quite the contrary, a *possibility* of the man belonging to the domain of what man can or cannot do, the philosopher finds himself at present forced to move forward one more step: if philosophy is a possibility (or, which comes to saying the same thing, if reason, such as he understands it, is only one of man's faculties), possibility in the strictest sense of the term, therefore realized or not, what is the reality from within which this possibility emerges?

It would be of no use if the philosopher replied that the possibility and the faculty of which it is here question are real as possibility and faculty. The reply wouldn't be false, but it wouldn't concern the essential point. Admittedly, a possibility of existence is a real possibility and it is perfectly correct to declare that man really possesses, in fact, this possibility and this faculty. But also, no one had contested it; what was put into question was the thesis according to which man is a philosopher, good or bad, conscious or unconscious, but always philosopher, that is to say, always in search of contentment in and by reason, that he tricks himself on his own account if he believes himself to be pursuing other goals, that in a word man's reality is reason and that it is a simple error to maintain the contrary — an error, that is to say a deficient form of the same reality.

The point in question is entirely different. It's not a matter of reason and error; error, admittedly, exists, but for the non-philosopher it's nothing more than what causes the failure in the pursuit of satisfactions. The opposition that the philosopher has established between reasonable reason and unreasoning reason is at odds with itself: the opposition is between the philosopher's reason and life, and error has nothing to do with that question, since it is only the danger that the man of everyday life's reason, that of *homo faber*, must be wary of.

Evidently, the philosopher can completely discount this affirmation. Nothing prevents him from continuing as he started, because nothing can happen to him. The others will kill him? The philosopher is well aware that he will be powerless against them, that before

their tribunal, he has no more chance of being acquitted than a doctor would have before a court of children if he had been accused by the candy maker of being the bad man who forbids the poor little things their joy and who compels them to drink the bitterest and the most repugnant potions. This, however, doesn't refute him; it is enough that he take this danger into account: he can be made the fool, persecuted, driven out, killed, but what is all that in comparison to the incessant uneasiness, to the pressure of the desires and the fears of the man who has given himself to [18] what he calls life? Either he will be killed, or he'll live as he has lived up to now, a reasonable being in search of presence.

The philosopher is thus irrefutable. The inconvenience is that his adversary is equally so. And this inconvenience is infinitely more serious for the philosopher than it is for his adversary — in truth, it is only serious for the philosopher: because the other couldn't care less about refutations, he only recognizes victories and defeats. Let the philosopher believe himself invincible, let him even be so according to his own criteria, what does that matter to the man of everyday life, as long as this philosopher keeps himself away or as long as he himself is sure to be able to eliminate the philosopher if he dares to bother him? The situation is different for the philosopher. If it's on reasonable language that everything depends, it is unbearable that there be a discourse that denies reasonable language, that denies the philosopher's reason and which nonetheless isn't an incomprehensible discourse, a fool's discourse. The philosopher, whether he likes it or not, if he doesn't want to renounce philosophy, and the movement of discourse, must draw the conclusion from it, and the conclusion says that man freely chooses reason, freely — therefore without reason. The choice of reason is a choice, not unreasonable (because the reasonable and the unreasonable oppose each other inside the limits of reason), but an a-reasonable choice or, in a sense other than temporal, pre-reasonable.

### *The reality of philosophical possibility*

Here then is the big favor that the man of everyday life does for the philosopher he obliges him to admit that its first admission didn't go far enough, that it wasn't enough to admit that the philosopher's discourse, the search for reason, had its origin in the primitive negativity, in this desire which was human nature. Without any doubt, this is still taken for granted, but, what's more, it now appears that this is not a simple and natural negativity, but a determined form of negativity that the philosopher rejects.

Let's be sincere. In all honesty, was it really man's primitive negativity, his desire, that the philosopher was after? Was he angry at everything that was born of desire and of

transformative negativity? Admittedly no. For he should have also rejected, and probably above all, philosophy itself: animals don't have it, nor do men who live like animals, providing their sustenance by means of processes without history and without change. In reality, he didn't want to go backwards, he wanted to stop a movement which, in his opinion, had given all the good it could give, once it had led man to philosophy: it is only from this point that the march of humanity becomes descent. He really wanted man to have the time to dedicate himself to reason, he admitted (or would have admitted, if we had asked him the question) that man, under the thrall, not of desire, but of need, is hardly anything other than an animal. No, he has nothing against what we call civilization, the organized life of the community or of human communities, nothing against the rules and processes of that community; he is even completely ready to obey these laws and to contribute, for his part, to the satisfaction of [19] needs, or even of legitimate desires. He only adds that not all desires are legitimate, nor are reasonable.

It is clear that the difficulty hides itself behind this *only*, behind this restriction so *natural*. What in effect does this *not legitimate* mean? In the sense of the man of everyday life, this is perfectly understandable: illegitimate is a desire which, for technical reasons (of whatever order this technique be), either couldn't be satisfied, or could only be satisfied at the expense of other satisfactions more desired and more desirable. But the philosopher won't have an answer as easy as that. If he says that the illegitimate is what prevents the contentment's advent, he will contradict himself, because he therefore still wants to deny negativity, whereas, on the other hand, he just granted that the man of desire's transformative activity is the necessary condition of philosophy's reality. Will he say that it is necessary to stop this movement? We will ask him then to prove that evolution's culminating point is attained, and, to do this, he will be forced to develop, no longer philosophy, but science, to worry himself about the world's conditions, no longer the search for wisdom. Admittedly, it's important to keep in mind that a philosopher can silence himself, and work towards his salvation; however, he would therefore renounce all discourse, and we who, putting ourselves in his place, try to clarify the implications of his choice *such as it is expressed in his discourse*, we would be under the obligation and entitled to leave it out in order to interest ourselves only in the philosopher who takes responsibility for discourse. But if he doesn't want to fall silent, if he doesn't want to renounce discourse, if he doesn't want to leave the world, if he is not wise and knows that he isn't, why does he speak of legitimate and illegitimate desires? Why does he forbid certain desires, since he no longer forbids desire?

### *The fear of man as philosopher*

It's that the philosopher is afraid. He isn't cowardly, far from it; he is willing to face death, he is even willing to suffer it if he must, not with a cheerful heart, admittedly, but if he must choose an unreasonable or an a-reasonable life on the one side and the end of his existence on the other, he'll resolve himself for death. Cowardly in the fashion of he who fears a thing or an event and flees in the face of this danger, he's not so. On the contrary, in this sense, he is courageous, and maybe more courageous than the majority of heroes who only-defend themselves as well from fear because they aren't intelligent enough to see the risks they're running. But he is afraid of that in him that is not reason, and he lives with this fear, and all that he does, all that he says and thinks, is intended to eliminate or to calm that fear. To such an extent that it could be said of him that he is above all afraid of fear. He doesn't fear desire, he doesn't even fear need, he who doesn't fear death: he fears being afraid.

For it is fear, more than any other passion, which would make him lose mastery of himself. The desire that deprives most men of presence, he has subjugated; he aspires to the view, to the *theoria*, he knows that in this attitude alone he will be able to be content. [20] What's still in him that could worry him? The possibility of losing himself, to demean himself, not of falling back into desire, but of receding before what he can't avoid, of forgetting what's in view of what can happen to him: fear of fear.

Fear of fear? It will be simpler to say: fear of violence. It's true that the philosopher is decided to accept violence, to endure all that can happen to him, to struggle, to his life's risk, against all that would want to dominate him. But he's man, he isn't yet sage, and if he is by moments, he isn't always; he keeps within him the living being's animality: if he needs at every instant to brace himself against the threats, how will he still think, how will he simply have the time to free himself? And must he not fear violence, and fear it as a philosopher, since it's that which will keep him from becoming or being wise. He knows what it is to be wise: what guarantee does he have that he will be wise, this man here, this reasonable animal, that he won't bend, that he won't succumb before the danger, that he won't be afraid before the tyrant's bull, or the frown of a loved one? He doesn't want to be unworthy, he hopes not to be, he's determined to die rather than make the sacrifice of reason; but that choice valid today, taken yesterday, will he be capable of implementing it the indeterminate day of trial? In him, will passion not have advanced insidiously? Will he not have been mined from the interior before finding himself face to face with exterior violence? As others



fear what happen to them from outside, must he not fear what threatens him from inside? Is he ever reasonably sure of his reason?

He couldn't be so — unless the life of men be such that he can know that his fear of fear is unfounded. In other words, the world of men must be such that passion have no place, that negativity and desire contribute to constructing a form of life in which man, men are sheltered from violence, that their character be formed or transformed in such a manner that the individual isn't pushed towards passion, but towards reason.

There is therefore a response to the question which seemed so difficult and which concerned legitimate desire: it's only the desire that looks for reason and contentment that is legitimate. When and if all men want only to be content, when nobody will no longer be looking for satisfaction and gratification, when nobody will seduce any longer another, when nobody will threaten any longer another, when all will fly together to the rescue of someone who suffers from passion, then, and only then, the philosopher will be able to live without fear of fear: reason will have penetrated all of man's and humanity's existence.

Thanks to the discourse of reasonable discourse's adversary, thanks to the anti-philosopher, the secret of philosophy has thus been revealed: the philosopher wants violence to disappear from the world. He recognizes the need, he admits the desire; he concedes that man should stay animal all the while being reasonable: what matters, is to eliminate violence. It's legitimate to desire what reduces the quantity of violence that enters into man's life; it is illegitimate to desire that which augments it.

[21]

*The necessity for philosophy to realize itself in the world of violence*

The philosopher's thought therefore changes direction. He had been too quick: the non-philosopher's objection was well-founded. In effect, it still remains true that reason alone can give contentment, that only it *is* contentment, but it isn't less true that this reason could be for man only in the medium of violence; for never does man leave the domain where violence, fear, the fear of fear are possible. It isn't enough to act as though violence didn't exist, to not speak of it, to repress the fear: it looms even for the philosopher in the fear of fear; still in the man that wants to be reasonable, who wants himself to be reason, passion remains the drive of his flight's movement before movement and becoming, and violence, that which doesn't depend on him, but that happens to him, is what gives him the courage from his fear. It's necessary that he turn himself towards violence and that he looks

at it face on. He can no longer reject as error and deception what man did with his philosopher's discourse in the day to day life, he must, just like him, help himself to what *homo faber's* reason invented: if there is a difference, it's that the philosopher knows why he must use it and to which end he wants to use it. In a word, he can't leap into presence: the only path which leads there passes by knowledge of *reality*, of what resists and threatens and which can only be negated by means which are in its own nature. If it is indispensable that he always say: "reason, reason" he hasn't done enough with that call to man's dignity; because that dignity must prove itself in everyday existence.

## B. — REFLECTION OF PHILOSOPHY

### I. THE LOGIC OF THE COMMUNITY

#### *Philosophy and formal logic. Form and content of discourse*

It is perhaps useful to summarize the results of the preceding reflections in a more technical language — technical, of course, in the philosophers' sense. If we define then, in keeping with tradition, the philosopher as the man who speaks in a coherent fashion in view of unity, the result appears therefore of a surprising simplicity: understanding reasonable discourse doesn't suffice for understanding philosophy. In a word, logic is not philosophy.

It will probably be said that it was much ado about a trifle to develop such complicated arguments to end up at an obvious thesis. However, it is the case of philosophy that its theses are not themselves of great value, they don't even make a lot of sense, apart from the path by which they were come to. Logic isn't philosophy; it's certain that we can find this in every manual and in other more venerable texts than manuals. But this affirmation, cut from its roots in the life of the philosopher (and the non-philosopher), is only itself logical. We would say: since there are other parts of philosophy that everyone considers as belonging there, logic can't be philosophy in its entirety, if we don't want to fall into a flagrant contradiction; and who is the beginner that ignores that contradiction is not allowed? The problem of logic would therefore become a logical problem among others and would find a logical solution like them. In fact, it's a totally other matter, not a problem for logic, but of logic as something problematic, dubious in its pretensions and its range: what can man do with logic? And can he do anything of importance for himself?

Here the logician will make an objection: in speaking this way, he will say to us, are you speaking logically or not? If you affirm that you are speaking according to logic, that you demonstrate a thesis according to the rules that logic elaborated for all demonstration, you recognize value and the validity of logic: or if you deny it, you admit at the same time

that you haven't demonstrated anything and that you have done nothing other than speaking without saying anything. This must not bother us: we have not affirmed and we have had no interest in affirming that logic [23] be without value or validity. On the contrary, it seemed of the highest importance to us that the philosopher, seeing himself as a reasonable being, developed a discourse that holds together, a discourse that *held together* in fact. But the question is another: if discourse must be logical (and logic here means: without contradiction, since contradiction would remove from it all precise meaning), it remains to be asked if this character suffices for discourse, if, aided by this sole character, discourse comes to understand itself in its being and in its intention. And what we found is summed up the remark that this is not the case. Man can do a lot of things aided by logic, but he can't do anything with logic alone.

We can express this result in another way. Logic, being the science of non-contradictory discourse, isn't capable of finding a content for this discourse; it is even incapable of understanding where such a content could come to it from. Nonetheless, it is capable of allowing a sorting among all the possible discourses and of finding those that man can hold on to, namely, that hold together.

Logic so envisaged is formal logic, that which is destined to allow inquiry (ἐλεγχος) about the value of what one and the other affirms during contradictory discussion, during dialogue. Therefore, its first name, *dialectic*, is preferable: this logic conceives of itself as dialogue's rule, and it is conceived in view of a single goal, to put the consistency of discourse to the test. Yet, this consistency is nothing other than non-contradiction: if you can bring your adversary to admit a thesis that he had started by denying, or if you force him to deny what he had affirmed at the start, he must keep silent; having conducted an incomprehensible discourse, a discourse that one can't maintain and that he himself can't maintain, he's lost and must take himself out of the game.

Yet, if it had been discovered early on that contradiction makes discourse impossible, it has just as quickly been pointed out that contradiction can only present itself there where something, even if it were only one thesis, is recognized as valid by all of the participants of the dialogue: with he who grants nothing, all serious conversation, that is to say, all conversation destined, in principle, to lead to an agreement, becomes impossible; we must not debate with he who denies the principles, these theses which, evident for everyone, neither demand nor admit discussion, but form the elements which all discussion bases itself on; to give but one example, dialogue can't engage itself with a partner who would deny the value

of contradiction as a decisive criterion, or who would not admit that there was the possibility of contradiction, or who would teach that all affirmation of discourse is contradictory.

But in addition to principles, factual data are equally presupposed: if discussion must come to an end, it must preclude that everything be questioned in every individual dialogue. Admittedly, at any moment, anything that does not make up part of these very principles *can* be put to into question. But in order for the dialogue to have an object, it is indispensable that, at least in what concerns this concrete dialogue, facts be recognized, data admitted: likewise that in the absence of principles, the decision would become impossible, the dialogue would [24] no longer be about anything, would not be able to begin, if one and the other didn't stipulate that there is something to speak about. We can demand what virtue is, but it is therefore necessary to be in agreement as to the existence of virtue; one can contradict another about the sacred character of this act or that phenomenon only when the adversaries have agreed on the fact that there is a sacred. Logic, the science of dialogue, applies itself to what is common to the two interlocutors, it only serves to eliminate the *remaining* contradictions, thus helping them to put together a coherent discourse on a given subject, pushing them to get rid of the contradictions that they hadn't remark between the different affirmations they have held up one after another and that they find themselves now obliged to maintain at the same time, with the result that they will abandon one of them or they will demonstrate the possibility of the reconciliation of the two. Logic doesn't constitute discourse; it constitutes it as coherent discourse by purifying it of contradictions.

### *Dialogue as domain of non-violence. It's limits*

This is the first result, translated into the language of the trade. But it must not stay alone. It remains to understand dialogue itself in its meaning and its scope.

On the surface, this question is outside the framework of our initial reflections. In truth, the problem that presents itself to he who is looking for the nature of dialogue is none other than that of violence and its negation. Because what is necessary in order to have dialogue? Logic only permits one thing, namely that dialogue, once engaged, concludes, that we can say which of the speakers is correct, more exactly, which of the two is wrong: because if it's certain that he who contradicts himself is wrong, it is by no means proven that he who convinced the other of this unique crime against the law of discourse isn't equally guilty, with the sole advantage, completely temporary, that he hasn't yet been so convinced. Logic, in dialogue, prunes discourse. But why does man accept a situation in which he can be flustered?

He accepts it, because the only other exit is violence, if we rule out, as we have done, silence and the abstention of all communication with other men: when we're not of the same opinion, it's necessary to come to an agreement or fight until one of these two theses disappears along with he who defended it. If we don't want this second solution, it is necessary to choose the first, each time dialogue concerns serious and important problems, those that must lead to a life's modification or reinforce the traditional form of this life against the attacks of innovators. Concretely speaking, when it isn't a game (which understands itself only as the image of seriousness), ultimately, dialogue is always about the manner according to which we must live.

We? That's to say men who already live in a community, who already possess this data which are necessary in order for there to be dialogue — men who are already in agreement on the *essential* and for whom it is enough to jointly develop the consequences of the theses that they have already accepted, all together. They disagree about the [25] manner of living, because they agree about the necessity of a manner: it is only a matter of completing and clarifying. They accept dialogue, because they have already excluded violence.

#### *"True" men and non-violence*

They haven't however excluded it absolutely. On the contrary, it seems necessary to them in order to settle disputes that can arise between themselves and those who don't have the advantage of living in community with them, those beings who, all the while having the exteriors of human beings, are not men in full right because they don't recognize what makes man. Those beings have not yet lifted themselves above nature; although they possess human features, they are not understood, neither what they do, nor what they say: they babble *bar-bar*, they twitter like birds, they ignore the sacred, they live without shame or honor — only appropriate to be used as intelligent machines for true men, if they domesticate them and give them the status which, by nature's right, is theirs, that of a slave, a being that doesn't know how to think, but who knows how to act as a truly human being from the moment that a master thinks in his place and gives him orders to execute. Violence is the only way to establish a contact with them — and that's why they aren't men.

It's between true men that violence is forbidden. Admittedly, it's not a *de facto* exclusion, it's not impossible, but he who employs it separates himself by this very route from men and puts himself outside of what unites them, outside the law. He no longer has a share of the common heritage, because violence is what would destroy the concrete community of men, this community whose meaning is to defend all its members from external violence,

that of nature, whether it presents itself under the guise of need or comes from animals with a human face, from barbarians. The community knows how it must defend itself from need: it possesses a science and an organization of work; it also knows how to resist the barbarians: it has developed a political and military constitution. Yet, the one who, employing violence at the interior of the community, against his brothers, destroys the organization and renders futile this science, which is only of use provided that the worker can work in peace, this person is the worst enemy of each and of all. If therefore a difference of opinion arises between the members of the community, if there be disagreement about a rule of law, about the application of a technical process, about the choice of a political line of conduct, the entire community has a vital interest to make sure that it doesn't come to blows, but that it comes to an understanding, that we limit ourselves to the exchange of arguments. The community lives on only as long as dialogue suffices to settle everything that can divide the members.

*The conscience of "true" men. The community as subject*

For us it is not a question of history, not even an idealized history, of a schema of historic evolution. Therefore, we don't ask ourselves when and where dialogue (or, if we prefer, discussion) [26] was discovered in its importance, nor what were the real conditions that made possible the establishment of a rule of discussion. We could say, roughly speaking, that this dialogue develops itself everywhere that a certain measure of equality has been attained between citizens, where a community of masters has formed in which each member knows himself to be sheltered from need and, as a result, from the struggle with nature, and which no longer knows (or does not yet know) a master, human or superhuman, which all must obey: dialogue develops itself in a community of men who know, all together, that they are free of immediate need, that's to say in possession of a sufficient technique in order to provide for their needs by the use of intermediaries — slaves, machines — furnishing the required physical work, in such a fashion that the *equals*, the true men, can deliberate and reflect in peace about what seems good to them to undertake.

It's the historian's work to show how such a state of things produced itself here or there: what concerns us is the manner in which men living under these conditions become aware of these fundamental facts. And the first observation to which they proceed is that of the inadmissibility of violence between them. For themselves, they are beings who possess — and therein lies their essence — a reasonable discourse; that there is a violence other than exterior (which includes the violence of barbarians), they don't think about that, so much are

they unburdened and protected from it: manual labor dishonors (unless it bears — still, because this hardly lasts — the imprint of the sacred), the only honorable effort is the one whose goal is to defend the community and to prepare for this struggle those who have a share in the community.

Therefore, the veritable subject is the community, not those who are men only because they participate in it: it's the community that thinks, that decides, it's the community that lives; outside of it, the individual — what we call the human individual and who, under that law, is precisely not human in so far as he is individual and is not individual in so far as he is human — is nothing, not for others, nor for himself, just as at the interior of the community nothing can happen to him. It's true that he'll die; but what will die with him is only an element of an immortal all, and its disappearance isn't more tragic than the drop of a hair from a man's head. Dead, man will be no more, and nothing serious will have happened to him; or he will continue, in a hereafter which doesn't much interest him in his lifetime, an existence in every aspect similar to his present life, in the company of the great ancestors; or he will live on as a shadow, gifted with a conscience only at the moments where his descendants demand it of him or allow it to him. Man is truly sheltered from violence, as long as his community is sure to survive, protected from exterior dangers by its political and technical organization, from interior dangers by its constitution.

That's why all that is essential to the community's life bears the seal of the sacred — or, translated in another language, belongs to the domain of things which can't be modified by a decision of the community, that, as a result, we cannot submit to a discussion. But this domain isn't clearly demarcated: [27] the sacred can be de-sanctified in part, new sacraments can be introduced and established. For us, this is the expression of a change in the forms and in the conditions of life: when agriculture loses ground to maritime commerce, the gods of the sea prevail over those of the earth and beneath the earth; when the thought of a sly voyager is indispensable to the acquisition of this wealth that henceforth makes a good man, the enterprising goddess of intelligence becomes the arbiter who decides the struggle between the ancient deities and those of a more recent era, ignoring the powers that are superior to her by their age and by their blind force. But the passage is imperceptible for he who lives and who carries it out without knowing. For him, at no instant, is the continuity broken, and if he recognizes that the past is not equal to the present, he notices however only an enrichment to which no loss corresponds. The community endures, because the gods endure, and their number has augmented, as did the community's force, which remained one and the same.



## II. THE DISCOURSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND BEING

### *The community's death and isolated man before violence*

He therefore who declares that the community is no longer the same, that its sacred has really changed, that everything must be submitted to the inquiry of contradictory dialogue, is truly impious and a criminal and can't not be condemned. But the fact that such a man could appear suffices to show that the community is no longer what it still believes to be. If man was still a member of the community and was only that; nobody would be able to conceive of the idea of an examination without limits; that a single one conceives it, and it is clear, for us, but also for him, that the community itself is put into question and not only this determined community, but the community as such.

In fact, the community can only become problematic there where the determined community feels itself and knows itself to be in danger. Whether it clashes with adversaries with the same tongue and with the same tradition and that it cannot decry as a group of animals with a human face, whether it finds itself facing barbarians who, as inhuman as they be, have at their disposal a strength that the community isn't certain to be able to vanquish and with which it sees itself forced to compromise, attributing to them, against its intimate convictions, a human status, little matter: starting from this moment, the individual is no longer protected from violence, he can lose his community, therefore all participation in a community, he can find himself alone facing nature, without the aid of his equals, deprived of his partner-collaborators, of his machine-slaves, [28] perhaps reduced himself to the role of tool in the hands of a barbarian master, in any case abandoned to himself.

At the moment where this reflection appears for the first time, the community still endures and man isn't deposed of his dignity: should it be otherwise, he would no longer have the possibility of expressing his fears, unless he had the luck, exceptional, of being received in another community with the same tongue and the same tradition (in which his situation would be that of a citizen who would have understood the possibility of absolute misfortune). The community isn't dead, but it is no longer immortal, and man, in the apprehension of the catastrophe, prepares himself to endure it.

Yet, to his problem, there is not a unique and all given solution: he may not want to survive what still makes his life, he can establish himself as an isolated individual, as a man who can make himself received everywhere, either because he brings a new concept of life with him, or he is capable of teaching a new technique, or he is able to indicate (or convince

his hosts that he can indicate) the means to reinforce the community to which he offers his services; he can equally close in on himself, decided to recognize nothing of what will happen to him, content to be who he is, satisfying himself with the existence that nature, outside all human community, offers to the man who renounced all desire and is self-sufficient as soon as he finds what is necessary to the animal life of his body; he can, finally, try to construct and to form a new community, founded on a new sacred, a truly immortal and immutable sacred, because conceived in view of its immortality and its immutability.

Whatever be his decision, the fact remains that the tradition, which until now had formed the core of its existence, is depreciated: since it *can* fail, it *has* already wrecked; since it *can* be put into doubt, it is nothing, and man finds himself alone, alone facing violence. It's alone that he must defend himself from need, alone that he must give a meaning and a dignity to his existence: it is no longer enough that he reach an agreement with his peers and his brothers, he must be in agreement with himself, that's to say, since no discourse is impossible for him any longer, given that no traditional discourse still has rights over him, with all the possible discourses. He is still the being that is gifted with reasonable discourse, but this discourse no longer has a sure and valid content for everyone, it is now only formed from the memory of depreciated discourses, of discourses which had been valid, but which no longer are without a preliminary examination. He is alone, individual, facing violence that he can refuse, that he can accept, that he can undertake to subjugate, but that he can no longer forget.

### *The birth of ontology. Discourse*

In the history of philosophy, this crisis fixes the date of the birth of *ontology*.

Man is alone facing violence, facing what can happen to him. Yet, if he has to be capable of taking some kind of position before violence, at least one condition is required, namely that violence [29] still be understandable, that what dominates man and what can crush him have a meaning in itself, a structure, that it can be grasped. Whatever the path that he chooses among those which are before him, it's necessary that man can find his bearings so that he can choose: even the fold over into one's self still presupposes that there is a nature which can furnish these basic necessities that it prescribes for the upkeep of the body's machine. Even if what happens to the individual would be incomprehensible as it is violence for the individual, a sense must remain visible, if not seen; a possible orientation, if not actual.

Thus dialogue becomes discourse. It no longer matters that men, *true* men, be in agreement in their perishable and therefore accidental community, it only matters that man's discourse grasps what is, but as it is in itself: the agreement between men will be established all by itself if men don't attend to themselves, but to what is. Once they speak neither of their interests in their communities nor of the interests of their communities, but of what is, dissent will no longer be possible and violence will no longer threaten them, it's either that all together they scorn it (if nature is such for them that man can't take another attitude), or it's that, still all together, they subjugate it. All together: because there is no longer the difference between the veritable men and these animals who only resemble men; before violence, all are equal, and the discourse of each is valid for everyone if it is valid in itself, that's to say, facing what can happen to every man, facing violence.

What violence concretely is, what reason, which scorns or subjugates violence, is, the content of discourse alone can show. Whatever it is, it will be human and it will concern what can happen to man, to any man. And once again contradiction receives the value of a distinguishing essential sign. In effect, how to get one's bearings in life, how to make a decision before violence, if what is said of it in discourse is not consistent, denies itself, if what is sometimes is this, sometimes that? Man's nature, what in itself is not discourse, exterior nature, violence then under its double aspect, what man doesn't dominate, doesn't dominate yet or will never dominate in the conditions of his existence, all this must be known, must be able to be described without ambiguity so that discourse can fill its function.

But now the contradiction establishes itself elsewhere: it took place in dialogue, in the contradiction, where each of the interlocutors tried to show that the other not only said something in contradiction with the affirmations of his adversary, but contradicted himself in denying a principle that he had admitted (with all the true men). At present, contradiction threatens the man who, representing all men, speaks with himself, not in order to be in agreement with himself, — because who would not be in agreement with himself if he spoke with himself in the absence of all naysayers? And the contradiction, would it not be able to survive in the agreement of men of a specific community, of every specific community, if nobody took on the principles and if the contradiction resided in these very principles? But in order to be certain that it holds the truth about [30] what is: there must not be contradiction between what man says about reality and that same reality, what he says must not be in contradiction with what he encounters, what happens to him, what he observes. In a word, his discourse must account for the world.

## *Non-being*

It therefore isn't the simple non-contradiction of discourse in itself that decides its value. Admittedly, non-contradiction is indispensable, and without it, no understandable discourse can be thought. But this necessary condition is no longer sufficient: no principle is any longer above inquiry, outside the formal principles of discourse; but since the purely formal character of these is clearly recognized, the interest turns to the *objective truth* of the content. Formal logic is indispensable, but it only makes sense to the extent that it leads to objective knowledge; more strictly, to the extent that it allows controlling the form of all discourse concerning or claiming to concern what is.

It is clear that this new interest brings nothing to logic: such as it was established, as science of discourse, it is useful and is sufficient for the solution to formal problems that are and must stay its own. Therefore, logic — it's starting from here that it must take this name and lose that of dialectic — is not a part of philosophy, which now becomes *first science*; logic is itself a tool, a technique, a science, if we like, but a subordinated and derived science, because it doesn't bear on the essential. It can therefore halt in its evolution, since it is perfect: the next step will not be made by it, but by the science of what is, considered as it is.

As it is: the restriction matters. Because it is impossible to construct a discourse which registers everything and which is, at the same time, free of all contradiction. What man observes, what happens in him and outside of him isn't immediately translatable in non-contradictory discourse: water is sometimes hot, sometimes cold, sometimes when we heated one hand and chilled the other and we plunge them both together into the same bowl, hot and cold at the same time; man, the philosopher himself, chooses according to reason and submits himself to what is and knows however that the movements of the passions that he is subjected to carries him away against his will and makes him do what he disapproves of at the moment that he undertakes it.

What man observes is therefore not what is: a mixture of being and something else, of an element of non-being, the observed needs to be pruned. But this non-being isn't simply devoid of being; it *is* non-being, and its being contains a negative sign, it consists in diminishing — this here is its own reality — the reality of what truly and completely is, of what discourse can be about without contradicting itself. For lending itself to discourse is the sign of what truly is, not partially and relatively, but absolutely and in its totality. In effect, the *phenomenon*, to the extent that it contains some reality, is substantial, consists in itself: how

would it be possible that man live, orient himself, act in reality, if this [31] reality were not such that it could be recognized, that is to say, translated into discourse?

What appears to man, it's true, isn't entirely reasonable and contains what keeps man from being entirely the master of it, what makes him unable to account for it in his discourse without leaving a residue; but still this residue can be determined, if not in itself (wanting to determine the indeterminate in its being, which is to come in the determination's deduction, would be a misinterpretation), at least compared to the determination: It is what the determination determines. The contradiction is in the phenomena, in what appears to man, but this contradiction can be expressed without the discourse which speaks of it being itself contradictory, and the indeterminate determines itself as what isn't reasonable, but is for reason, positively, as what *is* non-reasonable.

What is recognized in this discourse (but at first is not recognized *by* this discourse: it is only later that this presupposition will show itself, when we will no longer confine ourselves to the discourse of primitive ontology), is the negative: the world cannot be understood unless we admit a negative element, a non-being in being, a mode of appearance which hides what is, at the same time that it reveals it. Man is the being that draws out to daylight what the phenomenon contains of reality; he is the being gifted with reasonable discourse, not because he can come to an understanding with his equals and exclude the contradiction of what he says, but because he can form a non-contradictory discourse and base it on a non-contradictory reality. He isn't reasonable because his discourse flows, in agreement with itself, from some kind of principles, but because he can discover principles, which are those of reality, of what is inasmuch as it truly is. He isn't reasonable because he doesn't contradict himself, he is reasonable because he's protected from contradiction by his possession of truth, by the possession of Being in truth.

Therefore, truth doesn't reside in discourse, or only resides in it in a derivative manner. Discourse is the place of error: man can speak of what is not; it's therefore to the extent that he refrains from doing so that man speaks the truth and that his discourse is true. But the truth isn't essentially in discourse: it has its place in the sight that penetrates look and appearance in order to seize what is. It matters, admittedly, that man help himself to the truth; but this matters only to the man who, in error, tricks himself and prevents himself from finding his bearings in the world, thus condemning himself to failure, searching either to dominate nature (in himself and outside of himself), or to free himself from it in ceding to it: he must know anyhow what he is dealing with. But what he knows in knowing the truth, is not discourse, it's what discourse designate. Discussion in the community could content

itself with the truth of discourse, with the formal cohesion between the principles recognized by all the members of the community and the consequences that each member draws from it: the community was sure of its principles and each member was sure of himself and his life within his community. At present, something else is required: man, each man, every individual, if he wants to address [32] what is common to everyone, to what is, must be able to seize the truth of being. Discourse doesn't decide anything, nothing can be decided on in discourse: it's reality which decides truth, and the disagreement can't be settled by a simple consent (which could just as well be based in error) but only by appeal to revealed Being.

*Revealed being and the discourse of the community*

Man is the being who, because reasonable, can deceive and be deceived. To tell the truth, he always deceives himself and he is always deceived: philosophy is the incessant work of the reasonable being who wants to attain truth. Necessary work, because truth isn't naturally given: even though he lives faced with nature, in nature, with the most intimate contact of what *is* in him and outside of him, man doesn't automatically translate into discourse what is. On the contrary, the language he inherits is a language of interests and conventions, sufficient for the needs of life in the community, invented by the community for its ends, but not at all destined to seize what is at the bottom of appearances. This is why man can settle into error and can persevere in it as long as the share of truth that his discourse contains (without this discourse being capable to separate its true from its false) satisfies the exigencies of the organized existence of the community; this is also why this discourse shows itself insufficient from the moment the community no longer appears as immortal and that men find themselves dispersed across all the surface of the earth. What had been the most certain, the most positive, must now let itself face what had been forgotten in this positivity and which shows itself in this ordeal as the most dangerous negative that there is for man, and the inextricable mixture of truth and error. Does it require another proof than the mere fact that this confrontation became necessary? Isn't it evident that men have erred, if the community is in danger? Could it be in danger had it been founded, not on appearances, but on what is, not on what appears and disappears, is born and perishes, not on what contradicts itself and therefore couldn't last, but on the rock of the real which *is* and which is that which gives being to the very appearances? Could negativity burst into men's lives, if men, in and by error, hadn't opened the doors to it? Still this interior violence, which alone endangered community that was strong enough to not fear its exterior enemies in danger,

rich enough to know itself to be sheltered from need, how could it have become a threat, if men had known what reality is, what their own being is and the being of the world?

A task therefore takes precedence over all others: that man rids himself of this negative, that he denies this negative which seduces him or by which he seduces himself, that he purifies his discourse of these errors which disfigure it and which keep it from being reasonable and from grasping truth. It isn't so much necessary to learn to speak of the truth; it's necessary to unlearn moving oneself in error. Truth is there, open to the gaze of man, provided that he wants to look, that he wants to be look pure and disinterested. That he cease to follow his propensities, that he cease to believe what was transmitted to him as eternal principles, that he renounce what [33] seems to him to be in his interest, but which is only the desire of the non-reasonable side of his being, and the truth shows itself such as it is in itself.

### III. THE KNOWLEDGE OF BEING AND THE SCIENCE OF WHAT IS: THEORY AND PRAXIS

#### a) DISCOURSE SEIZING REALITY

##### *Knowledge as negation of the individual*

The paradoxical result of this movement which had isolated the individual is to deny the individual: error is that which is individual, either a discourse presents itself as being essentially discourse of *this* individual *here*, or a discourse claims to in truth be about this very individual. Because there isn't and there can't be a truth, neither for the individual as such, nor concerning the individual as such: true is what is and not what becomes and perishes, true is what every man, as he is man and as he is, can see and must express. Man errs as long as he is this or that, he errs as long as he wants to speak of this or of that: *man* alone can speak, man who is the same in all individuals, and he can only speak of what, behind appearances, is in things. Man is reasonable — man, not men; and it's Being which shows itself in truth, not things that seem to be.

The individual, to be man, must therefore start by denying himself. Neither that which he desires will give him reasonable certainty, nor that which, in the tradition of his community, he had taken as certain and indisputable; it's not a matter of knowing what is profitable, what up until now passed for profitable, it's a matter of seizing that which will

never be able to betray man. The agreement of individuals, admittedly, is a sign that they don't pursue personal interests, each separately; but if this agreement doesn't have its foundation in Being, it can only express an accidental agreement between individuals. Discussion constitutes the first step towards reasonable certainty, but it is also only a first step.

*The elaboration of ontological discourse*

Yet, if the philosopher can scorn traditional knowledge, he can't renounce it, and if he doesn't choose silence and death in solitude, if he doesn't opt for an animal existence (which, in effect, lives without discourse and without science), he must turn himself towards the study of what is. To say that phenomena both hide and reveal what is, this certainly constitutes, in relation to the logic of discussion, a decisive step; but it is necessary to go further, it's necessary to distinguish what, in this or that phenomenon, is reality from what is not essential in it. It is not sufficient to declare that a [34] discourse concerning Being is the sole discourse about which all men can come to an agreement, that they can and must rely on it: the simple affirmation doesn't furnish the required discourse.

This discourse is the work of science, or rather: of the particular sciences that concern the different domains of being. Because Being, while being one, is multiple for the man living in the world, born in a particular community, situated in a particular "civilization", heir of such and such tradition. He knows that Being is one: but this unity of Being, he also knows that it finds itself (if ever it *finds* itself) beyond all being and that it is the suppression of individuality, as much his own as that of the things and the circumstances that surround him and occupy him. The ascent towards the origin is the condition of the unity of discourse on Being; but it is the descent of the One towards the multiple which alone allows man to speak to men, to live with them in a concrete and solid understanding, which establishes the possibility of a sorting among appearances, of a choice of the essential, of what matters to man as man — to every man.

Every traditional principle can and must be submitted to reason's inquiry, we've said: what is it other than the critique of this tradition which has guided and which continues to guide man? There are sciences, that of the cobbler, that of the doctor, that of the priest, of the politician, of the poet: the hour has come to wonder if they are properly constituted, if they truly furnish what they promise to procure for man — certainty, founded on reason, that their practices are irreproachable and can resist universalized discussion, to examine if they don't presuppose principles which are only final according to their pretensions and which reveal themselves as arbitrary as soon as we try to reduce them to the unity of Being and to



measure them against the ideal of a discourse truly one and free of every only traditional element. There are domains of Being: but are they truly split according to the cleavage planes of this very Being, or do they respond to a given community's merely traditional interests? Do they allow finding the unity of Being again? Can they be conceived as derived from this unity?

No reflection on the form of discourse could satisfy these requirements: it's necessary to elaborate discourse, it's necessary to actually organize the totality of traditional heritage into science and into sciences, to bring it back, part after part, to the unity and to deduce it from the unity. The philosopher must make himself a man of science (and must shape men of science) in order to be able to live as a philosopher: all that is must be penetrated by reason, shaped and reshaped by reason. It doesn't suffice to postulate the unity of discourse and the unity of Being: it's necessary to show the possibility of a single discourse which seizes the unity of Being in the multiplicity of what is; and we will only show this possibility in realizing it.

### *The multiplicity of discourses and ontology's failure*

Ontological responses therefore necessarily agree in as much as they recognize this requirement's well-foundedness. The divergences appear as soon as it comes to filling this framework. [35]

What were these responses? This is a question that falls under the history of philosophy and which doesn't concern us. Without speaking of the refusal of ontological discourse — we have already said that we have opted for he who refuses empty silence, not for this reason or that other, but in fact, in speaking and in continuing to speak —, we could distinguish two principal directions of ontological thought, that which recognizes nothing that is superior to ontological discourse and which sees reason's realization in sight of what is, in pure *theoria*, and another which asks science for the liberation of all traditional fear in order to be able to give oneself to Being: the one who wants to live to philosophize, the other who wants to philosophize in order to live. We could enumerate the different solutions which have been given over the course of history, analyzing the mixed forms, determining the necessary links between pure forms, the dialectic which rejects man always from the one to the other and from this to that (isn't that what showed itself over the course of our preceding reflections?). But this isn't our problem.

For us it's a matter of the fact of the multiplicity of discourses and nothing else. Man constructs coherent discourses, discourses which don't contain contradiction, which each

embrace all that is essential and which brings it back to the unity in order to afterwards deduce it from the unity: yet, there are several discourses. It would not be correct to say that these discourses are in contradiction; we would thus presuppose, without any justification, that they form, at least in principle, a unique discourse, even though incorrect. But the difficulty is all the more serious. Each discourse is determined by what is essential for it, and the essential is determined by the discourse: what is that saying, if not that there doesn't exist those common principles which are required for the possibility of all discussion? Each discourse satisfies the set conditions, in each discourse men can understand each other by appeal to Being, to what is essential in phenomena, to what *is* deep down in what becomes and perishes: what is that saying, if not that between discourses there is no arbitration and that only the free and unjustifiable choice can settle between them the reality of men's life? Must one not recognize that the enterprise, which wanted to liberate man from violence by the establishing of a unique discourse, has failed?

For it isn't that men haven't succeeded in erecting a first science starting from which the particular sciences could be constructed or towards which, as towards their center or their source, they could be brought back: it's that, on the contrary, several first discourses are imaginable and have been invented and that, confronted, they don't even contradict each other, but are incommensurable, because each, taken by itself, holds what it promises and is irrefutable on the condition — and this condition is legitimate — that the refutation makes use exclusively of its own principles of discourse for critique. Whether Being be determined as pure thought or as pure matter, as a person or as impersonal, whether what is be understood as always existing or as created, whether the essential character of phenomena — their share of Being — consist in their quality or in their quantity —, it is always possible to form a discourse that doesn't contradict itself and which account for [36] all experiences, — or at least of all *essential* experiences: restriction of the highest importance; because it would be of a childish ease to 'refute' a discourse by objecting that it is not complete, that it doesn't explain what it must above all explain. But the *essential* for each discourse is set by that very discourse, and we would only be hiding the difficulty in demanding, for example, of the theologian an explanation of thunder or of the modern physicist an interpretation of sin, thus surreptitiously asking them to recognize as essential that which for them belongs precisely to the realm of non-being.

Failure therefore on a decisive point: the appeal to Being doesn't allow founding a *unique* discourse on which *all* men are in agreement, a discourse which isn't that of this community or that other, but *the* discourse of *man*. Phenomena are not discussed: everyone

admits that a dropped stone falls, that the sun rises regularly, that men must drink and eat in order to live; but from the moment we try to bring these phenomena back to their common source, to Being, to the One, discord reigns anew: there is not a universal *and* concrete essential, and we continue to live as we have always lived, renouncing the quest for absolute discourse, founded on the absolute, limiting ourselves to struggling against violence by means of the tradition, perfecting them, admittedly, and completing them — because the idea of science, of a discourse bearing on reality remains established and serves to *rationalize* techniques of work and of organization —, but without claiming that we have resolved the conflict with violence by reason, for everyone and once and for all.

*Unique discourse's meaning for he who adheres to it. Its meaning for us.*

*Skepticism and despair*

Failure therefore, but failure only for us. Because nothing prevents each of those who formed discourses from holding theirs as true and holding themselves to it: there is nothing in the plurality of discourses that could bother them, considering that each is convinced not only that he is right, but also that all others are wrong.

But if this is so, must we not ask ourselves if our concept of a unique discourse doesn't contain an ambiguity? In effect, is there not a unique discourse for each among those who search for a unique discourse? And our process, which is to project all of the unique discourses onto the same plane, is it not absurd? And this absurdity does it not jump out at us when we add, as it is suitable to do, that all these philosophers, in search of contentment in or by the sight of the One, have renounced violence and that there isn't the least danger that they will ever come to blows? They don't belong, at least according to their convictions, to a community they would have to defend the interests of, they desire to free themselves of all traditional desire and therefore of all personal interest, whatever it be, riches, honors, contacts: how could violence burst into their sphere? Their discourses don't agree, it's true, but that agreement doesn't *interest* them; at most they hope that all men come to the peace they've found. [37] They'd willing to convince them; but none among them ask to overcome by natural force, by the means of animality. And in what concerns nature's violence, they have already resigned themselves to it, and if everything is not yet revealed in its positive meaning, in its being, in its participation in Being, they know too well that a little patience and effort will be sufficient in order to achieve their goal.

Yet, the discussion isn't at all threatening outside of the community: if it doesn't threaten the community's existence, what danger does it present? Here, there is no

community of work and of struggle: by what right, then, do we proceed to this projection on the plane of discussion? Is it simply because we have stumbled back, without noticing it, onto this plane that we had believed, however, to have left? Or has the term *unique*, employed with no distinctive clue, tricked us and should we have determined, in each case, for whom the unique is unique?

The two criticisms are justified: we have let ourselves be swept along by the habit of discussion and we have undergone the seduction of ease, in employing the term *unique* without paying attention to its essential ambiguity. But will it be enough to renounce our errors? What means do we have to put them right? Must we admit that there is effectively — and maybe legitimately — a plurality of ontological discourses, of unique discourses, that men can each in their own way attain their salvation — understand: those that want to attain their salvation? And will it be necessary to leave the others to their fate, to their hunt for satisfactions, to their struggles, to violence?

It may be. However, that would then leave us with a question to resolve: who are the *others*, these *others* that *we* will abandon to *their* fate without salvation, and who (or what) are *we* who abandon them, and what is this *abandoning*, what is this tranquility with which we abandon them, doing as those who clutch to a unique discourse — and nonetheless conscious of the fact that ourselves, we are before these discourses like the famous ass between his water bucket and his feedbag, incapable of choosing either one, or even, in order to be entirely sincere, not at all tempted to choose one rather than the other nor to make any choice? Do we ourselves number among the *abandoned*? Where does it come from, this detachment that makes us speak, as something foreign and exterior to us, of both the violence of some as well as the unique discourse, unique discourses, of others? Are we beings that soar above the world where one struggles or from which one withdraws into the discourse bearing on Being and in sight of the One, and do we soar, at the same time, above discourse, any discourse, in the manner, but without the decision, of those who retain from discourse only its insufficiency and who, without lingering to transform it, return to silence? In other words, are we simply skeptics, thinkers who admit that man can't not think, not speak, not formulate a discourse, but intelligent enough, penetrating enough to admit to us that discourse, as inevitable as it is, never seizes the truth of Being and that the lone truth for man is that prudence which teaches [38] him to never take position, to leave truth to Being and to abstain, to retain oneself, to suspend all judgment?

It seems that's our case. But what is the meaning of this skepticism? Let one be skeptic, let us be skeptic, so be it; but what does the skeptic live off of, if he scorns violence

as much as unique discourse? Off of the demolition of discourses held by others and that he amuses himself in confronting? No doubt. However, is this more than a pastime and, above all, is this really our pastime, or do we take, on the contrary, seriously, desperately serious, questions, problems that we don't succeed in formulating and which, however, weigh on us, and make us detach ourselves from all that we formulate, from all that others have formulated for us, all the more as we succeed less in seizing them and in expressing them in the form of a theoretic problem and question? Would we be *skeptic* before all that we took as important, because we are, so to speak, too certain of one point, of one thing, of something which would be inexpressible in all these discourses, so as not to doubt, in order to not mock all these lovely certainties that are being praised to us from all sides? And if we have just now employed the expression *desperately*, should we not take it in its most literal meaning, indicating that we don't expect any response, any solution, any contentment from all that gives hope to the men of unique discourses?

We would have thus arrived at a limit: we speak and we know that our speaking doesn't seize anything of what matters to us, and that what discourse expresses, no matter what the discourse, doesn't matter to us; it would seem that we strike against something worse than a wall, that we have arrived opposite a nothingness or a space filled with an element in which we can neither breathe nor move, in which none of our gazes discern either objects, or forms, nor forces and where nonetheless is situated, must be situated, what has more weight than all *reality*, a space into which we can't penetrate and at the interior of which, by an unthinkable, insoluble paradox, we would have placed ourselves in order to watch and judge and devalue all that is known and accessible to us. And all these reflections don't at all prevent that we knew — or is it necessary to say: *felt*? — that we cannot abandon, that we don't *want* to abandon, this serious game in which we try to understand ourselves with the help of discourse: this very despair, does it not prove that what matters to us, after all, despite everything, above all else, is to know what we are?

### *The abandonment of ontological discourses*

*as resulting from the historical conditions of our community.*

#### *Our situation*

One thing is certain: we aren't of those who elaborated and who elaborate and who repeat these discourses, who leave us cold, as, on the other hand, we know well that we don't want violence, and that therefore we aren't, either, of those who live tranquilly in a given

community, ready to defend it with [39] violence, “certain” of what is the interest of the community and the individuals, relying on a non-contradictory discourse, traditional and recognized by them and their peers. What remains for us, if that’s the case?

We are not — at least not in the discourse that we are in the middle of holding — of those who believe themselves to be sheltered from violence in their community and who pursue the goals that man traditionally pursues in that community, and we are not of those who, still living in the community, have understood that the community is not immortal and who prepare themselves, in their discourse, for a life isolated and at the same time universalized in front of the universal: we are of those who, in fact, have lost the community, who no longer have problems regarding the community’s possible ruin, of the community’s death, but who passed by this ruin and this death and who know that life continues and continues to be bearable. Speaking as we have spoken, taking the position of the detached skeptic, we have done nothing other than admit that the interests of the *true* man are not ours, not any more than his fears: we are not of his family, neither by security nor by apprehension. We take after those that he considered and considers as animals made in the image of man, as tools.

It is therefore understandable that we can’t recognize ourselves in the *true* man’s discourse and, as a result, we see why his universalism, his attempt to find a discourse which is valid for man and therefore for all men, doesn’t touch us: this discourse can be right for a man who, at least for the time during which he speaks, is certain that his community’s world still lives on and who can therefore envisage that, if truly catastrophe arrived one day, he will not want to survive it or that he will pull himself from the ruins of his world in order to live in his discourse, isolated and universal. We others survived it and noted that the result, after all is said and done, isn’t as bad as the *true* man anticipated, because the ruin wasn’t for us, but for him, because we were never *equals* and that we are the heirs of slaves, of those who worked, who didn’t have *discourse* and who didn’t need it, but lived and worked with the help of a *language*, of a means of communication in view of work, destined to facilitate and to assure work’s success. In sum, we live, occupied by our desires, by our needs and we want to satisfy them through peaceful work, because we know, by experience, that the struggle between workers makes the work’s success impossible and exposes each and every one of us individually to nature’s violence.

Our disinterestedness concerning unique discourse, our interest in the agreement in, and by, and for work and in defense against nature’s violence, extra-human violence, therefore indicates that the attitude of true men is, in a manner of speaking, posterior and anterior

to our own. *Praxis*, so neglected, so scorned by them, proceeded their pride, just as, after the failure of that pride, it takes back the prime position: we are the heirs of the first men, of those who struggled with nature for [40] their sustenance and for their natural existence. But we aren't the direct descendants of these men; the lone fact that we speak of them and of ourselves, that we have present in mind the discourse of those who had forgotten need, that's what shows that we are not *tools*, men who don't live in history and whose existence is an eternal return of the same conditions, the same data, the same tasks. We are, also and as much, the heirs of discourse, or, to speak without image, our history is such that, no longer having masters, we must assume the role of masters, that, not having had our own discourse, we have taken onto our own account that of the *true* men at the moment that their community disappeared, where the much dreaded catastrophe came to pass and that the equality of men came to be, not, as foresaw and advocated by *true* men, by the elevation of inferior men, but by the pulling down of the masters (or by their disappearance, if they preferred to disappear). We therefore have a *language*, the language which serves us in our life and for our life, and a *discourse* with the help of which we try to appropriate our life, following the ancient masters who had their own life and asked themselves only what they needed to do with it. We have, we keep a formal logic, because we learned that violence between men constitutes a danger for all men and that the agreement is the indispensable means for the defense of our *natural* interests; we maintain the requirement of a first science, not because we would be convinced that only *sight* can give man contentment, but because we learned that we must know what nature is about in order to be able to survive its hostility, not because we want to rest ourselves from the flow of phenomena in the grasping of Being, but because we haven't found other means of orienting ourselves in this flow. We need reason, because there is no longer a master who is reasonable for us.

In a word, it doesn't matter to us to live as *sages*. We have a philosophy, but it is not in order to have wisdom, it's in order to bring to a close, as much as possible, our science of nature, of the struggle with nature, of the organization of that struggle. We don't struggle blindly, unconscious of the struggle, and seen this way, we are legitimately the descendants of *true* men; we have even gone further than them, since we have understood the importance of the struggle with nature, that they had hurled back onto others and that they had ended up by forgetting; and we don't believe, like the good heirs of ancient slaves that we are, that consciousness is all nor that it is enough to struggle with oneself to arrive at contentment: we have accepted the struggle with nature and accepted to take it seriously. But we speak, we know that we speak and that speaking isn't an amusement, but a process, the human

process *par excellence* in order to lead the struggle against violence, not to speak in order to say nothing, as he who doesn't avoid contradiction speaks, nor to speak, in order to live as though the struggle with violence didn't exist: we are men of science, but of useful science, former slaves making use of the former masters' discourse of former masters, the parts of this discourse that seem to have *practical* application and meaning.

[41] So this is why we don't attach a large value to unique discourses and why, nonetheless, their multiplicity touches us: the projection of all these discourses onto the same plane, the idea of a discussion between them was illegitimate, but only from the point of view of unique discourse. It remains true that man, any man, can hold himself to his discourse, to any discourse about Being, provided he is ready to give his life if what his discourse qualifies as inessential and negligible takes, in the facts of his existence as a thinking animal, an unbearable importance. However, heirs of the discourse of the master and of the language of the slave, we were nonetheless right in projecting all unique discourses onto the same plane: but while this plane was for the masters that of the agreement of all *true* men starting from common principles, it shows itself at present as that of *praxis*, of the activity of the man who wants to act reasonably in nature, struggling with nature, with the means that nature puts at his disposition, more exactly, that he knows to draw from nature. And as it is success that decides in this struggle, it matters greatly to us to find the *true* discourse about Being, *true*, that's to say, now: *effective*. We compare the discourses that promise us a usable lesson. And so, we notice that these discourses contradict each other in their practical consequences.

In effect, what do we ask of discourse? Nothing other than to direct us in life, to allow us to take on the mantle of work's supervision from the masters. Admittedly, the formal idea of a valid discourse for all the individuals is precious to us in our struggle with nature. But we learned that the agreement between individuals doesn't move us forward as long as it depends solely on the goodwill of all those who participate in dialogue: it's necessary that things decide between opinions, and that reality must be the judge of our disputes. Step by step, we have thus developed a technique, not only of work, but moreover — and perhaps above all — of the examination of nature, an effective natural science and of which the responses don't depend on us and on our agreement, but on nature itself. Heirs of slaves, we don't struggle with our proper nature, and our discontent, but with exterior nature, struggling ourselves, everyone participating in this struggle; and we are the heirs of masters inasmuch as we struggle with the help of a reasonable discourse, our discourse, and that, if we work, we work for our contentment. But our discourse doesn't concern ourselves, and we,



who direct nature at our service, we don't know how to direct ourselves. Having overcome nature, we are the slaves of our victory, and subjugated nature subjugates us in its turn: we overcome, but we don't know what to make of our victory, the victorious struggle doesn't have a meaning for us, who are not more than combatants in a war without a leader, without a purpose, without a master plan, without a possible peace. We have parted with the antiquated tradition of work, and we are bound, more than the ancient masters, by the tradition, all the stronger because unconscious, not even by the tradition, but by the traditions, our traditions, different from the moment we want to make use of our victory: from the master, we only retained the desire to [42] appropriate the product of everyone's work, each all the product, and as we lost all tradition which can limit our pretensions, we can only fight from the instant where we cease working and questioning nature. The masters had forgotten the struggle with exterior nature: we have forgotten the one with our interior nature and have only prevailed over exterior violence to let ourselves be carried away by the interior, the passion, the traditional desire without concrete tradition. We can't choose between the masters' multiple discourses, we who live in, with, against the nature of the exterior world, and we can't live however without a discourse which gives a meaning to our work, to our victory, to our lives, if we don't want to abandon ourselves to the despair of violence, to the violence of despair. We need our own discourse.

## b) DISCOURSE AS LIBERTY IN THE CONDITION

### *The choice of the problem*

If we were working as historians here, if only we envisaged the series of fundamental concepts starting from which man constructs, consciously or not, the world of his life, we would have to ask ourselves what is the existence of those that we have called slaves. Because it is evident that man, everywhere and always, has lived in and by *praxis*, that he always possessed a technique, and a technique which changes itself (always, because it's starting from the moment where a technique *in evolution* appears that we can speak of the species *homo sapiens*, opposed to a bygone species of super-ape: it's only a definition), that a language always contributed to the development and to the perfecting of these techniques and of the organization. The *true* man's discourse is itself traced back to this root, and the principles, the values, the sacred of each community finds its origin in the concrete form of existence of each community. We would have to ask ourselves what is the form of *certainty* which dominates that life and in which that life expresses itself, with its myths, its gods, its

rites, its processes. We would have, finally, to ask ourselves what remains of all this tradition at the moment where the man who is born as the member of such a community loses, with what we would call his freedom, all his tradition, all his language. What we have only treated by allusion would therefore become more significant and would be given a light which would make visible the structure of the language of the slave and of discourse, in a measure that it would be necessary to determine, common to the former slave *and* to the former master, this mixture which can happen only because these two components have their sources in the same soil: a way of speaking that is, if expressing it so is permitted, *residual* in both cases, the nostalgia of a world of certainty in the one and in the other, a dream of a reestablishing of the unity in both.

We don't have to undertake these analyses in this moment. But it was essential for our aim to mention these subjects of analysis, [43] since the facts which are targeted therein explain how it happens that we still and always take interest in the *sacred* tradition, even if it became a pure form no content any longer fill since the slave learned that his own sacred did not protect him from slavery and that the master saw that his principles don't stand up to violence. These same facts explain why, on the other hand, we continue to wonder what science's discourse, destined nonetheless for the struggle against nature, signifies *for us*, why we don't manage to forget ourselves in this struggle nor surrender ourselves to it completely, but demand to know what we ourselves are: just as the master's discourse doesn't make the problem of the struggle with nature disappear, the language of the former slave doesn't succeed in erasing the question and the quest of contentment.

It is correct — and we cannot insist too much upon this — that man *can* turn away from himself in order to live entirely in the work and the language of the sciences; but it is equally a fact that he doesn't always confine himself to it and that he can choose and sometimes chooses a road which leads him back again towards the problem of his existence inasmuch as it is a problem (what is thrown before him) and task for him. We won't repeat what we have said above, when the question of choice was asked: the fact that we speak as we do shows what our position is, which is the path we chose. Here no more than there, there is no argument that can oblige others to make the same choice. But once the choice is made, it will be necessary to look at what it entails for man.

#### *Determination and liberty*

This acknowledged, nothing is yet resolved and the opposition between the attitudes that we have inherited, far from being defeated, is not even yet formulated: it is only evoked.

Let's try to make this more specific. It can be expressed thus: in science, man determines what is; this scientific language of determinations is the sole which, in his eyes, is valid, which attains truth, which contains it; it is therefore only in this language that he can express what he is; consequently, he only knows himself in truth as a determined being. Yet, a determined being can't ask questions, because questions are only understandable from a not completely determined being, from a being who is not made, but who makes itself, who forms itself and who transforms itself. In other words, it seems that man cannot validly speak of himself except in a scientific language, with the help of an ontological discourse founded on Being, and yet can't speak of himself, can't even speak at all (in the sense that *speaking* also signifies the question and consequently refers back to *praxis*), if such a total science of Being is possible: the question is only possible to the free being, to the free *non-being*, and can only receive an answer if everything is determined.

In this way the problem of discourse springs anew, the logical problem, but transposed, transfigured, changed in its substance. It is no longer a matter of the agreement of individual discourses, all drawn from [44] principles recognized by the people who debate, it isn't a matter of a choice between discourses bearing upon Being: what has become problematic, is discourse itself, the possibility of speaking of what is inasmuch as it is, more exactly, the possibility of reconciling man's *liberty* with the determinations of science, of reconciling the concept of man as a speaking, questioning, choosing, acting being with that of a world determined reasonably and which determines man.

We would commit no injustice towards ontology nor towards the logic of non-contradiction if we said that ontology didn't make this logic take any step. However, if ontology is content with non-contradictory discourse and only asks to elaborate a *system* which holds up when we judge it starting from its own principles, if it contributes nothing to the history of logic, contenting itself with the instrument it finds all ready, it's ontology which, on the other hand, pushes logic to a revolutionary reflection in obliging it to square off with the problem of the possibility of a discourse concerning the real and which be nonetheless, at the same time, human discourse. At present, the man who wants to orient himself in the world because he knows he lost the orientation, which, in the past, was given to him, who wants to know what the world is and what his place in this world is, this man sees that he can't answer questions that he can't but ask, before having resolved the problem of the possibility of a non-contradictory human discourse on the subject of what is inasmuch as it is *and* on his own subject inasmuch as he is free: an undetermined determiner.

Man, acting being, wants to determine what is, the world; in order to do this, he lets himself be determined by the world, which furnishes him the content of his science, and seizes himself as part of this world on which he couldn't act if he wasn't a part of it. There is no liberty without science, because there is no reasonable action without knowledge of the world: there is not science without liberty, because the condition science reveals only exists for a will which searches for this condition only because it denies it.

### *The transcendental problem*

Transcendental philosophy, in all the forms that it has taken over the course of history, proceeds from the recognition of this fundamental problem: the first result of science is that man is a conditioned being, its first foundation, that man is free. How can a being, of which we can and must speak of as a thing, be free? How can a free being, that's to say, without immediate union with Being, have access to Being? How can man, who feels himself to be free before having elaborated any science, who knows immediately that he can do or not do this or that, can speak of necessity and encompass himself in this necessity?

We know which response Kant gave to this question, having been the first to formulate it in all its purity, and how he saved infinite liberty in establishing the finite character of theoretical knowledge: it's a misinterpretation to want to *know* freedom scientifically; [45] it can be *thought*. It's not in contradiction with science, because science is unfinishable, not only unfinished, but essentially unfinishable, because it's only possible in the frame of human activity, at the interior of this frame which can't be seized in its totality because we only *seize* within its limits, because science must renounce taking hold of Being in its unity, more exactly, because man understands that for him it's not a matter, in science, of Being, but of what is, and still of what is in as much as it shows itself to man, in as much as it appears to what appears as concrete man to liberty, which, itself, is never the object of any discourse, but the source of all discourse Science is possible as science of phenomena, and man can speak of what is true, of what shows itself everywhere, always, to everyone, because he himself, in his liberty, fixes the frame which, being its own, and that of science, is more than necessary, which makes science's very necessity: to be given to man is the same thing as entering into the frame, and it is in the force field of this frame, in the structure of this field, that all that appears to man shows itself. The free man possesses a science of the necessary, but he is not an object of this science in as much as he is free. Everything is given to him, except what can't be given: himself, in as much as free, to whom everything is given. Free, he can know himself conditioned; in as much as he is conditioned, he doesn't even conceive

of liberty. What is thus given to liberty is determined for liberty, but liberty itself isn't of the domain of the determined, it is determining: it can't be *known*, but it can be *conceived*, without the discourse of science being marred by contradiction because if this; because liberty *is*, without being this or that, and it is certain of itself beyond all scientific certainty, which is always chance's domain and of which the contrary can be thought, whereas man, acting being, being who says *no* to that which is given to him, who understands what is starting from what is possible, reality as a particular expression of functions which *could* be satisfied by other values of observation, man, even though nothing keeps him from affirming the contrary, can't not be immediately certain, not of his reality, because reality only defines itself in the domain of the given, but of himself, of his action, of liberty.

The importance of this question as well as of this response couldn't be exaggerated. It can be defined in two ways, *either* we put the accent on the recognition of the contradiction which is now an inherent part of all discourse, since all discourse both does and does not concern phenomena, what is invariable at the core of all experience *and* what is essentially never the same, *or* we insist on the recognition of violence as an insoluble that can't be rejected as an "accidental", "inessential", "negligible" factor, but which presents itself as constitutive of all content and of all the content of human existence. Furthermore, it is evident that the two expressions point to the same final fact. Man's discourse is unfinishable, Being as such is elusive and, the total unity before his eyes, man never ceases, can [46] never cease to move himself in contradictions; all the activity of his intelligence, of his reason, is only the undertaking of orienting himself in the world of the given, an activity always sure of its success provided that it knows that it is itself that imposes and creates order, and which finds itself dependent on its material from the moment it wants to elaborate this order. But what else is this, if not the observation that every concrete content of his discourse of acting being, that every condition of his activity, everything which gives man a content comes to him from outside, doesn't depend on him, is imposed upon him by a violence, by a nature in which he can act, but that he can neither create nor radically transform? The principle of order itself is what it is, without man being able to do more than note that it is and that it is such. Form and content of his experience, or his science, of his proper structure (as science's subject-object) don't depend on him, and he can't imagine that it be otherwise; his discourse solely allows him to designate the empty possibility of a creating liberty, empty, un-grasped, un-graspable, designated solely by the (verbal) negation of what it finds to be its proper being.

*Life understood as contradiction. The discourse of contradiction.*

*Activity and Morality*

Bringing reality back to possibility, understanding what is and what man is by what (what he) could be and isn't, discovering necessity not in nature as it is in itself, but as it appears in and by the regard that man directs towards it, saving man's liberty in making of it an inaccessible for all positive discourse and in founding the unshakeable certitude of it on the immediate consciousness of action and the responsibility of *wanted* action: here is the solution to the problem. Man can speak of what is, *because* he can't speak of Being in its unity and its totality; man can know himself to be free, *because* he can't speak of his liberty, but can only experience it in the act. Liberty, acting only in the domain of the given, only experiencing itself against the given, isn't of the given's nature, and liberty, to whom appears every phenomenon, can never appear: it speaks, but it never speaks of itself positively, it designates itself *per viam negationis*.

The consequences of this solution are upsetting, as much for formal logic as for ontology. It is true that man's discourse must protect itself from contradiction: at present this means that this discourse bears essentially on the contradictory, that non-contradiction, such as it can be maintained by a deduction of discourse from universally admitted principles, is the least important feature of discourse, and empty form which fills itself thanks to the contradiction in phenomena, mastering it, but not negating it: if ever man no longer found himself before contradiction, every *problem* would have disappeared for him, at the same time as every possibility of action (which is nothing less than the struggle — the contradiction — against contradiction), at the same time that every possibility would have disappeared for man to become aware both of himself and of nature. Without contradiction, existence is, either animal, or [47] divine. And since this contradiction — as a last resort, is that between the man who acts and nature, given domain of his activity and of his action — can't be eliminated and can no longer be set aside as an inessential aspect, it follows that there is no sage: man can't find contentment in the sight of the eternal One, since the eternal One is never given to him, that the idea of a *given* eternal contains a formal contradiction. What is eternal for man, is the form of what is always becoming, and this form, if it allows the discovery of laws that are valid everywhere, always, for everyone, can't give man an eternal content, a transcendent object of beatific sight, since it only reveals itself as united to its content and that man can only become conscious of it in throwing himself into the experience, this composed of form and matter, that transcendental thought only makes sense as

reflection on the real science of man acting in the given. There is an eternal, but it doesn't enter into man's horizon, because it forms this *horizon*, that which limits his sight; and there is sight, but it is not of the eternal, since it is sight of man acting *at the interior* of the world, not concrete sight *of the* world.

We don't ask ourselves here what this result entails for man in what concerns his own life. Let it be enough to recall that this life is, necessarily after what precedes, an acting life, that the action aware of itself is the struggle against contradiction and against violence, that the aim of man can't be to escape from the finite and the given, but only to be in agreement with himself, with what is more himself than any given, with his reason, that he is, fundamentally, a *moral being*, a being that guides himself according to a discourse of which the content (the conditions of his action) doesn't depend on him, but of which the form (the rule that he prescribes to himself) is his own, in so much as it only allows as criterion the sole agreement of man with himself in reason, therefore excluding from his decisions nature and violence, even though he can never be certain to have excluded it from his acts. He can hope — no science can forbid him that, since science only concerns the given — he can hope for contentment in eternity; he can assure himself only of satisfaction, each time that he has resisted that which in him carries him towards an unreasonable act and which isn't in agreement with what makes humanity in him, that he resisted what there is of violence in him: he *must* act in such a way that the principle of each of his acts can found a system of rules of coherent behavior, that's to say, non-violent. It is without importance to know if, in fact, he is always capable of conforming to this imperative, since he always *had* to conform to it, as knowing if the act that conform to the rule will reach the envisaged aim doesn't matter, since this depends on the given and not on the decision. Before any reflection about the facts, it is clear that an aim which is not universal or *universalizable* by its principle constitutes a misconception for human liberty which only *knows* itself as liberty to the extent that it *wants* to subjugate the given, to free itself from the given, to install, in place of a kingdom of necessity and causes, one of ends and of reason conscious of itself.

Therefore, neither sage, nor saint, but searching, working, struggling, free in the domain of the necessary, finding himself in a world that he didn't [48] create, with a constitution of all his faculties that he didn't choose, negating the violence of the nature surrounding him and of the nature which forms his being to the entire extent that he can observe it and speak positively of it, here is what man is. Or, better maybe, here is man's life, if the term *being* must be reserved to that which can enter in the positive discourse of science: man makes himself, he isn't, and in the measure that he *is*, simple given of experience, he isn't a

man in the strongest sense of the word. It's true that all that which surrounds him (or that which fills him) is of the order of what is, of the order of *fact*: fact that he possesses such a character, fact that he possesses the discourse which is his own, fact that the world enters into the universal forms which are those of this discourse, fact again that from the universal forms man succeeds in descending towards laws increasingly particularized, fact that he can climb back up from his observations to laws that unite what is given to him as dispersed in time and in space. Nothing depends on him, save the will and the decision to be reasonable.

And again it's the facts that give man the possibility to make up his mind concretely, again it's the fact of his will that allows him to speak of his liberty, to think this liberty forever unknowable: it is only in opposing himself to the facts that he makes himself a non-fact, liberty, subjectivity, and he would be nothing without the facts. He is reasonable, he pursues, he must pursue, aims which are in agreement with the unique aim, the pure and total reasonable comprehensibility of all acts and of all events; but he can only imagine such a final state in negating all that he knows concretely, and even in the moments of the most profound confidence, he would only be able to speak of an asymptomatic approach, since his imagination itself cannot erect a positive image of the kingdom of ends for him.

Reasonable force which opposes the violence of the given, man can only realize himself in what is not him, in what shows itself and which happens to him, to him who is never a phenomenon if he is himself. There is no condition if not for the liberty that denies it; there is not object if not for the subject who, in determining it, gives it solely its being object: Being in its totality is only a direction indicator for man's research, and man has the right to declare himself free, because his *immediate knowledge* nowhere encounters *derived knowledge*. But he can only know he is free because there is a condition for his liberty, because there are *facts* for subjectivity: the ground of the coherence of all that is, this ground which replace the unity of Being by the coherence of this discourse bearing on what is and shows itself, this ground is not an object of discourse, can only be announced by means of negation, by opposition to the knowable as knowable and only *knows* itself because, in *fact*, it only *knows* what is not itself.

### *The infinite of liberty and the finite of life*

For discourse, these developments are far-reaching in scope. Non-contradiction isn't dispelled, far from it, since it remains discourse's form, but it is deposed, because it no longer regulates [49] discourse except in its form, without regulating what alone interests man, content. This content can't be deduced from any principles, it can only be found and by no



means does anything guarantee that what is found be free of all contradiction, for on the contrary the judgments that concern phenomena, the given, becoming, nature, will regularly contradict each other, from the moment we project them on the timeless and non-spatial plane of non-contradictory discourse concerned with Being; science's task is precisely *to impose* a unity which isn't given and which must be such that the contradictions of the experience are neither refuted, nor refused, but are conserved, despite the reduction that they undergo as much as thanks to them. Neither the sole principles allow man to orient himself in the world of phenomena, nor what is only the singularity of experience is of use to him: science proceeds to the union of that which is not united by itself, but which, in fact, lends itself to unifying action. Reflecting, man comes to the conclusion that what he knows in that way is not necessarily all that exists in the formal sense of the word; but he also makes sure that it is all that is knowable for him and is thus alone existing for his activity and his science. There is no *theoria* for him, no pure sight of the eternal in its positive being; there is only the opposition to contradiction, the activity which doesn't know itself, but experiences itself in the always renewed struggle, never achieved in the only life that man knows; all idea of another existence is good and well permitted, but no content, no image correspond to it. Because, in fact and by the fact, he only possesses an unfinishable discourse, man is not dealing with eternity, but is, far from being tricked by the temporal's appearance, temporal himself at the deepest point of his non-being.

Between me speaking and me I'm speaking of, there is therefore no contradiction: there is worse, there is a chasm; no bridge can lead from the *I* which knows to the me that *I* know (unless I renounce all knowledge and turn myself away from every concrete, myself included in my known being, towards what can't be demonstrated as impossible because it is situated outside the limits of the knowable). On the one hand, the ground of my being that I can't reach by any knowledge, and on the other hand, the requirement of a final reconciliation of all contradictions in an absolutely realized sense, in a true cosmos, a kingdom of ends about which I can't speak positively and to which I only access in a quasi-seizure by an empty act of faith and exclusive of all concrete knowledge: it is only in accepting this double limitation and this double transcendence of his concrete discourse that man can understand his discourse, its scope, its signification; he needs to renounce knowing anything other than phenomena if the very idea of knowledge not be necessarily struck by absurdity. Finite being and infinite liberty, man can approach only the finite in his scientific discourse, which he only exceeds by an empty thought and from which, in this life, he frees himself

only to fall into daydreaming or the emptiness of silence. There is science for man, because there is neither science of Being, nor science of liberty. [50]

c) DISCOURSE AS THE GRASP OF BEING BY ITSELF AND FOR IT-  
SELF

*The understanding of the finite as the exceeding of the finite*

Here is the price at which being and liberty, condition and discourse, are reconciled. And this price is high when we remember what we were expecting from discourse. Admittedly, the words liberty and Being don't lose all meaning, on the contrary, all meaning of all discourse orients itself on them, but as the imaginary focal points for discourse; they are indispensable inasmuch as they furnish orientation and meaning to discourse. But man must renounce knowledge of them in order to be able to direct himself towards them.

Is paying this price inevitable? Without a doubt, man can limit himself to the reflection about the possibility of concrete discourse that concerns what is, reflection about the *comprehensibility* of the fact that he has a discourse concerning reality at his disposal; therefore he settles for being put at peace with himself, of having understood how and in which limits he can understand. However, it might be that what he found in that way, all the while being true, was not all truth. We can't force man to exceed that position. But can it not be exceeded?

In fact, the man that wants to limit himself to this finite discourse about the finite, has he not already exceeded it without even noticing? His discourse limits itself regarding Being: does he not speak of Being in doing so? We can admit that the science of the man living in the world, of the acting individual, doesn't find access to the absolute; is it the only science, is he the only subject? The fact of knowledge can't be deduced and we can only understand by way of regression how science is possible; but is not the reason that understands the reality of science by its possibility present and real? The liberty which is experienced in its opposition to every given, is it not established within the given, just as much by the act of knowledge as by its opposition to the given in the midst of the given? Does Being not give itself to man's knowledge, does it not lend itself to his activity, if only by allowing him to question and to find endlessly, to decide and determine himself?

### *The coincidence of Being and reason*

A single step suffices so that the reason's limitation disappears: that we no longer look at reason from the individual's point of view, but the individual from reason's point of view, and liberty, reason and being will coincide. What is *fact* for the individual is only so because the individual takes himself and understands himself as *fact*. But all facts, including the fact named man, are facts of Reason and are grounded on Being, which is nothing other than Reason determining itself in its Freedom. The individual can only universalize, and this process is unending; Reason-Freedom-Being can determine itself and has determined itself, and transcendental reflection could only take place [51] because unconsciously, it admitted the certainty of a final meaning, of a realized liberty, of a Being living in itself. A single step to make, a single proof of courage to provide, and the coherent and truncated discourse will transform itself in absolutely coherent discourse, infinite and at the same time closed on itself: instead of wondering how man can possess a science of what is, it's necessary to wonder how reason could ever have doubted itself. The subject thinks the object and therefore thinks itself under this category, reflecting its being, in as much as it is thought, in the categories of the given object; there is therefore no surprise if the result is the separation of thinking reason and thought reason. Isn't it preferable to recognize that this very thought has its place in reason's domain, that subject-reason and object-reason are one and the same reason, that reason, thinking the object, does nothing other than think itself?

Reason seizes everything, it doesn't seize anything that is not itself: there is nothing that it can't know — with the condition, which is that man renounce limiting his idea of knowledge to the scientific knowledge of the individual acting in nature. It is possible, and it is consequently necessary that discourse become absolutely coherent discourse, that's to say, no longer the individual's discourse, — for by definition such a discourse is unending, because the finite doesn't exhaust the infinite — but the discourse of reason itself, of reason which is Being and liberty; it is absurd to speak of an *other* of reason, of a being (or of a non-being) which would introduce, be it the unreal of *simple appearance*, be it the constraint of a condition restraining liberty-reason in the manner of a superior or only exterior force.

### *Absolutely coherent discourse: Being, Truth, Liberty*

It is evident that, for the individual, this discourse which reveals Being in its liberty is itself an *other*, an *exterior*, a constraint; should it be otherwise, there would never have been either the problem of discourse nor that of violence: they only arise because the

individual itself isn't absolutely coherent discourse, but finite and particular, mixture of discourse and of violence.

However, it was necessary to accept that and, just as in the discourse of ontology, understand the individual starting from discourse, and no longer discourse starting from the individual. Yet, this very necessity isn't unconditional for the individual: he who is ready to sacrifice his life in order to not renounce his particular discourse cannot be brought by any means to search for absolute coherence. Man *chooses* the possibility of coherence, that's to say, he can just as well not choose it, and absolutely coherent discourse doesn't possess any worthy argument against this man, since every argument in favor of discourse presupposes that we have opted for it.

So if there isn't any discussion *de jure* between the upholder of absolutely coherent discourse and he who refuses this discourse, discussion has in fact not disappeared. The individual's discourse isn't naturally coherent and, ordinarily, *we* stop ourselves in a sort of semi-understanding, in a particular and contradictory thought. Therefore the man who holds this discourse also knows that it's in his best interest [52] to engage in discussion with himself, in order to eliminate the contradictions of his own discourse, discourse of an individual, because he can only ensure the discourse's coherence in proving (not by an abstract demonstration, but by the elaboration of discourse) that all reality, even the unreasonable or a-reasonable reality, is included. Absolutely coherent discourse must account for the discourse that claims to be finite, for the language that doesn't want to be discourse, for silence itself, if it wants to be certain that it is in fact what it pretends to be. The man of absolutely coherent discourse, in understanding how it happens that he himself is not the absolutely coherent discourse, understands discourse, because he understands himself in it.

It so happens that man, the being that negates and that freely wants his liberty, acts on the given in the midst of the given, denies what he finds before him, denies what he finds in himself, denies still every given process of transformation of the given. Having only been awareness of what is given to him from the exterior, he becomes self-aware in acting on that self through action on his conditions, and he finds (or he will find) contentment after having transformed all the given by imposing his form on it, that this given is that of exterior nature or that it is that of his life as man determined by the human community. This is how, understanding his situation in a completely humanized world as what liberty wanted since the beginning of its history, he is reason inasmuch as he understands, reasonable inasmuch as he lives, free and satisfied inasmuch as he feels. Without a doubt, the given of the empirical existence of the individual remains; but this given is no longer exterior to reason, it is

understood by reason as the result of its proper action on the given. Reason has realized itself and knows itself realized: it has understood itself as the source of the dissatisfaction that negates, it has satisfied negativity, this force being the form reason has taken in imposing itself on the real, and, knowing that, it knows itself content. Man knows why he was dissatisfied, he knows how he found contentment, he knows that he no longer has anything to deny: subject and object coincide in he who *is* reason and liberty and who *knows* himself to be free reason and reasonable liberty, thanks to his negating action, which ended up devouring all that was given to it positively.

Therefore, a *theoria* of Being becomes possible again: man reconciled with what is, can speak of Being. But, since he can only do so at the end of negativity's path, this view will not be a static view and Being will not be as though concentrated in a single point. It is negativity, not positivity, which holds the earth and the sky together, its contradiction that is the blood and the breath of Being. Being isn't the hidden ground of what is, is not the *other* of phenomena, a *background-being* of everything that man knows: it's organized totality, the One developing itself in its contradictions, seizing itself in its proper un-folding, the return of the One to itself across the alienation which is its way of being itself. Unmoving Being, unique discourse of ancient ontology's Being, is nothingness and death: here, Being lives as the sum of contradictions, more exactly as the reconciliation of contradictions through contradictions.

The contradiction which worried the first logic and which for the second logic formed its second to last word which no last word followed, [53] the contradiction therefore hasn't disappeared: it can't even disappear, since it is the motor of the movement in which liberty realizes itself, reason finds itself, Being un-folds itself. It itself is what results in the reconciliation, but not in discourse, as the ontology of antiquity wanted, and not, as transcendental reflection wanted, in finite consciousness: it makes itself conciliation, it understands itself as happening in man's reality. The struggle is decided on the field of struggle, of real contradiction, just as well that between man and nature as that of man with man and of the community with the community.

It is therefore only after the end of the struggle that man can become aware of what he did, total awareness after total victory. Yet the individual as such has never finished struggling and working (struggling with exterior nature): it is humanity that is able (or will be able) to declare itself definitively satisfied, truly content, but not the human person. Therefore, the human individual doesn't have a coherent discourse that is his own; opposing itself as violence to violence, it remains determined by violence; but *inasmuch as* universal man,

inasmuch as the bearer of the absolutely coherent discourse, he raises himself above the given of his existence and *sees*; what he sees then is not the eternal, the point, the One, the divine spectacle, it's violence understood as violence and became reason inasmuch as, in the struggle and by the struggle, it has actually liberated itself from the *exterior*, from the *other*, from the violence — of itself as a given.

There is therefore wisdom, but this wisdom is entirely discourse, as what it seizes isn't outside of time, but is time filled. There is wisdom, but there is no sage: the individual-man doesn't escape from violence, from what is exterior to him, he isn't wise in the measure where he acts and he lives, but he can attain wisdom in understanding both violence and his own negativity faced with violence, provided that the thought and the work of man, of men, of humanity, be advanced enough so that violence no longer concern anything other than the individuality as such and that everything that exists on the human and universal plane be *formed* by man's liberty-reason, provided therefore that man be certain through his reason (and not by the simple sentiment) that his existence as member of the human community is a reasonably free existence, that reasonable being is recognized as such by each and everyone, that's to say, that he is the subject of no one and that all limitation of his given individuality is understandable to his reason as a limitation imposed by reason itself, by this reason which alone is qualified to reasonably negate. So, Being is accessible to man, no, better than accessible, since the notion of access still assumes a separation: Being grasps itself as Being in man, in universalized man. All that is, taken separately in its given existence, is neither Being nor Thought; but being, as unity of contradictions, is one and reason and knows itself Thought, just as Thought, having extracted itself from the finite in taking possession of the finite in its totality, knows itself Being: there is no longer solely the logic of non-contradictory discourse, nor ontology, nor the question of the possibility of discourse concerning the real: there is absolute knowing, liberty knowing itself *logos* and Being, *onto-logical*.

## C. — PHILOSOPHY AND VIOLENCE

### I. VIOLENCE AND DISCOURSE

#### *The individual in possession of absolutely coherent discourse*

Everything is terminated, everything is per-fect [thoroughly done]: The opposition, in appearance insurmountable, between discourse and violence is understood and conquered. Yes, there is violence for the individual, there has been violence for the man who hadn't yet arrived to the point where reasonable liberty is realized, where man, universal, knows himself universally and definitively satisfied, reasonably content. But this violence is now recognized as the individual's essence as such; it isn't the essence of the man who is no longer under violence, and for whom violence is not what he neglects and wants to forget through fear, though laziness, though cowardice, but what he subjugated and transformed. The individual is caught up in the movement of becoming, and the content of his life happens to him from the exterior; but the absolutely coherent discourse of universal man (who universalized himself in and by his history) embraces the totality of contradictions, and all concrete violence possesses a sense for the reason which has unfolded itself. The fact no longer oppresses man, nor does it dissolve itself, any longer, in an empty and purely formal facticity: what shows itself is neither a sense which opposes itself to a non-sense, nor a non-sense which posits a signification solely in the confidence of faith, neither knowing nor known; with all that it contains, including man with his history, the world *is* sense, the unique sense, sense totally revealed by itself to itself.

In this world, the individual can always speak as individual, but this language will not be reasonable, not absolutely coherent, and even were it free of all formal contradiction, it would only be one of the sides in one of the given's real contradictions and would only be able to be understood as reasonable by its subordination to the universal that it contains without knowing it. All discourse possesses a meaning and thus participates in meaning; yet,

this particular meaning reveals itself in its truth only placed in absolute meaning and considered from the point of view of absolute knowing, of totally coherent discourse. But since this sense reveals itself in that way, it is just as true to say that no form of human discourse is absolutely absurd: history is the realization of absolute sense, and in that way history is terminated, because it has become understandable, that's to say, because all the particular discourses, even the least coherent, even the cry of [55] violence, have become so, or if we prefer (but this comes down to the same thing), it is understandable, because drawn to a close: it's drawn its journey to a close because it found what it was looking for, the coincidence of the science of Being with the certitude of liberty, and because it understood that it is itself that, from negation and particular discourse in particular discourse-negation, produced this reconciliation, because there is no longer a choice to be made, because what appears as a dilemma to finite understanding and to the individual's sentiment isn't but one and the same thing, it is, seen from absolute knowing, only different aspects of the same. Violence is no longer expelled from discourse, neither is it, any longer, simply reviled: it's understood in what it is positively, the spring without which there would not be movement; being at each particular point only negativity, it is, in its totality, Being's positivity which recognizes itself reasonably as liberty.

The individual is therefore understood, more exactly, man can understand his individuality. He *can*: he can just as well not understand himself, not want to understand himself, not be reasonable. He can continue to speak as if his particular discourse had a complete sense in itself, and nothing keeps him from leaving absolute knowing where it is, from sticking to his individuality: doesn't absolutely coherent discourse teach precisely that man is objectively free, that the world has been transformed into world of liberty and that the individual can live for the moment, since the world no longer has room for reasonable discontent, that's to say, that the world guarantees contentment to the individual who lives in the reasonable institutions produced by negativity in its history? Let him speak in this way, let him negate and protest even as an individual: his speaking and his protestation no longer have any importance for a world truly become human, since this world no longer furnishes him with the Archimedean point from which he could shake it. For absolute knowing, this individual will therefore be unhappy, not through the human world's fault, but because he himself wants to be unhappy, because he is obstinate in his unhappiness, because he does not want the reconciliation with the universal and with what is, because he is not himself free in and through thought. Let him amuse himself in his unhappiness! Absolutely coherent discourse understands him very well and doesn't let that worry it.



*The revolt against absolutely coherent discourse*

But are we ourselves satisfied by this response? And are we not tempted to protest by making a scene, comparable to the one provoked by Diogenes who, strolling before the eyes of the Eleatics, *showed* them what he could not *demonstrate* to them, namely that there is movement? Absolute knowing has no trouble as long as it is dealing with an individual who doesn't know the possibilities of absolutely coherent discourse, who ignores that contentment is at arm's reach, who continues to think as we did before history achieved itself and before absolute knowing realized itself; but it is a question of a man who knows absolute knowing and who refuses it, who doesn't demand, as the individual unconsciously [56] in the world of activity and action does, to be reconciled with reality in reality, but who requires the reconciliation of his individuality with reality and discourses, taken in their totality?

Here is what this man will say: "I suffer, I desire, I'm going to die. I fight and I struggle. Are my suffering and my struggle less immediately present to me because absolute knowing can (and because I myself can, if I want, with the help of this knowing) understand and reconcile the contradictions between me and the violence of struggle and of death, because it can surpass my despair and head towards absolute meaning, in which I disappear? Violence, is it less violence for me because it is violence understood, understood by a knowing which destroys me, me who suffers and who struggles and who works and who is going to die?" Maybe, even certainly, this discourse is incoherent from the point of view of absolute knowing; but what is serious, it's that this man accepts, prefers, the incoherence: it seems that, in fact, absolutely coherent discourse hasn't reconciled the individual with reality, but has only reconciled itself with Being. Admittedly, absolute knowing isn't misled, nor does it mislead its adepts: it has never hidden that it isn't reconciliation for the individual in his individuality. But for us, the question of man rebelling against absolute knowing isn't meaningless: man can choose between reason and non-reason and here it appears that this very choice is never a reasonable choice, but a free choice — which signifies, from the point of view of absolutely coherent discourse, and absurd choice.

*Philosophy as human possibility and absolute choice.*

*The language of violence*

It's time that we look back on what we have said up until here. Man, we had assumed — and this assumption now seems risky — is a thinking being, a speaking being, to such an extent that still there where he does not speak, he acts *reasonably*, which is to say, according to discourse, or at least according to a discourse. But is it true that discourse is everything for man? Is discourse even the essential for him? No doubt that for philosophy it is a matter of discourse, that even if it protests against discourse, it does so with the means of a discourse; but it now seems that man can push back discourse knowingly, and that, possessing discourse, he can renounce it. It is difficult to say to what purpose he pushes it back; because from the moment we attribute a meaning, and goal, a motive, to this act we return to reason and to discourse: maybe, even though this wouldn't mean anything for discourse, we will need to say, with this man, that he does it in order *to live*. Man lives, he feels himself living, and in this life he *can* do philosophy, search wisdom or knowledge; but it is only one of his possibilities, and the other possibilities are just as important and can, for man, be infinitely more important than this first which is the only one that is true for philosophy, but which philosophy would be unable to demonstrate to man the *truth* of, because the philosopher has made his choice before demonstrating anything and that the demonstration is of value only for he who chose demonstration.

[57] The observation that we were brought to make on multiple occasions, namely that man could confine himself to a discourse which showed itself insufficient to he whom, by an act of their liberty, had surpassed it, this observation is therefore of a range infinitely larger than we had believed. The opposition isn't solely between discourses — if that were so, absolutely coherent discourse would be absolutely right, and man, whatever he be, would always realize it, either totally or partially —; it is between discourse and violence itself. Man chooses, and his choice is free, which is to say, absurd and irreducible to any discourse: what is this saying, if not that man is not essentially reasonable, that it isn't by accident, by ignorance, by some historic circumstances that he opposes himself to discourse, but because he is, in the depths of his being, something other than discourse, a being which can turn itself towards discourse, that can understand itself in its discourse, but that isn't and will never be discourse? Reason is a possibility for man, possibility, this designates what man *can*, and man can certainly be reasonable, can at least want to be reasonable. But it is only a

possibility, it isn't a necessity, and it is the possibility of a being which possesses at least one other possibility. We know that this other possibility is violence.

Violence of the man who doesn't accept the discourse of this or that other man and who searches contentment in struggling for his own discourse that he wants unique, not only for him, but for the whole world and that he attempts to make actually unique by the real suppression of all those who hold other discourses. Violence of the man who affirms himself in his being such as he is for himself, who only wants to express himself as he *feels*, in a language which allows him to understand himself, to express himself, to seize himself, but a language which doesn't expose itself to contradiction and against which no contradiction is imaginable, because it doesn't know *common* principles: what is common to all or only to many, is no longer the being of this man for this same man. Violence, despite the fact it is violence sustained, but violence still, and violence recognized as the essential of life, this violence that doesn't come from man, but that happens to him from a nature, from a being that is superior or supreme: this is what counts for man, not discourse, and man can live it in freely subjugating it or in raising himself, violent, against it, experiencing himself as life in a struggle that he knows lost in advance, but which is all that gives him content, value, and dignity. Violence, finally, at the depths of the existence of the person who, working, searching, dominating himself, doesn't think himself able to dismiss the given as such and in its totality, and who, accepting his fate as a minor force before an immense force, without emphasis and without pathos, affirms himself in temporary, fleeting, vain successes and known as such.

### *Violence as problem for the philosopher*

Man's other possibility is violence. But — we couldn't insist on this too much — it is to us that this possibility appears in this form: how does it appear for he who opts for it? It will be necessary to say that it doesn't appear to him as possibility; because possibility, [58] it is only that for we who speak, at the interior of our discourse, which is not violent, but is all stretched towards understanding, towards that which is the furthest from violence. For the violent, the very idea of an absolute coherence, of a total truth totally revealed is meaningless: he is not there in order to see, he struggles or he endures, and, struggling or enduring, he expresses himself; but he doesn't want to seize in its total truth what he must dominate or endure, and it is not with an understanding and with a seizing that he occupies himself, nor with a possibility next to which there would be other possibilities: he is negativity in the midst of what he denies, he doesn't have coherent discourse and isn't seeking

coherence, isn't even seeking the poorest non-contradiction. He is not mute, admittedly, he can scream his despair (not that of the man who lost hope but of a being for which hope in itself is foolish), he can even develop a whole series of particular discourses, of techniques, of useful sciences, or even a coherent discourse; but this discourse will establish its proper limits, and neither it, nor this language, nor these partial and particular discourses, are for him about man and don't aim for what in him is essential for himself — they *must* not do so.

The essential: let's be careful. Once again, it is not him who speaks this way; for him, speaking of the essential would be exposing himself to the critiques of philosophers: if he made distinctions, if he recognized that certain things mattered, that others can and must be neglected, he would finish by renouncing violence, too occupied separating the essential from the incidental. It's our way of seeing that makes of the violent a man of thoughtful consciousness in himself, and which demands what he *wants deep down*. He himself doesn't want *deep down*, he wants nothing: there are things that he doesn't want. Nothing keeps us from interpreting his acts and his actions and noting that in fact, he accepts *this* and refuses *that*, that in his action an essential and an inessential can be distinguished; but we would prevent ourselves from understanding him if we transformed this difference into distinction made by him in his consciousness, if we made of his negating and (for him) purely negative action, an ontological discourse. For him, what appears to us as the essential of his existence can't be formulated and announces itself precisely in silence, not in an absolute silence, but in the silence of reason which is supposed to be coherent, not in a renouncement of all that, in everyday life, we call theories, but in the renouncement of all *theoria*, of every view and of every attempt at a unique view of the whole. Violence is a problem for philosophy, philosophy is not one for violence, which laughs at the philosopher and which sets him aside when it finds him bothersome and in him senses an obstacle on the path without tracks that is, for itself, its reality.

The paradoxical result is therefore that violence only has a meaning for philosophy, which is the refusal of violence. It isn't that philosophy refuses violence absolutely, far from it; we would easily uphold that a philosophy that understands itself as understanding and as path to contentment recommends the use of violence, because it is brought to observe that it must raise itself up against violence. But then this violence is only the necessary [59] means (technically necessary in a world which is still under the law of violence) in order to create a state of non-violence, and it isn't the original violence which is the content of human life; on the contrary, human life will only have a human content starting from the moment where this secondary violence, directed by reason and the idea of coherence against the original

violence, will have eliminated it from the world and from man's existence: non-violence is the both the starting point and the final goal of philosophy.

It is so much so that philosophers often forget that they are dealing with violence. It is true that philosophy doesn't forget it, or, in order to not speak in images, that all philosophical discourse shows that he who formulated it was pushed by the problem of violence. It doesn't matter to us here to know in which direction this push acted in the different *systems*, and it doesn't matter to us, either, that we have, or not, recognized violence (under other names, understand) as what is irreducible in man, that we have made of the realization of the non-violence in the existence of man the goal of discourse: these choices are only derivatives of the original choice, that between violence and discourse — original choice, because it is anterior to all discourse for discourse itself, if it wants to understand itself.

It doesn't always want to understand itself, and it can't always understand itself. And when we say that it doesn't and can't always want it, we don't think of the refusal of absolutely coherent discourse, but of the halt of discourse, either in an attitude of partial and particular satisfaction, that of the masters in a given community and which is for them everything (everything that counts), or in the attitude of the slave who, having saved his life, continues his work, or of the ex-slave who is content to no longer have any master over him, at least no human master, and, although feeling unsatisfied from time to time, counts on successes and satisfactions to come. The first, as long as he doesn't fear slavery for himself, doesn't ask questions. The others will not seize their essential discontent. Therefore, it becomes evident that they can't always understand themselves; because in order to understand themselves, they need to have a discourse sufficiently coherent for the idea of absolute contentment to be able develop there, and, as long as the individual struggles with the brute and brutal violence of a master and of a nature untransformed by work, for him there isn't the *problem* of violence, there is violence and he has only to defend himself, the same as for a man dying of hunger, there is not the problem of hunger, but the problem of nourishment, and since he will not busy himself thinking of hunger and of defeating it in this way (unless he had prepared himself for such a situation before finding himself before the practical difficulty) nor asking himself how the human world needs to be arranged so that there is no longer the practical problem of hunger: he will look for a crust of bread or a bowl of rice. Concretely, there will not be the search for contentment if man doesn't have the time (*otium*, *σχολή*) to think about contentment, in other words, if he is not master enough of nature, not liberated enough from natural and human violence, if only for the time to speak about it or to hear others speak about it.

[60] But this forgetfulness and this impossibility of asking the question show precisely that philosophy has its source in the fear of violence: this is what explains why philosophers turn away as often and as rapidly as possible from violence. This is also why those that look violence in the eye turn away as often as possible from philosophy, which seems an invention destined to hide what life actually is. But even this negation only arrives at its pure expression with the help of discourse; man can silence himself — let's say more prudently: nothing rules out man becoming silent, because we know nothing about him who, never having spoken, holds himself in silence —, without passing through discourse. But only those that can seize their own attitude with the help of a discourse speak of silence and of violence: to qualify the discourse as absurd, this isn't only a discourse, this presupposes moreover the existence of an elaborated discourse that its *No* can be thrown at, and all those among the silent about which we are informed have *abandoned* discourse, that is to say they stuck with it for a moment. Therefore their negation is measured by the discourse that they negate and it doesn't go any further than this: a partial discourse only produces a partial negation and a partial silence: pure violence only opposes itself to absolutely coherent discourse. Thought needs to be pretty advanced for someone to be able to declare that he reaches for his revolver the moment he hears the word "civilization".

But the more this seems clear, the more complicated the problem of philosophy becomes for philosophy itself. In effect, if philosophy is only one of man's possibilities, if this possibility can only be recognized as such when its contrary appears, the violence in all its purity that absolutely refuses the absolutely coherent discourse, philosophy must be understood by its other — problem which would not be difficult, given that all that is understood is understood with the help of its other, if that which understands in this understanding were not what must be understood therein, philosophy itself. It is enough to neglect this difficulty in order to construct *unique*, coherent discourses, as we said above, even more, discourses — and there have been many — which understand everything except the fact of their own existence. But how can these discourses be understood as human discourses? How can non-violence understand itself from violence, coherence from the incoherent?

After all, since men held such discourses and since these discourses neither fell from the sky nor sprung from the head of Jupiter, since, additionally, reality is the best proof of possibility, it isn't absurd to look for an answer to this question. That the simple non-contradiction or the analysis of the conditions of possibility of science and liberty won't furnish it for us, we've seen. It's true that absolutely coherent discourse affirms knowing, perhaps

even constituting the solution, as it's true that this discourse, if it's truly what it claims to be — and we have every interest in granting this to it in order to formulate or problem in the most radical way —, not only understands everything, but also understands [61] its own reality: it is Being that thinks itself, or Liberty that becomes aware of the results of its unconscious work and finds itself — the word is to be taken literally: makes this remark in reality — content and released from the domain of all discontent. The fact remains that I myself can be unsatisfied and that I can, if not refute, in any case refuse and push back discourse. There is philosophy for me, because I *want* there to be philosophy, because I *posit* the existence of a meaning, because I *stipulate* that it is possible to elaborate a discourse that understands everything and itself. But this decision is free, it is not a part of discourse, it is incomprehensible in itself, absurd, as we said, and in truth more that absurd since the absurd still defines itself by a relation to a meaningful which only exists in discourse: it is the absolute principle, the beginning which understands, but to which it is pointless to apply the idea of understanding.

In a word, meaning, all meaning, has its origin in what isn't meaning and which is meaningless — and this origin only shows itself to developed meaning, to coherent discourse. Absolutely coherent discourse is therefore right in the measure where the absolute refusal of discourse is only possible *knowingly*. All refusal is only particular if it doesn't lean on absolutely coherent discourse, and it is therefore only the refusal of a determined condition that absolute discourse can display as particular, if not in the eyes of the violent in question, at least in itself, that's to say, in and for discourse: such a refusal still admits a world, a meaningful reality in relation to which the object of refusal is judged and condemned, and the rebel, tricking himself about the nature of his revolt, believes in the depths of himself in the possibility of contentment, *if only*... Taking himself for violent, he is for discourse only a philosopher who misunderstands himself, but who will no longer misunderstand himself as soon as what revolted him has been gotten rid of or modified and as soon as he has received satisfaction. Only the destruction of discourse — either by silence, or by non-coherent language — corresponds to pure violence, which is only pure *knowingly*. And this is possible, and without this possibility philosophy wouldn't be understandable for itself: here is our difficulty, for those of us who do philosophy.

*Insufficiency and legitimacy of the existentialist response:*

*violence in discourse*

It seems there is a simple enough solution to this difficulty: it would be sufficient to say that man is such that there is always a discourse for him and that this discourse is always incomplete, that there is always an order for him, that he always lives in a world that is organized and in which he orients himself, but the organization and the orientation are never definitive, never finished, unfinishable by the nature of this human world which is a world where the absolute is nowhere to be found, but only the finite, and this is evident, because only the individual holds discourses, that discourse doesn't grasp the individual and can't grasp it, because the individual never succeeds in identifying with either his elaborated and congealed discourse or his world, that he is always ahead of himself, because every established point becomes the starting point for him. In sum, it would suffice to formalize all that [62] seemed to present us with such great difficulties: *facts* are transformed into *facticity*, *history* into *historicity*, the *negation* into *negativity*, *discourses* into *for-itself*, etc.: we would thus know what man is.

Certainly a seductive discourse, and certainly insufficient, just as the one of transcendental reflection on the com-possibility of science and liberty, and for the same reason: man is in it, *eternally* "historic", *eternally* "temporal", *eternally* "ahead of himself", *eternally* "in an unfinishable world": this discourse understands (embraces) everything — except itself, and if man was what this discourse says of him and was only that, this very discourse inso-much as eternal would be impossible for the *temporal* man.

However, as insufficient as it is, this discourse is nonetheless true, in that sense that what it affirms of man can and must be affirmed of him: its proof isn't only in the fact that we have only been able to speak through the use of concepts identical and analogue to its own, it's above all that without it, it is impossible to see negativity and violence as one of the two last possibilities of the man who speaks and as the foundation of all of man's attitudes. Insufficient as transcendental discourse, it is also as necessary as this discourse. And maybe it will allow us to draw closer to a response, if we try to make clear in what way it isn't sufficient.

Man, says this discourse, and it is right to affirm that, is free. Man can always say *no* to any condition, and what for him is only is for him because he wants it: even the most unbearable situations, the most terrible, slavery, torture, the threat of death, don't bind him with regard to the ground of his being, since he can always negate the situation. Everything



follows from this liberty, ground of a being which doesn't exist in the way of things, but who is *for himself*, who isn't in time as a fish in a river, but who is entirely temporal, forthcoming, coming forth, who is not in an eternal present, but who acts and who makes up his mind and who commits himself and who therefore makes history, being who *is* history and who is never finished, because finished he would be a thing and would not be free, — being for which there is no absolute meaning, but who gives a meaning to everything and to whom everything reveals itself, thanks to this meaning and in the framework of this meaning.

The question remains of knowing what this means *for me*. Because me, such as I exist, not in facticity, but in the situation that is my fact, not as temporality, but at this moment of time, not as historicity, but in this historic present, I am not freedom, I am maybe not even free. Being free, this means for me that I can do what I have the intention to do and not be subjected to what I don't want to be subjected to. Without a doubt, if one locks me up, if one threatens me with torture, I am free to not yield to the violence and to the threat; but practically, this signifies that I repel the violence of the other or of nature in abandoning myself to the absolute violence of death: I am free to say *no*, I am not always free *to do*; I am free to die, I am not always free to live; I am free to choose in a situation, I am rarely free to choose the situation.

[63] We will respond that this itself is a sufficient proof of the ontological liberty of man, and, admittedly, we will grant that willingly. But this proof doesn't lead further than any transcendental description: it expresses what is required so that what is can be transformed into coherent discourse. It speaks of negativity *per viam negationis* and teaches me neither what I can do nor what I must do with this negativity. It depicts me, not as the individual that I am, but as individuality from which my concrete existence, the only thing that interests me, becomes graspable for a transcendental discourse. It shows me that I am free; yet, I have always known that, even though I have not always formulated it; and it doesn't excessively interest me, because I don't wish to be free, but want to be content: to tell the truth, my freedom wouldn't interest me at all, if I wasn't discontent and if I didn't want another life, other conditions, another world. And so I don't find myself much advanced when I learn that everything depends on me insofar as I can withdraw from everything: as it happens, I have no desire to withdraw from everything, but rather to enjoy everything, and my problem isn't so much freedom as the fact that this freedom has so few occasions to act positively, that I find myself stopped and bothered and not free in my decisions, at least insofar as I want to put them into execution.

Of course, one will say to me, freedom is always freedom in situation — and, once again, I'll be in agreement, especially as it is exactly what I just said. But if I find *this* situation of mine unbearable, if I don't find myself at all consoled by the remark that man's liberty essentially, eternally, involves *the* situation? If I declare that, if it pleased me, I wouldn't feel the situation more than I feel clothing that suits me? One will retort that it would be for my part the abandonment of human liberty, and that I would be a thing among things if I didn't affirm myself in negating what is. That may be; but this would be a lot more distressing for my critique, whose discourse would therefore be shaken to its foundations, than for me, who would be content with my life, who would no longer demand anything and would be able to tranquilly enjoy my existence.

This does nothing to disarm transcendental discourse, and he who holds it will not be convinced by my objections; but if he wants to take into account what I say, he will necessarily surpass himself. He will be led to say that what I just suggested is perfectly understandable and that it is no surprise that I remain dissatisfied with his discourse; because the discourse is such that it only seizes the universal, the structures of man and the human reality, not the individual, that it's even a misinterpretation to ask discourse to seize, not individuality, but the individual, since discourse is the fact of the individual, but that the individual is not at all the fact of discourse, that, consequently, discourse is only about *existential* forms, but that the existence which is its own cannot be expressed, that it can only be lived and acted and can only be so by me. Just as I had granted to transcendental discourse concerning existence all that it required and asserted, this discourse now accepts all that I have put forward as an argument against it — and it is not more refuted or worried than [64] I was by it. With this difference however that, from transcendental, discourse becomes, or rather knows that it must become absolutely coherent discourse, that it must understand itself, since it saw that discourse can be pushed back *knowingly*, that it is therefore only one of man's possibilities.

Have we thus come back to the same point and do we find ourselves before the same difficulty that we hoped to get around in addressing ourselves to the transcendental discourse concerning man's existence? Not exactly, because violence, which had appeared to us as the other of absolutely coherent discourse, now shows itself in discourse itself. Man is an individual, he is *me* or *you* or *him*, and discourse, knowing itself abstraction, knows itself both as discourse of violence, not only discourse concerning violence, not only discourse occupied by violence, but discourse spoken and formed and elaborated by violence. Non-violence is the One, it is the universal, it is what encompasses and sublimates and eliminates the

individual and only preserves it in the form that discourse gives it, not as an individual, but as individuality. But this itself now appears to discourse, and the injustice committed towards *me* and *you* and *him* shows itself as such. Thus the man of discourse liberates himself from what we can call his guilty conscience: knowing that man can choose between discourse and violence, he also knows that he has chosen, that the choice was free (which signifies that at each moment he could have and that he still can opt for violence, otherwise said, for silence) and non-justifiable (because, otherwise, it would require a discourse above discourse in order to justify the choice) and that, in the end, for discourse itself, it's an absurd undertaking to want to impose discourse on a given individual.

*The non-necessity of philosophy  
and the good conscience of the philosopher*

One will ask if this is all, if that is the solution we have looked so long for. Because what does it provide that's new? That it's necessary to pass, if we want to speak *reasonably*, through absolutely coherent discourse? We said that before. That, in forming a coherent discourse (even if only partially), man chooses freely? We found more than one illustration of it. Or is it simply that the philosopher now devotes himself to philosophy *knowingly* and *without a guilty conscience*, that he wants to understand without looking for the impossible justification of the understanding that predates understanding?

In effect, it's *simply* that. However, this *good conscience* of the philosopher has consequences that are not simple. Because as long as philosophy is not aware it is grounded on freedom, that it believes it needs a justification, it inevitably consists of partial discourse, even there where it is supposed to be absolutely coherent discourse: it wants to understand its own possibility, not in the sense where we asked ourselves the same question, namely how is philosophy possible for *me* (or if we want, for the individual), but for itself. It interprets itself then as *science*, in the feeling (that it takes for a theoretical evidence) [65] that science can be demonstrated to everyone. And, admittedly, philosophy is science and science can be demonstrated to everyone as true — provided that everyone recognizes the value of the demonstration and sees in science the essential content of man's life. What's more, philosophy is therefore more scientific than any science, since all science accepts from tradition the delimitation of its domain (which doesn't prevent it from being able to change these borders that starting off, it had accepted as its own) and that philosophy forms, seen from that angle, the first science, the science of what is inasmuch as it is, either in itself, or for man acting in his concrete existence. But if it is content with this understanding of its being,

philosophy renounces understanding itself as a possibility for man and exposes itself to the protest of the concrete individual, and wanting to impose itself on the individual through discourse, it finishes by finding itself obliged to impose itself through violence, calling the one who utters this protest (and even more the one who practices his refusal) a madman or a criminal, that's to say a dangerous animal that needs to be removed or eliminated. Philosophy, for as scientific as it is, is not a science, and it is not, any longer, science: it *is* man speaking and who by speaking accounts for his realized possibilities in front of himself; it is the discourse of the man who, having chosen to establish his own coherence for himself, understands everything, by understanding all human understanding and himself.

## II. TRUTH AND VIOLENCE

### *Truth as core of the problems*

The result, expressed in the language of the philosophical tradition, is summed up in the thesis that truth is not the problem of philosophy and that it is not even a problem for philosophy: what, above, we called good conscience signifies precisely that every question concerning the possibility of philosophy and every “methodological” reflection with regards to discourse in its totality are both superfluous and, in a strict sense, ludicrous. The *other* of truth is not error, but violence, the refusal of truth, of meaning, of coherence, the choice of the negating act, of incoherent language, of “technical” language that is used without asking what for, silence, the expression of personal sentiment that claims to be personal.

This affirmation seems too paradoxical to be able to pass without explanation and clarification. However, the same tradition that it goes against has always defended it in declaring that discourse is the site of truth and that everything that isn't discourse contains neither true nor false. But the tradition added (often without being aware of it) that discourse therefore *also* contains what is false. In effect, [66] what is more natural? Have I not been wrong an incalculable number of times? Must I not always pay attention in order to avoid new errors?

However, what we neglect in thus relying on everyday experiences, is the fact that error itself only shows itself against the backdrop of truth, that it is error “in truth” — in other words, that I am wrong, but that discourse isn't. Me, this individual here, I can leave the path to coherent discourse, I can follow that of violence (which Descartes designated

under the name of will): I can become unfaithful to the choice of coherence that I made. And so, the tradition can forget — and forgets often — that the individual isn't the subject, but the object of discourse. In effect, nothing keeps the individual from *considering* himself the subject of discourse, from constructing a discourse of which he is actually the subject, of fastening himself to his attitude of finite being living in a finite world, conditioned being in a conditioned world (of interpreting himself as the *me*, not as the *I* of transcendental reflection), — in a word, of limiting himself to the science of what he encounters in the world of his action: we saw how for this individual truth doesn't only become a problem, but an insolvable problem, or, in order to speak in the terms of this discourse, how Being becomes the *ideal*, and the inaccessible ideal, of scientific knowledge. There are *those* discourses that contain the false: *the* discourse will need to understand them *in truth*.

The thought which lost the guilty conscience in front of "science", which understood that this science is one of man's attitudes and must itself be understood as such, does not (immediately) deal with what is, but with man's discourse, and it can be in good conscience precisely because it knows that man isn't necessarily a speaking being, that he is not naturally looking for the coherence of discourse, but that it is thought which has chosen, and chose freely, coherence and understanding. It therefore doesn't ask how discourse is possible, because it knows that discourse is real: it wonders what the reality of discourse is, more exactly, how man has realized discourse. It's about understanding how man, living being in a world, creating and destroying and recreating worlds, reaches, in his choice's liberty, the coherence of discourse in order to understand all discourses, all non-discourses, all activities, all of men's' acts. For *the* discourse is neither of the individual, nor for the individual as such: in choosing discourse, it is not me that I choose — I would do that in acting or in becoming silent or in expressing myself in a language that I don't want to be coherent —, I choose, on the contrary, the universal, and the individual that I am is therefore understood by discourse, not discourse by the individual. The subject of discourse is discourse itself, its object is again nothing other than itself, and the "problem of truth", if it's not taken in the sense of science, but of philosophy, is not that of the *adaequatio intellectus ad rem*, but that of the *adaequatio hominis ad intellectum*, to coherent discourse. Expression that seems empty or contradictory only as long as we stay in the memory of traditional discourse, discourse that claims to be about discourse's *other*, about [67] Being, and which forgets that this Being shows itself only in discourse, that discourse never gets out of itself. Paradoxical formula only as long as we forget that it's a matter of a discourse held by a man who could just as well not hold discourse or hold no discourse. Formula in contradiction with what we

have ourselves said about the impossibility of an individual discourse only if we neglect it's an individual that speaks, but that he doesn't speak as individual, because he doesn't *want* to speak as individual.

Philosophy is the speaking of a concrete individual, but of a concrete individual who, in a concrete situation, made up his mind to understand, not only the situation, but moreover his understanding of the situation. It's me who knows that I am not free in this world that I know to be a world of violence and suffering and hunger and persecution and violent death, but who *wants to think* this world and me in this world according to the meaning that it possesses and that therefore *wants to realize* the meaning of the world through discourse, reason, reasonable action. It is me who, here and now, wants to possess a discourse which doesn't only allow me to act, but what's more, allows me to understand what acting is and what is the meaning of all action; it's me who knows myself finite and who nonetheless wants to understand the finite starting from the infinite, myself starting from the universal.

Myself starting from the universal: therefore not what I *feel* myself to be, not in my violence (which doesn't want to understand, which is the refusal of understanding — and to which I can always return, if I want), but in my thinking. Speaking in this manner (which is that of the tradition) suffices in order to see that all the paradoxes that have just been uttered are not as paradoxical as they appear. In everyday language, they simply signify that, if I want to make use of a coherent language, this language will not be my own, isn't my own, couldn't be mine. It is everybody's language (*everybody* being defined — delimited — by my discourse), language that I didn't invent, but that I found. And maybe it is insufficient to speak of a language that I found, as though I, being independent of discourse, entering naked into a clothing store, offered myself the luxury of such a garment: if I want to speak of me, even if only to myself, it is only in language that I find myself, and I find myself there *objectively*, in a determined manner and in such a way that I can recognize myself, only inasmuch as this language already transmits a coherent discourse to me. Nothing prevents me, once I've grasped myself with the help of discourse, from striving to demolish and spurn discourse, either in order to modify it, or in order to refuse all discourse *knowingly*; it remains nonetheless that I, who thus frees myself from discourse and, if it comes to that, from all language, only make this decision in the environment, the *medium* of language and of discourse.

The language we speak everyday bears witness to this. We speak of our body. We could explain it by a theory that sees in the soul man's essential. In truth this explanation would confirm again our thesis instead of invalidating it, since it would show that man *seized*

himself in a theory-discourse. But this is even more striking when I say: *my* soul and *my* consciousness and *my* reason, and it doesn't need an analysis in order to show that the [68] owner that announces himself in these possessive pronouns is nothing other than what we have called violence, but a violence which has already surpassed itself and speaks — speaks from the point of view of the universal, of discourse in itself, which designates, as *my* reason, the particular discourse in the medium of universal discourse. There is no self there where there is only violence, and where there is a self, there is a self, split in two, the universal in me that speaks of the violence in me. And so it's all very well to say that someone learns to speak, but it would be contradictory to imagine that someone says: I learn to speak. The universal, once the choice was made in favor of coherent discourse, precedes the individual, not only in the transcendental sense, but in the most banal historic sense, and man doesn't start by being an individual for himself: initially that is what he is for the others and he can become that for himself, after having been a *member* of a community which is only for itself in its language and only seizes itself in its discourse. For the universal of discourse, the universal is first (and not only *a priori*), and man, who only exists as an individual, is man for himself only through his participation in this universal.

### *The identity of philosophy and of history*

If now we cast once more an eye behind us, it appears that the definition of man from which we took our start only underwent a single modification: instead of saying that man is a being gifted with reasonable discourse, we would say that he is a being that can, if he so chooses, be reasonable, that he is, in a word, liberty in view of reason (or for violence), that once he decided to speak in a coherent fashion, the universal is for him the beginning and end of his discourse and we would say that he will radically liberate himself from discourse *knowingly* only after having traveled through discourse in its totality.

A modification, to all appearances, of little weight. And yet, it signifies the unity of philosophy and the history of philosophy. There is not *systematic* philosophy separated from philosophy's awareness about its own history: moreover, philosophy only understands itself in its history and is only this awareness, even there where systematic discourse forgets or denies it. Because philosophy is nothing other than the discourse of concrete man, of the individual, meaning: of the individual who opted for the universal, but who opted such as he is and who the decision does not *immediately* elevate to the universal, but carries him there only in the slow work of the awareness about the discourse that he *is* (that he *is* a lot more

than that he possesses). The One is only in time and in discourse and in the multiple, the eternal only shows itself today and is nothing if it doesn't show itself.

It is equally true, and our modification of the definition of man doesn't change anything, that the multiple only appears seen from the One, that time only reveals itself looked at from the point of view of the eternal present, that discourse only understands itself opposed to total sight and to instantaneous seizure. But the One only shows itself to us in discourse, and there is not a discourse of the eternal, of the One, and of [69] *sight* which is not a discourse of the multiple and of the given, and discourse held by a man in a given situation, therefore by a being who, instead of speaking, can turn himself towards violence, can make himself violence or express himself in violence or be subjected to violence. He can also turn himself towards the One. But any attempt at seizing the One in itself is doomed to failure, because the One which transcends discourse *isn't* outside (coherent) discourse, unless man chooses silence — a choice that we others, who speak, can conceive, but which is only visible for us starting from discourse, a pure possibility, at the inferior or superior limit of discourse, before its beginning or after its completion, abstention or absolute revolt.

Seeing this possibility is of a decisive importance if philosophy is to understand itself, and this is necessary to admit before philosophy can proceed in good conscience. We have said this often enough. If we repeat it here, it is not only in order to avoid the appearance of a contradiction between an *absolutist* "thesis" and a *relativist* "thesis", it is above all in order to clearly show the historic character of philosophy.

In effect, if it is the concrete man who *makes* philosophy, it is evident that philosophy is itself discourse that understands itself as discourse of a being whose other possibility is violence, whose violence is not only the other possibility, but the possibility realized in the first place: discourse forms itself, man forms his discourse in violence against violence, in the finite against the finite, in time against time. And it is evident then why it is not enough to say that man is (eternally) in history: it is precisely a matter of knowing *which* man is in *which* history, and transcendental discourse, in formalizing *the* real in relation *to* discourse and to *the* possibility *of* discourse, asks the question in such a manner that it becomes unsolvable, — regardless that this real is understood as *the* nature or as *the* existence and this discourse as science or as interpretation of man by this very man. It is only in his history that man reveals himself to himself, it is only in his discourse that he becomes aware of this revelation.

We will therefore need to go further than we have been up to now and to affirm not only the identity between philosophy and the history of philosophy, but even more that of



history full stop and of philosophy. Understanding himself starting from violence and in view of coherence, the man who chose discourse only understands himself in his realizations, in what he has *done* in the world and what he himself has *made* of himself: in a word, there is not philosophy from the point of view of God, and if there is a wisdom it will be silence.

*First philosophy* is therefore not a theory of Being, but the development of *logos*, of discourse, for itself and by itself, in the reality of human existence, which understands itself in its realizations, in so far as it *wants* to understand itself. It's not ontology; it's logic, not of Being, but of concrete human discourse, of the discourses that form discourse in its unity.

Human history and philosophy are therefore only the two aspects that man offers to himself of himself. For us it is a matter of knowing how he grasps himself concretely in them.

[70]

#### *Pure attitudes and categories*

Man stands in the world (understood as that in which he lives) in a certain manner, he lives in a certain *attitude*. This attitude isn't necessarily conscious; ordinarily, it will not be so, but will *generate* itself, negating in action, in sentiment, in non-coherent language, not turning back on itself; but it is always possible for discourse to seize this attitude — for discourse, that is, for the man who turns himself back to what he does, feels, expresses, who wants to transform this into coherent discourse and who, in order to do this, gives an account of himself to himself of the extent to which his life is universal and valid for all men (for all those that are men for him). Once carried out this awareness, this discourse itself acts: the man who understood what he does is no longer the man who did it, and his awareness is at the same time the seizing of his attitude and his liberation from this. The particular universal of a concrete attitude doesn't support the light of discourse, and the revealed *essential* ceases, by this very fact, to be essential. It is only a matter then of realizing what is now *known* as the goal that we had unconsciously pursued, and this *only* indicates (to us) that another essential, still and newly ungraspable, is there: the goal attained, real life will begin, we will know what is truly essential for man, we will live it, whereas, for the moment we are *still* completely busy realizing what is essential merely as preparation of the coming of the *essential essential*.

But this awareness, we'll say it again, doesn't always, or necessarily, take place: there is not an attitude in which man (man, that's to say, a certain number of men, otherwise

history would have already come to a stop) can't be content and in which he cannot stay. For the concrete man, all the attitudes are equivalent, that's to say, absurd, except one, his, which is the province of no tribunal, but forms the tribunal to which all is answerable.

Yet we, we have opted for discourse, and what we want to understand, is our discourse as coherent discourse: *for us*, the attitude which can transform itself in coherent discourse, were it only partially so in our eyes, holds a special place and holds it legitimately. We don't therefore have to have a guilty conscience if we distinguish among the real attitudes those which have formed coherent discourses and which have in that way formed coherent discourse, we don't have to be ashamed of our interest in discourse, in philosophy, — on the condition of not forgetting that discourse is only one of man's possibilities and that we never lose sight of violence, factor, *moment*, essential to every attitude, attitude itself and which must be seized by discourse so that discourse understands itself as man's discourse. Nothing therefore keeps us from saying that all attitudes aren't of an equal importance *for discourse* and that is it legitimate and necessary to turn ourselves towards those that produce coherence discourses, which, if it is permissible to speak in this way, produce themselves in discourses.

For man, in his existence, in his life, acting, speaking, expressing himself, or even silencing himself, always presents an understandable [71] aspect to the discourse which searches to understand it, and nothing is absolutely foreign to man when it's about man: even he who I qualify as a madman is not totally closed off to me, if only because I understand him sufficiently in order to qualify him as a fool (and, in fact, I understand incomparably more, to such a point I can't imagine a man who is mad absolutely); even he who has renounced discourse, he who chooses incoherent discourse, the ecstatic who has left discourse, are not totally inaccessible to me: if for themselves they are not in the world of coherent discourse, for discourse they live here, and discourse is about them in a valid way, valid for me who has chosen discourse: even he who opted for violence can only kill me, he can't keep me from seeing him and understanding him in his violence and in his silence.

But, if every individual can be understood, if a discourse can always integrate him into the world of coherence, men's discourses are only understood in relation to certain attitudes that we will call *pure* or *irreducible*. These are the attitudes about which we just spoke, those that transform themselves in coherent discourses (the coherence is in each concrete case determined by the nature of the attitude), which understand themselves, because it is essential to them to want to understand themselves.

The pure attitude is therefore understood in relation to philosophical discourse, to our discourse. In no way does it distinguish itself from other attitudes inasmuch as attitude: its difference with these here resides in the unique feature (and which is only essential for philosophy) that it elaborates, in a discourse for itself, what in its world is for itself the essential: it is not satisfied with just expressing itself, it formulates itself positively or in opposition to a discourse that it *finds* in the world against which it raises itself up, and it says in a discourse what matters to its sentiment. In a word, it seizes the essential of its world as a concept. This concept, we will designate it under the name of *category*.

The *purity* and the *irreducibility* of attitudes therefore come to them from their discourse: pure is the attitude which develops a pure category, it is irreducible, if no means of discourse allow this discourse's adversary to refute it. The pure attitude can be surpassed, but it can only be by a free choice, by an act which doesn't justify itself in the parlance of the world it refuses (for which this act is, on the contrary, incomprehensible) and which will receive a meaning only starting from its own category, which will seize, in its relative legitimacy, in its *partial* coherence, that which it has surpassed.

It is the categories that determine the pure attitudes; it is the attitudes that produce the categories. There where it is a matter of philosophy, the categories take precedence; but they can only take precedence because we know that they are work of man, that they are not "constructions" that, as works of the living man and founded on his attitudes, they only detach themselves from this life in order to return to it and in order to act on it.

Attitudes for the man in life, categories for philosophy, together they allow understanding man, allow [72] man to understand himself. Starting from them, all the attitudes open themselves to understanding, not only those that we have qualified as pure (among which it is necessary to count those which refuse discourse, but which, by the *consciousness* of the refusal, define some of the categories for philosophy, even though they themselves refuse to positively designate a *world* and the *essential* of a world), but even the incoherent attitudes, those whose discourse is contradictory or defective, those of the language which doesn't want to be coherent, but only wants *to express* (such as poetic language) what the individual *feels*, even the attitudes of silence attained in absolute contentment or misfortune. All together, they reveal the meaning of history to he who has chosen meaning, because they understand themselves (they end up understanding themselves) as the work of history.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. what will be said, below, on *reprises* and on the problem of the *end of history*.

*Discourse in its totality and the logic of philosophy*

Here it is the common root from where, like two *moments* of the same human reality, philosophy and history spring: as this history is one, philosophy is one, and the two are so, because they only present two aspects of man such as they distinguish themselves and complement one another *for discourse*. It is the same man who acts and who speaks: he speaks a language that formed itself, that he has formed in his action, and he acts according to a language that precedes and directs his action. He is not necessarily a philosopher, but he is understandable for philosophy, and it is in understanding him that philosophy is understandable to itself, is understandable as a work of man in his history, having sprung from violence, facing violence, ready, if discourse so demands, to return to violence. Man's attitudes in his history form the categories of his discourse, because man speaks being violence in violence, opposing himself to violence in his discourse or building himself up as violence with the help of discourse.

The logic of philosophy is thus the succession of man's coherent discourses, succession of which the orientation is given (for us) by the idea of coherent discourse that understands itself. These discourses will be particular, since the attitudes which become aware of themselves in them are particular attitudes from the point of view of coherent discourse, attitudes which distinguish between an *essential* and an *inessential* and which, in consequence, don't accept in its positive character all that is given to them and that they recognize as given. They are violent, because they don't envisage violence in its purity and refer back to violence in order to create an understandable world, not succeeding in positively understanding the existing world and their own existence; they are in this way brought to reject that which puts their "values" in danger.

How, starting from the simplest attitudes (and which can, by this very fact, only be understood at the end of analysis), discourse develops, how what is only recognized implicitly (as [73] what must be eliminated or erased) is produced in light of the consciousness of the attitude, is precisely the work itself of the logic of philosophy to show, and it is during the course of this work that it forms itself into first philosophy, foundation of all ulterior philosophy whatever the name that this bears: ontology, moral, psychology, politics, philosophy of nature, of existence or of science: it is in the logic of philosophy that they all understand themselves in their meaning for the man who *makes* them.

### III. THE LOGIC OF PHILOSOPHY AND THE VIOLENCE OF HISTORY

#### *Philosophy and the language of the historic world*

Any anticipation of this work would be absurd: there are no results to anticipate there where work is its own goal. It is however permissible to make some remarks about the form of the research, not in order to give it a *program*, but rather in order to avoid that *natural* prejudices create the impression that such a *program* be, not only possible, but also *natural* itself and taken for granted.

Having such a prejudice would be to demand a deduction of categories. All that we have said clearly indicates that such a demand would be illegitimate: a deduction is only understandable starting from an *essential* recognized as such, and here the *essential*, more exactly, the *essentials* only need to show themselves in their purity, including the essential of the particular discourse which requires a deduction because for it, the deduction is the essential.

It would equally illegitimate to demand a justification of the order in which the attitudes and the categories present themselves: they form in their totality the last order of discourse and all the different ideas of order are functions of the categories, to the totality of which the concept of order could not therefore be applied, so to speak, *from outside*.

These qualms of scientific thought which has formed and deformed itself attending to a reality that it considers exterior, meaningless qualms strictly speaking when it's a matter of discourse itself which can constitute, for itself, its own exterior, but which can't be exterior to itself, are resolved as easily as they are formed.

This is not the case with the objections raised by the thought that turns towards man himself. This thought seems to be right, if it is suspicious of the identification of history and of philosophy. In effect, it will say, this thesis liberates us from numerous difficulties; but doesn't it lead to others, of perhaps a larger gravity? Every pure attitude formulates itself in a developed category, but every attitude is encountered at every moment of history, therefore after being un-folded, [74] after being surpassed. For discourse, the pure attitudes have an advantage over the others: how is it then that discourse is not completed and completely coherent from the first moment that man turns towards himself and his attitude? How can there be impure attitudes? We understand well that man, finite being facing violence and violence himself, renounces discourse, at least the understanding of discourse; but isn't it

paradoxical that even the man who is occupied with himself, with his attitude and with his discourse doesn't totally understand himself? And if this must be granted as a fact, how does it come about that he ever understand himself? Let's not ask, in the manner of *scientists*, for a guarantee that assures us that the system of categories is complete; but is it not necessary to ask how discourse can form itself in history starting from a first attitude that nothing obliges man to exit? Are there not particular discourses and particular attitudes — or appearing particulars from the point of view that we chose here — which endure and which allow men to orient themselves in their existence? If certain attitudes are fundamental attitudes and furnish the categories of discourse, how can man have a discourse before having at his disposition all the categories in the historic discourse that he finds, that he forms? And if he finds all of them, isn't discourse then always the same, isn't it as eternal (as relatively eternal) as man, that's to say, present to him at every moment?

Without a doubt, logic will need to furnish some responses to these questions or show the solution to them (which might be the dissolution of the questions): without which it would not be complete, discourse not being understood in its totality. Nonetheless, it is possible from here on out to indicate the meaning of this response and of this solution.

At any given moment, man can have any attitude; but he will not have it at any given moment *for himself*, for his own discourse. He will be, for example, satisfied with his world; but he will not know himself satisfied, precisely because he is so and because his world won't appear to him: he will live in this world and his discourse will only concern what is encountered at the interior of it. Or he will be, on the contrary, unhappy and will find his world an absurd chaos; but that this absurdity have a meaning for him, that it be, very positively, the meaning of his world and that in this absurdity he possess a world, he will be almost always incapable of formulating it. There is no need to multiply the examples: the fact is that man's attitude doesn't always adequately express itself in man's discourse, if the word *adequate* is taken in order to designate the discourse elaborated in a coherent fashion around what is *essential* for man in this attitude<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> It is a matter of formulating what occupies the individual in his existence such as it is for him, and it is only for himself in his discourse. We therefore exclude non-coherent expression, that which we call *poetic* and which doesn't claim to be *man's* expression, but *my expression*, and we leave aside the human possibility, which, radically other, doesn't only renounce discourse, but also language and all expression and which is violence or silence. In which sense we can exclude them, in which sense these possibilities are and must always be present to philosophy if it wants to understand itself, we've already stated: it matters to be reminded of it here, because only this reminder of what we exclude of human possibilities here makes visible that the concrete individual's discourse, in a concrete situation (not that of *the* individual in *the* situation), is the *undertaking* of that individual in which he *universalizes himself*, forms himself and formulates himself as man and in seizing his situation, tries to dominate it.

[75] Yet, this domination of the situation in discourse (and not by discourse, since it is necessary to hold back from the idea of an instrument employed by a reason different from its instrument), it is only at the limit that it leads to the category, that's to say, to the concept which allows building a coherent world and which gives a meaning to all that is and to the life of the same man who in this discourse seizes himself and constructs himself at the same time as his world. Man doesn't start by being an individual for himself; he doesn't start out in his existence as if everything had always been waiting for him in order to be and in order to receive a name: the discourse of a world, of the world that the individual is born into, is both in its dignity and historically prior to him, and man is, for himself, this or that being determined by this discourse, before being himself, even before wanting to be himself — and numerous are the discourse in which man never asks the question about his individuality. It is only at the moment where the world of this discourse no longer satisfies man that this world is *seized* in the discourse of this very world as a violent world, as a world which doesn't necessarily satisfy man, in which man can be discontent, — seized in a discourse that wants itself *novel* and which, in allowing the individual to seize himself in his world, separates him also from this world of which it makes man's *other*: violence, and violence felt violently as such, is at the origin of all discourse which claims to be coherent. It is violence which, age after age, provides itself with what it can negate in discourse and which, grasping itself as freedom in its discourse and, at the same time, against its discourse, produces philosophy.

But each discourse which is born in that way in history understands itself quite naturally as eternal discourse: violence, felt violently, must be ruled out *once and for all*, so that man enters into presence, into contentment, so that history, reign of violence and of violent revolt of sentiment comes to an end. Knowing what man is, so it seems, suffices, to be able to apply oneself to realizing the human world, the world in which man no longer has to rebel against exterior conditions and interior conditions, where discourse is made superfluous by itself. And in effect, the eternity of presence isn't an invented idea: it is at the bottom of all human discourse and is at its final outcome. However, it only exists in the time of history, and the unconditional (presence in which man will no longer feels conditioned) only shows itself to the person who knows himself and feels himself conditioned. It is in history that man elaborates his eternal discourses, in the condition that he speaks of what will be unconditioned existence: just as all historic discourse about man speaks of man eternal, of man such as he is in [76] himself, similarly all discourse concerning man's eternal being is essentially a historic discourse.

So each discourse claims to seize man as a whole. But starting from historic discourse that historic man, author of this discourse, *found* at his entrance into the world, of his discourse in which he opposes himself to this world and this discourse, man stays stuck in the concrete contents of this discourse and receives everything from it, including the concrete form of his discontent and of his revolt. He will protest against the conditions that he encounters at the interior of this world, he doesn't yet protest against this world and its discourse, and it is only after a long and hard labor that he will seize world and discourse and leave them in that way at the moment where he seizes them, or being contented with this world and with this discourse, having subjugated everything to what he came to understand as the *essential* of discourse and of the world, having also, as a result, offered to another individual the possibility of rebelling against this world coherent in itself and which *can* therefore be felt as violence and as exterior condition by he who is ready to say *no* to this world, to this discourse, to this contentment. Meanwhile, during all the time of this labor, up until the *essential* of this world succeeded in expressing itself in a coherent discourse, in what we traditionally call a *system* (which is not necessarily a philosophical system in the occidental sense of the word and will even ordinarily not be so), historic discourse endures, incoherent in the eyes of the critic, sufficiently coherent however to allow the men of this world to orient themselves in the situations which are the situations of this discourse and of this world, of this tradition. In that way discourse, such and such discourse not only endures up until this moment, but longtime after, or even indefinitely.

For if it is true that man can't overestimate philosophy (for the reason that all estimation which claims to be reasonable presupposes philosophy, which precedes any estimation), it is also true philosophers are only too carried away at overestimating the real and historical influence of philosophy. The fact is — and nothing refutes the facts — that men, as a general rule, don't care about coherence nor desire being philosophers and possessing a discourse that hangs together. All human discourse can be understood by the philosopher, and the incoherence that he encounters in the majority of discourses actually held doesn't present the character of the incomprehensible, but only creates a difficulty of comprehension. This understanding is the philosopher's own task and comes down to him alone, and if he claims a particular function in this sense, he only states the simplest of truths. But he is mistaken if he believes that this understanding, which is, if not what is the most important for him, at least one of his most important tasks, be important for the man in the concrete life of his world and of his discourse; because this man possesses another means to get



himself out of the incoherence of his discourse, or rather two means: incoherent language and the silence of violence (towards others or towards himself).

Discourse, in so far as it claims to be coherent, aims at the presence, the eternity, the essence of man and of the world. And this aiming at presence [77] is real only in history's time; all aiming at immutable essence has its root in the evolving of determined man in a determined world, of a man who determines himself in this discourse and in this world against the one and the other.

*Logic of philosophy as the understanding of man*

It is this problem which, with more precision than was possible for us before, defines the scope of the work of research to which we can give the name of a *logic of philosophy*: not logic in the sense of non-contradiction — because it deals with solutions that between them are contradictory and self-contradicting —, not a logic of science — because science, for logic, is only one of man's possibilities, and perhaps not the first possibility for logic, supposing that there can be a first possibility — but the *logos of eternal discourse in its historicity*, understood by itself and understood as the human possibility which has chosen itself, but which also knows that it has chosen itself and that it would not exist were it capable of being necessary. It is logos which reflects itself in the fact, and the fact which reflects itself in logos, the one and the other humans, knowing themselves human, liberty in the condition and condition for the liberty, eternity in time and time seized in presence, violence for discourse without which it would not know itself as violence and discourse of violence which wants to itself be discourse. To repeat, philosophy and history are one and the same, not one and the same *thing*, but the same man in the unity of his oppositions, which are unity, because *his*.

Unity for philosophy — which signifies that this unity doesn't exist for man in his concrete existence, for man in such and such situation at the interior of such and such history. On the contrary, this man judges that the discourse that aims at coherence and the man who wants to understand what is and what he is, flee the act that alone attains satisfaction, and don't take seriously the form of life that would give them contentment. For the person who lives in his history and which confines himself to his history, there is at the most only language, indispensable tool, if such is his world, of violence which liberates, which destroys what bothers and enchains and oppresses man: the man of discourse, he who wants to seize this world such as it is, is, in the eyes of this man who lives in history, a coward and madman,

a traitor or a destroyer, to scorn or to eliminate, but not a man in the full meaning of the word. It is true that this language doesn't resist philosophy and that it can — and from the point of view of philosophy, must — be transformed into discourse, that the *essential* of this world, unknown to the man who confines himself to this world, can and must be revealed. But philosophy would be mistaken about itself and would imitate the non-philosopher if it ruled out this man as non-man and enemy which it is only a matter of combating; it will need to understand *in his non-philosophy* (just as it must understand — a task infinitely easier and which has long been classic under the title of interpretation — the language of the person who doesn't want coherence but who wants to *express himself* such as he feels). Why it can take on this problem, we have said as much: man is one for philosophy — in other words every expression of man can be understood in the categories of discourse, even if this [78] expression would claim to be *essentially* outside of discourse, outside of coherence, even outside language. But philosophy must, at the risk of falsifying the nature of its object, never forget that the person it understands in this way doesn't understand himself in this manner.

What comes back to saying that in historical action man doesn't understand himself as a philosopher, but that philosophy understands itself as historical, as born of violence, of need, of the condition, that it is for itself the conscious liberation of man from the condition. But it also knows that in philosophy man has only ever freed himself from the conditions that he had already felt as chains and as obstacles: for philosophy, it is legitimate and natural that man in action ignores the implicit discourse which guides him and that he, the man of action, isn't conscious of having formed. It is also natural that the person who reflects on action and who sets out to formulate what was essential for the man of action in his action doesn't see that he is speaking of a man who doesn't care about consciousness, that he doesn't see, either — and this is far more serious — that with his reflection he prepares a novel action himself, that his discourse reveals as condition what, beforehand, had not been felt as such, that it transforms into chain what, up until here, hadn't even been remarked and had been *natural*. The man of action is, to employ a terminology in fashion and extremely dangerous, materialist, the philosopher, idealist; but this idealism and this realism are not one without the other, and just as idealism transforms itself dialectically in materialism, likewise materialism doesn't differ from dialectic idealism for the thought of philosophy (which is thinking, period), if not by the attitude of individuals who opt for one or for the other: yet, this attitude can always be translated into discourse (and is), and this discourse can always be translated into attitude (even though this is only ever rarely done by the same individual).

It is why philosophy is possible, not only as a choice for man — the question is no longer asked here —, but technically possible. Man is a speaking being: not necessarily speaking, still less necessarily convinced that speech, and in particular coherent discourse, is the essential of his existence, but in fact speaking. It is probable that some men fall radically and totally silent: they then leave philosophy at the same time that they leave history, and their silence only shows itself as the last possibility for language and for the discourse that grasps language; what's more, this very possibility would not show itself, if silence was not —in fact and historically — extolled in discourses which want to demonstrate the superiority of it as the sole path to contentment, to presence, to absolute coherence. It is speaking man who we must deal with and only with him. Whether man asserts the subordinated character of language and of discourse, whether he declares action alone or “technical” language or that, non-coherent, of feeling, valid, doesn't matter for philosophy: what he says is understandable and wants to be so and is understood and must be so.

[79]

*Relationship between the categories and the attitudes*

We will say nothing more in asserting that every attitude can be transformed into discourse, that every fundamental attitude can produce (*can* produce, but necessarily produces only for philosophy) a category, that what acts as the essential in that attitude can seize itself or, if the attitude refuses that, can be seized by another attitude as the organizing concept of a system, of a coherent discourse — precisely as what we call here a category. It is for philosophy to say what these fundamental categories are, these possibilities for organizing discourse, existence and world around an essential, possibilities realized in man's history, and it is again for philosophy to insist on the fact that these categories precede, for it, the attitudes which have precedence *in history*: it organizes the categories in view of the absolute coherence which understands itself as man's possibility, and it is why, warned about the possibility of revolt against all coherent discourse, philosophy equally knows that its construction only applies to itself.

Philosophy, in reducing the attitudes to the categories and discovering the attitudes with the help of the categories, can't forget, short of betraying itself or falling back into a way of thinking that it has surpassed, that the man living in his historic world isn't preoccupied with the logical purity of his attitude and of his discourse: this purity only gains importance starting from the moment where a man wants to understand and understand himself totally. It is only then that the constituent categories of discourse and the constituent attitudes

of the history of discourse emerge, and it is only then that the discourse of understanding becomes the *essential*, but becomes so for itself, which is conscious of this free limitation, conscious of being one of man's possibilities.

And so, the logic of philosophy will not forget that what it must give an account of is historic discourse in its totality, not only its own: since it has understood what its essential is and since it has chosen this essential, it will not judge historic discourse and the history of discourse and discourses according to the criterion that it itself applies to itself. Having understood itself, it will be able to understand the discourses of those who do not understand themselves, or only understand themselves imperfectly, or don't want to understand themselves, and it will understand them in their intentions, not in its own intention. It will not be able to not start from the pure categories and attitudes and it will however know that these pure attitude-categories only have value in so far as they will allow understanding discourse and the discourses which are held and which have been held in the historic world and that it itself is the fruit and the final outcome of (but it is only so for itself).

Man is one, discourse is one, history is one: this is why understanding is possible. But this unity is not linear. It is true that, for the logic of philosophy, the categories form a succession, that, for it, the attitudes presuppose [80] one and another, that a new attitude arises only after the precedent was formulated in a coherent discourse, produced its system and thus produced its category: only from this moment on can it be denied *knowingly*, radically, and then does the quest for contentment replace the pursuit of satisfactions which, implicitly and unconsciously, had occupied the man who hadn't yet uncovered (un-covered) the essential of his world and let himself be guided and dominated by this world. But if reality is only understandable in the developed idea of understanding, it doesn't follow the schema of the succession of categories, an absolutely legitimate schema for the logic of philosophy, source of all reflection about legitimacy, but legitimate and necessary only for this logic.

This difference of aspects of the same that are history and philosophy explains how all human discourse contains all the categories for philosophy, and that at each moment of the history men (and not: man) can take any attitude; it explains at the same time why it would be mistaken to affirm that every category and every attitude are always understood as such by they who live according to one and speak according to the other. What we called the *essential* of an attitude reveals itself as such, in most cases, only to the observer, that's to say, to the man who doesn't enter this attitude; what would form the category of this attitude,

*if* it were so formulated in a coherent discourse, acts in the concrete discourse of the man of that attitude, but only shows itself to the logician who is looking at this discourse as that of another and for whom this discourse is in effect so. Objectively, that is to say, for analysis, which bases itself on the unity of discourse (which it knows to have *chosen*), all the categories are always present in all discourse, albeit in the modes of exclusion and of negation, and all the attitudes are open to every man, even if only in the mode of refusal of these possibilities; but this fact itself appears only to the logic of philosophy, after the concepts of attitude and category have been elaborated.

History is therefore at once circular and linear. It is circular in the sense that the analysis always finds the same attitudes and the same categories over and over again — if there was something new under the sun, absolutely new, how would man understand his past? —: as we say, man doesn't change. And history is linear and, as we equally say, in progress, because the categories don't exist at every moment for the man of this moment and because, consequently, the attitudes themselves aren't understood by him as irreducible, but are conceived of, and for those themselves whose existence is guided by the attitudes, as "personal" decisions at the interior of a "stable" world, without any universal scope, opposed even to all possible universalization, as *extraordinary*, in the strict sense of this term, in a word, as violence, as revolt which doesn't consider itself and doesn't want to consider itself but wants *to express itself* in a language which holds to not being coherent (coherence being in this case considered like a conformist lie) or in an action that wants to destroy the existing world and discourse, [81] in an act or in hope-less cry, without hope, which only longs to protest and wants neither to teach nor realize.

### *Categories and reprises*

It is this progress, this work of felt discontent and of violence, which reveals to man what he is: his "eternal" being is nothing other than his action in time, become understandable and actually understood in time filled with action. Man's possibilities only show themselves to man once he has realized them, and discourse can reduce only the attitudes that man has taken up to unity: what's more, he will be able to reduce them to unity only after these attitudes have changed the world in which they first appeared as mute revolt, after they have expressed themselves (in an incoherent language and pitched against the ancient coherence), after a revolted individual has "made himself understood" by others, by the others, and that he imposed on historic reality, not the form of life that he projects (because he projects nothing positively, — he protests against what is and in the language of the world

he wants to quit), but his search of a novel reality: if his protestation succumbs in “political” reality, it doesn’t leave a trace in the history of “spirit”: man understands himself because he acted and to the extent that he takes on the actions of the past as his own. The past is therefore heavy with the future; but it only is for that future which is our present, while, for itself, what appears to our new present as past is in no way past, not even by anticipation (in the future perfect’s mode, of the “I will have been”), but is what is now and must be affronted and sustained and combatted now, in this now which, for analysis, has become past.

It will not be useless to note that the very interpretation, the attitude of pure intelligence which forgets this, will reveal itself for this very reason as a particular attitude; it will be surpassed precisely because it rejects as inessential all that isn’t interpretation, therefore because he who could be called the intellectualist historian refuses to recognize violence in what was and was only real in its now, thus forbidding himself from understanding his own existence in the now of his world as well as the reality of past worlds in the unity of man’s world: the purity of the attitude and the category appears to him as a supreme value, not for philosophy, but for man.

Yet, as we have said, this purity doesn’t play the slightest role for man in his everyday existence. Man himself speaks *as he sees fit*, and he doesn’t put the *fit* of this *seeing* into question: in observing him, in analyzing the incoherencies of his language *we* discover what pushed him; it is not *him* who discovers it. He employs all the means that the discourse of his historic community puts at his disposition in order to defend what he regards as his interests. To analysis, these interests reveal themselves as those of the community in which this man is born (and which have sustained in the individual case a sorting carried out by personal *sentiment*): the man in question expresses them in an incoherent language, and if this language is reducible to coherence by interpretation with the help of [82] the attitude-categories which this developed, man himself jumps from attitude to attitude, from category to category, to all the category-attitudes of coherence as to all those of speaking violence. His action (and his discourse, to the extent that it forms an integral part of his action) reveals to the observer what he pursues *deep down*, what the center from which he orients himself in his world is. But to his own eyes, this center doesn’t appear as such, it doesn’t even appear at all, no more than man sees the spot where he puts his feet. He always speaks of it (for the interpreter), he never formulates it: as soon as he would have formulated it, this principle would have been able to be called into question and would already be eccentric in a world whose center would have changed by this discovery’s very fact, just as the ground that I see is not the one that supports me. Ordinarily, that’s to say, as long as it’s not a matter of the

systematic thinker who formulates (and in doing so surpasses) the attitude-category, this center organizes life and the world without being recognized, and the discourse which approaches it, which tries to approach it, is not the discourse of this center, but that of another category, in particular that of a surpassed category, a discourse completely organized *because*, in fact, surpassed and which is therefore at the disposition of the first person to come along, of the normal and ordinary man.

At the beginning of a new era — at the moment where a new interest, wanting to destroy a world grown old, organizes a new world —, it is therefore the ancient category which grasps the new attitude, and speaks of the new category, and in speaking of it, also hides it and falsifies it. Man *reprises* (for us who, coming later, know the category that he is just in the middle of developing) a discourse that, in his action, he has already surpassed, and we could say that all the work of an *applied logic of philosophy* consists in the understanding of these *reprises* of ancient categories which form the language and the (non-coherent, even though claiming to be coherent) discourses of men.

At this point, we can and we must content ourselves to set this concept. It is essential to truth: it's this concept that allows the application of the logic to historic reality, said otherwise, which allows the understanding of the discourses concretely held by the men of the past and the present. Because — we could not repeat it too much — it is only for the logic that the pure category and the irreducible attitude (irreducible, because the category is pure) have a particular value, particular and legitimate, because philosophy chose to understand and can understand only with the help of what developed into coherence. But what has to be understood is precisely what is not coherent, what is not discourse united by a category, is not attitude pushed to unity by reflection. For philosophy (not for the acting man, more exactly: for every acting man), history has its meaning in its coherence, but it has its content in the incoherent, in the contradictory, in violence: the reprise, to use a Kantian concept, is the *schema* which makes the category applicable to reality and which thus allows concretely realizing the unity of philosophy and of history.

[83]

### *The logic of philosophy and the end of history*

The justification of the concepts which have been developed must be the work of the logic of philosophy itself, and we would be able to progress to it, were it not for one last argument that needed to be taken into consideration, an argument which, in truth, this logic

will provide a solution, but which is such that it seems to oppose itself to the realization of the logic, even before the task has been undertaken.

All coherent discourse is the end of the history that has led to it. Here is the result we have come to. But does not this conclusion, though inevitable, put all that we have believed safely held back into question? For how do we avoid applying this thesis to our own discourse? Is it not necessary to say that the logic of philosophy is only possible at the end of history? Or must we admit the transitory nature of this logic, as with all logic and with all systematic discourse? Can there be an eternally true logic, if all eternity is the eternity of a historic moment, only eternity for a historic moment and if all that man has revealed (to himself) is by the same token exposed to his violence and can be dismissed because it is grasped?

It is easy — and legitimate — to respond that the eternal, appearing in time, is always the eternal, precisely because it would be strictly speaking absurd to speak of an eternal which doesn't show itself in history. It would again be legitimate to refer back to what was developed above, namely, that circularity is just as essential to history as progress, and that wanting to speak of a progress that is not progress of a subject identical to himself is senseless, whatever the meaning of that identity be: the best proof and the simplest is situated in the fact that the most extravagant *historicists* don't succeed in avoiding — and for good reason — speaking about *the* man, of *the* history, of *the* world.

But it is best to take the objection in its positive content and admit that in effect the logic of philosophy is only possible at the end of history. Yet this can signify only one thing, namely, that it is possible at the end of the history that is its own. Said otherwise, it is possible only starting from the moment that violence has been seen in its purity and that, consequently, the will to coherence, as a violent decision (free and non-justifiable) of man against violence (“natural” up to that point), is understood as the center of the world in which this decision is made. And we must and can admit at the same time that history is not finished in the sense that violence has not been thrown out of reality, that men can always resort to it and that the decision for coherence can always be forgotten, refused, can no longer be understood as man's concrete possibility.

Every system is the end of history, of its history, of this history without which it would not be and which is only understood in it as meaningful history. In this sense philosophy is eternal, because it [84] is always looking for the same thing: understanding — and is historic, because what matters is not what it finds, but what path it finds it by, what point it starts from, in a word, which is, historically, the man who sets forth on the quest for



coherence. What he will find is only too easy to say in advance, because what would he find other than coherence? But it is his determined liberty, more concretely, man living under such conditions, in such a world, in such a discourse that demands satisfaction and presence and coherence, and the *formalization* which speaks of *the* man and of *the* world and of *the* coherence, as indispensable as it be to the undertaking of the logic of philosophy, not only isn't sufficient, but must be recognized as insufficient, if this undertaking must not be bogged down in the timeless and the abstract of the intelligence of the intellectual.

In this sense, every system is true and always true, because a coherence was attained in it, — *always true* to the point that, at any moment of history that follows the elaboration of this system, the individual can be content with this coherence, can establish himself there and can reprise under this category all that he encounters in his world which, in fact (that is to say, from the point of view of the logic of philosophy, and already from that of the simple attitude of the interpretation), is formed by a category or by categories following those that this man chose. And it is always surpassed, because its category, once revealed, appears (can appear and has appeared in history) as a condition, as an *Other* of the man who revolts against what is presented to him as valid once and for all.

If therefore a logic of philosophy can be elaborated — and solely the realization will be able to prove the possibility of this —, it will not be different for the logic of philosophy than for every coherent discourse, for every system: the negativity of the individual will be able to attack it just as it attacked all the systems. The only difference will therefore be that the logic of philosophy would still understand the very possibility of that, that for the logic, it would be every bit as legitimate to negate the logic of philosophy itself as to be content with it. Said otherwise, the logic would actually be the end of history, just as every system is the end of history — of its history, which is here the history of philosophy or (for philosophy doesn't have a history, only man has one) the end of the search for contentment *through discourse*. In it, this quest would have understood itself and would have grasped itself in its possibilities as in its limits: the man who doesn't want it will not dismiss a philosophy or a discourse, but *the* philosophy and *the* discourse. However, if he has passed through the logic, he would not *dismiss* them as something exterior: he would stop *dealing with them*, because philosophy as a problem, as an obstacle on his path, no longer keeps him busy. He would no longer be a philosopher, not because he would feel that philosophy can't make him content, but because he would know that philosophy has given him contentment, all the contentment that he could ask from discourse. He would no longer be philosopher, because he would have understood philosophy starting from truth and from violence and because he would

know that truth [85] is the end and the beginning of philosophy and that it is no longer for him a matter of understanding how he can arrive at the universal, how he can enter into truth and into presence: he would know that he always finds himself already there insofar as he searches for them, and that insofar as he wants to be reasonable, he is.

Is it still necessary to add that history is thus not terminated in all the meanings of the word? On the contrary, saying that it will continue is a simple and flat identity, because it is nothing other than the duration of man for himself. The individual can always opt for violence and refuse discourse, any discourse, that of the logic of philosophy as much as the others, and, consequently, it is perfectly possible that this discourse be destroyed or become meaningless for a humanity living in violence, struggling with violence. But the logic itself will have understood and shown that discourse is for man, even if he himself would have chosen to speak, only one of the possibilities of language and that he is left with expression: it may be that man turns towards that expression, no longer in order to protest against discourse, but with a clear conscience and freely, being certain that discourse is accomplished. The world would have become a truly human world, a world that violence would have disappeared from, would have been ruled out by man acting reasonably according to the discourse concerning violence: all violence there would be the violence between individual and individual at the interior of a coherent world, the struggle would no longer be the struggle with nature, subjugated by work, nor with the society, reasonably organized, but the struggle of sentiment with sentiment — a struggle possible only in a world of realized universality, in a world where all particular discourse would have received its place and would thus be surpassed, where the universal would have formed the existence of all men and of each man to the full extent that it can be formed by this, where sentiment would no longer have to reflect nor reason to take into account sentiments, where man would be *man* with men, and *this individual* with that individual — in a world that reason, having put violence to its service, would have actually transformed in such a way that no reasonable and universal protest were any longer thinkable, where the reasonable man were absolutely contented and had understood his reasonable contentment — in order to be free to live in presence and in the sentiment of presence, not because he rules out reason, but because he knows reasonably that reason is realized.

In the meantime — and we live in this “meantime” —, the logic of philosophy doesn’t guarantee and couldn’t guarantee that such a life is actually possible. What it can affirm, if it succeeds in its undertaking, is that truth *is*, that discourse is accomplishable because it is accomplished: it can show that the categories have revealed themselves in their

totality, because, in fact, the category of the category, the center which doesn't only organize discourses, but discourse, shows itself to the logic of philosophy and in the logic of philosophy. It understands everything and itself, because it understands man in philosophy, philosophy in man, because it understands the coherence in violence and the violence in coherent discourse.

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*Passage to the logic of philosophy*

The justification of this claim, we have said, can be furnished only by the logic of philosophy itself, of which the possibility will be demonstrated only by its realization. Reflections on the "method" of this logic will not be expected: there can be no difference between the logic and its method, since all methodological reflection can receive its meaning only from the logic — and can only receive it in a strictly limited sense, that of a discourse determined at the interior of total discourse.

A word only about the beginning that we have chosen. If discourse is one, all the categories are equivalent, because from each among them we must come to all the others: the sole question is to know in which sense we will go through the circle of categories. We have started by an *attitude*, that of Truth, the poorest of the attitudes from the logical point of view, that of satisfaction in total presence, so total that there is no discourse, not even language, that in appearance at least, there does not yet exist a *category* for the man of this attitude, but only for the philosopher who turns towards it. Here, it is not possible to speak of subject and object, man and world, coherence and violence. If someone asked us the reasons for our choice, we would be obliged to call on the patience of the reader for it, because it is only at the end of the search that the beginning acquires a meaning. If, however, an allusion can clarify the reason for that decision, we would say that Truth, in the definite sense, is not the category of a discourse, but that of discourse period, of philosophy, but that it is the first to appear on the plane of the attitudes that lead to the quest for coherence and for contentment, were it only because it is what announces itself in the eternal nostalgia of contentment and of presence which characterizes all of man's discourses.

Furthermore, we must apologize for the dry and abstract style of this book. But not only is this inconvenience inevitable, if we want to avoid emphasis and prolixity; moreover it is compensated by the fact that "abstract" discourse can forestall the danger of a surface understanding, which makes it so we don't believe ourselves obliged to verify everything,

because we think we are dealing with something known: it is not that it is a matter here of novelties, it's that the impression of something known is only an impression, the consequence of sentimental or verbal habits, a mode of knowledge that is inadequate once we have made up our minds, not to feel, but to understand. It is a cause for alarm that the easiness of the reading is, in matters of philosophy, an obstacle to appropriation and pertinent judgment. Excuse us if this worry has pushed us too far.

# LOGIC OF PHILOSOPHY

[88]

## CHAPTER I TRUTH

1. *Truth as the background of discourse.* — The defect of every beginning in philosophy is being the beginning: the choice of starting point is neither justified nor justifiable, since nothing is established, and the reader must extend credit to the author, who will be able to give the reasons for his choice only at the end of the work (if an end it must have), either in coming back to the beginning, or in showing that thought's movement is infinite, but that the beginning is such that it neither stops this movement nor hides it.

Said otherwise, the beginning of every doctrine which wants to develop thought in its totality (finite or infinite) is a matter of reflection: concrete man looks for wisdom because he knows, with a fortuitous and historic knowledge, that there is, or that there could be, something like a doctrine: a reflection of the particular in the idea of whatever totality that be, transmitted to the individual and thus, for him, preconceived. The beginning is therefore an attempt; it's necessary to start: let's start then by a definition of philosophy by putting it in relation with Truth, without knowing exactly what these words mean and if the relation that we'll establish between the two makes sense. Measuring all that we'll say to the idea of totality of thought (that is, by a reflection which will be able to be transformed into doctrine only at the end, if ever it can be), we'll be able to try, not to arrive at a result, but to trigger a movement.

Let's establish then, at the risk of discovering that we have established something absurd:

Philosophy is the search for truth, and is only the search for truth.

This initial definition is as poor as all initial definitions; since the domain it must delimit is not yet known, the definition is purely negative and constitutes the domain in question by the exclusion of all other domains (presumed known): all that is not the search for truth, or is not exclusively so, is not philosophy.

This manner of proceeding can be useful in numerous cases. Is it so here? Do we actually exclude something with our definition? In this case, there would be domains other than truth on the plane where truth is situated. Were this so, would it not follow that they would need to be known *in truth*? In other words: wouldn't a search for truth be needed at a higher level in order to judge the claims of the previous search?

[90] It's accurate that philosophy has sometimes been defined as we've just done (in order to be able to start). Life, religion, sentiment, action are therefore opposed to the search for truth. This is legitimate provided that we place ourselves outside of truth (which, in this case here, is qualified as "objective" or "disinterested", because, *subjectively*, we lose interest in truth) and that we stick to this position with prudence and firmness. These attitudes are possible and real. It's necessary only to add that they become absurd (taken in its precise sense — not pejorative — of "devoid of meaning") as soon as they want to deal with truth. In order to be just, let's say this doesn't happen as long as these attitudes are authentic. The danger only exists for those who reprise these attitudes, the romantics of faith who don't live in God, but defend religion, the poetry enthusiasts who aren't sensitive to the world, but to poets, the ideologues of politics who never act, but are intoxicated by dreams of power. The poet, the faithful, the politician ignore the search for truth just as they mutually ignore each other, and they are ready to kill the others if they notice that they don't follow them. This is in the order of things and doesn't need of justification. It is not similarly the case for the romantics. For them, all these possibilities coexist. They can play the possibilities one against the other; they can strive to "justify" all the attitudes, to "coordinate" them, to find "solutions" to "contradictions". The search for truth and religion, for example, are for them two attitudes that are equivalent and which, while remaining separate, must not however enter into conflict. There is therefore "truly" one "theoretic" truth and one truth "of faith", the one next to the other. What they forget, it's that in speaking in this way, they have taken sides with the "theoretic" and that, consequently, they should only look for truth. Man doesn't always look for truth. That's a fact of life. But at the level of the search, there is nothing that "corresponds" to truth, that's its "other".

The domain of truth is therefore not limited, and the initial definition doesn't make sense. We can't speak of truth, because truth is everything; all that we'd say about truth would oppose it to something else, and it would only be a subject falling under a broader predicate, equally applicable to other subjects. Therefore the judgment: "Truth is everything", can't be part of the doctrine; it is part of the explanation. The doctrine can start only with the single word *truth*. Said otherwise, *all* judgment about truth is absurd. We will find



the oppositions between *true* and *false* later, the distinctions between *truths* according to their dignity, their scope, their dependence, etc.... At present, all the habitual associations, the memories originating in science and logic, which all presuppose or establish relations need to be eliminated. Here, the question is about what founds these relations — or even closer to the beginning: what we mean in saying that there are relations. All positive explanation is therefore impossible; wanting to give one, would be wanting to speak in silence. Truth is neither being nor nothingness, it is neither the object nor the me. We can only [91] evoke it and speak of it through images. It is the light that brightens nothing, an invisible light, because it is only light. It is the state of awareness that is preceded by no dream. It is what precedes the beginning. It is the eternal instant, older and younger than all time.

Images that can be of service due to their incomprehensibility. In effect, man is always in truth, and truth is consequently inaccessible to him, as the base on which he stands. What he calls errors finds itself included in truth and is error “in truth” only for this reason. The false nonetheless exists. But it isn’t the opposite of truth, otherwise a superior truth would be required and so forth, ad infinitum.

We must therefore eliminate the confusion between truth and the true. For this confusion is “natural” to us. As Hegel pointed out, the first category is everywhere that which has the least content, which is the poorest. This is necessary, since it must be absolutely simple. But an era which searches for a first category and which, moreover, is aware of the fact that it’s looking, and that it’s looking for a primitive category, not a fact or a reality, such an era no longer knows the poverty that it is looking for. The uneasiness that sends it off on the quest for such a category is provoked by an embarrassment of riches. It knows too many things, too many truths, it knows too many contents, too many situations. When it finds what it was looking for, it can seize it and keep it only at the price of the greatest of efforts: the words at its disposal are loaded with history, its concepts have entered into infinite and indefinite relations. Yet, it is looking for a simple foundation and that it will need to keep simple. The difficulty belongs to the very nature of the task.

However, the truth in question is not inaccessible. It can’t be exposed, that’s true; but it can be lived. Silence precedes discourse, and discourse can end in silence. Parmenides’ great undertaking consists in this. Parmenides speaks, he discusses, he even confesses, in negating it, the existence of error, he is the son of a “developed civilization”. But when we take Parmenides’ result seriously, we arrive at the silence of truth. Being and language are identical in the unchanging, still, eternal unity; every question is forbidden and impossible,

every response is unimaginable. Parmenides spoke. But he could have fallen silent and nothing keeps other men from drawing this conclusion from that discourse.

The fact remains that it would be a drawn consequence, and this silence would have taken its origin in discourse. Yet, silence is a widespread attitude, but in its naive form. Man ordinarily speaks without saying anything — οὐδέν λέγει, to reprise the Greek formula —, all that counts in his life happens outside discourse, and for the awareness of the individual, discourse is superfluous. He knows what he has to do, speech is a tool, a tool not even essential, and outside this character of tool, it is bothersome: women gossip, men are serious and don't speak. Truth is given where there is no question, where language and condition coincide. That's why its presence isn't grasped. [92] It is only *noticed* by he who is looking for truth and who therefore knows himself separated from it. It's the philosopher, in his situation determined by history (which he reads as the history of his search), that *notices truth*. The reflection on himself and on his interest brings him to the point where he encounters truth as a category, as the domain of all questions. Truth then is but this, the field of knowledge, a field empty and infinite and which is only filled in going forward.

2. *The impossibility of a preliminary reflection on method.* —The question that we expect to find at the forefront, that of philosophy's method, will be mentioned at this point only in order to be put aside. On this point, we can send the reader back to Hegel. The question of philosophy's method doesn't make sense, and the problem is exactly the same as that of the limits of the domain of truth: in order to work out a method of philosophy, we would need to have another philosophy with another methodological foundation for which we would have to establish a third philosophy and so on. Yet, philosophy is a fact or it's a product of liberty (a formula which will find its justification in what follows). There is nothing that precedes this "fact", nothing that precedes philosophy, which is itself understandable and which understands all things. It is for itself the absolute beginning, and it is particularly important to never forget this; for it is particularly easy to give in to the temptation of things that we "know". We've noted that only an era that knows many things feels the need for a philosophy. But this lack is on the philosopher's side, on the side of the lover of wisdom, and not on the side of what he is looking for, on the side of wisdom. Man sets out from knowledge on his search; but what he aims for isn't a knowledge that refers back to searching. For the individual, the reflection precedes the doctrine. But the reflection is only in the doctrine, which is first. The individual, whether or not philosopher, does not understand himself. He is comprehended (in both meanings of the word) in the doctrine. What must be

prevented is that ideas and associations of words slip in at the beginning of the doctrine, where they don't make sense. We must put aside all reflection on the true, on contradiction, on identity, on all that makes sense only in the domain of the relative. Contradiction, in particular, must not here inspire the fear that it gives to men of science and to logicians. For however salutary it may be there where it's in its place, it would have us forget that at the moment there isn't even the possibility of contradiction, and that in fact, contradiction is conceived as important only very late: we can live in contradiction, we live currently and essentially in it (every decision, for example, is made in contradiction), and it isn't necessary to invoke the example (of dubious value) of the primitive who says that he, man, is a lizard.

3. *The subjectivist prejudice.* — The last “interpretation” to eliminate is that of the “truth for a subject” — the last not in the sense that there would not be others that were false: [93] all interpretation is necessarily so at this level; this one is only the most modern. The remark that we have in order to object to this is always the same: there is still neither subject, nor object, nor relation of for. All this will need to find its place, because all this is, or if we prefer, is true. But all this corresponds to particular attitudes (here, particularly, to that of science which wants to speak of, and for, all the particulars inasmuch as particulars, namely, the fundamental attitude of transcendental ontology). Yet, the problem is that of the field of all discourse.

4. *Truth, Being, God.* — Since we have only an isolated word here as all the doctrine's “content” and since this word doesn't have a “meaning”, it would be possible to replace it by any other whose current acceptance would not itself be opposed to an understanding in the sense of universality and of the absolute. The choice, in effect, is a question of opportunity. The words “Being” or “God” would provide the same services, and it is not by accident that they have always been united in the tightest relations with the term “Truth”. God is Being and Truth, Truth seizes (which means: is, since it is what it seizes) Being and God, Being is the Truth and God. However, the history of reflection has shown that the two terms of Being and of God are more difficult to handle, if we want to avoid the dead ends of the ontology of reflection which oppose subject and object, and of the faith which, barring doing ontology under the name theology, stops at the negation of every concrete and refuses both the doctrine and the reflection.

It is evident that we will be obliged to come back to these problems. Nonetheless, we can immediately add that Hegel's philosophy, on the one hand, and mystic thinking, on the

other, have not succeeded in putting aside the dangers inherent to a reflection that doesn't know itself as such. It is true that a Saint John of the Cross, for example (or a Calvin, if we gloss over — against all possibility — the role that the fact of revelation plays for him), ends up at a first category which, under the name of God, seems to correspond exactly to what we designate (because we have not done more than designate) under that of Truth. But once having arrived in this way at the result/foundation, we no longer have neither the means nor the need to enter into the movement of discourse. Between God, which is Nothingness, and the mystic, which is equally Nothingness, there is only the Nothingness of Union. Truth is thus seized, but it is only so as the background against which everything disappears, not as that against which everything shows itself: discourse is evil. The central category is therefore not Truth itself, but thought's negation and its halt (μύειν = to close the eyes), and in fact, we find ourselves before another category, which we will have to deal with soon.

The problem is completely different regarding Hegel (it is here a matter of the Hegel of the *Encyclopedia*, not that of the *Phenomenology*): the Being which forms the starting point of his logic *is* not, and he therefore avoids the insoluble difficulties of the reflection of Being in the subject or the subject in Being, the problems of knowledge and of [94] existence. We don't want, neither do we need, to ask the question if, as is necessary in the Hegelian conception of philosophy as a system, the Encyclopedia leads actually back to its beginning and if the Being at the end is that of the start, if in the case where we would be obliged to recognize a failure, the reason for that is found in the choice of beginning or must be looked for elsewhere. Perhaps Hegel has been treated unfairly: the fact is that Marx, who understood Hegel, wanted to turn the system over and take it off its head to put it on its feet, and that Kierkegaard, who didn't understand him, dismissed him — both, because for Hegel Being is (or seems to be) at the center, because they believed themselves obligated to defend the imprescriptible rights of action and the heart against an ontologistic doctrine. Once again: we don't ask at this point if that revolt is justified or not, we only cite it in order to mark the danger of the usage of the term Being which — such has been the history of the occidental spirit — will always be understood as designating the object: at the level of Being, man *is*, nature *is*, history *is*, and the absolute knowledge of Being (which *is* not, at least in Hegel) will be interpreted as the science of all the things that *are*. This single reason, of a “pedagogical” order, even if there were no others, would suffice to make us prefer the term *Truth*.

## CHAPTER II NONSENSE

**Truth is nonsense. In effect, since truth is only truth, all that presents itself is not the truth. Everything is non-truth, everything is empty of meaning, since all determined meaning is inadequate to the truth.**

1. *Nonsense and truth.* — The category of nonsense is just as universal and just as empty as that of truth. The distinction is possible only because both are surpassed in our discourse and because other categories, infinitely more complex, are added to these first categories, which exist for us only because we have others at our disposal.

Reflection shows that the life of the conscience is between sense and nonsense, and both are constantly present in discourse. This presence's manner will appear in the doctrine's development. For the moment, it is sufficient to recall polarities like language/condition, decision/situation, self/world. But at this point, this reminder must serve above all the elimination of all these concrete concepts. What we must retain is the pure duality of truth and nonsense. For us, there is no means of distinguishing them by definitions and predicates. We can say that truth is the domain, and that all that fills this domain and which reveals its existence to us is nonsense. We could explain truth as the "yes" and nonsense as the "no". But we would not be much further along. The true difficulty at the beginning of the logic is to not "imagine" interpretations of the categories, despite the fact that these categories wouldn't exist (wouldn't reveal themselves) without that imagination, which is the historic existence of the categories.

2. *Lived nonsense.* — *Nonsense and reflection.* — If the category of nonsense can't be defined, it can nonetheless be lived and had been, just like that of truth.

The example of Parmenides will be helpful here also. In effect, to the simple and single truth he opposed the theory (θεωρία = sight, spectacle) of the deceptive appearance which, also, is everything. From the moment we leave the pure truth-unity, we fall into what,

under the most diverse aspects is always what isn't, and never is what it is: what is has no meaning, since there exists, in truth, only truth. In any [96] way that we interpret the relation or the absence of relation between the two parts of the Parmenidean poem, it is clear that the, unconscious, motive of this splitting in two is found here. The form (non-exterior, but philosophical) of this thought is that of the reflection of what is in Being, and the disciples of Parmenides developed it in that direction.

However, the theory of Cratylus, disciple of Parmenides' great adversary, Heraclitus, is perhaps more instructive. It takes its start from Heraclitan instability. It's the instability of all that is that preoccupies him, not instability as such, which had interested his master. His attitude is perfectly understandable: since we can't even go down into the same river once, there is no longer any meaning of speaking about anything at all: we can't do anything more than point with a finger. The interpretation by the means of the concept of being is therefore pushed to its final consequences. Everything must be resolved through relations of being, and the gesture that remains in being drives out the word that refers uniquely to being in giving it a meaning. In any case, nonsense, lived and in a manner of speaking practiced by Cratylus, hasn't yet detached as a category: thought will need to enrich itself a great deal before it has the means to seize itself in this form.

It seems however that Hindu thought brings out the two categories of truth and non-sense clearly. The initial background is everything and everything is only that. It is neither substance, nor being, nor nothingness; it is the background of everything that shows itself. To this first appearance of the category of Truth, Buddhism opposes the discovery of non-sense. It doesn't say that traditional theology is false; it doesn't teach, either, a novel truth to replace the ancient one. Nothing that can be said interests it. Evidently, there are other categories that have been at work in the creation of these two systems; what's more, therein we find, and even necessarily, all the categories that are at discourse's disposition. This is not surprising, since man understands everything in and by the body of categories that are, from the point of view of reflection, the dimensions of analysis, the different directions in which these questions find their way. But it's a single category that is lived as decisive, from the moment that it is no longer a matter of reflection, but of life. For Buddhism, life doesn't make sense, nor does it contain truth. All is empty: all that shows itself and all of the whole that is visible to which it shows itself. There is Truth, but Truth is nonsense. It isn't that what had shown itself as Truth at the bottom of appearances has disappeared. It doesn't disappear, not any more than the appearances, which nothing can make disappear, since Truth's being is a matter of appearing in them. Nonsense and Truth are not distinguishable: it is necessary

to recognize Truth as nonsense, nonsense as Truth. And this same recognition itself is nonsense. It is only a preamble, only a program that needs to be realized. We are familiar with the different techniques used by the different schools in order to reach this goal. They always pursue the same end, namely to empty consciousness of all content, so that consciousness and content disappear in the end and that, by the realization of nonsense, Truth no longer appears, but *is*. For appearing and [97] being are mutually exclusive, and Truth is present only after nonsense is recognized as Truth.

We can't doubt that this attitude be real. It's not doubtful, either, that it's impossible to refute it: an attitude is not refutable, and the very concept of refutation has no place here. But under the influence of Greek reflection, we are looking to reduce all to demonstration and refutation. Not that this is illegitimate: it is matter of another attitude, and all attitudes are equivalent regarding their "truth". But given the role that this attitude plays in our era's thinking, it will not be useless to note that its claim, *logical* or *scientific*, doesn't surpass that of any other in dignity. One can't refute Buddhism, one can only fight against the man who preaches Buddhism.

Logic has already gone through that experience with radical skepticism. Responding to the skeptic doctrinaire that his doubt isn't total when he affirms that doubt is the only logically possible attitude is a powerful objection. But the skeptic will be able to declare that this too must not be regarded as a true thesis; doubt can doubt itself. And if the logician insists, the skeptic will fall silent, and there will no longer be any means of convincing him or refuting him. It is necessary to notice, however, that this experience has never convinced logicians. In effect, the skeptic, such as we encounter him, commits himself, at least at first, on the field of discussion (if he doesn't, we don't "encounter" him). Consequentially, the skeptic's silence isn't understood as an authentic attitude, but as proof of the logician's superiority, which forced his adversary into silence and made his silence appear as an expression of the stubbornness of a man who doesn't want to admit he's wrong. For the logician, everything becomes discussion in this way: which proves that the process is legitimate. Yet, this legitimate isn't unique. The logician interprets all attitudes other than his own as directed against him. He can translate and does translate everything into his own terms (which is the strength of the attitude). But the very notion of discussion is particular. Therefore it is not necessary to listen to the arguer: the believer doesn't discuss, he believes. The Buddhist doesn't refute the world's meaning, he sees the nonsense of it. His attitude, just like that of the logician, is impregnable. Man can maintain himself in it indefinitely and no "necessary historic evolution" can remove him from it.

3. *The concept of reprise.* — The opposition of the second category to the first brings us to speaking more particularly of a concept of the greatest importance, that of *reprise* (cf. above, pp. 81 ss.).

We have remarked that nonsense is — and that, on the other hand, it relates to Truth (as being the same thing): nonsense can be lived and the example of Buddhism shows that it can be understood as the truth of truth. But emptiness is not necessarily *understood* as the truth of truth, it can be simply *lived* as emptiness. Thus, the saint of Buddhism, just as that of yoga, once he has attained perfection, no longer thinks and no longer speaks. However he *can* speak of nonsense, he *can* evoke [98] emptiness as truth. We therefore notice an essential possibility, that of the *reprise*. We obviously can't explain this possibility yet (which, inasmuch as δύνάμις, is a reality)<sup>3</sup>. However, we can say that the reprise is the understanding of a new attitude (or category) under a previous category, an understanding realized in and through that prior attitude. The Buddhist doesn't necessarily fall silent. He can speak of nonsense as truth. It can be asked, and in fact it has been asked, why Buddha, who fulfilled freed himself, still speaks. The orthodox response is to say what he did it through love and mercy; a historian or a modern psychologist will perhaps say that he was a man and that, as such, he needed to teach in order to affirm himself for himself in making himself recognized by others. But these responses are false, the one just like the other, because they respond to a question that is meaningless here and which is understandable only on the field of reflection and of possibilities. It is not more meaningful to ask why Buddha spoke than to analyze the motives for which the man Jesus, who commanded all the forces of heaven and earth, let himself be crucified. If modern reflection didn't have the vague feeling that there is "something strange in all that", it would need to lend an ear to these eminent specialists who, with the splendor of idiocy, went all the way and provided it with the history and the theories of these "cases of psychosis and neurosis". But it's not a matter of reflection or of possibilities. Buddha could have not spoken. However, it's not a man who could do this or that. By judging him in this fashion, we put him back into a world he has left. He doesn't speak: it is truth that reveals itself in his language. Because he speaks, he couldn't have not spoken. He doesn't distinguish himself from his teachings. He *is* truth: and that truth, which is the category of Buddha's discourse, grasps nonsense.

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<sup>3</sup> For a restricted sense of the initial reprises, see chap. IV, n 7 pp. 118 sq.



It is important to note this fact that nonsense isn't exclusively itself. It can be (as is probably the case in Zen Buddhism), but it may be that it understands itself as truth. In a modern language, we would say that it interpreted itself as truth. The expression isn't without danger; for us, it implies a multiplicity of interpretations, the idea of the choice between true and false. In fact, the reprise is, in order to remain in the modern language, always "true". Here is, if we like, the initial form of reflection, reflection which hasn't entered into consciousness, simple reflection, different from that which we ordinarily have in mind and which is twofold, because in this reflection consciousness knows itself to be consciousness, that is, reflection. In simple reflection, the category is returned to itself in the form of a prior category (anticipating, we can add: of any, or of several, prior categories). It is through the reprise that the attitude becomes category.

This is why Truth was without discourse. Every "theory of truth" is false and can't be used, even as a simple example, except on condition of an abstraction eliminating all that [99] makes possible the existence of that theory in the mind's reality, that's to say, in the totality of discourse. For, in order to speak about Truth, a large number of reprises must have already taken place. The first of these acts is the reflection of the nonsense in Truth.

Let's repeat that this reprise is not necessary. Every category can stay a mute attitude (mute regarding the essential — it can lead to silence by the path of language and of reflection) But from the moment there is a reprise, there is language. The category of Truth is sufficient for this, from the moment that man possesses another category he can reprise under the first. It is easy to see what this language is, what it isn't: it is the simple revelation of nonsense. We can speak, because Truth arrives first and because Truth has at present become concrete. There is judgment: Truth is nonsense, nonsense is Truth. The simplicity of this judgment of complete identification shows the limits of this language. There is only speaking, only evocation. Herein applying, as we just did, the terms of judgment and identity is only justified from our language's point of view, which can't rid itself of its richness. In itself, this speaking is only the perpetual repetition of the same truth that is *the* Truth. It can choose different words, since it is formed in and against a rich discourse full of history; man will speak of emptiness, of nothingness, of the negation, of evil, of pain, of death, of deceitful appearances. What it means is always the same thing: nonsense is Truth. It doesn't speak, if speaking signifies the articulated expression of thought, it *says*. The listener isn't supposed to have his own truth, another truth. The master doesn't busy himself with other theories (except by accident and in order to say that they are not the truth — they are something in

the world): nothing exists outside of the nonsense that he reveals as being truth. There is only that simple reflection. But it is sufficient in order to create the first language.

4. *Logical priority and historical explanation.* — One will perhaps object that what we just called a first language is in fact the product of a long evolution, that Buddhism was preceded by an entire series of religious, cosmological, philosophical systems, that, just as with other “nihilistic” systems, it can’t not be the fruit of an extremely advanced reflection. We would then point out, first of all, that we have spoken of these theories only in the explanation that necessarily takes place at the level of the modern consciousness, a consciousness which distinguishes between the essential and the inessential. Next, we would say that the very level at which this objection is made is poorly chosen. “First” doesn’t necessarily signify what comes first in the chronological order. The origin of this confusion in the interpretation of the word is clear: we are dominated by the theory of history, as founded by Christianity. This history, as the order of human evolution, has a beginning and an end, and every event has its place: historic order and logic order coincide (in God). But it is possible — this is not the place to tackle this question — that this be a [100] particular theory that itself needs to be understood. In any case, it can’t be verified, since we can imagine no proceedings in order to refute it: it can allow any detailed objection against the arrangement of facts, without which the order as such being destroyed. From that, it follows that the directing idea need not be, *a priori*, that of the unity and of the uni-linearity of evolution. Perhaps this idea will even show itself inapplicable. The objection, in order to make sense, should therefore be formulated differently: against the order of categories, not against that of the illustrations. But then it becomes untenable. In order to refute a system of categories, there is no other means than elaborating another, if the critique accepts the categories but wants to combat the order. Yet, there is no difference between the categories and their order. If there were a difference, we would be brought back to the, inexistent, problem of philosophy’s method. Therefore it suffices to say that there is no simpler language and that this language is consequently the first. Lived reflection has shown (it has not demonstrated, as it does not demonstrate anything) the importance of language. It shows, moreover, that language refers (taking this term in the most formal and vaguest sense) to the situation, because man, speaking of nonsense and living it, *takes a position*. May it suffice anxious theoretical reflection at the moment to note the impossibility of finding a more total understanding than that carried out by the categories of Truth and nonsense.

### CHAPTER III THE TRUE AND THE FALSE

**The understanding of nonsense as truth creates the opposition of true and false. Speaking of another truth than that of nonsense is *false*, saying that nonsense is truth is *true*. Since nonsense is proclaimed truth, the truth is determined and that truth can be formulated.**

1. *The introduction of the category* — From the moment that the believer of nonsense speaks, Truth becomes a category in the purest sense. We can speak of Truth, since now there is something other than it, something other that, nonetheless, is identical to it. Truth was only a mute attitude. After the appearance of nonsense it can come back to itself by the mediation of that other which is itself. Truth, for us determined by the category of nonsense, now becomes real for itself. It becomes the place of what can be said. Not that there are already responses to previously conceived questions: the question finds its origin here; but there is language, there is what shows itself in language, there is the Truth and the other.

We will need to pay attention to this duplication of Truth. Therefore, it will not be useless to translate this duplication in the language of ontology, even though the process isn't without its dangers, since this transformation is not a pure game and since we will see it happen "for good". However, our current philosophical language is that of ontology, and every attempt at explanation will need to use it.

Let's say then that all that is, because it is, is in Being. We therefore can't speak about Being, because all speaking particularizes Being and no longer signifies Being, but only what is. Yet, what is, isn't; if it truly was, it would be Being (substance, God, etc...). Being is nothingness. This is all we can say: Being is Being, Being is nothingness, nothingness is Being. It's not much, and nonetheless, there is a language: nothingness *is*, and nothingness is nothingness, and Being becomes the domain where the nothingness that *is* opposes itself and marries itself to the Being which is nothingness: what we call the existence of things (for Hegel: becoming) is born.

Let's return to Truth. We can speak, this signifies: we can say the Truth. But the Truth that is stated is not that in which we speak. We say: nonsense is Truth, and what we say is true. But we can say other things (for example, it's nonsense that nonsense [102] is Truth) and we no longer say the Truth. In the two cases, we speak inside Truth, since there is nothing outside of truth. Which signifies that with nonsense, the negation has entered Truth, a negation that is initially total, and which can stay total, that is, refusal to speak (not silence, as in original Truth), but which, in understandable itself as Truth, particularized itself, since it allows something else, namely, what it negates, what it declares to be nonsense. In negating them, it creates the infinite impossibilities that are not Truth. Silence is and remains the truth of Truth. But the silence that wants to be silence to be silence knows language and false speaking, and it understands moreover this false in its truth: the false is the nonsense that isn't refused as nonsense, but is received into Truth, precisely because it *is*, being nonsense. Truth and nonsense interpenetrate each other in language.

2. *The category as a category of discourse. Master and disciple.* — It is only under this category that the examples given up to here become something other than matters of abstraction. We continually needed to eliminate the language factor. As far as Parmenides and his theory of a single truth is concerned, and Buddhism as well, we have left out all that, historically, had been necessary in order to found sects on the truth of the masters or the schools that claimed to adhere to them. The true illustrations of the first two categories would have been what Parmenides and Buddha lived, not what they uttered: sight, nothingness, the One, in which rather than from which they *spoke*. The fact that they translated this lived experience in “theory”, “religion”, “thought”, could be neglected, since it was only the attitudes that interested us, but these attitudes, attitudes of silence, are accessible to us only with the help of the corresponding categories, that is, thanks to a discourse that contains, when analyzed, all the categories — as all discourse<sup>4</sup>.

Historically, there is no master in the absolute sense of the term. Nobody, by himself, starts; each is in a tradition to which he opposes himself. But he who is the first to break himself away becomes the master full stop for those that will be freed uniquely by him. Parmenides who is thus the master of Plato's dialogue, considers himself a disciple. Himself,

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<sup>4</sup> The emotional state of certain psychopaths (psychopaths only in our society) of certain musicians, painters, poets, can very well describe what is at the core of these attitudes, which only shows itself to reflection and as “objects”, that's to say, as possibilities that *we* don't bring about.

in his poem, he is the disciple, not of men, but of the goddess, and, only in that way, legitimately master for men. For Buddha, the problem arises differently, since he is not looking for a *theoria*, a sight, but an attitude; however the apprenticeship of prior existences ties him back to a history also; the fact that this apprenticeship isn't part of his present existence establishes him as master. Such as they appear to their disciples, Buddha or Parmenides or Xenophanes [103] don't speak, they proclaim. But what they proclaim is heard by others who, previously, had heard something else<sup>5</sup>

The disciple is the man who pronounced and understood words and discourses, who didn't know that the acts of pronouncing and listening had importance, and who now hears *serious* discourse from the masters. He learns the true: he will no longer speak "lightly". What isn't the master's word is false, since only that word is true. It's from this point of view, that of the student who had learned something else, that the master's discourse is truly and completely understandable. The master speaks to others, who have not seen the light that was always there, and he can give them sight, because they are neither deaf nor blind from birth: they possess healthy eyes, but they don't see with their eyes, for what isn't Truth obstructs their sight. The master has only to lift the obstacle, and the disciple will see the light, he will see seeing (Truth) and non-seeing (nonsense). It's in this way that the master's negative language is applied, negative whether about truth or nonsense: don't let yourself be deceived by what is said, here is the master's discourse, all that is said is nothing, doesn't exist — only what is nothing at all exists, and that is the whole.

It is superfluous to come back to the categorical difference of the two attitudes that, in silence, live opposite lives. Let's look however a little closer at the master's expression in a concrete case. According to Xenophanes<sup>6</sup>, God (Being) can't have become; for he would have become, either from the *same*, which is impossible, since there would be no reason why from two equals the one would be the begetting, the other the begot, or from the *other*, which is equally excluded, since the best would arise out of the less good and the less good from

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<sup>5</sup> What this is, this "something else" doesn't interest us. (The following chapter will come back to it.) The sequence of categories, to restate, isn't a historic sequence: whatever the disciples had heard before hearing the master, was said in a language, and the question of the first language in the historic sense of the word "first" is absurd. There is not man before language, and we are not looking for the ancestors of *homo sapiens* here. These problems can make sense for the special sciences, but are out of place here where it is a matter of understanding, among other things — things that have at least the same importance — science itself. Man has always spoken. But there are eras where speaking is not taken seriously by man, and he takes it seriously for the first time when he falls silent in the silence of nonsense.

<sup>6</sup> [Aristotle] *On Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias*; ed. Apelt, 977, 14 ss.

the best, that's to say, what is from what isn't or what isn't from what is. God is therefore one, eternal, *eminent* ("Divine nature is such that it is not vanquished"). An ordinary bit, we'd say, of monist ontology. It deals with Being, and nowhere is Being transcended; the unity and the oneness of this Being can't be understood in the order of things that possess being as a predicate. And this line is rigorously followed, when Xenophanes says that God has all meanings since otherwise there would be relations of inferiority and of superiority between the parts of God: a discourse which employs notions belonging to being.

But in what follows these notions will be surpassed: "Being eternal [104] and one and of spherical form, he is neither infinite nor limited. For non-being is infinite; for it has neither center, nor beginning, nor end, nor another part, and the infinite is of these species. Yet, what is isn't like what isn't. If they were many, they would limit one another. But the One is neither equal to what isn't nor to the many. Because the One has nothing against which it will form a limit." And, after the same demonstration for movement (change) and rest, the conclusion is that God is "neither infinite nor finite, nor at rest nor in movement". The author of the tale immediately draws the consequences of these theses: "So, there is nothing outside of God, or all things are eternal...If nonbeing is infinite, why would Being itself not also be infinite?" In effect, why not? Because the notions of Being become inapplicable. Because Being can be approached only after the elimination of every predicate. Because we can't *speak* of Being; we can only *evoke* it in negating all that is taken for Being. All things either wouldn't be or would be eternal? Absolutely, were it a matter of things. But precisely, it isn't a matter of things, not of this or that, not even of the totality of all things. We can only speak of the impossibility of speaking; in order to make oneself understood, it is necessary to be incomprehensible. All that we can say is false. When we speak about Being, we must reject every predicate, since every attribute, being only attribute, is false. Having arrived at nonsense, the master falls silent.

We know the decisive importance of Xenophanes' thought for the evolution of Greek thought, whose history, determined, like the entire history of philosophy, by the reflection, we won't retrace. Xenophanes' adversary, Heraclitus, and his disciple Parmenides, made explicit his idea. What enters with Xenophanes into Greek thought, the essential difference between the true and the false, remains its inalienable heritage. The particular categories inside of which what is and what isn't are understood differ from one successor to the other: in Parmenides, Truth is Being, Being is Truth; for Heraclitus, Being is contradiction (the false of Parmenides), contradiction is Being. These differences don't have importance for

our question. The one and the other know that there is a true and a false, because we can speak according to their doctrines or against them. Xenophanes spoke of the absurdity of man's opinions. But for him, these opinions weren't worth the trouble to be understood. Those who were subjected to his influence want to seize the false *and* the true. Hence, this surprising attempt of Parmenides that forms the second part of his poem, devoted to the elaboration of the systems of the false. From there, the "hylozoism" of Heraclitus which introduces absolute contradiction in the world nonetheless one. The fact that they speak to disciples, that, having themselves been disciples, they are aware of speaking to disciples, permits them to speak, and they can speak of everything, because everything has entered into their world. Parmenides teaches: "Everything is only the (meaningless) name of what men have fixed in their language, believing that it was true: becoming and perishing, being and not being, changing place or changing brilliant color"<sup>7</sup>, Heraclitus [105] warned: "The lord to whom the oracle at Delphi belongs doesn't speak, nor conceal, but signifies<sup>8</sup>." Language isn't sufficient to seize the Truth that transcends it; but it can show itself in its true nature, which is to be false. Truth can, in effect, only be "signified," but the rest can be spoken of. A theory can even be made of false opinion. The negation, lived purely in the attitude of nonsense, here becomes a category consciously employed by the disciple who, as master, addresses the new disciples: he himself doesn't proclaim, he teaches; but his teachings are discourse only by the negation of all discourse.

Thus we understand the "primitiveness" and the "obscurity" of the Greek philosophers that we call Pre-Socratics and that we would be better off calling Pre-sophists. Their attitude, that of the true and the false, knows no mediation. The true and the false oppose each other and unite each another without any factor of mediation intervening. It's why these authors are "obscure". The most established concepts of reflection don't interest them: even more, don't exist for them. It is natural to object that elaborating a system of the world doesn't make sense when we say at the same time that we can't speak of what is, but this objection doesn't touch Parmenides, for whom it would even be incomprehensible. The false *is* just as much as the true<sup>9</sup>, and the fact of truth's proclamation doesn't abolish the existence of the false. What creates all the difficulty for modern thought, is that contradiction doesn't yet possess the character of an absolute criterion that it will have later. Here, the

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<sup>7</sup> Diels, *Vorsokratiker*, fr. 8, v. 38-40.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*, *idib.*, fr. 93.

<sup>9</sup> In the modern (and vulgar) sense of the word *to be*, it would even be necessary to say that only the false is (object).

contradiction is concrete; there is contradiction between the true and the false, but the true and the false aren't true and false theses that we know to be on the same plane and that we declare mutually exclusive. The true is truth, the false is all the rest. This doesn't mean that the contradiction isn't felt, or that Parmenides had admitted that two times two gave four and five and six. This shows only that contradiction is not a category, that questions aren't asked with the intention of answering them with the help of contradiction, that contradiction is not used to discover the true and the false, but that the true *and* the false are needed to establish the contradiction.

3. *The role of the category in the reprises of ulterior categories. —The attitude. —* It is suitable to insist on the “primitiveness” of this category especially since the modern consciousness in its reprises often doesn't surpass it and therefore expressed itself in a language dominated by it. It's in this way that we encounter discourses that seem to depend entirely on it, and that are in reality constituted by completely different categories, but reprised under the present category. The “absolutist” doctrines, even when they refuse all proof to the disciple, even when they don't recognize contradiction, don't have their origin in this category. They employ [106] concepts that this category, in its simplicity, doesn't produce. They speak of an *object*, of a *conscience*, of an *absolute*, and they must speak of them, since they are posterior to science. They oppose themselves to science (voluntarist theories, for example) or recognize it as absolute (such is non-dialectic materialism); in both cases, they reprise the categories that they use under the simple bipolar unity of true and false from the moment that they address themselves to the “sentiment”, to “the evidence”, to the “intimate conviction”. But despite the trouble they put themselves through to make others forget, and in order to forget that they arise out of the reflective consciousness, they remain what they are, the product of an intervention of posterior attitudes and categories, incomprehensible without these in what concerns their “content” — by the simple fact of having a determined content, which is unthinkable in the category of the true, for which all determined content is on the false's side.

The attitude that corresponds to this category is, it has been indicated, that of the disciple become master. It isn't a reflective consciousness, that is, which knows itself consciousness. The truth is we must not even speak of consciousness. Reflection, when it looks at the representatives of this attitude, can use this term; it can say that these men have been torn between these two poles of true and false, or that their life is determined by the tragic



consciousness of the inexpressible truth in the sole language that is at their disposition and which is the language of the false. But this doesn't make sense at this stage of evolution where these thinkers find themselves. Describing their primitiveness with words understandable to reflective consciousness, by terms that evoke "values" and sentiments, is sacrificing true comprehension to the appearance of clarity. From their masters, these thinkers learned that there is only Truth. These are not men who "struggle with their problem" — there is no problem and there isn't man, the one opposed to the other or only separated from the other. We would better describe them with Parmenides' own words: Being and thinking are one and the same thing. They are not torn, if this expression means that the rift sticks to them in the manner of an attribute; they are this rift. Being double is not a sickness for them, as it is for the reflective consciousness; it's their natural state.

The rift of modern man exists, because modern man is essentially his own observer, and that's why he sees this rift in the primitive thinker who, far from saying that Being is torn, teaches that, alone, the One exists. For him, the rift falls on the side of nonbeing. He speaks of it, because he can and must speak of the false. But this rift between Being and nonbeing isn't in him, and to place it in him, would distort the interpretation: he himself *is* this rift, but is only so for us, there is not in him a consciousness outside of this world which is double, being and nonbeing. He is primitive, that's to say *one* (*one* as rift): there is no category in order to understand him other than his own.

## CHAPTER IV CERTAINTY

**Negation is understood as truth's being: the true negates the false. The true is what negates, but doesn't undergo negation. Therefore the true is life's content, the positive essential, and man lives in certainty.**

1. *Introduction to the category.* — *Discourse and language.* — *The sage.* — The true and the false are recognized as inseparable. The true opposes the false, the false the true.

For the man of the true, the false is characterized by the fact that it requires the negation, that it is shaped by nonsense. But man can speak of the true only with the help of the false that he negates. His *true* doesn't *make* sense, because it *is* sense, Truth, but which, now, is determined. Everyday speaking, however, remains opposed to the negativity of the true; it succumbs to it, but it succumbs to it only because, at each moment, with each of its words, this discourse refers back to the false.

It must therefore part with this false. But discourse must also stay fastened to this false if it wants to remain discourse, if it doesn't want to disappear into *Truth* or *nonsense*, into silence<sup>10</sup>. It therefore presents itself as discourse in the world, as thought, as certainty fighting the rambling speech of men who don't know certainty, but who speak of this and that: the task of this discourse is to return what is being said in the world to the essential, and discourse's negativity becomes the process of the discovery of truth which is found in any human speech, both true and false. Discourse is pronounced in the middle of speech and there finds disciples who understand it: therefore speech is not absolutely false and contains *some* true, without which there wouldn't be the passage to discourse.

Speech is therefore recognized as a reality. But it hasn't yet become the plane on which all reality presents itself and encounters itself. Speech is not *discourse*; discourse and speech oppose each other as imminent reality and minor reality: for the first time, the

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<sup>10</sup> It can always do so; but what interests us, is discourse, that's to say the man who doesn't *want* silence.

essential is seized inasmuch as essential; there is discourse that matters, there is the rest which doesn't matter, but the two, the essential and the inessential, exist, and the truth is the property of the *sage*<sup>11</sup> who, therefore, differs from all men. His being the sage is holding [108] certitude: "Not after having listened to me, but after having listened to my discourse, it is wise to admit that all is one", exclaims Heraclitus<sup>12</sup>, whilst men live "as though they had [each separately] a thinking (πρόνησις) to themselves, even though discourse is common<sup>13</sup>." Men have all sorts of opinions, the sage possesses a discourse that is certain. In the middle of uncertain opinions, the sage proclaims the certainty that is *his* certainty, and which can become the certainty of every man.

Thus the previous category's unity between the true and the false is destroyed. The false isn't the totality of determinations, the true is no longer the unrealizable and unsayable positivity; both, in separating, no longer form a unity, but a mix. We must no longer say: the false is (inasmuch as all that *is*, is appearance and false); at present, man says: the false isn't. The teachings of the master no longer suffice: proof is necessary (not a demonstration), and this proof will be that opinion isn't, that the negation of discourse negates itself, that there is in reality only the discourse and that all other speech is nonexistent.

But this *nonexistent*, being rejected, is also recognized. Since man lives initially only in speech, it is necessary to elaborate discourse: Setting aside the false, negating it wholesale and in the absolute, is no longer enough, the true must be found in the false, since what was the domain of the false has become that of discourse. Certainty must become the heritage of all men. It is necessary *to satisfy* men, not just indicate the truth to them, not just show them a system of the false that is itself false. Their opinions must be understood not in the false they contain, but in the true they have. The sage's discourse must not remain the pure negation of every position, it must fill itself with content, it must be convincing through a teaching which will no longer be that of silence. Man must be convinced in his life, he must know where he stands at every occasion. There is the false, but there is equally the true. Only he who can have the certainty of being in the true is actually in his place in life, and he can lose this place, if he gives himself up to the uncertainty of opinion. It's in life, and not only in discourse, that the true and the false must be separated. At the depths of all speech, there is certainty, and discourse reveals it.

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<sup>11</sup> For the *category* of wisdom and its relation with the present *concept* of the sage, cf. ch. XVIII.

<sup>12</sup> Diels, *loc. cit.*, fr. 50.

<sup>13</sup> Diels, fr. 2.

2. *Category and content. — Certainty as the constitutive category of the world. — Subjectivity.* — The category of certainty resists analysis with the greatest of obstacles, precisely because the attitude is the first to be “understandable”, that is, the first of those that can be taken up by anyone at any moment at the interior of any world. Therefore the historic examples are innumerable. But instead of facilitating the explanation, they make it more arduous. It’s not a problem for the historian: everywhere where there are human documents, he finds certainty, the certainty of a cosmology, of a theogony, of a magic, [109] of a religion, of some system of values, to such an extent that certainty doesn’t interest him, since what changes — and is in this way historic — isn’t certainty, but its content. For the philosopher, the problem presents itself under an angle opposed to that of the historian. Not that the difference is to be looked for in an opposition between becoming and being, time and eternity, truths of fact and truths of reason (this is for the doctrine to establish, if applicable, these distinctions which don’t go “without saying”); the difference is constituted by the philosopher’s interest in certainty as a *category*.

Yet, being a man in history, he speaks to a historic consciousness and he must use the historian’s language in order to describe, what is, logically, anterior to all history.

The historian demands *why* certainty follows the other categories, instead of preceding them, *if* certainty truly is anterior to everything, *why*, to come back to the examples given up until now, we only now speak of myth or of magic cosmology, which are certainly more ancient and more primitive than the highly abstract thought of the Buddha or of Xenophanes, what’s more, which are its historically necessary conditions. The doctrine is very far removed from wanting to cast doubt on the sequence of facts which the historian speaks about. However, it is not the series of events that occupy him. Xenophanes is after Homer and can’t be thought without him. But Homer can’t be *understood*, that’s to say concretely: critiqued and rejected) without the category *elaborated* and made graspable in Xenophanes. So be it, the historian will say, then Homer will be understood only with the help of all the categories which are available to us (or which benefit from our understanding). We admit that; it’s even an evidence, since this is only the formal definition of understanding. And we admit it all the more willingly in the way the objection is lifted, since it thus becomes evident that logic doesn’t have an immediate relation with history: all the categories find themselves in the understanding of every phenomenon, and nonetheless logic’s task persists. The problem is misplaced: it’s one thing to find the categories, another to indicate the place where, historically, the category appears for the first time, still something else to describe the attitude that corresponds to the category. For — and herein is at the same time the response to another

possible objection — if it's true that we find all the categories in every interpretation, it's no less true that the interpretation that the interpreter gives (or that we give) of his interpretation (not of the object that he interprets), what we call his "methodological" awareness (which is, itself, a later phenomenon, for interpretations are often anterior to all self-awareness) is born and lives in a single dominant category. We will have to therefore distinguish between simple understanding and understanding understood. There is in history (we are speaking only of human history here) always an interpretation, and the question of the beginning of history (understood as the comprehension of the past) doesn't make sense. But there are not always categories *understood as the foundation of this interpretation*, not always a detached understanding as such. This is a product of reflection, and man doesn't live [110] necessarily in reflection: his attitude can be *primitive*, in the logical sense of the term, at any moment of his history. Our reflexive understanding must deal with such non-reflexive understanding.

In a word: *certainty is the category in which the world appears* (= cosmos), — *the world*, not only such and such world — the category of "worldliness". But this fact remains necessarily hidden to the category itself, precisely because the attitude is this: being at home, being in a determined world, because the category only reveals itself to the reflexive discourse of the man who neither accepts the beginning's silence, nor is certain of his world, but who lives and sees himself between chaos and cosmos. We will have to determine the point where all of certainty's content is "depreciated", without certainty however disappearing; we will have to investigate when reflection seizes this very fact: but the simple reference to future discussions suffices to make the origin of the historian's difficulty understood. Man always lives in an organized world, once he made it to the *attitude* of certainty; however, the *category* will show itself only at the moment where, in his world, he has called this very world into question. If for the discourse of the man in the world there is nothing that precedes discourse, the discourse is nonetheless not its own foundation for man — who can fall silent; in this way the attitude of certainty is historically omnipresent but is not however the first logically; the category underpins all discourse about the world (about every world), but reveals itself as such only at the moment that reflection emerges.

In certainty, man is "sure of himself". He is so —and necessarily — to such a point that it is impossible for him to say: I'm mistaken. Man can say, I've made a mistake; he can say; I will be mistaken, — which signifies: I will later be convinced of having been mistaken in this present moment which will then be passed. In the present, and for the present, error

doesn't exist: the present (barring a projection into a future that allows watching, by anticipation, the present as a past) only knows certainty.

If, however, we have the habit of asking the question of access to truth rather than that of the awareness of error, the reason for it will be that "civilized" man, "historic" man reckons with the possibility of error. He knows that he has been mistaken in the past, he fears being newly mistaken. Thus, he abstains from judgment. But, where does this sentiment of error come from, if not the opposition between his judgment and that of others? The man who is colorblind will confess that what he calls red is in truth green, because others tell him that it is so: nevertheless, he will not be able to keep himself from seeing the object in his fashion. The man who creates a false theory will be able to convince himself of the truth of another thesis: despite that, he was not less certain of his own for as long as he believed it. But we are formed by the skepticism of prudence: we can be wrong, it is therefore better to not speak of one's certainty which can reveal itself as a false and unfounded opinion; because society treats as uncouth those that don't follow this rule, or even, in serious [111] cases, places them — and rightly so — in an asylum. However, the most civilized man can't not believe what he believes, short of returning to the category of nonsense. What distinguishes him from the madman is his prudence: he doesn't act according to his conviction.

We don't have to explain at this point how this skepticism of *ἐποχή*, of abstention, is formed; it interests us only insofar as it hides the constitutive role of certainty. In any case, certainty is, properly speaking, what forms human life. Man doesn't always act by thinking — and it would be better to not require that of everyone —, but he always acts following a line of thought. The form in which that thought acts is certainty.

As elsewhere, the extreme case is again here the most instructive. Psychiatry has often described the case of certain patients whose intelligence has kept all its strength, but who use that intelligence in order to construct absurd systems. It is characteristic of these patients that they are inaccessible to any refutation of their system, without however being incapable of taking into account detailed objections to such a degree that the doctor avoids making critical remarks about them, which would be used by the patients in order to better settle into their initial certainty. One can have a sustained conversation with these madmen, up to the moment where we touch upon their idea. For themselves, they aren't crazy; they are only so to the others who don't accept their "idea"; they are regarded as geniuses or supermen if they succeed in imposing their idea on their people or their era. The madman's madness isn't in him, but in the others who put their certainty into opposition with that of

the “patient” and who keep him from being the world’s savior, because they don’t want to be saved by him.<sup>14</sup>

We wouldn’t make this category-attitude any more familiar to modern thought, if we wanted to enter into the explanation of its contents. Other categories are necessary in order to understand these, which distinguish themselves concretely, all the while placing themselves under the present category. Mythology, not that of poets, but of tribes, religions, not of theologians, but of faithful people, fatalism, not of philosophers, but of the “superstitious”, all that, in a manner practically always unconscious, guides life because it can’t be put into doubt without that life becoming another, constitutes such content. In order to be able to say that it is a matter of certainty, it is sufficient that this content distinguishes itself from other contents which appear possible but false: the true is no longer the absolute point, as with the previous category, where all that isn’t true is rejected wholesale. Truth is no longer punctual, it possesses content. For us, there are therefore several trues, but for each of these trues, all the others are false.

What doesn’t yet exist, is the putting into relation these different trues, which, for certainty, don’t coexist on the same plane. Certainty is therefore essentially limited. It is what it is — in order to speak reflection’s language, it is a for-itself that [112] has no in-itself in opposition, and we must carefully eliminate every in-itself (= for us), that is found on the side of content. Certainty is thus the origin of subjectivity, the origin, but not subjectivity itself. There is no subjectivity without certainty, but this isn’t sufficient to create that. For this *pre-subjectivity* doesn’t know objectivity as its opposite. But from the point of view of posterior categories — which ours inevitably is— we can say that certainty is, in itself, subjectivity. Because, for us, the plurality of certitudes is given and all certainty that isn’t total (that’s to say, that isn’t ours) is only a particular opinion for us. Taking content into account, we distinguish (and, at the same time, identify categorially) certainties that, for themselves, are absolutely separate and unrelated. Subjectivity, above all in the pejorative sense of the word, is characterized for us precisely by the presence of “unfounded” certainty, the sole that is at issue here. But certainty itself is so remote from any subjectivity that it would employ this word (and employs it where its content allows) in order to reject what isn’t certain: the multiplicity of contents doesn’t make sense to it, because it is itself identical

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<sup>14</sup> It isn’t question, of course, of standing up for the “unappreciated great men” that the blind and unjust society incarcerates in asylums. It is uniquely a matter of presenting the attitude corresponding to certainty.

with its content. It is, one might say, objectively subjectivity: it is the category of the world-for-man.

3. *Certainty, conversion, and violence.* — What is certain is opposed to the apparent, to what deceives, in short, to all that is a mixture of false and of true. Certainty, in order to untangle the true from the false, doesn't separate them absolutely, as the pure opposition of the true and the false does. It is certain, on the contrary, that nothing is absolutely deceptive. The man of certainty hasn't forgotten that before arriving at certainty, he lived in opinion, that he believed what others still believe, said what they say. He passed by the attitude of negation, of the negation of all discourse, and he therefore knows in the most concrete fashion that certainty and opinion must not be radically separated, if he doesn't want to renounce discourse. This is why he must take on what there is of false in opinion in order to eliminate it with the strength of the determined negation. Because, for him, there is not an absolute separation, he can hold a discourse both true and determined.

For, since he has come from the unity-opposition of the true and the false to certainty, he doesn't need a proof that shows him that the passage is possible: he has performed it. All discourse is true — in part; the task is to state what makes truth from it. For the man in certainty, everyone else can be converted to true discourse: the task is to show them that they already adhere to the truth and they are only unaware of it. Certainty is so very sure of itself that it doesn't understand that a man could not accept it; there must be something in him other than merely opinion's way of speaking, a quality that doesn't depend on his thought and his language, a stubborn and wicked *character*, a *force* foreign to his humanity, a psychic, physical, astrological *misfortune*, an evil *demon*, the *devil*: to certainty, man *must* be open to its content.

[113] What's postulated in this way — it's evident that this postulate doesn't show itself as such to the man we are speaking about — is the unity of mankind in discourse: all men have this in common, that they can accede to the truth (except those *accidents* that we have mentioned and which make a monster of the individual that they strike) and that they speak of the same thing, at least by right: certainty claims to be universal. However, it doesn't follow that, between the different contents, there be discussion; on the contrary, the man of certainty knows only one manner of behaving towards he who doesn't share his truth: if the sermon doesn't force the adhesion of his fellow man — it is still necessary that the content allows conversion —, there remains only the destruction of the infidel who, by his very obstinacy, has shown that he is man only in appearance and in reality is the most dangerous



of animals. Discussion will only later be possible. For itself, certainty is knowledge of its content, the positively determined true.

4. *The essential and being.* — The category of certainty gives birth to the concept of the essential. The essential is what constitutes certainty's content. Certainty doesn't accept everything, its work is untangling all that opinion proposes to it, and ruling out what belongs to the false. But the concept of the essential doesn't appear under this name, which implies a degree of reflection that isn't yet attained at this point. The name given to certainty is that of *being*. Certainty says: this is — or: this isn't. For certainty, it's the content's being or nonbeing that makes the difference between itself and opinion.

The word *being* — as we've said — is extremely dangerous. We have encountered it within the first category, and we have ruled it out. It could have found its place under the following titles; if we haven't introduced it, it was for the same reason, in order to escape misunderstanding difficult to avoid, considering our own historic situation. But the situation has changed, being was (or would have been) a subject; now it's a predicate, it is uttered. We could have said Being in the place of Truth, Non-being for Nonsense, and for True/False: the nonbeing of Nonbeing. Now the category says: this *is*. Therefore, since every posterior attitude, when and if it is formulated in a theory, will reprise the category of certainty, every ulterior category will be able to be read as a form of being, and being will find a determination in every category<sup>15</sup>

Certainty's being isn't the Being that corresponds to the original Truth, the Being which is the infinite field on which all that is appears. Here, *being* means *enduring*. Certainty doesn't forget that it comes out of the opinion which contains some false, which therefore *is* and *isn't*. It therefore constitutes in itself (= for us) a first form of [114] temporality: time is, for certainty, what makes opinion. Opinion *was*, certainty *is*, and always *will be*. Still, this presentation is superficial; certainty rejects its past and refuses any future: it was in error, it knows that, but it also knows that there always already was what is. It will never collapse back into the false that it penetrated. Being is eternal presence, a fundamental presence that allows the game of temporality, but which doesn't participate in it. Time is recognized, but solely recognized by negation<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Contemporary usage shows this in an extreme case: is it not currently said, among philosophers, that the being of man is the transcendence of all that is?

<sup>16</sup> It's why this category produces subjectivity in itself, not for itself. The man of certainty is a subject only for us; for himself, he is identical to the content of his certainty, because nothing can touch him and because he is sure that his certainty excludes other *possibilities*: yet, possibility is essentially temporal.

The essential *is*, that is, it *endures* — better: it's it the essential that man *endures*, that man *leaves it at that*.

5. *Science and certainty*. — *Man's orientation in the world*. — The category of certainty has contents and it determines them in creating them. Its favorite words are “always” and “everything” (no longer the “all”, which belongs to anterior categories). God is always and always present in everything, all the things are “in reality” (= forever) water, fire, matter, spirit. Man knows *something*, he no longer knows in an absolute way: science is born.

It goes without saying that this science is not what modern man calls science. But his opposition to this manner of “primitive”, “archaic”, “superstitious” thinking is this irreducible only because he opposes himself to it in the same attitude and reprising the same category. For us, on the contrary, it's important to see the profound unity between the critique and the critiqued. The man in certainty knows what is true and what is false. Yet, there is no other definition of science. Other categories can and will crop up in which man further determines himself, by which he creates other possibilities and other contents for himself. But all that he will know, he will know in certainty. This is why it is only natural that every concrete form of science declares all other science false and that for the first, the second knows nothing, but believes to know. Science in the modern sense has given itself rules according to which it chooses between convictions, rules that are certain, but certain only for its own certainty. It must acknowledge — and it acknowledges with all the bitterness of the faithful who endeavors without success to save his fellow man — that it doesn't succeed in convincing everyone, and it is with despair that it turns away from the man of bad faith (bad, because it is not its own).

Here, myth is science just as well and for the same reasons as Newtonian physics. There is no means that allows choosing between the two *objectively*: there is not yet objectivity, there is only certainty. That the sky be a bronze canopy, a tent, the hide [115] of an animal, or that it be an optical phenomenon to which no tangible reality corresponds, this doesn't make the least categorical difference. In mythical thought, the last definition is no less absurd than the first one for the astronomer. Both adversaries are shocked that absurdity can be lived in, both need to nonetheless admit that the other, in fact, succeeds in living in his fashion just as well as he does in his own. Science is in life and for life, not in the sense that we currently hold, namely, that it serves to maintain life or to allow progress: it is in and for life, because it allows man to pursue his activity with a clear conscience. It liberates him from the obligation, now intolerable, of rejecting all determination and all content.

This science gives meaning to the world. And more, it's only through it that there is a world, a *single* plurality. Before, plurality was the opposite of the unity that alone *was*. Now, plurality and unity have entered into each other. The essential is no longer the *one* that detaches itself from its *other*, forever outside of it. It is in the other everywhere, and therefore the other is never purely inessential, it is more or less so. Each thing has a sense (which means that each thing is part of the world), nothing is meaningless or valueless. Man has direction.

Of all this, the man of certainty (taken in the initial form of the attitude — for it must not be forgotten that the most complicated, most thoughtful, theory is lived, insofar as it can be, in the attitude of certainty) knows nothing. The world is not *for him*. On the contrary, for himself, he is in the world. It isn't he who, for himself, creates the world; it is the world which creates, explains, and justifies man. For himself, man is only a part of the great whole. His own value can be put into doubt; the world is absolute and the source of all value. He is for himself this or that, a lizard, a child of God, a soul. Man, who, for us has determined the world is, for himself, the creature of this world.

Hence the difficulty of understanding a man who lives in another world. What he says of his world, we allow without much difficulty. But that his life actually takes place in this world, that he interprets himself in this world, above all that he act there, seems so very surprising that ordinarily he is seen as a storyteller with a ready imagination, but who isn't more committed to his cosmic make-believe than the grandmother who tells the story of Little Red Riding Hood lives in fact with talking wolves. It's true that what man says about his world doesn't necessarily nor always correspond to his activity. The myth and the magical practice of the same man aren't each other's explanation, and the convictions of a Christian metalworker don't explain his behavior faced with a lathe to an observer. But this uniquely proves that certainty's content isn't necessarily logic (in the sense of non-contradictory logic — in fact, the logical unity of this content, if ever it is something else than an ideal, is attained only in exceptional cases) and that man is, with his contents, double, if not multiple. The interpreter will need to admit this splitting of content and not be tempted to [116] skirt around it by a reduction of contradictions which appear as such only to modern science.

It's necessary to convince oneself of it: in this sense certainty is blind, it's not critical towards itself. Its doubts concern only the details of its world, which it can't evaluate because this is the foundation and framework of all its evaluations. This, is it just? That, is it dangerous? etc., are the only questions that man asks himself, and he is certain to find the responses

he needs in order to live in his world. It's true that he doesn't have the satisfactions that he would obtain in another world, that, for example, the worlds in which the Hindu or the Iroquois live don't permit them to construct airplanes. But as long as we don't force them with violence, not only does the airplane not interest them, they don't even understand what the point of having airplanes would be. Each world fixes its goals to those that live in it, and nothing prevents this world from enduring as it is, up until the moment that a catastrophe arises from the outside that transforms or destroys it. Nothing prevents either, it's true, a determined world from being essentially a world of conscious contradictions, a world "in evolution". But it's a matter here of an infinitely more complicated question, and the category of certainty is too primitive to understand the logical meaning of what, from its point of view, can be only an irreducible fact — and which is, for us, the reprise of other categories under that of certainty.

6. *The particular categories of content.* — Man always lives in a world. This is the anthropological expression of certainty. There are no detached objects, isolated values, independent thoughts; everything is linked. Therefore, what we can call *vital categories* finds its place at this level. Admittedly, other philosophical categories will be needed in order to uncover the particular categories of such and such world through analysis: the question of knowing what the ideas-attitudes are according to which man finds his bearings and things find their place, can be asked only about a determined world. Here, it is a matter only of acknowledging that this question always finds an answer, even, and perhaps more easily than elsewhere, there where at first glance an answer appears impossible, because the unknown world seems too foreign.

To the man who lives in this world, his science corresponds to this anthropological expression (or if we prefer, this exterior view). The certainty in which he is established is a certainty with regard to his particular categories. It is in no way necessary — this is evident after what we just said — that this science be an elaborated theory. One of its forms, myth, practically never possesses the unity of formal logic: in the same people, for the same narrator, the tales contradict each other, the explanations of what is for us the same phenomenon differ, because the same animal isn't the same in all of man's activities. This merely confirms one of certainty's most important characteristics: in the man who confines himself to it, activity and theory are not separated. His science is immediately efficient, his activity [117] at any moment can be justified because every act has a meaning and all meaning acts.

This here is a relation — it would be more exact to say an identity — that we admit communally for the world of myth and magic. In fact, it is a fundamental attitude that can be taken, and is when the occasion presents itself, at every moment. And on the other hand, even in the magical world, this identification is not necessarily conscious. It is only in extraordinary situations (the sole where the situation is perceived) that we search to justify the act by myth or to make speech act. In day-to-day life everything hums along following rules that, often, only reveal themselves to the observer that has come from outside and who doesn't know them.

We would, all of us, be good and embarrassed if we wanted to halt our activity up until the moment that we had scientifically proven (with the help of modern science) that our next movement was in agreement with the theory: and it would even to be feared that this movement didn't take place, since, most likely, science wouldn't be ready to answer the question. In fact, in daily life, far from addressing oneself to the theory, we don't even ask questions. The concrete certainty according to which this naturally follows that is so strong that it isn't even felt. A failure, an unforeseen event, is needed so that it shows itself lacking. And even in this case, certainty is not shaken, because the failure is not attributed to science, but to the poor use that has been made of it. This is why science, when it expresses itself, for example, in myth, can do so only in an incomplete and inadequate fashion: it can only explain the situations in which failure is one of the essential possibilities or in which man remembers having modified daily life. In this way, it doesn't become aware of most of what makes life. The totality is visible only to the stranger who perceives it because it is other than his own. It's the Englishman who sees how the French live; in order to understand what the language that we speak is, looking at it from the point of view of a foreign language is necessary. What's the most certain, the best "known" science, is at the same time what is the farthest from consciousness: know-how. If man recognizes the essential of his world in and through his life, he isn't necessarily capable of designating it in his theory.

It seems that we thus arrive at a paradox. Man, in his science, plots out a world such that it contains situations of possible failure; in other terms, man opposes a nature that he is not always the master of to his activity. He knows nothing of this opposition in its universal form and only seizes it on a case-to-case basis. The essential for this science is therefore what, according to it, decides the result of the struggle engaged in these critical situations. But for us, as for every foreigner, this isn't all the essential, it's perhaps not the essential at all, which is situated elsewhere, in the fluent activity of daily life, for example, or in

technique, be it magic, not in the science of this certainty. Yet, if therein we see an another essential, if on the other hand the [118] essential exists only in the science of a determined world, it is evident that we have done nothing other than oppose our certainty to that of the world of which we speak. By what right? The question is asked and is shown at the same time to be insoluble: there is no impartial judge, since in this trial every judge is by definition party.

For the moment, we have only to notice this paradox. It is a fact that man lives in certainty, it is equally a fact that all men don't live in identical contents of certainty, and also a fact that these contents can enter into contact and that man can become aware of this contact, at least in certain cases, where then one certainty judges another. The question of the rights of this judgment establishes the paradox; but, for the moment, it can be put aside, and must be. For it arises only in certain cases, that is, in a world determined by categories other than that of certainty, a complex world that will be able to reprise the category of certainty, but that will also know others and which will constitute the content of its certainty only by the mediation of attitudes in which man unfastens himself from his world.

7. *Reprises*. — Certainty, as we've said, doesn't seize itself, being essentially turned towards its content. It has a discourse, but this discourse bears, as science, on its world, not on itself. Therefore, it only appears in the reprises, subsumed under other categories, seen by the attitudes-categories which precede it and which become, from attitudes, categories in encountering their *other* in it.

Yet, the categories that precede that of certainty don't possess a discourse bearing on the world; because this discourse is established on it and is logically contemporary to it. In the strict sense (that is, of discourse) there are therefore no reprises of certainty, particularly as the reprise presupposes not only the existence of a discourse of the category under which the reprise is carried out, but also presupposes, in the man who carries it out, the need to take into account the attitudes that he encounters in the world — in other words, it presupposes a double reflection (or, what is the same thing, self-awareness) which certainly, and even essentially, doesn't exist in the present category, even more so isn't understandable in the more "ancient" attitudes-categories than itself. If there are reprises, it can be a matter, consequently, only of reprises of *attitudes* or composite attitudes, in which certainty isn't immediately man's attitude, but becomes so solely by the mediation of another attitude that grabs hold of certainty and makes its own expression of it.

But that composite form, if it is no longer without discourse (which is precisely what certainty furnishes it with), doesn't always know reflection, being but attitude. Whichever side we take the reprise from, certainty doesn't feel the need to understand itself with the help of anterior attitudes — and even less so given that these others leave it in peace and that even the category of True and False doesn't oppose another science to that of certainty, but only refuses [119] it —, nor do the anterior attitudes desire such an understanding of certainty, which they ignore or simply reject in regards to its content and which is, to them, all too natural as a form of attitude for them to be able to ask about it (aside from the fact that they are perfectly incapable of asking questions).

Nonetheless, reprises of certainty exist, but they will be formed uniquely when other categories, those of reflection, have already made their appearance: these can be understood in the language of certainty — it's the rule that an attitude arrives at its pure expression, that is, at its proper category, only after having longly groping forward, always desirous of formulating itself in an already existing and thus logically more ancient discourse —, but they don't arrive there directly (we have seen that no category is more naturally hidden than the present): these are the categories that reprise certainty under anterior categories. The reprises mentioned in what follows are therefore understandable uniquely if this fact is retained: otherwise they would seem to be gratuitous constructions. To give an example, certainty in this way can be lived as Truth. The world is known, nothing is incomprehensible, everything is in its place, everything shows itself as it is "in truth", not as this or that, that is, as this *and* that, a mixture of false and of true, but reveals itself in the whole and as whole. This is the flash in which the Plato of the Seventh Letter seizes the source of all being and all good. Man holds truth, he is reconciled with the world that Being takes back into its breast. Here it is evident why this reprise can't be direct. It produces itself only after the separation of man with his world. However, in this reconciliation, it's a really a matter of a reprise of certainty under Truth that allows the latter to reappear.

## CHAPTER V DISCUSSION

**Certainty can affirm its content against another certainty only by the violent destruction of this other certainty. There where the use of violence is excluded men regulate their shared life by means of a formally united language: they discuss.**

1. *The man deprived of certainty. — The master, the State.* — The *content* of concrete certainty forms and founds the human community in the eyes of its members. For every man, there is only one community, and originally this community does not oppose itself to others, but is absolutely unique: what appears, for us, as *another* community doesn't exist as such for the man of certainty, and the members of this "other" community are, to his eyes, only enemies with whom determined relations can be established, if such is the concrete form in which he lives, but whose dealings can't lead to a community of communities. There is only struggle or separation, because each of these contents is, in the literal sense of the term, incommensurable with the other.

Therefore only violence can break the resistance of the content and only struggle can put two "ways of life" face to face: the man in certainty, even if he understands the foreigner's language, will not understand what the other says, who for his part doesn't speak to him, but makes himself at most heard by him. Therefore, the ordinary outcome of a struggle is the disappearance of one of these two contents which have confronted one another, and the victor, if he doesn't kill his adversary, either will treat him as a domestic animal, a beast with a human face (man-footed, = ἀνδράποδον) who has no language, no gods, no science, or will impose his own certainty on him.

Philosophy isn't looking to know how this schema has been translated in historical reality: it matters little that one tribe subjugates another, or that, among a certain number of families contained and formed into a coalition by exterior pressure, the one prevails over the others, or that slave dealing becomes the continuation of banditry by other means, in a word, of knowing in which manner the *foreign master* establishes himself. It is nothing other than



this very fact that is important for philosophy, since it is with this fact that a situation is born which forces man to the desertion of concrete certainty. For the men who now live under the domination of another, [122] individual or group, are obliged to take their master's certainty into account. It's not necessary that they forget their own, nor that they participate in the master's, even though these cases are frequent in history (it is clear that they don't present an interest for us); but in any case, they can't not take what their master considers as essential and true into account. What's more, subjects among themselves, of different origin and life, can no longer decide on their *otherness* through force and, outside of renouncing language, they can't not enter on equal footing into relationships. Their simple *otherness*, their existence, incommensurable and without contact, changes itself into *difference* in a *common existence*: there is no longer *content* there are *contents*, and since there are many and because none among them can prove itself, there is no certain content, but only the form of content, and certainty survives as a simple memory or ideal, as the desire for a certain and concrete content.

The master — as Hegel has shown — doesn't enter into this community. This is why he ends up being deposed, either because his subjects, struggling in his place with nature or against the adversaries of the group, finish by taking power, or because he himself is content to enjoy his certainty filled with a concrete content and, satisfied and contemptuous, allows his subjects to live as they see fit. But for these subjects, there is no satisfaction that seems natural to them: they have lost their worlds and they find themselves again, each of them, isolated in their solitude, bound among themselves by a link that they view as exterior, even at the moment where there is nothing above them other than the *State*, that is, the form of their community for all of them and no longer a foreign master.

Yet, this state that they experience as a limitation of their desires, they understand it as the greatest of goods: the return to their ancient life is forbidden to them and, although they know their present community as a form of life that is imposed upon them, they know that in losing it they would lose everything: every man is for himself, in the two meanings of the expression, and since for each there is only himself, he finds himself empty and unsatisfied, all the while admitting that, without the State, they would only be objects.

It is in this dissatisfaction that the individual knows himself as an individual, an individual in the State, but an isolated individual for himself. He is looking for satisfaction, though he can't but look for it in the only way that he knows how, in the master's fashion such as he sees it, in pleasure, that is, in power and in riches. Yet, he has understood that he will be able to obtain and keep this satisfaction only on the condition that it is accorded to

him by others: he can't struggle against all of them who, this he knows well, desire and fear what he desires and fears himself. He will be content therefore with his share, all the while looking to make it as large as possible: if, in his heart of hearts, he considers himself worthy to succeed the master, the reality of his existence has taught him that he must make his competitors recognize his claim and that he will succeed only to the extent that he will be able to make the others believe that, in looking for his advantage, he is working for theirs.

This new desire is however far from abolishing the ancient concrete [123] certainty in all its elements: on the contrary, large sections of the old edifice rest standing and endure; but these parts resist only because they are no longer important to the new community, which doesn't care that much about knowing what the individual "believes" or "thinks", as long as his "personal" convictions don't menace the peace and unity of the State. It may even be that a sort of ersatz antique knowledge springs forth, a product of the fusion of ancient rules, recipes, and rites. But this "state religion", this "official doctrine" is characterized precisely by its sacred and official character, admitting by this very fact that it no longer forms life's content, that it is a thing accepted and which can therefore be rejected like it was introduced: it no longer governs existence, it must govern it, and the individual is brought to heel to it as he is to the State itself. Its role is no less important, but it is a *role*, understood as such by the whole world and as one that can be taken away, because this ersatz exists for man as an exterior object: it isn't life, at the most it gives life form.

2. *The passage to discussion as a free act in a determined situation.* — It is important to correctly mark the character of this passage to the present attitude. This passage isn't "philosophical": it is violent. Man doesn't go *necessarily* from the unconsciousness of certainty to the consciousness of the new attitude, from the in-itself to the for-itself. If it's correct that he can't grasp what is not in his reach, it doesn't at all follow that he must grasp what he possesses. Man comes to the for-itself in leaving the in-itself, and since this very movement is visible only once the point of view of the for-itself is attained, the covered stages and their order seem necessary: but they are only so *ex parte post*. A philosophy that constructs itself as necessary sees a necessary history behind it, a unilinear history in which every form finds its place (at the price of a "reduction to the essential" which is a function of the unique line), but is of value only as a stage. That in reality this "stage" is not content with the role that we intend for it, that it insists on enduring, that it dares to exit linearity in order to form a framework of life that perseveres and, perhaps all the while maybe having its own chronology, is genuinely out of step with that history, this is in the eyes of this

philosophy an error, what's more, it's a crime, which is avenged, in the long run, by the defeat of this form under the force of the form, philosophically posterior and therein superior. Yet, what is thus seen as proof is in reality the starting point of the theory: if the "posterior" form hadn't overcome the "anterior", it would not exist as posterior, but would have been a vain and short-lived attempt at revolt. Victory proves nothing, it is before proofs; without it, there would not be this system in which we have the need of proofs, in which we look for them, and find them because we look for them. This is why the philosophical pretense of proving the necessity or the justice of the victory can't rest on this same victory from which it historically takes its origin — and we won't insist on the misinterpretation that there is in naming victory what we transform at the same time [124], by the deduction, into a necessary event. It is true that a form of life, which is ours, took precedence over all others and that it seems at the point of imposing itself everywhere with an irresistible force. But this *refutes* nothing and no one. It is also true to say: if our history has a sense, it couldn't be any other way. But we must not forget that in this way we have stated a hypothetical truth, we must not delete nor pass over in silence the fact that at every moment of our history, men can deny and do effectively deny the antecedent of the affirmation. In other words, *ex parte ante* the way out of the struggle isn't certain and the victory isn't necessary but is truly victory. The struggle isn't between ideas but between men, between groups that live with and in these ideas — except in the case of discussion, which is that of a certain community, of *civilization* in the Eighteenth-Century French sense (of *civis*). But other forms of life exist and live on, to such an extent that there is no place for discussion between us and those that live in these forms of life: for them, we are nothing more than "foreigners", capable of winning, but not of winning them over.

It is therefore a leap that leads from certainty to discussion, not a passage made possible by mediation, and this leap takes place in highly determined conditions. It could have not come to pass; once it had taken place, it is extremely difficult to see that it was free, that man, for example, could have refused to abandon the struggle and that he could have preferred to die, or that the community could have been dispersed, its former members reabsorbed into communities with other contents. All of this has happened and happens still. Once, in Greece, the master disappeared without finding a successor, and it was the contrary that happened, and discussion was born: birth, not becoming. Admittedly, discussion is not fully flourished at the moment of its birth, it unfolds, it has its own history. But in order for it to unfold, it must be. Let's state it more simply: discussion is a category and consequently is irreducible. We don't understand it, we understand through it; and the man who lives in

the attitude of discussion, who therefore, because he can't oppose it to a posterior category (even in a reprise of the latter under that of discussion), doesn't understand it as a category, but understands everything with it and no longer understanding the certainty he has just left, in what it is for itself, transforms this into an ideal and establishes it as a goal of the discussion. For us, its appearance is a fact, the most important fact of history such as we read it, because it constitutes the starting point of this history (the necessary condition, not the sufficient condition).

3. *Trial before the community. — Right and property. — The struggle of interests and discussion's procedure. — Discussion and tradition.* — Man in the attitude of discussion is man who talks, that is, who speaks to another so that the other responds to him and who is sure that the other, every other, has the same desire. Struggle is forbidden, this struggle so much more ancient than language that it is the common attitude of man and beast (the man who prefers [125] struggle is *brutal*). These men have left the isolation of Truth, the speaking of nonsense that destroys itself, the sermon of the true-and-false, the discourses of certainties that are all mutually impermeable. They can and they must speak, each in order to impose "his point of view" on the other. For us, they live in a community, that of the State; them, they see themselves as individuals opposed to one another by their interests, but who can and must speak, one *with* the other, one *against* the other.

In this way their discourses no longer exist side-by-side, they touch. For each, it is a matter of being right such as he is, in what he is, for himself, in his private interest. Yet, what he is for himself, this is determined by the content of his certainty, and there is no content here other than that of his own superiority. But this superiority can't express itself naturally, brutally, through violence; the individual can no longer take what he desires, do what he wants, because he has learned that he would have all the others against him, and that he would therefore drive himself to ruin: he must demonstrate his right.

Therefore it is in no way surprising that, historically, the discussion starts before the secular, civil tribunal. There where certainty hasn't been shaken, there is no trial. The thing is to one or to another, the action is allowed or forbidden; when we don't know, God, the fates, the inspired king, will tell us. But this certainty no longer exists. Those that decide are men just like the others, like the parties. It is over them that it is necessary to prevail, even more than over the enemy. The discussion is only in appearance carried out with the other, in reality, it addresses itself to the judges. It is necessary to struggle and to overcome, but it is no longer a direct struggle between the two adversaries, it is decided on before and by the

community.

It is necessary to be right, this means therefore: it is necessary to be master through language. The shared reality, the reality of the community, is speech. Previously, in certainty, everyone spoke “as a single man”; now, each speaks for themselves. Yet speaking for oneself is saying that its understood that only speaking is truly shared because the community throws out he who doesn’t limit himself to speaking in his dealing with this community and his fellow citizens. But each can try to obtain the satisfaction of his desires, namely, a place as similar as possible to that of the master and which spares him the effort and procures for him the enjoyment of goods. He will succeed at that however, only to the extent that the others grant him what he is looking for. In front of everyone, he will need to be right when facing against each person, he will need to prove that such goods belongs to him, not to another, that such obligation falls to the opposing party, that he, to the exclusion of his rival, can and must direct, distribute, decide. The proceedings before the tribunal, the council, the assembly gives him the occasion and the means to make recognized his *right*.

In itself, this world is that of ownership and the civic function of ownership. Man without possessions is not a citizen, at least he is not fully so. He is not a *good man* because he wasn’t able obtain his share of what was anciently a common good or at least at the disposition of the initial occupant, and on the other side because, possessing nothing, he can at any instant reprise [126] the violent struggle, having nothing to fear and everything to hope for from the destruction of the established order. The citizen is an owner, and as such is a civil servant, because ownership is the basis of civil function and because it is by this alone that man is bound to the working community that had been founded by the master. However, the importance of ownership for function and the importance of function for ownership respond to one another. Inasmuch as member of the authority that decides, inasmuch as magistrate who directs and distributes, the citizen is the representative of the community, and as such he disposes of, in turn, the ownership of all, since he forms and applies the *right*. Being rich and being powerful are two of the citizen’s goals, and one is not reached without the other: without “means” he will not acquire power, without this he will not keep those.

Yet, the man who knows his world as a world of ownership is for himself a speaking being. It is as such that he can exercise influence over the others in order to get them on his side in the discussion with his rival. It’s up to him to find the correct discourse, that which makes the others agree that he is right. *Agree that he is right*: the question isn’t to demonstrate his right, in the sense that the community living in certainty had understood this word,

as a hidden entity, maybe difficult to discover, but which, once found, is immediately evident and decisive. Here the right is made by man, it belongs to he who the others have *agreed* is right. The old right has lost its strength; there is no longer a god who speaks to the people or who inspires the king. The ancient decisions live on, but they are no longer sacred, nor immutable; men made them, men can unmake them. There are no longer fixed rules, everything is possible, provided that the others consent, that they be convinced, and they can be convinced, because nothing is forbidden.

It is therefore language that is everything and that makes everything: it suffices to speak better than the adversary, to speak as one must, little matter the content. Admittedly, men, for as long as they are not personally interested in the determined dispute, ignore this and don't want to admit it, since they can't live outside certainty; they cling to what they have left, the usage, the right, the gods, honor. Therefore it would be ungainly to throw in their face that all this is no longer but a memory. The struggle must not be named at the interior of the community; it can be spoken openly about only in the conflicts that oppose one community to another, there where brutal struggle is admitted. At the interior of the city, struggle is the secret that all possess and that all silence: the citizen claims to be moved by the unique interest of the community, by the interest of all; his value consists in his utility for them. Consequently, if he wants to convince them, he must demonstrate to the others that he maintains the tradition, that he defends the peace, that he is a good citizen, and that, on the contrary, his adversary wants to overthrow the law, employ violence, harm all the citizens, that at least he is a useless member. But as the other has the same interest as the first and possesses the same recipe, the decision, the choice that the others must make between the two depends uniquely on the technique of discourse. He who will make himself heard, and be able to keep his rival from being heard, will carry the day, either that he will make a fool of him and [127] make him appear as a man of whom we can hope of nothing serious, or that he will make him a suspect person that is capable of returning to violence.

So the others choose. But they are not only *the others*, the neutral. They are also, each for himself, men who can be dragged into the struggle, they are citizens, that is, men essentially interested in the community not being broken by violence. Yet, if it is the most able who is *right*, the least able will be tempted to take his *right* by force. It's in this way that the others understand that their decision is not sufficient, since the pure and simple decision risks provoking a revolt. Their agreement with one of the adversaries would exclude the other from the community and would destroy the community in regards to that other: he too must be convinced, above all him. The two adversaries must speak to one another, talk

between themselves; the community can and must be content to fix the rule that they will have to observe in order to bring things to an end. It will then be able to limit its intervention: it only imposes the rule, and it is the rule that decides, because the rule binds the judges just as much as the parties.

This rule will be a rule of procedure that will allow seeing what each of the adversaries wants deep down and which in this way keeps the community from letting itself be fooled. For this, a sole means, which is to force each to say everything: the adversaries will have the right to question and the obligation to respond. The opposition between particular interests so revealed will expose what the community's interest is in their dispute. It isn't enough that the discourses of the one and the other square off; to the eyes of the community, their content is the same, namely, the absolute value of the individual for himself. This is not what interests it. In order to be able to reconcile the parties by making a decision, the others must oblige them not only to reveal their opinion of themselves, but to take a position one regarding the other, to talk before them: as for the individual, language was the only means of winning the consent of the community, it is also the only one that the community possesses in order to reconcile particular interests so as to maintain its own unity and to decide between adversaries to the best of its own interests.

The rule of procedure is therefore established in sight of the common Good. But in reality this Good itself is the subject of the discussion: since there is no longer a common content of certainty, there are not truly common decisions, and the judges' votes, whatever they say and think, will be the votes of individuals, of whom each has content only in the entirely formal certainty of his own absolute value. In this way the discussion becomes general; each individual is in discussion with all the others, and since there is not a community founded on a common content, the possibility of violent struggle isn't eliminated but only pushed back by the fear that each has that the others will form a union against him: the discussion engages the community and each individual, it continues as though the struggle for the mastery of the community could explode at any moment. Therefore it is without end, as the Good, instead of deciding, becomes what's at stake in the discussion that nothing guides, except the rule of procedure which, for as necessary as it is, isn't sufficient. There is the law, but it must be [128] applied; there is the tradition, but it must be interpreted: nothing that we can't draw from its part, nothing that isn't subjected to discussion. It's the world of language, in which the individuals are looking for mastery of the community through language, where all is won or lost through language, where nothing exists for man except insofar as it shows itself in language; the community is community only because it limits the

struggle to language, power is recognized as power only because it makes itself recognized through language, the foundation of power and of participation in the community, ownership itself, depends on language. Language alone allows deciding, and the discussion of all the individuals with and against all individuals is the unique law and the life of this community, where each mistrusts every other and where language alone possesses the trust of all.

Nothing is therefore established before being formulated. For us, who see that this discussion is only the form taken by the struggle at the interior of a community that is no longer in certainty, this affirmation is of an evident insufficiency. For all this, it doesn't cease being that of the man in this attitude; for the real content of the attitude doesn't exist for this attitude and announces itself only in the contradiction between personal interests and the *tradition*, a contradiction that makes up the supreme danger for a community that fears only its disintegration by brutal struggle and who sees its concrete unity in this common tradition. Therefore it is from the tradition that discussion starts. However, at each point it is sufficient that a single individual ask a question or expresses his dissent in order that this specific point of the tradition must be discussed. There is always a common point between adversaries, a point from which they both leave in order to head off into different directions, a start of discussion (ἀρχή, *principium*). But this start can be pushed further and further back, since all that is fixed in language is exposed to contradiction, and the discussion that lives on the ground of the tradition devours it.

This is why it never installs itself without meeting resistance. The man living in the tradition (that is, who, for his decisions, relies on the leftovers of the antiquated science or on the orders of the ancient master) doesn't willing come to discussion. He will try to cling to this tradition, all the more forcefully given that he senses what little solidity is left in a community of the non-violent struggle of interests. But, no more than his adversary, does he allow the struggle (if he allows it, he remains in certainty or he oversteps discussion), and in this way he will have to prove he is *right*. He doesn't understand that in this manner he yields to his adversary and that, in reality, he has deprived the tradition of its sacrosanct nature by the very fact that he wants to *demonstrate* the tradition's *rights*: if he wants to reform the community in leading it back to the tradition, he must convince the citizens by the very means which have served to win them over; it is necessary that he also makes himself strong in the science of demonstration, and the discussion will finish by carrying the day.

4. *Contradiction and formal logic. — The specialist of discourse. — Socrates and the formally coherent discourse.* — This [129] language of discussion isn't part of the world, as was the case of the discourse of certainty, when the word, alike to all that exists, possessed



its strength and its effect. Language is no longer natural, it is human; in other words, it comes from man and goes towards man; it is only on man that it works, only it must have an effect on man. In order to know what is and what he is, man must study language, which has become for him, not the unique reality, but the unique plane on which he can seize reality. Or rather, it is not a plane, something passive which allows any form to emerge from it according to its proper laws. In truth, language gives being to the forces which, without it, would be neither visible nor efficient and which can enter into reality only provided that they submit to language's own laws.

Consequently, sticking to language is sufficient to know what stance to take concerning all that is encountered in the world — to language, the reality of the community, not the speaking of the one and of the other, who make use of language to their own ends and who in this way contradict themselves. Language is not only the being of man (for us), it is all that is for man. The world is revealed to him in language, and the laws characteristic to language don't govern language alone, they are the laws of the world: if the world shows itself in discussion, it's because speaking purifies itself there to become language, and that the contra-diction eliminates the interest of individuals allowing the pure identity of words to remain in the identity of their relations.

“This is that”, here is the type of relation between words, relation between things, and the response of the adversary must be “This is not that”. In the world of certainty, it would have been: “It's another such thing”; but now men talk with one another, and certainty's speakings are incommensurable. Here, it is a matter of being able to decide; it is necessary to ask the question in such a way that it can be answered by a *yes* or a *no*. Yet, the question springs up from contradiction, there where intentions are in opposition; there is in fact only one question: is it good to do this?

But how to answer this question? Where is the good, where is the bad? And even if we knew, how to know that the path we offer will lead there? There are only the laws of language in order to answer that: it is necessary that the community endure in its unity, that all pursue the same goal by the same path, it is necessary that the contradiction of intentions be eliminated. Yet, since we can't see at first glance whether or not contra-diction will appear in the middle of this path, it is necessary to look for the consequences before giving one's consent to the project (pro-ject). Thus the interest turns itself towards a new goal. The “this is that” teaches us nothing; it is merely good enough for setting the starting point of discussion, for allowing it to take off. In order to bring it to a close, another relation is essential: *if* this is that, it follows that... and from there that...: language allows anticipating. One thing

possesses a quality, another thing the same quality: is it this quality that matters? We can indiscriminately take one thing or the other. Any other thing that doesn't have it is to be rejected; because *if* I want *this*, and *if* I can obtain it only by *that*, it's necessary that I obtain *that* first. He [130] who doesn't want to admit that is in error. We can and we must start by limiting the meaning of the terms, set an end to their tendency to broaden, define them; after, we will research the ways in which their combining is fruitful (from λόγος to συλλογισμός, to which is opposed the παραλογισμός of λόγοι which don't meet).

It has often been noted that of all the sciences, logic is the emptiest, the least “interesting”. The principles of identity, of contradiction, of the excluded middle are too obvious, the rules of the syllogism too natural in order to set interest. This is true for us, yet we don't live in a world of discussion. There where truth is and is only non-contradiction, where the sole means of seeking it is demonstration, there is only one unique science, this logic that we call formal, because for us something else, a “reality”, a “heart”, etc..., is added to it, is opposed to it. We speak of *something*, and this something for us is (in our normal attitude — it is not a matter of epistemological theories here) independent of our words. Or in order to consider the same difference from another point of view, we live in a world which is not in essence political: it is not a question of being right, but of doing something. It is not any different *in* the world of discussion. But *for* this world, doing something important, is being right. Socrates says nothing else when he affirms that virtue could be taught and that vice is an error; the shock that determines Plato's entire life (and which made him go beyond discussion) takes place when he is forced to observe the community kill this man that was right. For, in fact, the community is in search of the Good, the Good is brought about by virtue — everyone agrees with this — Socrates, the first, the only, led the discussion about virtue to its conclusion: how could he be condemned to death, he, who alone had understood discussion? He knows that logic (or the dialectic), the science of language and of discussion, is *the* new science, not only another current, which, without having existed beforehand, would be added, such as a tributary, to the existing science of certainty; it destroys and replaces this ancient, pre-logic, science, which was the property of individuals in a personal capacity: the king's science, the blacksmith's science, the hunter's science the priest's science. The new science, born from the death of the content of certainty, interests the citizen as such (in the world of discussion, this signifies: man as man). It isn't transmitted, it doesn't require initiation, it is taught. For it, there is no master, there are specialists and professors. Everyone can attend to it, it's not up to anybody in particular, and anyone can do research in this

domain where any discovery ends up being at everyone's disposal and can be used by all. Science is no longer the property of this or that person, it is accessible to everybody. This is why everyone leaves it in the hands of specialists, who put it at the disposal of all those who can't do without it, the citizens. It is developed by specialists in order to become everybody's science: everybody discusses, the specialist discusses the discussion.

Socrates' case is perhaps the best illustration that we can [131] find of the attitude of discussion as well as the difficulties that are put in opposition to its understanding<sup>17</sup>. The portraits that have been drawn of him since antiquity barely resemble one another, the roles that he is made to play only line up with difficulty. However, all the authors are unanimous about one point: Socrates discusses and he does nothing but that; he doesn't teach anything, for he doesn't possess certainty, he doesn't learn anything, because the others don't possess certainty either. He is looking for a technique: since the agreement can be found only through discussion, it is necessary that this discussion can be brought to a close. And this technique is developed on the basis of a principle, of an utterance accepted by everyone, namely, that man wants to be content, in other words, that he is looking for the good, because the good is what makes man content. Socrates is therefore actually a revolutionary (from the tradition's point of view), a sophist, that is, a technician of discussion "without convictions", a logician inasmuch as the inventor of laws that govern language, a perfect citizen who wants the community to be a perfect reality, a moral man who cares only about the Good. His accusers are right, just as Aristophanes, Aristotle, Plato, and Xenophon are. The differences between them arise out from the fact that the former haven't yet reached the plane of discussion and the latter have already surpassed it. For Socrates himself, there is only one unity, a unity that we can reach only through the demolition of strata that have been superposed since our world ceased to be that of discussion, a unity that he lives directly. He is the adversary of a tradition whose bearers don't know how to justify themselves, of rhetoricians who appeal to the particularity of interest or of habit, of the other *sophists* to the extent that they don't go far enough in their research and don't pursue this technique of discussion that they promise to their students, of the seditious who put their profit — or what they believe to be — at the place of the unique interest of the community, of the dissolute who forget that they are men uniquely because they are reasonable, that is, because they speak. Hence his total lack of

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<sup>17</sup> It is nevertheless necessary to observe that Socrates, from the moment that he explains what he does, doesn't stay in the framework of what he does, but reprises (inevitably) anterior categories.

understanding in the face of what we call unwillingness. Man discusses, either with another, or with himself, by splitting himself into a man of tradition and a man looking for an agreement<sup>18</sup>; the pursued correctly discussion leads to conviction; and that's all, nothing else is necessary: we can't imagine a man who wants to be in opposition with the Good on purpose; in other words, who is looking for his misfortune. Socrates, it is said, did away with everything that is not reason. We would be hard pressed to find a more extraordinary anachronism: he did away with nothing there where, before the discussion of which he is the representative, there was nothing. If we wanted to criticize him, it would be necessary to reproach him for having discovered reason only, for not having found all that reason is going to find.

[132] Aristotle<sup>19</sup> establishes the assessment of Socrates' work; he invented the definition and the inductive method. A unilateral assessment, as we have seen, but nonetheless correct, inasmuch as he summarizes under these two headings the results of the Socratic effort for science: the *term* must be definite, that is, limited, and since this limitation can't be made without the help of other terms, it must be put in relation with other words, in the end, with all the other words; and this *definition* is correct, if it applies in all the cases where the word, according to everyone's use, is where it belongs. Here is what Socrates did according to the second generation of his successors. We see that this appreciation converges well enough with our feelings in the face of formal logic: Aristotle's world and horizon are no longer those of the Age of Pericles. But if Aristotle has gone beyond this world (and Plato with him), it's thanks to Socrates. It's that Socrates, in reducing discussion to the definition, and through induction, to the coherence without contradiction, broke its ties with the tradition and establishes the community as the unique value. He is, for Plato, the great and fierce opponent of the sophists; but it isn't because he is opposed to their radicalism: he reproaches them for not having gone far enough. Their discourse appeals to convictions, in other words, it lets in the tradition in order to use it without believing in it; it appeals to beliefs, feelings, passions. Their language is the speech of certainty in decomposition, which acts as though the tradition were still certainty, but which is understandable only by admitting that all that is left conventional tradition. They are in discussion, but they don't understand it, and the necessity of discussing the discussion escapes them; they are looking only for an advantage, not the Good; they want progress in the City, not the progress of the City. They are the agents

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<sup>18</sup> It is not yet a question of the *interior* discussion between passion and reason (cf. *infra*, n° 5, pp. 133 ss.). For the moment, it's a matter of a practical reflection, where man anticipates the argument of a possible adversary, representing another interest or, at least, the common interest of non-contradiction.

<sup>19</sup> Arist., *Metaphysics*, A 6, 987 b, 1 sq.

of decomposition, *because* they are not revolutionaries. Socrates has only one thing to bring: the discussion in view of the Good. It may be that he doesn't succeed immediately, it is even probable that the answer is situated at a very great distance. But he knows the path, and he can demonstrate that there is no other, because every other attempt would destroy the very possibility of an agreement. It's necessary to be able to reach an agreement, and the sophists are unable to do so, because they don't ask all the questions or, to reprise Aristotle's words, because they don't proceed by definition and induction, which alone — as much indispensable as exclusive — can lead to an end in agreement, and because, on the other hand, they don't understand that the unique object of discussion is the Good, whether it be called City, Virtue, or Wisdom. For Socrates, and since Socrates, there is the idea of science in the modern sense of the word, formal science, but also the ideal towards which all activity of the mind that claims not to be particular, but to convince man insomuch as a pure member of the community is directed. Socrates discovers the possibility of formally coherent discourse in language.

The laws of language (or of thought) that have emerged over the course of this Socratic research are therefore valid for everybody, and, [133] since there is no knowledge that be sheltered from inquiry and since there is no authority, the research which aims at the Good is revolutionary: the community that wants to cling to the tradition has no content and scatters, because each, tugs this tradition on his side, pursues what he believes to be to his advantage without any preliminary examination. Man must therefore understand that he can be satisfied only through reason and through language (λόγος), not in his personal being, but as a universal element of the community, as a thinking individual.

“All men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal” — the regular criticism of this syllogism is as easy as it is inappropriate to its true meaning. That the major premise not be true if the conclusion isn't, that Socrates must be mortal in order to assert that all men are, this is exact. But the argument neglects the importance of the minor premise: Socrates can be a man or not; the minor premise says that he is; therefore he is mortal. In other words, it is not a matter of knowing if all men, taken one by one, are mortal, but if all beings have the right to the predicate “man”. Or: if Socrates was not mortal, it wouldn't follow that there are men who are not mortal, but only that Socrates isn't a man. The criticism starts from the idea of an induction by an observation of objects; but for the discussion, the object is not yet opposed to language. The syllogism is formal: You say that all men are mortal and that Socrates is a man, consequently, you must admit that he is mortal. Yet of

Socrates inasmuch as this, we can say nothing; we can assert something uniquely of Socrates inasmuch as a man. The induction itself is logic on this plane: you apply the same predicates to two individuals; therefore, to the extent that you make use only of these predicates you must allow that I treat these two as one and the same thing, that I apply the same common noun to them. The question of the agreement between the utterances and the facts (of a material truth) does not arise, because it cannot arise on the plane of discussion, where the contradiction alone can refute<sup>20</sup>—

*De jure*, language is therefore the world, it alone reveals truth; only what can be said without contradiction and all that can be said in that way is true, that is, received from the community and obligatory for all just as for each. The world will be justified, the Good reached, when language is that of each and every one: discourse without contradiction, life without violence.

5. *Man opposite the world. —The individual, reason and virtue.* — Man sees himself<sup>21</sup>— in the world as a reasonable individual, which [134] means first of all that, for the first time, he no longer sees himself as a species. In all the previous attitudes, man is at the center for us only; for himself, precisely because he is at the center, there is only the world, the world where man finds himself but doesn't come across himself: there is Truth, Nonsense, etc... which constitutes the Whole, and in the Whole there is no particular place for man. Even in certainty, which nonetheless organizes his world, and where man ascribes himself a role in which he is irreplaceable, each thread of the great cloth is equally indispensable. Man is to be explained as part of the world, and looks at himself only as a function of the organized All, perhaps an eminent function, but a function amidst others.

Plato's Socrates expresses the difference with a perfect precision (and there is nothing against this being a citation), when he complains of the disappointment that he felt at reading a book by Anaxagoras<sup>22</sup>. Anaxagoras speaks of reason, and Socrates expects an explanation of the world by way of the Good. But he encounters "things like air, stones, waters and a great number of other absurdities" as causes, just as if someone had said that all of Socrates'

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<sup>20</sup> Hence importance of the sophisms that play such a role in the world that discusses and which appear to us in most cases as simple play on words. "What we haven't lost, we still have; you haven't lost any horns; therefore you have horns." It is of a childlike simplicity to notice that the major premise is false. But it isn't a matter of true or false: if we allow that... and if we allow that... it's also necessary to allow the conclusion — and the adversary is caught.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. what has been said on the subject of Socrates, p. 131. n° 1.

<sup>22</sup> Platon, *Pheado*, 97 b sq.

actions were determined by reason, and then swerved into an explanation of these actions based on anatomical facts that allow the execution of the required movements: Anaxagoras' reason is merely a force amidst the others at the inside of the world; the world doesn't become a human world, an understandable world, a world for man in relation to it. Man is understood by the intermediary of the world, and not the world by man. — It is clear that Socrates is unfair to Anaxagoras. Anaxagoras doesn't at all feel the need to understand a world that is neither foreign nor strange to him, just as he sees no necessity in understanding himself, in Socrates' fashion, in his actions, which have their place in this world and are understood because they are therein understood. But Socrates is looking for an explanation by way of the Good, for the world just as well as for himself; the old world no longer is, and man no longer knows his place. The content of his certainty has become formal: there is a world, there is himself who is looking for his place; but all that he knows is reduced to the formal knowledge of the formal unity of the world, and of the postulate of his own unity inasmuch as he looks to live that unity.

Man is reasonable, or he has a reason: it is in this way that the content of his certainty is expressed for the man of discussion. Language is such that the discussion can conclude in an agreement. Man can trust language, because language doesn't lead to contradiction, because it is reasonable. Man is man — and not animal — only to the extent that he participates in this reason. And he no longer participates in it to the extent that he is this here or that there, or that he is looking *to be right* in his desire, but to the extent that he *possesses reason*, that he expresses what each can and must say, where he is universal. It is inasmuch as universal that he is a thinking individual: individual and indivisible because element of discussion, he plays his role [135] uniquely as a member of the community of discussion. Reason is not different between individuals, since the meaning of discussion is exactly that of making contradiction disappear; the differences are of the order of facts, unjustified and unjustifiable; they exist only at the beginning of discussion, and are then eliminated through shared work, the realization of reason. In his essence the individual is not *a man*: he is *man*.

Thus, man finds himself split in two and reflected in himself. He *finds* himself exactly as he *finds* another man, or another thing, an unknown fact, which has not undergone the trial of discussion, which affirms or negates with motives that are far from being universal and don't even claim to be. And at the same time, he knows himself to be he who must and wants to eliminate this character of fact, he knows himself reasonable and judges; what's more, he wants for himself to be only reason, to be universal, and he is worried and troubled

by this strange animal that claims to be himself, and that he can't let be right, because this other refuses discussion and doesn't even speak the language of reason, but that of thoughtless interest, of passion, of the passivity which accepts itself such as it finds itself. The man that he wants to be for himself finds himself caught in another that he doesn't want to be: he must shake off this other in order to become himself. There is a moral, and there is only one moral. The world doesn't interest him; 'the sites and the trees don't want to teach me anything, but only the men in the town'<sup>23</sup>. The science of the working world and of the master lives on; but it would be beneath him to learn it: being a doctor, a cobbler, or a maker of discourse, this would turn him away from his goal; this knowledge can bring him nothing by way of its content, but only by the fact that it is knowledge, that is, that in each of these limited domains the discussion is terminated, and agreement met, the Good known or recognized. However, the cobbler is reasonable only as long as he stays cobbler, and the best of the artisans can be the worst of the citizens, because he doesn't reason inasmuch as a reasonable individual, but as a particular: he is not virtuous, accepts himself as he finds himself, as man, he is only a part of the world, incomprehensible for himself as for the others, an animal that doesn't think.

It is discussion that liberates man from his particularity, that leads him towards himself, towards virtue and the Good: he can't be himself without being virtuous. From the moment that he is reasonable, he is no longer anything other than a member of the community, than citizen, that is, virtuous. He isn't looking for passion's advantage, he is looking for that of the reasonable individual. There is therefore no moral *obligation* for man, if this word is taken in its exact meaning; otherwise it would be necessary to assume that passion was seen as an essential part of his being. Yet, for the man of discussion, it is only an accident. Knowing what he is suffices for his being to shake off this dead weight that is no more natural to him than shackles are to a prisoner. An obligation could exist for a compound [136] being, but the reasonable individual will follow virtue from the moment that knows what it is; he doesn't sin because a malicious or spiteful force drags him towards evil — evil is nothing other than the absence of the Good —, he sins through ignorance. Man, the true man, is not only good; he is virtuous. How would he go towards the evil that is contradiction? Why would he destroy his own self in refusing himself the Good? Virtue and knowledge are one and the same thing.

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<sup>23</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 230 d.



6. *The role of discussion in the city.* — For us, the thesis seems empty, which says that the Good is non-contradiction, agreement. It is true, as we have previously said, that the criticism commits an anachronism if it wants to refute Socrates, if it attempts to combat discussion. No fundamental attitude — it is necessary to insist upon this — can be *refuted*; it is *surpassed* by another. Nonetheless, the search for the real conditions of an attitude is legitimate, which simply signifies that we, who have passed by other attitudes and have consequently other categories at our disposition — attitudes until now not understood, categories not elaborated —, can apply these to the attitude in question: if it is extremely important that we properly refrain from introducing into the attitude questions which are ours, and not theirs, and which are impossible and senseless for the attitude, the fact remains that these questions inevitably come up for us. Every attitude is, for us, a human possibility that can be reprised at any moment. It will appear to us, at the most, less complete, it will seem to us to neglect aspects, for us essential, of the world and of man, it will be abstract. Nowhere perhaps, is this sentiment stronger than before the attitude of the reasonable man (in discussion's sense), probably because no other is more widespread (authentically or as flight in the face of other decisions — the question isn't there), more spirited, more irritating consequently than this here. Why does man settle for non-contradiction? Or rather, for we have responded to that question, how can he settle for it?

He can, because he lives in a world that he doesn't put into question, because he is certain that discussion will come to a close, because the question of freedom doesn't exist for him. He sees himself as reason going towards itself, and the essential fact for us is not visible for him, namely, that he is not reason, precisely because he is only reason in progress. The City is, for him, unanimity, and he passes over the fact that in order to be unanimity, it must be diversity. Reason is non-contradiction, and he doesn't see that this non-contradiction, if ever it were achieved, would eliminate discussion and the only language that he knows, that it would destroy reason, which exists in fact only through its expression in discussion. He negates the tradition, which is the domain of interests, and forgets that nothing would remain as the subject of his discussion if that tradition came to be extinguished, bringing down with it every concrete that he needs in order to give a content to his language.

But his attitude is less paradoxical than it seems in that way. The discussion truly corresponds (that is, for us) to [137] a reality: that of the struggle of interests, and the unity of the City is actually in danger. What other means are there of avoiding its destruction than the transposition of the conflict onto the plane of language and morality? The essential interest is truly agreement, since no desire can find satisfaction outside of the community; man

is truly citizen, morality truly makes sense, because the struggle of interests is therein expressed and becomes the business of the City, instead of being the business of adversaries who are allied by a particular communion of their struggle against the unity of the community. The morality of the citizen, the morality of concord and of non-contradiction makes sense, precisely because it negates and forgets the reality of the world that, for us, is its own, because it negates and forgets that this world is not reasonable, that the brutal struggle is not definitively ruled out, that the agreement and the Good are never completed.

7. *Formal logic and deductive mathematics.* — Science, in the modern sense of the word, which corresponds to the discussion, is mathematics. A deepened analysis shows that it and formal logic are identical (this analysis has been made by Husserl<sup>24</sup>); but furthermore, this, far from being an impoverished and narrow form of that, is its origin. It goes without saying that mathematics, as analytico-descriptive techniques at the service of sciences that have built themselves on another idea of truth, contain elements that are not understandable, in regards to their origins, through non-contradiction. But in this, the identity of problems appears only more clearly. The one and the other form, to employ a concept from the category of the *condition* (which, consequently, doesn't exist for discussion), the science of the possible, of necessary conditions, but not sufficient for every science of the object. It is not a coincidence if the two are born at the same time, as it is not surprising that the same causes which create logic transform the empirical technique of land-surveying and of commercial calculations into a non-contradictory system of demonstrated theses by reduction to the theses that everyone admits. Incidentally, this unique origin explains the lack of interest that, among the Greeks, stops any development of algebra: the number doesn't give rise to discussion, it doesn't pose any problems; even a child can see that two plus two is four, whereas whether the surface of two different figures are equal is not evident at first glance. The number doesn't step out of the tradition; it retains a character of immediate certainty, a magical character. The reasons that are ordinarily lined up, to wit, a preference given to the visible, a heaviness of writing, besides that they explain nothing, for they uniquely repeat the problem, are ridiculous. The men capable of inventing the algorithm, much more difficult to find, for the theory of proportions were also capable of constructing a handy system of writing for numbers (which, let it be said in passing, is not indispensable to a formal algebra), and the creators of [138] musical theory don't seem to have been "pure visual people". An algebraic

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<sup>24</sup> E. Husserl, *Formale und transzendente Logik*, Halle, 1929, particularly § 23 sq.

theory becomes important only at the moment that a quantitative physics geometrizes nature and finds itself obliged to verify its hypotheses through measurements.

8. *Reprises of discussion.* — Of the reprises, the most important have already been presented over the course of the preceding remarks, in the interpretations that the man of discussion gave of his attitude. It is sufficient to write them here briefly. Thus, discussion is interpreted ordinarily under the category of Truth in being understandable as the plane on which all that can appear appears. — The reprise by nonsense is less current. It is encountered there where reflection turns towards the attendant opposition of opinions, and not towards the goal of discussion. It starts from the disappearance of content, it isn't interested in the work of the destruction of the tradition, but in the result of this work: we can assert everything, therefore there is not nor can there be any certainty. Every thesis is particular and can be contradicted; all the coherent systems are equally possible, and the number of these systems is unlimited. If something exists — and that is not certain, for we arrive in this way at contradictions —, we can't know it, because man can be wrong; and even if we were to know something, it would be impossible to speak of it and to communicate it, because language only transmits words. This is the sermon of the man living in nonsense, but who has passed through discussion: there is only nonsense, because discussion doesn't make sense, doesn't reveal anything. It shows only one thing, namely that men always remain particular beings, that the agreement is not made, that each has his own truth, which nonetheless is not the truth since there is discussion: the unity of certainty no longer is and nothing can replace it<sup>25</sup>. However, it's precisely discussion that is the determinant attitude, not nonsense; man's life is lived in discussion, nonsense is not lived, but demonstrated; man doesn't fall silent and the discussion continues, because even nonsense can't be demonstrated: in short, because there is nothing else to do, other than discuss. — In regard to the reprise of discussion with the help of the category of the true, we have seen that it is nothing other than the current interpretation that man gives of himself: he is, as reason, true in the false, which he *is* as particularity. — Finally, discussion is reprised as certainty in claiming to be sure of its commensurability with the world that is given to it through the tradition: not only does everything reveal itself on the plane of discussion (reprised by Truth), but the concrete world of the tradition is justified through the discussion that transforms it; in fact, the world

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. the *agnosticism* of Gorgias (Diels, *Vorsokratiker*, fr. 3), and the *subjectivism* of Protagoras (cf. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 151 E sq.).

becomes what it is in its essence only through discussion. Its certainty is that of the drawing to a close of discussion, of the realization of the Good in the unity achieved by virtue.

## CHAPTER VI THE OBJECT

**The discussion is never complete, but man's activity doesn't stop in order to wait for the end of it. Thus discussion shows itself to man as a game that can acquire a value only provided that it lets itself be guided by something independent of formal language, by the *object*.**

1. *Common sense and discussion. — Non-contradictory discourse and reality.* — The object is born in the revolt of common sense against discussion and against the ideal of non-contradictory discourse.

One will always be able to demonstrate to our adversary that he has horns, since he admits that he possesses what he has not lost and that he has not lost any horns. But he, abandoning the game, will not have to look for the fault in the reasoning, he will invite those present to look at him, even more simply, he will start laughing. The most convincing refutation that common sense can oppose to the demonstrations of the impossibility of movement, is to walk right in front of the logician. Everyone's agreement is certainly the community's greatest Good; but, as common-sense notices, it's necessary to add that this agreement must correspond to reality: if all the citizens say that Alcibiades is going to save Athens and if Alcibiades betrays the city, ah well! everyone agreed and every was wrong.

Common sense thus discovers that language can deceive, that there is error. This is new. The man of certainty — and even more so, he of the anterior attitudes — is exposed to fault, he can *do* what he must not *do*: he can't fall into error, he can't *say* what *isn't*, because his speech doesn't separate him from his world, in which he remains and acts. It is only transformed into an individual error, separated from the world, knowing that language isn't a natural force, that he can speak "without saying anything". It is however not discussion that discovers this danger: even after a failure, it will remain what it had been and will continue to declare that the undertaking has not succeeded because it was neither spoken about enough nor well enough: one has but to start over. But at this point common sense refuses

to follow: it wants something, it knows that; that we discuss, fine, but the discussion must have a meaning; it mustn't go around in circles.

In fact, common sense is, we see this, under discussion's influence: it no longer has certainty regarding its world's content, the idea of the Good [140] to be sought towers over it. For common sense, it is not sufficient to build a temple, it wants the temple to be good — in other words, it doesn't know how to construct its temple. It also knows that man is an individual amongst individuals and that he will do nothing if the others don't allow him to, either because they are opposed to his design, or because their struggles make all work impossible. He is reasonable, he is thoughtful, and he asks that others be reasonable like him.

But in this way, the word reasonable takes on another meaning. It remains true that contradiction must be avoided, that we can't say, nor want something and its negation, that a triangle can't have three right angles. But it is no longer sufficient to confine one's self to that: there can be error without the search being able to discover any contradiction; and on the other hand, *being* doesn't only mean being without contradiction: we can demonstrate that there is not movement — and everything moves. The man of discussion wanted to be right: common sense tells him that this won't lead him very far, even if he were to succeed in convincing the whole world (which won't happen); he would have won if everyone was in agreement, but won only in words, because the world on which he would have made unanimity would not any more exist for that.

*What is* thus is opposed to the discourse of discussion. Man can and must discuss, common sense won't deny it. But above all, man lives. Agreement is essential, but it is still more essential to know what the agreement must be made on. It is important to draw the correct conclusions from admitted premises, but more so that these premises be true. When I imagine that a chimera has such and such qualities, I can deduce from that it behaves in such and such fashion: what's the use, since there aren't chimeras? If man is reasonable, it is sufficient to bring him by discussion to the idea of the Good, and therefore, he will be virtuous. But if in reality the Athenians condemn Socrates to death, how can I say that man is reasonable and that discussion suffices? Admittedly, for the thinking man nothing is true that doesn't agree with the laws of discussion; but the fact that one thesis does doesn't keep it from being false.

The tradition, no doubt, informs man in life: we can't make shoes out of sand nor drink bronze. But after discussion is this sufficient? Admittedly, no. It isn't enough to know *that* it's so, it's necessary to know *why* it's so if we don't want to fall from discussion back into the struggle of concrete certainties. The task is to understand reality, to think it: the

tradition's knowledge and reason must be reconciled, so that man can fulfill, in his life, his desire, understood as the desire of a being that is not uniquely reasonable.

2. *Theoria, the tradition and discussion. — The science of being.* — However, it isn't common sense that will fulfill the new science that man is now looking for. He is not capable of overstepping discussion (if ever he comes this far); he knows only how to oppose an attitude that seems harebrained and incomprehensible, and remains in the attitude of magical science, shaken in his conviction when it is a question of the world in its totality, certain of himself to the [141] extent that he works and confirms through his everyday action the validity of the recipes that have come to him from his ancestors. And precisely because he is fully confident, the discussion doesn't overly worry him; he will agree with the discussion that violence and the destruction of the community are the greatest of evils, and he will continue his work: it will only be much later that he will be able to speak up again.

The position of the man who has actually and totally lived in the discussion and now runs into the *fact* is completely different, that this fact be the death of Socrates, the State's violence against the man who is right in the face of all violence and who accepts death in order to not vindicate violence, — or that he observes very simply that the discussion, even when it ends in agreement, doesn't lead to a concrete conception, and even less to the realization of the Good. And on the other hand, he knows that the tradition is insufficient as soon as decisions must be made, that it has value uniquely in working life where there are not decisions to make and where one can continue along the path that one has always followed, and he nonetheless notices that this tradition, for as incapable as it is of justifying its way of doing things, achieves in its domain results that discussion doesn't arrive at. Tradition and common sense know and don't speak; the discussion speaks and doesn't know.

Setting up the problem in this way doesn't resolve it. It is nonetheless indicating the solution's ideal: if being reasonable isn't sufficient in discussion's sense, and if knowing things without knowing what this knowledge is isn't sufficient either, a science that doesn't settle for formal agreement is needed, a science that speaks of things and which, reasonable in the eyes of discussion and in this way sheltered from contradiction, keeps and saves common sense's and the tradition's knowledge. A concrete truth must take the place of the formal truth of agreement, irrefutable discourse must receive content.

The blacksmith knows how to treat metal, he knows such metal apt for such use; but he doesn't know what the metal in itself is, he doesn't even know if *this* metal *here*, this bit that he judges apt and that he knows how to fashion, is a pure metal. The man of science,

who doesn't want to transform this metal — he leaves that up to the blacksmith —, is looking to know what this metal *is*, that is, how he can speak of it without sacrificing the blacksmith's practical science and without falling into contradiction. He takes his starting point from the discussion, from language, and he wants reach reality, by means of language. Yet, language has this particularity that in it man speaks universally; man has known this since he passed through discussion; the formal science of language has taught him that even the discussion about *this* fragment of metal happens in universal judgments: this fragment is good, because all the fragments possessing such a quality are; it is only in bringing the dispute back to principles that deciding upon it becomes possible. But what has changed, since man has abandoned the attitude of discussion, is that he no longer stops himself at principles that are so only because the adversaries have announced that they recognize them as such: the principles themselves must be justified, they must be such that the consequences that we draw from them according to the rules of logic coincide with the observations of life, of the tradition, of [142] experience; whether their consequences culminate at what is not observed or don't explain everything that is observed, they are to be rejected as false or as insufficient.

Observation, an analysis of what has been observed in order to obtain first principles, a synthesis starting from these principles in order to verify that they are correct and complete — here is what will therefore constitute science, no longer formal, but concrete and reasonable at the same time, a total view of the totality of beings in their unity, a *theory*. It is not a matter, as for a particular interest, of appropriating, in the master's fashion, the product of the work of the community and of transforming the State so that it serves this particular interest; it is even less a matter of transforming the world, since, in order to terminate discussion, it is necessary to grasp things as they are and not as they are not: it is therefore necessary to eliminate becoming in order to found science on Being, and the task is to construct a discourse that corresponds to Being, an immutable discourse revealing an immutable Being.

3. *Becoming and man's peace. — The sciences and philosophy. — The object (the One) and phenomena.* — The modern philosopher would ask for a guarantee of the conformity between the language that speaks of Being and this very Being. Nothing is further from the attitude that is here in question: man discusses as long as he doesn't *see*, as long as he is under the influence of opinion, true or false, whether he speaks of this and of that, of appearances that teach nothing for certain, of interests and desires that mislead him; once he has *seen*, he will no longer let himself be influenced by what is contradictory in the immediate



experience of becoming and of struggle; for this experience is totally understandable when it is reduced to the essential. What we call subjectivity is founded on the object and must be considered as an object of science. Discussion, having become understood, will be finished when all is brought back to Being, and man will be content not by the satisfaction of his empirical desires, but by his liberation from all particular interest.

The historic forms of concrete science that man elaborates in this attitude and with the help of this category don't interest logic. What it retains is the fact that this science is constructed with observation on the one side, analysis and synthesis on the other; how these two *moments* have been brought together, what has been discovered, over the course of an effort that has lasted longer than two millennia, about the interdependence of these "factors" and "directions" in favor of methodological awareness, this falls under the history of philosophy. We are dealing with the foundation of all science and all method, with this foundation so difficult to grasp in its simplicity, and which is that *there is reason*.

There is reason — it is the principle of all theoretical science, of all science that wants to speak reasonably of what is. The forms and the expressions of this principle matter little, when it is a question of theory in its initial form and force (they will matter greatly in what follows): man will doubt this principle, he will even deny it, and nonetheless his negation and his doubt will [143] still be determined by this principle they will need to be in opposition to in order to have a content and in order to not lose the possibility of discourse and action. There is reason — or: reason is; man will not unfasten himself from this principle without abandoning discourse all together, for all discourse, even though he would declare the contrary (under the influence of attitudes and categories that he will need to clarify) doesn't presuppose, but rather sets down that the world's being is open to man, that the world is reasonable, as is man's discourse, that the world's reason and man's reason are one and the same reason. There is observation, there is analysis, there is synthesis, because discourse is the world become speech and because the world is realized discourse.

It is with the first appearance of this principle that the science of the tradition and of common sense surpasses itself. It is not that it is rejected or solely neglected: it is fully recognized in its value for human life, honored in its representatives, erected as an example for the man living in the tradition's conformism: Plato presents the doctor, the architect, the strategist as models that allow seeing clearly the force of this new method. But for as great, for as laudable as their efforts be, so useful that the results that they obtain be, the man who comes from discussion and who therefore knows that a unique research, that of the Good, is absolutely worth the trouble, if he can and must study their work, he can't imitate nor follow

them. Admittedly, the interests that they serve are not their personal interests, the advantage that they obtain, they obtain for the community: the fact remains that they serve a traditional interest which, as such, is particular, even though not individual.

For the man who has passed through discussion and who has left it knows that the tradition won't allow him to live in peace. Discussion is not an accident, it is not an error, it does nothing other than express a fact that it doesn't understand, but that science perfectly comes to understand, namely: that the struggle is the sole possible and real relation between men who are individuals and who want to be only individuals, that these men enter necessarily in conflict, because each of them is divided against himself and in conflict with himself, torn between his opposing desires, his contradictory opinions, his irreconcilable beliefs. Before man has finished the debate that unfolds *in foro interno*, before he has reached peace, and a secure peace with himself, he will not even be able to try to intervene in the public debate that tears apart the State.

Yet, this inner peace, sure and solid, how would he attain it, if not with the help of reason? On what would he found an agreement with himself, if not on Being, the eternal, the immutable? The reality that observation encounters is contradictory, it doesn't only seem to be, because observation itself is directed by interest: it isn't by the establishing of principles that are themselves particular (being foundational only for parts of the totality) that man will climb towards the total and absolute unity in which contradictions disappear and the struggle subsides. The sciences aren't contemptible for that: on the contrary, the work that is theirs of reduction does eminent favors for the highest thought; without this effort, how would man conceive even the idea that he could [144] transcend the changes and the fluctuations of this becoming in which no form endures, no appearance takes hold? Nor has he forgotten discussion, nor has man forgotten the attitude and the discourse of nonsense (and the other preceding attitude-categories), and it isn't because he doesn't want to return there that he desires above all to accept the lesson of science, to observe the rules of logic and mathematics, re-create the destroyed world of certainty, and to merge in the vision of Truth. But despite all the value that he attributes to science, it couldn't be sufficient for him: it doesn't lead to peace, because, its principles established, it's in phenomena that it interests itself, not in the ascension towards the One, but the descent towards experience. A foundation of founding principles is required.

What is opposed thus to science is *philosophy*, the love of wisdom, the search for wisdom that is the presence of reason in man. Man is reasonable, it is what discussion affirmed: there is reason, here is the principle that philosophy extracts as the foundation of all science.

It is necessary to find reason again, not as man's faculty, not as science's basis, but as real presence.

Will the individual disappear in this manner? Far from it: once disappeared, he would have no need of philosophy, of research, he would be reason and he would no longer have need, nor desire, nor interest. But reason isn't a simple human faculty either, something that is like his arms and his legs and of which he would make use of as he likes, a property, a possession, which has value only to the extent that it forms a part of man. It *is*: that is, the individual is essentially insufficient in relation to it; it is reason that is the measure and he who is measured, it is reason that is real and he merely participate in reality. Philosophy is man's attempt to surpass himself in order to arrive at the total, one, unique reality that is reason — in him just as in the world.

It's in this way that he surpasses himself, that he transcends himself, in transcending at the same time and by the same act, the *things* at the interior of the world, the things that are this and that, goals to which desire tends, obstacles before which fear retreats, the struggle's stake, the work's substance, these things that never are because they are always becoming and always perishing, these things the category of nonsense had said are absurd. Man wants to save them, but he will not save them except by seeing in them simple phenomena, not appearances (they are stable in their very instability), but the manifestations of a depth, of a real reality — of the *object* of reason.

Yet, this object, what is it? Or does this question not make sense? Can we separate reason and its object? Do we not fall back, from the moment we establish such a separation, to the point of view of discussion? It is true that the individual is insufficient, that he is not reason: discussion has finely observed that. What it didn't see, is that the reason in man sees the insufficiency of the individual, and that in seeing in reason that insufficiency, man transcends it. Contradiction is real, in man just as in nature, but real inasmuch as specter of the One. Discourse is multiple and divergent, but it [145] speaks of what has no parts. Thought is wholly occupied reconciling what is in conflict; but it can reconcile, because, unity, it finds unity again. There is an object then, there is what ends discussion in appearing, but what appears and what it appears to are *one*: behind *things*, there is what is targeted through them, and what is targeted is no other than what aims: reason thinks, but it thinks itself.

Thus philosophy understands itself as the ascent towards the object, and it understands itself in this ascent. What the philosopher understands during his progress, is that this progress is everything for the individual, because speaking of an individual and speaking of a being which is separated being and hence incomplete, is one and the same thing: as long as

man lives with *things*, he has not attained the absolute of object-subject, of full reality without mixture of possibility and negation, and he is on his way. But if the route unfolds on the floor [*sol*] of becoming and of separate and distinct beings, its outcome is not a distinct and separate being among the others and of their nature, it is the disappearance of all negativity and of all possibility. The route is not set once and for all, and while walking man doesn't remain as he had been at the start: the route is man, man is his route and the arrival is the disappearance of both the man and the route, not by annihilation, but in absolute reality.

How philosophy indicates the way that leads to what, for the individual, can appear only under the form of the object, of what is radically other than itself, precisely because he himself is caught in becoming; how, the union made, it draws the return route that makes man understand that he is and remains individual, because he has a determined place in the cosmos which develops and unfolds, so to speak, the absolute unity — this forms the history of metaphysical systems (insomuch as they are metaphysical and don't enlist elements of other intentions and of other categorical sources). For he who lives in the pure attitude before the absolute object, the question is secondary: there is an object, there is reason, there is unity, and there is absolute peace for the man who knows how to understand and to retain this fact of facts. Ascent and descent, he will always need to rediscover them, and he will always need to justify the inevitably particular outlook before his own particularity, having understood itself as particularity and rising above the particularity in reason, which is its own object for itself: he will not be able to give up science, the only means that the individual possesses in order to grasp the world's unity and, through this unity, his own inasmuch as he is overcome in himself by himself. What matters, is that there is the Object and that this Object isn't hidden, since it is his own revelation.

4. *Philosophy and metaphysic as first science.* — Common sense had protested against the discussion and its formal agreement: it is the thought of the object that answers it by creating the science of the object. It accepts the criticism, it recognizes that, despite all the formal contradictions, movement exists and man walks. But it is not content with the observation of the fact; it recognizes at the [146] same time that the fact is contradictory, that contradiction is unbearable and that it must arrive at a non-contradictory science of phenomena.

It has the means to do so. Reason *is*, and all that is, is in the order of reason, although this everything is not reason, being only a composition of parts of which none is the unity nor possesses it: the phenomenon remains at the level of becoming and of destruction, but

what appears in the phenomenon neither becomes nor is unmade, but *is*, and the supreme science is the science of Being as such: observation is possible for the particular sciences, because reason, existing in the world, guarantees to it the possibility of “saving the phenomena”; their “objective” character is understandable, because there is a science of Being.

A science of Being, which is at the same time essentially that of non-being. For the One, under whatever name it be designated, can’t be the origin of the becoming that contains, with reason and being, non-reason and nothingness, and the supreme science will be obliged to take into account just as much the one as the other. Of course, it is only reason that lends itself to discourse, since the *other* is by not being; but if there *were* no non-being *there*, the incomprehensible of becoming would not even be understood as incomprehensible. The theory, the sight, grasps only Being and Reason, but it grasps them only against the background of non-being: among the fundamental concepts of science, there must be at least one non-concept that grasps, or better: indicates, nothingness and the void — a concept of pure opposition, but, as such, an inevitable concept.

Here is the foundation of the first science which subsumes the totality of becoming under unity, reducing the indestructible contradiction of becoming to the unity of its own concepts, in which it thinks the unthinkable as unthinkable: becoming is reduced to what there is of graspable in it, since the concept of non-being allowed the bringing back of becoming to being by the elimination of the ungraspable. The first science recognizes that the contradiction is contained in any observation of the sciences which only observe becoming; but in that way it also overcomes it, and the particular science can persevere on its path, which goes from the One (which being particular, it doesn’t know) to the multiplicity. For the first science supplies the fundamental concepts to it, the metaphysical categories<sup>26</sup> and it

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<sup>26</sup> Metaphysical categories, that is, the categories developed by metaphysics to be used by the particular sciences. It is them that we ordinarily have in mind when we speak of categories: from Aristotle (if not Plato) until Hegel and beyond, we understand, as categories, fundamental concepts determining the questions according to which it is necessary to consider or analyze or question everything that is in order to know what it is. They are metaphysical in this sense, that only the first science, that of Being as such, can provide them; but they are essentially scientific in their use; said otherwise: elaborated by metaphysics, they don’t guide it. In order to found his ontology, Aristotle doesn’t use the concepts of essence, of attribute, of place, etc.; he uses the principle according to which reasoning can’t go on infinitely — a principle that isn’t founded on ontology and its categories, but which allows the conception of a first science. Kant doesn’t build his transcendental ontology with the help of his table of categories but the help of the “ideas” of liberty and eternity, of the transcendental *ideal*, of the kingdom of ends. Hegel himself recognizes the difference between the *Logic of Being* (that of metaphysical categories), that of *the Essence* and that of *Reality*, the last of which must, among other things, make understood the sense of the first part of the entire logic, that is, from the metaphysical categories. It is essential that the two senses of the word be clearly distinguished in the whole course of this work, which is only interested in *metaphysical* categories to the extent that they reveal the *philosophical* categories, these centers of discourse starting from which an attitude expresses itself in a coherent fashion (or, in the case of attitudes refusing all discourse, can be grasped by philosophy’s discourse).

has [147] but to let itself be directed by this in order to be sure of not getting lost. The unfolding of the One, when it enters into the domain of non-being, belongs to reason and can be retraced by reason: cosmos and discourse, coming from the same spring and heading towards that same origin which they share, correspond to each other.

We have already said why logic isn't directly interested in this work of *metaphysics* and that the elaboration of different systems of *metaphysical* categories interests it only in regards to the difference of intentions — which aren't metaphysical, that is, where other *philosophical* categories are at work. Cause and effect, substance and accident, *the one and the other*, the idea, the communion of great kinds or of number-ideas, form and matter, potential and actuality, time, space, all these metaphysical categories that make the view of the unity in multiplicity possible, which outline the directions for questions aiming at the permanent in the phenomenon, which must allow the filtration of becoming in order to separate non-being from being — all these categories belong to science, not to philosophy, to metaphysics, which, rightly so, has always been interpreted as the first science, not to the logic of philosophy: in other words, they are scientific categories derived from a philosophical category, the translation of *a* determined attitude in *an* elaborated discourse, they are not categories *of* the attitude and *of* discourse. If they are of a particular importance, it's because they answer to a category that plays an eminent role, because it is the first that grasps reality as other than man, as object. Why it is not *the* category of philosophy (if such a thing exists), why has it been surpassed, this is a problem that can find its solution only in what follows, in the presentation of the other attitude-categories, as only the following can give a precise meaning to the opposition, here arbitrary, between philosophy and metaphysics. But that, even for the present attitude, metaphysics isn't everything, even though it be the foundation of its entire discourse, that this discourse can and must be surpassed at this very spot, therefore, whether metaphysics is only put to use, this is already shown in the preceding remarks and will be shown again in the following.

5. *The One as the foundation of political and of morality. — The philosopher and the State.* — Good sense responded to discussion: it is [148] not enough that man see the Good, for he is not essentially reasonable; one can convince him until they are blue in the face that particularity is contradiction and evil — he remains what he is, which means that he is determined. In this vision, passion, πάθος, is the essential, what man suffers, what affects him, carries him away, pushes him — the matter in him; he is reasonable, but he is only *also* so. Alone, humanity *is* reasonable, not the individual who *can* be so, just as dog-kind is

characterized by loyalty to the master, without one being able to say that this quality is found in all dogs. Reason *must* win him over, because it makes up the essence of humankind, but if it *must* win him over, it is because reason doesn't automatically dominate and because it must assert itself as determination against the indeterminate, the form against the matter. There are reasonable men, as there are loyal dogs; the difference is that the loyalty that is dormant in every dog is not woken by the perfect dog's loyalty, whereas the perfect man's reason can lead other men towards reason and according to reason. The man who is both reasonable and possesses common sense is aware that he is in communication and in community with the others; yet, he also knows that the unity of that community must be consolidated by means of science: since man will not always be reasonable, it is all the more important that the community be so. We will never be able to make a Socrates of every citizen, but we can keep men from killing Socrates when a Socrates appears; if man is all too often carried away by the passions, the philosopher must understand him with and in his passions. In short, a science of man, an anthropology, must precede and guide reason's action on him.

And this action is possible. For just as nature and the world are reasonable because reason makes up their core, so is the community of men, a living unity above contradictory passions. The real and realizing reason exists: the discussion between men can be dominated, because it has a natural end in its object, which is the State, and because it doesn't live uniquely for its formal goal, agreement. Of course, the discussion and even the struggle don't come to an end, since particularity can't disappear. But the two are reasonable to the extent that they are the concrete matter of the life of the State, just as the becoming of a living being, which is contained contradiction, is reasonable: the State is an organized unity, not simply a formal agreement. Everything proceeds from that unity, a unity that is not to create, but which *is*, prior to all the tensions that make sense only in relation to this unity.

However, only the philosopher sees this fact. The ordinary man is between the animal, which is in nature, and reason, which is above nature. He pursues goals, and this means that he is reasonable without knowing it, because his goal is human, not simply natural; but it is not him who fixes it: he finds his goals at the ready in the tradition, and as this tradition is the same for everyone, he encounters the goals of others, who are, like him, searching for their satisfaction: the discussion starts, desire liberates itself by understanding itself in its particularity. It's at this point that common sense had demanded a natural science, in order to decide objectively. But if [149] particularity is eliminated (progressively, it's true, not definitively) with respect to the natural objects of activity; can the same thing be said concerning man, when it's a matter of treating particularity itself as an object?

The response will be to say that man is double; the object-man, the man that science observes, is opposed to the man who observes and who elaborates science, who, consequently, establishes the relationship between the individual and the unity or (and this amount to the same thing) between the matter and the form of man just as well as the State. "Man sets his own goals" is thus an expression with a double meaning. In the first, materially determined man (according to human nature, namely in the community and in its tradition) pursues a good that he could just as well not pursue if he wanted to act on himself: in the second, man acts on himself with the aim of, not just a good, but the Good, in order to bring into reality this Good that, for philosophy, informs that reality against the resistance of matter, this Good that man can miss seeing, but that he can't not choose once he's seen it, since the choice is a reasonable choice only in sight of the Object which, being unity and pure form is the Good. It is true that the philosopher constitutes the exception in the everyday reality, but this exception reveals the normal case's being. To the extent that he acts, man is not perfect: how would he act, if he didn't know need and desire, if he wasn't particular, if he was equal to the form in the fullness of its unity, if he was without passion, without matter? His action, in order to target himself, always stays action, an expression of need, the search for contentment: but he is above the animal, in that sense that this action does not depend on a goal separated from the action itself, but that it is self-sufficient and looks for nothing outward. It is precisely human forasmuch as it is its own end and its own satisfaction. The reasonable man's goal is to make himself reason, pure act, a unity of desire and of contentment, of action and of goal, of the good and of the real: thought of thought, enjoyment of enjoyment.

However, even the philosopher remains a man and he rises over matter without ridding himself of it: he finds *his* peace in *theoria*, in sight; but he lives in a community and, man and philosopher, he must think the State in order to save it. There is always a State, it's true, but *this* State *here* can be destroyed, as there is always science, even though *this* historic reality of science can disappear. *The* State always is, it is always reasonable, in concrete relation with unity, but *this* State *here* is more or less so. In truth, this does not make the science of the State ill at ease. It doesn't have any more difficulty seeing what the essence of the State consists of, by which the quality of the good or the bad State is measured, than biology does in order to say what makes it that an animal be good or bad in its being as an animal. But if it is easy to find the means of raising good steer, it is difficult to indicate what is necessary in order to make a good State; for the science that grasps the essence of the State and which is capable of treating it as the doctor treats the sick, reveals itself and falls into



obscurity in the human reality of the historic State in which it exists, and the quality of a science done in a given State depends on the quality of that State that it wants to and [150] must judge. Concretely, the State and the science of man are both founded on man such as he is in such State at such moment.

The *objective* science of the State knows that it is the protest against the discussion that had unraveled the tradition without having succeeded in unraveling itself from it. The return to that tradition is prohibited to it; the tradition is not and cannot be a science, since it does not have an object. Nonetheless, science doesn't ignore that without the tradition it would not be, since there can be no absolute beginning; but the State's unity grows weaker because the tradition has shown itself helpless against the struggle of desires, to such a point that simple good sense foresees the moment that the fundamental rule of discussion, the exclusion of violent struggle, will no longer be observed. The philosopher knows, because he has seen it, that States are not immortal; he realizes that all of the tradition's pretty speeches about piety and the virtues can be turned around by the interest that takes hold of language and knows what it wants. Science must not only say what the good State is, but moreover indicate the means to bring it about.

The reality of the concrete State therefore brings science back to the observation of man. And here is what it notices: it is not necessary that each individual see reason in order to follow it. Incidentally, most men would be incapable to do so. Their strength runs out at the level of need, and they will be good citizens for as long as they aren't mistaken about these needs. But the fact is that they make mistakes easily enough because human desire is not animal, but social: satisfaction isn't immediate, but passes through work, which is shared; yet, desire exceeds need in that it tends to take the master's place, who receives the enjoyment of his existence not through his work, but through that of others. To the biological need is added the will to domination and the love of the struggle (non-violent only for fear of an irresistible violence): both are reasonable and understandable in the frame of a single nature, they are not so in the individual, where with neither goal nor limit they act as blind forces: there they will be beneficial like all that is natural, provided they are guided by reason. Yet, reason in the State is the law. Alas, in empirical reality, the law depends on men and can be deteriorated by becoming the toy of desires if it is defended only by the tradition. It is the language of the community; yet, desire can try and in fact does try to take hold of this language: this is why qualified men, those that know unity, the philosophers, must reestablish the law, start the training of individuals, educate the community, if they don't

want philosophy itself to become impossible in a State torn by violence, and where, again and again, Socrates is killed.

This work can be done only there where the power is in the hands of those that love reason and who give themselves to science. This is clear, because the State that they will need to take care of is sick and the State of the formal agreement is on the brink of degenerating into a State of violence in which individuals neither hold nor seek the place that their qualities assign to them and where everything becomes a question of force and of fear, of domination and of revolt.

[151] In order to put an end to rule by force, it is then necessary to start by being strong oneself. The man of science must turn away from the observations of his object, which is the State in itself, in order to form the real State in the image of the idea. Will he succeed? He doesn't know, for he has left the domain of science and has given himself to the individual: success and failure depend on his natural qualities and of those of the material in which he works as any technician does, although he does it at a superior level, knowing what his goal is thanks to sound science. For as long as he acts, he is given over to the contradictions of the living reality that he must try and reconcile, at the risk of bringing about the failure of the science that can only live in the healthy State.

It is not essential for the present categorial research to analyze the political theories that have been elaborated in the frame of this category, above all by the Greeks. Their categorial content is sufficiently clear and stays the same, from Plato and Aristotle, up until the Stoics (which is not to say that politics be the level at which man is interpreted for all the Greeks and that it hold the same place in all the systems). The true center of it is the first science, a real and possible science thanks to reason's presence at the core of being in general.

Man has no common measure with other beings because he has the possibility of seeing reason, — and he remains stuck in nature because he can't free himself from need and because he belongs in this way to a community of work: a contradiction that raises man above the animal in raising him above individuality, to the double reconciliation *both* in the perfect State, which realizes reason by the conciliation of particularities by means of the law, *and* in the existence of the sage who, thanks to reason's sight, exceeds particularity.

The perfect State will therefore exist only through the philosopher's action (if by chance it existed, only the vigilance of those who see the Good could protect it from the natural dangers that threaten it), and the philosopher's being as philosopher is reason: thus

all reasonable reality is traced back to reason. As a last resort, it's for reason's realization by the philosopher, it's so that the sage can live that the reasonable State exists. Politics, technical science of the good State's realization, and morality, which targets the formation of good citizens for this State, solely have worth because only the good State allows men gifted in the science of fully realizing man's supra-animal possibility. The others don't need science for as long as the State ascribes them objectively reasonable functions, in proportion with their means; they will be content, because education will have subordinated their needs and their aspirations to the living unity that doesn't reside in them: without knowing the science, they live by science, and they help themselves to its truths (and serve the truths of it), without them knowing what this character of truth is founded on. But they are men only because there are citizens who know another activity and another contentment, and whose dignity is *knowing*: the true meaning of man's existence consists in the realization of the *form*. This meaning is visible only to those who, in infinitely small number, have seen Reason, the Good, and Beauty in the One. But therefore, there is no one but them [152] to look for an absolute contentment, beyond becoming and contradiction, at the center of Being, a contentment not of the individual, but of man as man, who is truly man only at the moment where, in the eyes of the ordinary man, he is lost; for man is truly man, when, in him, reason turns back towards itself through the multitude of contradictions in which human life is deployed. Reason is not for man, man is for and by reason. If he wants to understand himself and find peace, it's reason that he needs to grasp. Morality, State, politics are only justified in view of the sole effort that is truly human, because it is truly super-human.

6. *The interpretation of philosophy by common sense and its consequences. — The reprises.* — The category of the object is the first that gives birth not only to a science which, if it is not our own, is “understandable” to us, but what's more and above all to a philosophy that is, at least in a first approximation, the search for total comprehension.

Saying that all the sciences sprung from philosophy is a classic thesis; but it's possible that this affirmation ascribes both too much and too little to philosophy. Too much, because common sense's reaction against the discussion and the real force of the working world are sufficient to create life's traditional techniques and allow, after the destruction of the cosmic unity of certainty, the technique's progress, because, furthermore, the diversity and the independence of the sciences, their evolution and their role are understandable only in this way and not by philosophical reasons. Too little, because, in the philosophical sense of the term, no science leaves philosophy here, for the simple reason that beside philosophy there is no

science: the science that, as theory, is opposed to technique, wants to stay and stays vision of the One, even though a partial vision, perspective, only access, not a total vision.

The protest of common sense thus produces a result that is surprising for its author. He, who had started by dismissing back-to-back the adversaries who confronted each other in discussion, who had wanted to work quietly, finds himself before something that he can neither avoid nor understand: theory. He wanted to make a good ship, and he learns that nature is the unity at the core of the contradictions; he sought to organize the good State, and he finishes by noticing that man's dignity lies in the One's vision. The objects have, so to speak, melted; the object, which is reason, alone, remained. He had a clear conscience in the possession of the remains of certainty, and he had to learn that this is nothing, that it is only a fairly low mode of human existence, or rather, he hasn't learnt that, but he has seen that a force that he has unleashed, he doesn't know how, drags him and wants to force him to surpass himself. This isn't what he wanted. He asked that his work be made easier, that he be provided with solid bases in order to construct a habitable structure. And he finds himself before an infinitely *worse* discourse than that of the discussion, which had bored rather than bothered him. He's happy to speak, for objects are grasped only by language, since different traditions' techniques confront each other [153] in discussion. But the new discourse ends up going too far: metaphysical categories meet one another, unite with one another, are distinct only in their unity, admit unity only because they contradict each other; nature gives itself to science as the being behind becoming, as the rest in movement; being and becoming, rest and movement, and all the other couples become themselves objects, behave as objects and demand that bases be found for them on which their contradictions, which are real and can't disappear, be reconciled — a reconciliation of which common sense feels itself incapable and which appears absurd and dangerous to it, because the conciliation doesn't move towards work but rather distances itself from it. For common sense, science is opposed to the sciences and drags the man who devotes himself to it down a slope leading to the void.

Therefore he would want to stop the movement, and not only would he want to, but he has succeeded in doing so for himself. Science must be limited to its role as common sense's auxiliary. Let it elaborate a technique of observation facilitating the work of the community, improving the organization of this work, here is what is good. Whatever goes beyond is only mental play, is not reasonable. It's that common sense, unwittingly, has confidence in the tradition. Its point of view doesn't suffer from contradiction, and philosophy itself wouldn't want to attack it: the sciences have a determined meaning, they can and must be limited, they are useful. But once all the questions can be asked and, asked, must find an objective answer,

it is no longer possible to stop the dialogue at the moment that it starts to become worrisome: all that common sense can do, is turn away its gaze, in order to see to things that seem more interesting to it. Yet, common sense, that is, the mix of fallen traditions and desire for social harmony, wants to take advantage of objective science. The science that had developed discussion and its truth (of agreement) had not given satisfaction to this world of shared work from which discussion had sprung: common sense therefore claims to be the owner of the *object*, tool, in its opinion, of its work. If it can find its bearings in the world with the help of the object, it has found all that it is looking for: it wants to know the *truth* about the world.

The difficulties that it falls into in this manner are extremely serious. In fact, they fill those books about the history of philosophy that look at the history of philosophy as that of the problem of knowledge. Yet, strictly speaking, this problem doesn't exist for objective philosophy. It proceeds from the object as absolutely knowable, and the doubts that have given it its momentum, it has left them behind: the world is the world, because it is reasonable, and if a difficulty remains, it consists in explaining the error, not the truth, by a hypothesis that is, strictly speaking, scientific, psychological or, with a modern term, anthropological. For common sense, it's quite the opposite. It positions itself in the world of shared work and there, it's error, the mother of failure, which counts and alone counts. To his eyes, the new event is constituted by the discovery of the truth, but of the truth on such a point: we were always mistaken, today, we know what it is in truth. Man finds himself faced with *an* object and wonders how to approach it, or even if it is approachable.

[154] This is the attitude of restricted common sense — that is, which refuses transcendence — which leads, in the judgment of the very same common sense, to the most absurd philosophical attitudes. Absolute skepticism, materialism, idealism are traced back as a last resort to reprises of the category of the *object* by common sense using the category of the discussion; they are not philosophical but scientific systems because they set off from the science of common sense in order to pass to the absolute of the science of discussion, to the totality of theses arranged in a non-contradictory fashion. They all want to explain how man can have knowledge of reality — the only thing that doesn't need explanation for philosophy in the strictest sense of the word. It, quite the contrary, starts from the fact of knowledge, which it describes, according to the historical situation in different ways. But that it speaks of *voũς*, that it finds the *intellectus agens* in man, that it demands, reacting against dogmatic systems, that we speak of science's fact, of morality's fact, it is always speaking of the same thing: man and the world are not separated, and man is comprehended (in the two acceptances of this expression) through the object (or, with a much later term,

the absolute), whereas the object isn't comprehended through man.

Common sense remains in its role if it protests against this philosophy, however objective, because it isn't scientific. Indeed, it isn't so and couldn't be so, if it truly wanted to be done with the discussion, not, like common sense, with all the discussions one after another.

Therefore all of philosophy's appeals to man of science's common sense are a waste of breath. Philosophy's own direction is opposed to that of common sense. If philosophy is perfectly capable of understanding common sense, common sense can't help but see philosophy's undertaking as senseless. Philosophy will content itself to note this. But the same doesn't go for the philosopher. For him, common sense's method is irritating. For common sense interprets itself in reprising the discussion's category and attitude and, opposing itself to philosophy, it tries to understand the philosopher's attitude as a particular interest, whose actual existence doesn't escape science's observation. The philosopher will be obliged to justify himself to himself, for the world in which he lives is dominated by science, and this justification will be all the more difficult for him since he can't start the discussion that common sense would want to force on him. He knows that common sense is right in its way, that its science is something very great, that the non-contradictory system is necessary. His problem isn't refuting common sense — were he to try that, he would be lost —, but surpassing it.

In its relations with the sciences, philosophy will therefore by no means contest that they well capable of understand their objects. It will even add that the opposite would be surprising, since it is they who created them as objects. All that philosophy asks, is that it be allowed to understand these very sciences, and that it be spared well-intentioned and perfectly absurd projects, targeting the solution to questions regarding the so-called exact sciences by precisely the scientific means that it puts in question. [155] *Ens, unum, verum, bonum* are *transcendentalia* according to which the elaboration of systems of categories becomes only possible. Wanting to define them, if only implicitly, is a misinterpretation. The most skilled scientific technique, the best algorithm can only be used to respond to questions they couldn't understand the meaning of.

The principal reprises of the category of the object presented themselves during the course of the previous discussion; it would be superfluous to once again list them. The others, which didn't appear there, at least not expressly, find their place there, so to speak, automatically, as for example, that of nonsense, under which scientific common sense sees

itself as a coherent system, but separated from the reality that it defines precisely as what can be grasped by no system (scientist agnosticism). Detailed research in this direction would present however a particular interest, because it is this, and this alone that can lead to a destruction (through understanding) of the prejudices against philosophy which, most of the time are presented — we have seen why — as systems, programs, ideas of philosophy's reform and which, naturally, do nothing to lift philosophy above the category of the object, which they live in, but that they are incapable of grasping. Such a research, the result of which would in fact be a philosophical history of philosophical errors, isn't part of our present task. It must be sufficient for us to have indicated it.

## CHAPTER VII THE SELF

**Knowing himself only reasonable in a world of Reason, man sees himself thrown back onto his individuality: as he is, he searches for his happiness as man. The *Self*, such as it finds itself, searches for Reason for itself.**

1. *The individual opposing himself, as self, to theoria.* — To the *fact* of the *Object*, a fact founding all the facts for the man in the attitude of *theoria*, man can oppose another fact — and we insist: he can do so, but nothing forces him to do so —, that of his existence, not objective, not mediatized by the community, but such as he feels that existence. He doesn't want to backtrack in this way, moreover, he knows that he couldn't do so, even if he would so desire with all his heart. The language of discussion, the One, the ascending trek of philosophy exist; what he is asking for, he asks for it only because both have left him in need. He thinks, and he can't think by any other means than in these categories. But it is *he* who wants to think, such as he himself is. In other words: he wants to be happy. The discussion had spoken of particularity, objective science, of man, philosophy, of the elevation to the Object and the disappearance of individuality: nobody has spoken of *me*. And with good reason; for the former had given itself the task of finding the agreement between particular interests, and the latter had shown that the grasp of the One is only possible for what *is*, not for what becomes: not for me, except to the extent that I coincide with Reason. Yet, man is looking for contentment. On this subject, all parties are in agreement. For the one, this fact is the starting point; for the other, it's a fact of observation, established in an indubitable manner. But if both promise contentment, the one in life at the interior of a unanimous community, the other in the transcendent view, they do nothing in order to provide it to me, and their promises don't give me much hope. Is the fully realized community truly a possibility of contentment or does it only eliminate an obstacle to contentment's realization? In regards to the philosopher's contentment, he himself teaches that it is not within everyone's reach, that it requires a well-made State, natural gifts, in short, a combination of circumstances that I can't control. My contentment becomes a simple likelihood in the world of *theoria*. I find myself *given*, to eliminate as such or to understand, both from a point of view that is [158]



not my own, that is that of nobody, which transcends every point of view. The reason that finds me, who is it? Impossible to say. But it is certainly not me, me who desires, who suffers, who fears, who hopes.

The man who speaks in this way is not the man of brutal struggle. That man, in search of the immediate satisfaction of his desire, doesn't speak of this desire: the woman, the treasure, the tool that whets his appetite, he takes them, and if he doesn't obtain them, he is dissatisfied to have not succeeded. He doesn't think a world where man is happy or unhappy, he doesn't think the human condition; he simply tells himself: I didn't succeed. This doesn't keep him from being unhappy. But he doesn't understand himself as unhappy: because *himself* doesn't exist for him; all that exists is his desire and what he desires. The man who knows discussion and science wants to speak of himself to himself. The science of certainty taught him that he is man, discussion, that he has a particular interest. Man and particularity, here are characteristics, terms that he understands, because they express what he feels. He is desire, he is thought. But why is it necessary to go beyond oneself? Why is it necessary to eliminate particular desire and thinking, and all that makes him this man here and not another? Because the discussion doesn't finish any other way? Because only at this price is there science? So be it. But him, he disappears, and, for him, any result makes sense only in relation to himself. Formal truth, objective truth, have an absolute worth, provided that we accept truth as the only human goal, as an end in itself. But can we do so, if, according to science's own system, we are what we are? What is the meaning of objective philosophy for man?

Philosophy's promise no longer finds credibility in this way. Transcendence is necessary, admittedly; but it only gives answers to the questions born out of discussion, and man requires something else: he wants satisfaction for himself. It is a matter of finding the happiness not of humanity, but of men; the State is no longer an absolute, man is not exclusively a citizen: in the best State, he can be unhappy — without speaking of the overwhelming difficulty that there is in realizing this State, without speaking of the danger that, realized, he runs of being brutally destroyed by a neighbor all the more dangerous since he will be less good. Man must be able to be happy as man — this means: as *feeling*. The satisfactions that the tradition offers, riches, power, no longer have appeal, for discussion has proven that they only lead to struggle, and philosophy has made it be seen that desire comes back to the animal part of man who only knows *some* satisfactions, never *the* satisfaction, reserved for what there is of superhuman in man. Yet, it is necessary to look for happiness in man and for man.

But it is necessary to look with reason, for the solution that is required must be valid for all. Taking hold of language and of the State no longer makes any sense, since man learned to distrust success almost as much as defeat. Would he be further along if he possessed everything and needed to continue to desire, to fear the loss of his power, vengeance, jealousy, death? If he wants to be happy, he would need a happiness that only depends on himself, on him alone. His action can no longer [159] turn towards the world, it can only affect him. And this action must be reasonable, that is, sure. The path of happiness must be drawn by science; otherwise man can't trust it. What good is dreaming of a goal that is objectively impossible, either because it doesn't suit man, or because it is unrealizable in the world such as it is?

Nothing is more distant from subjectivism, according to science's use of this word, where it signifies the forgetting of rules under the influence of particular and unreflecting interest, than this search for happiness. It is, of course, not science, for it opposes man's desire to science's attitude. But it is scientific, for it wants to grasp and satisfy this desire for everyone, for man as man. Only, science and its reality, the object, are no longer at the center. Thought was for itself a part of being, it was even the most important part of it. It will no longer be so. It must go back into man, being at his service, helping him to find what makes him happy (not, like for discussion and common sense, to help him obtain what he desires and not, like in the attitude of the object, to help him to get rid of himself).

2. *The contradiction of the reasonable animal. — Epicurean and Stoic solutions. —* Man finds himself unhappy, for the satisfaction, which had seemed accessible to him in the community, has revealed itself to be impossible: the tradition is no longer trustworthy, nothing proves this better than the fact that man searches and knows that he searches. As long as he lives in the community, his goal is set for him; even in the philosopher's ideal State, life will have a meaning and, although this meaning is not fully realizable for all, there will be a satisfaction even for the least gifted: education will replace the tradition and will create the just measure between their desires and their possibilities. But this perfect State is not achieved. The philosopher is not king, and this is bad for him, for he can't be happy, that is, wise, in a bad State. The philosopher in a State that isn't his is lost to himself — unless he changes, changes himself, unless he finds the means of living outside of the State.

But already, philosophy has changed. It looked for the possibility of surpassing the discussion by arriving at the object, at revealed Being, and the philosopher understood himself through philosophy, as one of the beings in the world, being apart, because it is to him that Being reveals itself: happiness opposed to unhappiness didn't concern him to the extent that he was wise; for to that extent, he desired nothing, he didn't desire; he was pure sight,

thought that thinks itself, object revealed to itself. Yet, the fact is that the philosopher is a man and that this man is afraid: objective philosophy, supreme contradiction, is a philosophy for the wise, and philosophy for man is required. But to ask for that is to already institute it, for reality is no longer sufficient to define human interest, and it is not enough that the real be: reality must hold an interest for man.

But to start with, man lives in a world that not only doesn't guarantee him happiness, but which makes him unhappy if he surrenders to it. Even more serious, this world is such that it hides [160] happiness from him. The tradition speaks of good or bad things, it says that man is happy when he obtains these and avoids those. This couldn't be entirely false, for the tradition would not have lasted were it not to correspond to human nature: in vain, *theoria* had wanted to forget this. What the tradition forgets is that the relationship between man's success and happiness is not the same as the relationship between lightning and thunder, man can certainly obtain what he desired and not be happy; for he who had desired and he who possesses are not the same man. The man of the tradition, the man of desire, doesn't desire this, he desires: the satisfaction of a desire necessarily leaves him unsatisfied, because at the same moment he is compelled to desire something else. But this is also what this man succeeds in forgetting.

Two things make it that man is unhappy, fear and desire. As long as he lives in the community and in certainty, neither the one nor the other upsets him. Since he has goals that, to him, are natural, he can have misfortunes, he can't be unhappy: for every danger there is a parade, for every fault and for every failure, a purification and a consolation. He only has to do his duty towards the gods and towards men; even death will be but a step of his career. The terrible, of course, exists; but it is reserved for the others, for the men who are both above and below him, who have not achieved life in the community, who have put themselves outside of shared laws, or who, through an initial accident, have been thrown out. And still, they are not unhappy, the misfortune that strikes them is commensurate to their titanic forces; it is of the same nature, only more gruesome than that which the common man sees himself exposed to. Man becomes unhappy, when he is alone, when he no longer has a career to follow, no longer has any content. Let him look then for enjoyment, let him even look for desire in order to forget that he is emptied of what made up his substance! He will be able to live in this fashion and will succeed in forgetting, but on one condition: that he manages to not think of the future; for he is alone and this means: alone opposite nature. He is no more than an animal, looking for pleasure like an animal; nature is no more than a mass of menacing forces against which no rite, no intercession protects him. Yet, the initial failure is sufficient to show him his situation. He is unhappy, not because he feeds impossible

desires, but because the satiation of his desires doesn't depend on him, because outside of certainty, desire is fear.

Yet enjoyment is the object of natural desire, pain something that man naturally flees — just like any animal. However, man is unhappy, and the animal isn't. The difference therefore comes from the fact that man is reasonable, that he anticipates. And he must anticipate: he is not simply a part of the world, as the animal is, his desire is formed by the community's tradition, his world, through work, he doesn't go straight on to enjoyment, but towards a pleasure that no longer has a direct relationship with his needs: if he doesn't know how to choose between the possibilities that are offered to him in this human world, he will harvest suffering. The path of he who wants to forget is not open to the man who doesn't want to be an animal. [161] Being reasonable and being unhappy, because he is both animal and reasonable, he must reconcile what seems irreconcilable.

Different solutions offer themselves to him. He can use his reason in order to free himself from an unreasonable tradition, just as he can identify himself with this reason, in order to subjugate what is unreasonable in him and in the world. The result will be the same.

In the first case, he turns himself towards the object of desire. Why is he unhappy? Because he doesn't find any enjoyment that depends only on him. Yet, he doesn't find any because need is natural and his desire isn't. If his desire required only the satisfaction of need, he would have as many chances of happiness as the animal, whose needs nature has provided for. The tradition stops him, which proposes so-called goods without any relation to the reality of his isolated life. Laws, proprieties, beliefs, all this is maybe justified from the community's point of view, but this very community needs justification, which is inconceivable, since it is its fault that man is unhappy. There is only to rid oneself of all superstitions, and the fear will disappear at the moment that desire will be ensured to attain its goal. Let us not worry whether in this way man falls to the rank of the brute: on the contrary, it is only in this way that he is fully reasonable, that he is truly above the animal, for alone, this attitude provides him the possibility of living for reason. If we can oppose nature and reason to one another, it's because the majority of men continue to follow the paths of this unreasoning reason that is tradition; it's because, in man, reason distorts a natural desire that it no longer understands, until it no longer even understands itself: in the sense of this opposition, it is natural for man to be unreasonable. Therefore reason's effort will never be able to cease: at every instant, man will see himself tempted by the tradition, he will need to look for where he will find this nature that agrees with reason. But the victory, in freeing him, will bring him an ineffable joy: he doesn't just enjoy, like the animal, he knows that he enjoys, and all enjoyment is thus multiplied to infinity. It's true that he is not sheltered from pain; it is not

something he ignores. But if ever the pain were to become unbearable, his freedom will make the exit from a life that has lost all value easy for him; otherwise the memory of past joys, the expectation of those to come will make him subjugate, or even forget, a disagreeableness that is not at all serious, since this is still in nature and is therefore not destined to last. For nature is good and promises enjoyment — or nothingness — to the individual: the sage's life will pass by in joy, far from men, in the society of those who have understood that nothing counts except reasonable reason, and the community of tradition and of work is replaced by the society of friends, where each finds himself in every other, where the enjoyment of each is that of all, where the company of friends adds, to the other joys, this last one, the greatest, that of living as a man with human men. The discussion doesn't exist for them neither does science's work: what would they disagree about, they who ask nothing of what surpasses the individual? What use is science to them, since they have no differences of opinion to decide and since they don't want to transform a nature [162] that spontaneously offers them all that they desire? At most they will outline a science in order to free themselves from that of the others, from that rank science made of fear when it remains faithful to archaic certainties, and of desire there where it has rejected them and which never takes into account man's veritable interest, which makes a transcendent out of nature, an object without willpower out of man, without human reason. For it could be dangerous, this pseudoscience, because it plunges the man that has surrendered himself to it back into fear, particularly as it claims to be reasonable. It is not in fact so, since it bars the path of joy; yet, reason is joy. It is, of course, not the sage who would strike up discussion with this science, but he is ready to uphold it, not to be the winner, but rather in order to prove to himself that he is in agreement with himself and that no knowledge regarding the world contradicts the possibility of happiness: he does science in order to free himself from it.

The reasonable man has in this way put the emphasis on his animality. He can put it on reason itself, and he will come to another solution of the fundamental opposition of his being. Since he can act on himself, since desire is the source of his unhappiness, since his fate doesn't depend on him, he must renounce the search for pleasure, the fear of unhappiness. He must make himself reason living in the world, not a reasonable animal, but reason in an animal. Reason in itself isn't looking for happiness, it is that; it knows neither desire nor fear, since it asks nothing. Admittedly, man is not pure reason, reason is outside of him, but he is not cut off from reason; if he can't merge with it, since he lives, he can follow it, since he sees it: the problem is that of virtue. However, it is no longer the man living in the city's virtue or morality; good and evil are not defined in relationship to the community, but for the individual isolated in the world, isolated at the interior of humankind. Man must fill

the space that is assigned to him in nature, by nature; here is virtue, the only virtue that exists for him.

It seems therefore that science must reprise its role, and the fact remains that the man living in this attitude interprets himself normally with the help of the category of the object: how is his place to be assigned to him without knowing what the world is? Nonetheless, this world doesn't interest him in itself. He wants neither to decide a discussion of a political nature — what does this city or that other matter to him in his unhappiness? —, nor to transform reality, since he has turned inwards towards himself, nor unite with absolute Being, since he wants to be happy such as he is and at every moment. It's true that he observes the world, and for this science is useful to him; but the question that he asks the world isn't objective; he looks at it in order to find a meaning to his life there. Therefore his interest doesn't lead him towards the detail. What occupies him is the world in its totality and in its unity, not things, but their places and their functions: once the world is understood from this angle, happiness, virtue, wisdom will be within man's reach.

The world makes sense, it is reasonable. For objective science, this signified that all contradictions disappeared into living unity. Now, the world is reasonable for man: man's [163] fate, all that happens to him, makes sense: reason is no longer transcendent, it inhabits the world; it no longer justifies, it acts: the world is filled with life and its soul directs it, a reasonable soul that provides for the good of the immense animal by giving consciousness and life to it. The world's parts are only the organs whose meaning is revealed to he who sees both their whole and their functions in their whole at the same time.

Soul of the world, soul of man, the two correspond to each other and the possibility of human happiness is founded on this correspondence. There is not any particular interest for a soul that is the soul of the whole and that has nothing to desire; there is no unhappiness for the man who looks on his life from reason's point of view. This here is not the flight towards the reality beyond all being, an ineffable act, indescribable rapture, it is the goal of the reasonable man, who at every moment of his existence overcomes his animality by understanding it and whose life is the struggle of his reason for its freedom.

For the animal in him balks. It exists, and it asserts itself in the desire of enjoyment, in the fear of pain, it's he who makes man mistake enjoyment and good, pain and evil. But the animal's joy and suffering have, in themselves, nothing of good or of bad for reason, except that the one, like the other, diverts man from virtue: let the reason in man understand what happens to the animal in him, and the idea of the necessity of events will free man from desire and thus from fear.

Man must accept what happens to him. The world is a living being, it would be absurd to assume that the action of its organs depends on man, and on him alone. The freedom

of the world's soul is a necessity for all things at the interior of the world: man therefore doesn't act, but fills a function. What distinguishes him from the brute and from the stone, is that he participates in reason, that he has the sense of goals, that he can propose them to himself; he is unhappy, because he is looking for the animal's happiness, being conscious, yet, the happiness of conscious desire doesn't exist. What he can attain is being free from desire, for everything is necessary, nothing that desire strives for depends on him. A single thing is in his hands: understanding that all that happens to him is good, because everything is necessary. Pain doesn't strike reason, enjoyment bring it nothing. Whether the animal suffers or has pleasure, what does this change, for better or for worse, the grand spectacle that his reason watches? He is player on the world's stage, his role is large or small, pleasant or tiresome, but he decides neither his entrance on stage nor his exit, no more the acts than the fortune of the character that falls to him: he will play it, and the sole freedom that is left to him is that of being unhappy, of desiring another part, of resisting, not through his acts, but in his heart of hearts. The sole freedom? No. He can exit the play, if the role is unbearable for him; while he remains on stage, he has no choice, but nothing keeps him from getting down off of the stage, if his character seems unworthy to him or if the animal in him can no longer satisfy the requirements of the piece of theatre. But he can above all, and here is his prerogative as man, act in his role and watch himself act. It's thus that he will be pacified, it's thus that he will enjoy, in his reason, the perfect beauty of this spectacle above which there is nothing; it's thus that he will be free, because he no longer desires [164] freedom. Wisdom is therefore the only virtue. Rule-following, what we traditionally understand in this word, doesn't exist for the sage. He is the sighted among the blind, the adult among infants, and the rules that they impose on themselves are not made for him, who knows himself driven by the soul itself: he is the veritable legislator, the true king, the source of the law, not its subject.

But man is not wise. Who can claim to have reached perfection, to be capable of remaining stably there? The sage, is it anything other than an ideal? And were he not, were he met on this earth, would he ever be anything other than an exception? In the meantime the others must live, we others must live. Rules are necessary, for the ordinary man, who doesn't know how to untie himself from the illusion of free action, a science is necessary, because the masses can't see the grand plan in its details, in its particular correspondences.

This undertaking will not be impossible, nor even extraordinarily difficult, for if the world is reasonable, the average man's thought cannot be false regarding the essential. The tradition has a meaning, it contains truth. Only, the truth is hidden in it, it is no longer recognizable for he who is caught in this tradition. For he doesn't live as a man, but as a particular being: he doesn't live in *the* tradition, but in *a* tradition, and what men believe and say

is not the pure content of reason. Yet, in order to recover the essential in the mixture resulting from the action of fear and of the particular desires of particular communities, it will be sufficient to trace back to the shared ground: what exists everywhere is human in the literal sense of the term. There are relations of sympathy and of understanding between men; there is a law that excludes violence and renders the life of each for all of the others sacred; one must not act against another in a fashion that he would not want to see employed against himself; man's life is directed from above, his acts are compensated or punished by a superior intelligence: here are beliefs that are encountered everywhere and which express the morality of a single humanity in which all men are brothers, the unity of a morality that is nonetheless only visible to the sole philosopher who examines everything from the sage's point of view. The laws and the gods present themselves differently from one people to the next, and it is up to the philosopher to uncover their grounding identity which alone allows fixing a conduct for the men who still need a guide. The sage, we repeat, is above the rules, he knows that action doesn't exist, that responsibility, punishment, freedom are words, that the necessary act leads to its inevitable consequence. But the morality that he offers to the others has the great merit of supplying them with a thought that, without expressing the truth, features it at a level accessible to the masses, and gives the ordinary man's life a meaning that he can understand: if he doesn't live as the sage at the center of the world, he will at least avoid the revolt against the inevitable; if he can't free himself from the illusion of liberty, he will make a decision according his nature as man and will know how to accept his fate as coming to him from the divinity.

The organization of the world such as the philosopher reveals it to him —and reveals it to himself who, as a philosopher, is not the sage — will help him: nothing, indeed is abandoned to chance there; every event is related to all others and supplies man with the means of orienting himself. [165] There again, the tradition is true, provided that we can bring it back to its truth. It knows that everything is full of prediction, that all is sign, prophecy, charged with signification; but it knows it in an obscure manner, it sees miracles and supernatural interventions, because it doesn't see the world from its center. And nonetheless, it is the tradition that is right against objective science, it is in the tradition that, disfigured, the idea of the world's life is kept intact against the dead conception of a whole united solely by a transcendent reason.

It is a matter of understanding this life in what it is for man. At the center of the world of men man himself is found, image of the world, reasonable life, reflection and copy of the great animal. His fate is not without importance, since he is the sole being who knows that he has a fate; he can question the world and the world will answer him, for the world's economy is such that all the parts move according to a single plan and because this plan is



established with man in mind. Nothing then is empty of meaning for him, and it is only his ignorance that makes him consider the cases in which he succeeds in grasping a few links in the chain that everything is hanging on as extraordinary: the world is a world of necessity for man, but of understandable necessity, human necessity. There is a science, and it matters to man, because it deals with his life, because it doesn't make him the object of an imperturbable reason, but the principal subject of the universal plan, because he sees in this way that he lives in a world that is good, and good not only in itself, but also good for him: his action has a meaning, since it is foreseen, virtue is truly praiseworthy, since it leads him along the path of destiny and because the virtuous man does what nature requires of him. He is ensured happiness through the harmony of his reason with global reason, the conformity of his life with the life of the cosmos that carry him. For man's conscience (unless man is wise), happiness is in properly human action, the action with an eye to humanity, the action of humanity in man. The moral conscience, not at all theoretical consciousness, is the spring of his happiness: if he is certain of having wanted the good, man can be content. The rest doesn't depend on him. Pleasure is agreeable, it is not a good, pain is troublesome, it is not an evil; because both arrive with necessity. Man's sole good resides in the human and virtuous action of man on himself in a world built with an eye to the realization of this good: morality and natural science mutually explain and rely on each other.

3. *The Self as the « eternal » man. — Man as sentiment. — The role of the category.*  
 — Here are the two philosophical possibilities of the man made unhappy by his isolation in the world, by his solitude before nature, in a humanity for whom every tradition has become doubtful. Historically, they are expressed in Epicureanism and Stoicism; but we find the category just as well in Plato and Aristotle<sup>27</sup> as in more [166] modern philosophies. However the category seems above all central in the two grand schools that appear at the moment where the city and independent work cease playing the primary role in man's life. Philosophy changes with the world, and it changes the world for the man who finds himself free, that is, empty. But for this very man, these underlying facts remain invisible: his condition expresses itself, but doesn't grasp itself in its language; his history, the history that he remembers and that he understands, is finished for him, he himself becomes a-historic, the world is no longer subjected to his action, but is absolute and he only has this world centered around him: a man eternally the same, an absolute world, here are the traits that characterize his thought.

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<sup>27</sup> They know it as the *natural* desire of happiness and grant it only a subordinate place in relation to the *theoria* that satisfies it in making it disappear (reprise). In Kant, the category appears equally as a fact, as an observation bearing on human nature, but here gives birth to the *faith of reason*.

It is necessary however to make no mistake about it: it is a matter of an authentic category, which means that it is one of the last bases of explanation, starting, inexplicable in itself, understandable only through its opposition to the other categories in their totality: a free act. In this sense, it is, not a-historic (a word without signification at the concrete human level), but anterior to all conscious history, which is itself built by a category or categories. The attitude that corresponds to a category is always possible, and this is particularly clear in the case of that which occupies us here: this category, whose action appears with good reason triggered, more than that of many others, by very specific historic conditions, is also the attitude-category of the man that rises up against history. Certainty no longer has any content since the tradition, which is its inauthentic form, has decomposed, and on the psychological level the absence of content expresses itself as a sentiment of hopelessness, an absence of hope: it is necessary that man create a new content — or that he accept the absence of it, an acceptance that with hope also eliminates fear. Whatever the preferred path be, it leads to the omnipotence of the present over the past and the future, of which the one is identified with error, and the other with anxiety. This is evident in the case where the emptiness of nonsense is consciously accepted, but it is not less true for the man who is looking for a new content in a new and human world. For this world must be drawn such that each moment has its meaning in it, such that nothing more be required in order to complete it: life can stop at any instant and be perfect. The sage is not waiting for anything, because nothing can arise and pull him from the contemplation of his role in the spectacle where everything has always been stopped and will always repeat itself in an indefinitely large, but not infinite, circle of coherent and necessarily realized possibilities. The meaning of the world is always, and always present.

The self is isolated man and, starting from here, the eternal man. The proposition can be turned around: the eternal man, the man who is always the same, is the man who interprets himself and is interpreted as *self*. Inasmuch as he believes, thinks, acts, man changes with his content. He [167] is identical with himself inasmuch as he feels, that is, enjoys and suffers, hopes and fears. Therefore, if he wants to grasp himself as himself, he understands himself as sentiment. Of course, it is for us that he understands himself in that way: we have seen that for himself, he is reason that must and can dominate the sentiment that is only passion, only passiveness, and it is only in relation to he who has gone beyond this category that the role of sentiment reveals itself. Inside the category, the self is the noxious matter that must be dominated, since it can't be eliminated. But seen from outside, this matter is the true content of life, which would no longer have any if the influence of reason were absolute: joy is in always-renewed victories, it disappears with the adversary. The Epicurean's

sadness, that Seneca saw, and the Stoic's severity indicate the same thing: the self, never victorious, is the inhuman principle of man.

This result looks more paradoxical than it truthfully is. It only expresses the difference of the *for us* and the *for itself*. We understand this attitude starting from human life: as despair, as an effort to conquer fear, as man's struggle against a condition that is always present, always changing and that he wants to eliminate in one go, once and for all. This is why, "Epicurean" and "Cynic"<sup>28</sup> have been reproachful terms since these schools appeared, and all the pleas for their cause miss the essential point, for as justified as they are in the details. What *one* doesn't forgive the "philosopher" is that he wants to be immediate to nature, that he is and wants to stay alone: the ordinary man protests against this extraordinary attitude. The very qualifying term of philosopher (= Stoic) is pejorative: the philosopher is he who thinks *apart*, who adapts himself to everything. He is not bad, he is even virtuous, but with all his virtue, he is not what *one* call serious. He bores, for, were he followed, the course of the world would end; he disappoints, for nothing is less personal than this category that opposes eternal reason to the animal that lives in sentiment; and it is of little consequence that the sentiment be considered as evil full-stop or as a temptation to ceaselessly keep under surveillance.

If this category is "extraordinary", it's because it is the first under which the individual grasps himself as a living individual (even though, seen under other categories, this is the refusal of life). The reasonable individual of discussion is drawn away from himself; if he is an individual for us, it's precisely because he doesn't want to be isolated, but to be right: the self doesn't care about being right, it is looking for happiness, its happiness. Being right, this is of value to he who lives in a community and wants to dominate those others who are themselves individuals and, consequently, are wrong, whereas he himself is right. Or differently: it is as universal that he is right. For the self, the universal is outside of it, and it is itself that it must lead to the universal. He himself is the sentiment of his unhappiness and of his fear. He finds himself, neither as an observed object nor as a particularity of the desire in the tradition — it is precisely these interpretations that he rejects—, [168] but as a yearning for happiness. He is *given* for himself, but this given is inaccessible to theory, as given to sentiment. For the reason in him; he himself exists only as he is incommensurable to reason; for this reason in him is in its essence the reason of the world, for which the self is not me, but, either a cog in the great machine, or a product of chance. Hence man's action on himself: *because* he is sentiment, he takes sides with reason against himself; being me for himself, he escapes in reason that has no self: in order to be happy, he must cease to be;

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<sup>28</sup> We speak of the Cynic's philosophical discourse. For the Cynical *scandal*, see below, pp. 171 ss.

for outside his unhappiness, there is nothing of the self. To be a *philosopher* is to die: the *sage* is outside of becoming, being not living, but in the eternal present, at the origin of the succession of events, at the source of time.

In the reality of this lived philosophy, there is therefore only this becoming. We can cling to successive moments in order to find joy in them — a parceled joy that doesn't depend on the philosopher, even though he can replace it through the memories of joys past — , we can give up on joy in order to search for tranquility; but life is always filled with the struggle between the feeling of unhappiness that wants to be reason and unhappiness itself. Never does the philosopher become a sage. He is always on the way, never arriving. It is in this way that he is himself for himself — despite himself. He is himself, because he knows himself to be the sentiment that he denies, he *lives*, because he doesn't succeed in being what he wants to be. And even if, by any impossible chance, he were to succeed (which — even at the limit — would be thinkable only for the Epicurean, since the Stoic can understand only after the fact what has happened to him and since something else happens in the meantime, such that he must always give credit to the reason of the world), happiness would still consist in the satisfaction of the determined and irreducible desire; the struggle would disappear, but the reconciliation would let the opposed two that it puts in agreement subsist in their separation, namely the nature-reason and the unreasoning reason of the social and historical animal. The success would be unique and the self who would have surpassed itself in this way would be all the more so self for the others who would admire it in its ascent, but who would no longer be able to understand it at its arrival point: the man who wins an instant of joy and in which reason is powerful enough to abandon life to nature, this man can be followed and imitated; he who would stick to this point without wavering would be above man, a god living not in the cosmos but between worlds. As the Stoic's satisfaction, which never removes fear from the animal in him, springs from the effort, the Epicurean's joy is also the fruit of tension. Even for Epicurus, it is not natural for man to be natural *and* happy. Philosophy is always necessary, and man is for himself a truly human being, because he wants to leave his manly being.

Acting on himself in order to free himself from the sentiment or in order to give himself over freely to it, man for the first time says *me*. The more he is looking to leave a life that is his, the more he'll find himself thrown back into it. It's as a self, between the memory of his past and the apprehension of his future, that he tends towards the eternal present, the immutable happiness. Wanting to escape from himself, measuring himself against what he would like to be, [169] he grasps himself as he is. The idea of wisdom allows him to understand himself as a man living in the world, inexhaustible for the science of the

object, incomprehensible as a particularity in the community. It is the negation and the transcendence of his desire that show man to himself as transcending himself, transcending himself not as reason, but as sentiment, transcending not only objects, but the object itself.

It is here that the extraordinary force of this category can be found — and it matters little that the man in this attitude apply it, so to speak, to itself, desiring to transcend, in wisdom, still the transcendence of desire.

4. *Reprises.* — *A note on the function of reprises in general.* — As the category of the object is situated at the base of all philosophy claiming to be scientific (therefore, without forming it necessarily all by itself), likewise the category of the self grounds the interpretation of the world as the field of human life, the *Weltanschauung*, and the reprises of the preceding categories form, with this one, so many forms of “human” philosophies. We could not here, not any more than in the preceding chapter, act as a historian of philosophy. Not only would this demand an analysis of historical philosophies, and, task of the greatest importance, the successive interpretations that they found; this would above all imply that the logic of philosophy was complete. Presently, only certain types of interpretation of man can be shown.

The self can thus be interpreted as Truth. It is evident that this category then loses its character: reflected in the self, it is no longer immediate. The self declares itself Truth, and this self’s decree is enough on its own to show us that it is not about Truth. But the same cannot be said for the self who, in drawing the category to itself, wants to free itself definitively and absolutely: it’s solipsism, not that of the school, which is only an interpretation both flat and absurd of scientific idealism, but that of lived solitude, for which nothing is outside of the individual feeling life. Certain lyrical attitudes, without exhausting themselves in this reprise, are only understandable through it. For these attitudes, nothing is except to the extent that it expresses the self’s sentiment, the only level at which there can be revelation. There is a world, but it is neither true or false, nor discussable, it is not, above all objectively real; on the contrary, it is essential to this world to oppose itself as *mine* to the people’s inauthentic, senseless world, as a world heavy with meaning and signification, to another that is the negation of sentiment and of happiness, a construction of unreasoning reason<sup>29</sup>. (It is incidentally this conscious and programmatic opposition that shows that it concerns a reprise, and not the direct attitude of Truth.)

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<sup>29</sup> Among the innumerable examples (and of which none, obviously, could be understood with the help of this single category), are placed, at opposing points, Byron and Novalis.

The reprise of nonsense is more theoretical: the self is the only level of revelation, but this level is empty. Every other level is put at a distance; [170] tradition, science, discussion, certainty do nothing other than mislead. Here, revelation is possible, but doesn't take place. Said otherwise, man can live in the human sense of the word, his life can make sense, but in fact, this life and this sense are ungraspable, and man can't speak of them. For as soon as he tries his hand at it, he once again renounces the self to give himself to some science, which is necessarily false, since it places itself outside of the self. Therefore speaking is only good for eliminating language: he who speaks affirms, and the self doesn't affirm, but feels. Every affirmed meaning is opposed by its counter-meaning and destroys itself at the same time that it destroys the other: the meaning of life is the nonsense that must be liberated through the destruction of false meaning. One is only sage in renouncing the sage's claim. It is only in this way that man can be happy and free. At the level of theory, we arrive in this way at skepticism, at an absolute and irrefutable skepticism. The classic argument doesn't have a hold here, namely that the skeptic contradicts himself in affirming that one can affirm nothing. For the self admits affirmation, its own as well as of the others'. Except, since all affirmations are possible, none have any importance. They are not false (that is, not necessarily false, even though there be those that are, but according to the principles of he who advances them), they are simply senseless; they don't count for happiness. Being placed on the terrain of the true and the false, of the revealed, of the observed, the business of *being placed* as such, herein lies the absurd: it is sufficient to admit the possibility of a determined meaning so that nonsense is fully exposed. Being skeptic, this means: not judging, holding one's self back, not going outside of one's self. Man affirms naturally, since naturally he speaks, but if he wants to be happy, he must not become attached to his assertions; he must act, must leave language (which he can only do in speaking all the contradictory languages), must make himself free for sentiment, must untie himself from all that binds others, in a word: he must eliminate the determination of judgment and must live.

The reprise of true-and-false is the reflection about the reprise of nonsense, as this very category comes out of the preceding category that it reflects in Truth. It therefore allows the self's truth, but opposes it to the supposed truth of the not-me. The self is the measure of truth, to the exclusion of every other standard. Between being and appearing, there is no difference for the man who knows that he lives not according to a community, a science, etc..., but in accordance with his desire and his sentiment. If there is an appearance and a false — and both exist — it's because he doesn't think as me, because he speaks a language that isn't his own, because he has forgotten that all that is shown to him is himself: he must grab onto this single truth. He who is able to do so is his own master; for he has ruled out the unreasoning reason that wanted to expel him from himself. And he is the master of the

others and for the others, because they live in the false. He can fulfill himself according to his sentiment and his desire, since he actually lives and since they believe only living. They are selves only for him, they are the products of language instead of being, as he is, the creators of it. In creating a language of his own and in imposing it upon them, he creates them in his image. Conversely, he can prefer free subjects to creatures, [171] to solitude, the recognition by other selves who owe liberty to him and who are linked to him as to their master-liberator, but not as to their lord: they will be his through the sentiment that he has given to them, through love. He will not want to be owner of things in human form, so little free that they don't even know themselves owned: from him, men will learn the true and the false, and in their self he will recover his own; become again nature and reason, their sentiment will be the nature in which his self lives. Whichever of these two attitudes he chooses, the master will always oppose the true to the false (the two being total understandings) like happiness to unhappiness, like Good to Evil, like reasonable reason to unreasoning reason, like nature to the artificial. The Good is the realization of the feeling and desiring self, and wanting to guide the self towards a Good independent of its desire is to throw oneself into the false. However, the true and the false are coextensive: the false is still the self's false, a self who forgets itself (from there, the possibility of mastery in its two forms) and Evil is the Good that has not been retained in its essence. The tradition is the self's reason, but degenerated, and the community's good, for as inauthentic as it is, stems from the Good, as the mirage is born of the real object. The false is the false of the true. But since it concerns a reprise, the false and the true are no longer in the world; the difference is in man himself, who knows himself to be at once me and not-me (traditional interest, object, etc...) and who therefore is no longer content to make a stand, but acts, and acts on himself. Knowledge and action are one and the same thing: knowing oneself is being healed<sup>30</sup>.

The reprise of certainty leads to a completely different result. The false, that is, the not-me, is actually negated by the opposition of a concrete self, which doesn't determine itself solely in and by the continual negation of its other and doesn't live only off of what it fights. The self that interprets itself under the category of certainty possesses a concrete content. It doesn't solely push back the world's speaking, it has something to say. And this thing that it proclaims is itself, the self. It is and it knows itself to be desire and activity, and it knows that any given being is an obstacle to its desire, unless it transforms it into satisfaction. Action in view of satisfaction is the only Good, and it is certain that this action achieves its end. Pleasure is always within man's reach, provided that he eliminate the obstacles. Yet

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<sup>30</sup> It is the prophet's attitude in relation to the community, as preacher, not his attitude before God. It doesn't concern, naturally, the content of his preaching, which is determined by other categories.

these obstacles are all of the same type; they are nothing other than false pleasures, false virtues, false rules that man has subjected himself to. The self is sure of its good: in order to enjoy, it only has to follow itself. It is not looking for itself, it doesn't need to know itself, it remains itself. Whether it draw its joy from the gratification of exterior things or from the immediate sentiment of its activity, this joy depends only on itself. Its relation to the false is, consequently, that of direct and acting negativity. The world's rules, which are not any self's rules, are the object of its hostility. It will not only put them in question, it will not only [172] declare them null and void, it will break them in order to destroy them. Between the concrete self, understood by the self as content of certainty, and the exterior law, there is no other relation than that of struggle: a cynical attitude and discourse.

The reprise of discussion turns towards a plurality of *selves*, interpreting the self as a subject in discussion, not as what it is for itself. In this way it transports its own problem onto new terrain, that of the agreement between individuals opposed by their interests, but who can't or don't want to settle their disagreements through the use of violence. The self's entrance into this world — the older category encounters the new attitude in a world it believes unchanged: "the world" is the same, but men "have changed" — changes the nature of the opposition: It is no longer the discussion of (traditional) interests that is at stake, but an opposition of sentiment between individuals who don't pursue goals fixed as such by the tradition, but rather their happiness. Man is no longer directed by the tradition's values, but *feels* unhappy and wants *to feel* happy, which no worldly success would know how to guarantee. If the discussion truly wanted to resolve the problem that it has set for itself in this way, it would overstep itself and would go, in transcending itself, first to the *object*, then to the category of the *self* itself. But since we must deal with a reprise (which therefore can't be produced before the following attitudes have appeared in the man of this reprise's historic world), the reprise suppresses the problem and is satisfied by the appearance of a solution (for us incoherent), in stipulating the natural agreement of individual sentiments in a moral *cosmos*. Just as the Epicureans and the Stoics are sure of the existence of a world that provides for man's natural needs or of which the spectacle procures satisfaction for him, so too is this reprise convinced of a well-ordered whole of sentiments. Either the agreement is produced, even though men's sentiments seem to oppose themselves to the establishing of such an agreement — or, man is such that, barring accident, the sentiments of each tend towards agreement, would tend towards it at least, if the wrong tradition were not opposed to it, and



would automatically produce it (in the case of the first response) if such a tradition didn't prevent the free play of sentiments<sup>31</sup>.

This analysis of several reprises can serve at the same time to concretely show the function and the historical functioning of reprises in general.

The category does not initially appear pure. It is therefore legitimate to demand the reduction of the most complex forms, which are also the most “natural”, to the logically pure expression. In such a reduction (through a deduction of the complicated starting from the simple) it is not necessary to look for anything other than an answer to this precise requirement. The *category* must be grasped in itself, as the concept through which every *idea* is determined as far as its function [173] in total comprehension is concerned. Yet, the philosophical category is always one, and, for it, the preceding categories are ideas which, for it, are not transcendent, but which it subsumes under itself. But on the other hand, this exclusivity of each category is not necessarily present in the consciousness that corresponds to the category-attitude and which opposes itself to the tradition, to the science, to the truth that it fights, but that it continues to recognize instead of excluding. It doesn't speak its own language, but that which it finds ready, it interprets itself in this language (that is, with the help of reprises), and this interpretation is ordinarily the cause of its historic influence, to such an extent that we can regard such a misinterpretation of the attitude by itself as a necessary condition so that it appear understandable at the moment that it appears and reappears. The pure expression of the attitude by its category is ordinarily delayed, and — we repeat: ordinarily — the reprise historically precedes it. Epicureanism and Stoicism illustrate, on the one hand the extraordinary case of genius, and on the other the current evolution. Whereas Epicurus knows from the start that all “truth” makes sense only in function of the self, Stoicism never succeeded in breaking through the reprises of certainty, discussion, and objective science.

Logic would leave its domain if it wanted to analyze the historic forms under which the attitudes present themselves and the concrete processes which lead man to formulate pure categories. Let nothing other than ideal types of reprises be looked for in what precedes, types corresponding to the historic reality, but neither wanting nor being able to exhaust it, given that their function, like all logic, is organizing experience, not creating it. The remark is perhaps particularly important for a logic of philosophy which is based on freedom and that can therefore only retrace a series of acts which are understandable solely after having

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<sup>31</sup> Shaftesbury, with his *natural and just sense*, could illustrate the “optimistic” solution, Mandeville, with the principle of *private vices public virtues*, the “pessimistic” solution.

been accomplished. For the passage from one category to another is not understandable from the first's point of view, and appears as necessary only after the new category's appearance, necessary from the necessity that this one freely creates. Man can settle into to any category, and men do effectively settle there. Overcoming an attitude is what makes the great man, knowing that there was passage makes the philosopher. Both are rare, it is even rarer that the same man be both. Ordinarily, the innovator will look to justify his decision by presenting it as the necessary development of the attitude that he has just overcome and will in this way attempt to make himself understood by others, or even to be understandable to himself. Logic, we repeat, must show the possibility of these attitudes, which are not fundamental, precisely because they are understandable through reduction and reconstruction. Where, when, how, why they are realized (questions that only take on a precise meaning thanks to logic) — here are the problems that logic must leave to history, which is, according to the two acceptations of the word history, the living source of logic and logic “applied”.

## CHAPTER VIII GOD

**The self doesn't find satisfaction in its isolation, since it would find it solely by ceasing to be self. It finds it by opposing another me to itself through which it is understood as feeling, satisfied as desire, determined as man, not as natural being: God.**

1. *The coincidence of reason and sentiment in God. — Man as creator and as image. Trust, obedience, love. — Happiness and beatitude.* — The self's happiness consists in the reconciliation of the animal in him with the reasonable being, or, if animality is understood as specifically human animality, in the return of unreasoning reason to reasonable reason. The self sees itself therefore as potentially reasonable reason, but united to desire, said otherwise: it sees itself opposite its proper nature (whether it be animal in every sense or human nature). In order to conquer, it therefore finds itself compelled to subject or rule out this nature. Yet, this nature is itself, in the same way as the reason that it sees as its veritable being, its self: in fact, it is me only to the extent that it is nature, and the self is nothing other than nature negated — negated therefore by nature itself. If then the self maintains the ambition of being sufficient unto itself, it will be happy only in word; for the other side of its being subsists and it feels its unhappiness all the more profoundly since this other side, decreed nonexistent, is introduced through this very decree into reason, which no longer knows rest. If, on the contrary, the self surrenders to nature, it will cease to be a self at the same instant that it comes to find joy there; for the self has understood itself as the felt opposition of reason and nature, of reason and desire, and disappears with this opposition. The self doesn't enjoy or is annihilated in enjoyment.

Therefore the self must, if it wants to persist in its being *and* find its happiness, be determined as a unity of desire and reason. But this determination must not be natural, neither in the sense of objective science, nor in that of the anthropocentric cosmos: happiness would always be a product of chance or it would signify the disappearance of the self that would melt in nature. Its happiness can be guaranteed only by a being that dominates nature and dominates it for the good of man, which recognizes it as he is for himself, through another self, but an absolute self which determines man as man, as self, for man's sentiment:

the world [176] is the creation of God, a self truly transcendent as creator, as absolute self, absolutely satisfied self, because absolutely powerful, but accessible to man's understanding as this creator is *me*, that's to say reason, feeling, and desire.

His desire is not however the result of a contradiction in his being, as is the case for human desire. Being creator, He is perfectly happy, since His desire creates His condition; more exactly, He is beyond all condition, since there is no unreasoning reason in him, His creative reason being essential reason: His desire is the fruit of His sentiment as He limits it Himself out of respect for another sentiment. Yet, this respect is only understandable in relation to a potentially reasonable feeling: God opposes man to himself as a freely created limit of His omnipotence as creator, as His image in which He is for Himself: He comprehends man in both acceptances of the term, as the circumference comprehends the circle and as man comprehends man.

For man's part, he only comprehends himself in God, and only starting from this comprehension can he be happy. For his being is based on his creator and persists merely through the will of this creator. To the extent that God transcends man — and this extent is infinite —, He is inaccessible to him. But man is immanent to God and comprehends himself therefore to the extent that he sees himself as a free creature. He is no longer alone facing nature, the divine self speaks to him and he encounters another self in it who, being above him and therefore disinterested, is not opposed to him, but asks him only to be truly as his creator wanted him to be: in the finite, an image of transcendence, a freedom that determines itself in view of purity. Man can be happy, because the divine self shows him the path of beatitude and helps him in his step. His origin, his being and his goal are not of this world where all being is isolated and unhappy: he grasps himself in his fullness by returning to his source, and this source, since it transcends and dominates nature, comprehending within it human nature, can guarantee him his happiness, a human and not animal happiness, because he who grants it to him is himself *me*.

He is in truth the only self. The creature claims to be a self, but the very possibility of claiming it comes to him from God, who wanted him free. His freedom is a creature's freedom, which has no other capacity than that, precarious in its essence, of divine will. This will, it's true, is immutable; for there is no change in what is above all limitation. But divine judgment corresponds to man's liberty, and if this judgement doesn't threaten man's freedom, it threatens his existence: God created man in his image, he created him free; man can therefore fall and God, recognizing him thereby as free, will punish him by taking the being of which he has shown himself unworthy back from him. Thus, man is and is a self only by derivation. His reason and his sentiment are actually what they are in their essence only on

the condition that they conform to divine reason and sentiment. His liberty and his being for itself are realized only at the price of his fall: completely united to God, he would no longer have anything to himself. His self, a contradiction between the creature's insufficient [177] and finite being and the freedom of the image of God, grasps itself only in temptation and sin, as rambling reason and as insufficient for happiness.

He would live totally in sin, if God didn't come to his aid; he would even live in it without knowing, if God didn't illuminate him through his revelation. As a creature, he is nature, above the animals that he dominates through his reason, but without his natural reason making him be of another essence than them. What they pursue, the continuation of their life in pleasure, he too pursues, only with greater skill. The creature's reason is only a technical intelligence for which there is no good and no evil, its goals are given to it, and it is looking for the means to attain them: God must give him a rule, a measure in order to judge these goals, or even in order to show him that such a judgment exists. Without the divine law, man would be but a mirror that reflects nothing. In learning what God is through revelation, he learns what he is himself. In learning what is good or bad, from God's image, he becomes similar to God.

Similar, but not equal. Without this knowledge of Good and Evil, he is merely an animal, happy, but happy in the happiness of the first of animals; his life happens from moment to moment, with neither fear nor hope, and if he is the image of God, he is so passively. He is the master of animals, because he sees them and recreates them in naming them, but he is not yet a man, because he is not *for himself*. He is but breath, but life. In order to be a living image of God, he must act, hear the divine law — and disobey. The divine law and his own disobedience give him to himself, but give him as fallen, and his fall is his dignity. It is this fall that assigns him a decisive role in the world, because with his downfall, the harmony between beings has been destroyed, and it is up to him to reestablish it. The world has become the place of temptation, of unhappiness, but also of rescue and salvation, man is no longer solely the first among the animals, he is a being above nature, because now, having disobeyed and being stripped of his natural excellence, he knows that he can freely obey. But he has not become God's equal, because the law is not his own. It comes to him from outside, from God, from whom he has separated himself and who has punished him: he is in need, and life is granted to him on the condition that he provides for it through his work. His subsistence is the fruit of his hard work and a fruit that ripens only with divine benediction; if it is lacking, if God turns against man, because man has turned from him, he will have toiled in vain. He draws his life from divine goodness which he no longer has a right to, but which comes to him as an unmerited grace, a gift that he can refuse through a new revolt, but that he can require only as the divine promise given to the law's faithful.

Man's world is therefore the domain of his action under the law. It is such that man finds everything that he needs there. God, in his wisdom, organized it for man's greatest good. Therefore man can find his happiness there — provided that he know what happiness is. For if it is true that he must earn it *in* this world and that the worthy finds it there, it is not less evident that he is not *of* this world and that the divine decision is not immanent [178] to earthly life, even though it is based on this life. Strictly human happiness consists in the conformity of man's will with that of God's, and man's desire is distorted by his downfall: it was his fall that was his dignity, and the dignity suffers the effects of this origin. It is why the divine law weighs on the human will, which tends immediately towards nature and doesn't see the creation in this nature, the incomplete being, but takes it for the absolute. Man has destroyed the world's harmony and has placed himself above everything, but he has only succeeded in doing so in principle: the freedom that he has conquered and of which he has made himself aware, he abandons it in order to put himself in fact below animals, which are without merit before God, it is true, but also without fault, whereas for man, living as the animal is being inferior to the animal. And yet, without the help of God, he will not avoid it. God must make him a new heart, if he is to be just in the lord's ways. The law's revelation would crush him, if it were not accompanied with that of divine goodness and mercy. Only together, justice and goodness give a meaning to his life: God gives him the law and leads him at the same time towards justice, which he would never come to by his own, irremediably corrupted, strengths.

In this fashion, everything is illuminated, for God wants everything that happens to man. Joyous and sad events, success and failure are only the means through which God rewards, punishes, tests, raises the free creature: here is everything man must know. God is just and good; Thanks to His goodness, He will not abandon his fallen creature, and to His justice, He sees human action in what it can have of praiseworthiness: God doesn't want the sinner's death, but rather that he mend his ways. It is not that He never punishes, rather that He has forbidden himself from condemning. But as long as he lives, man can and must hope.

To hope, but not to reckon with God. The divine plan surpasses him and the isolated event is not understandable: this is why the love of God and faith in him is situated above faithfulness to the law. All that God does is done well and in man's best interest, evil is not in suffering, it is in the separation from God: far from Him, man is the unhappiest of animals, because his straying reason fills him with infinite and eternally unquenched desires, pushes him to want to take God's place and fills him with the fear of failure without giving him the means to avoid it. Let him put his life and his fate back between God's hands, and he will arrive at the tranquility of he who nothing can threaten. Believing and hoping in God and —

what is the same thing — loving him with all his heart and all of his strengths: behold man's salvation.

Thus, happiness in this world and of this world has ceased to be man's goal. He has understood that, through his disobedience, he has lost it and that he would renounce his greatness if he wanted to look for it: in lieu of happiness, God promises him salvation, incomparably higher in dignity. But this salvation is won in suffering. The world is such that veritable joy is absent from it, still worse, it is such that the joys that it seems able to give are only so many obstacles and pitfalls on the path that leads to God. All worldly interest fastens man to his fall and confirms it in his own will, which is not that [179] of his creator, and as long as he runs after the goods of this world, he neglects God. Not that these goods be bad in themselves. On the contrary, like all that emerges from divine hands, earthly things, unpolluted by human sin, are perfect and objects worthy of admiration and love; but they have value only through their character as works of God and will only benefit man provided that he receive them as unmerited and free gifts of divine goodness: man must not count on his natural power; fully, he must give himself back to God who will grant him what he needs or refuse him what he must be refused so that he be saved. Without balking, the believer will say that all that God does is done well: whether He gives or whether He takes, blessed be His name.

In this attitude of faith and of trust, it doesn't therefore matter whether man is happy or not: happiness is an idea of this world that no reality corresponds to, at least for man. The animal enjoys its existence, but only because it is not aware of its happiness and as a result ignores the uncertain character of it. Man cannot return to innocence and to ignorance. He forever knows worry. The moment can be agreeable to him; he isn't any less aware that at the next instant misfortune could swoop down upon him. What he asks is stillness, what all the science of this world will not provide him. A single path leads him there, trust in the divine goodness of which he will make himself worthy through obedience to the law, that he will plant in his heart through faith, that he will confirm through solely love for his creator; a single science will instruct him, the one that will make him understand divine being through the study of the double revelation of God's law and works. But obedience, trust, love, understanding are more than *means* of salvation: he who possesses them *is* saved, because in their possession he finds the rest that he aspires to. He has left solitude, since now he finds himself before a self who recognizes him and who takes care of him, to whom he can address himself in his distress, whose absolute existence gives an absolute value and meaning to his own limited being. Such as he is, he is, if not justified, at least justifiable, and he knows how he must act in order to act well. Every question finds its answer, even if this answer would not be given to him right away. Reason is no longer separated from sentiment

nor is it its opposite, both coincide in their common source. Even suffering is good, since He who is goodness had wanted it. Richer than the *happy* man, he who lives and believes in God is in the *beatitude* of salvation, because all that can happen to him is for his good and because at every moment of his existence he is certain of the absolute meaning of this existence.

2. *The believer's attitude.* — *The category founded historically not on the categories, but on prior attitudes.* — *The believer's contentment.* — *The believer and the unbeliever.* — In what precedes, the category has been presented in such a way that it explains itself there where, through its opposition to other categories and other attitudes, it is aware of itself. But it is based on a lived attitude that theoretical awareness and the cohesion to the sense of discussion [180] — in the manner of the preceding explanation — are foreign to the point of seeming inadmissible to the attitude. If Christianity, a late product of the evolution, can't be thought without theology — for the simple reason that Saint Paul was a theologian<sup>32</sup> — religions like Judaism and Islam not only neglect it, but are even repulsed by it. It is not that they are incapable of developing one; they have done so under the influence of Christianity and, more, under that of Greek philosophy. But each time, these movements have been very rapidly suppressed by a revolt of what we can call the religious sentiment, a sentiment that, as mysticism, particularly as a heterodox mysticism, has equally played a very large role in Christianity.

What is this lived attitude of the believer? Let's forget for the moment the preceding analyses: it seems then that the believer draws his origin directly from certainty and that all that we have just said be said only in the interest of our "construction". In fact, the great religions of the Mediterranean, are they not born independent of all Greek influence, without the assistance of *discussion*, of the *object*, of the *self*? Have they not, on the contrary, always risen up against these attitudes and, what's more, against these categories, each time that they have encountered them over the course of their expansion?

We can respond immediately to this last argument. The Semitic religions have risen up against the Greek categories, this is true; but every category, every attitude rises up against all other categories and attitudes: the only question is knowing if this opposition consists in a pure negation, a result of a lack of understanding — in which case we can conclude that an attitude-category has collided into another which comes after it — or if the attitude, instead of targeting the destruction of an adversary which it doesn't understand, has the goal of demonstrating to this adversary that what it says is accurate, but not complete

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<sup>32</sup> For Christianity, cf. in particular chap. XII, n. 5.



and must be finished: then the criticizing category is the legitimate heir to the category critiqued.

Starting from there, the other arguments are easily resolved. It is true that the religions that we have alluded to don't historically depend on Greek thought and that the anterior categories were not developed by the nations and the communities that gave birth to this faith; it is not less true that they know the corresponding *attitudes*, that their discourse contains these *categories* implicitly and that it makes them explicit with the greatest ease as soon as the historic opportunity presents itself. The discussion, admittedly, is not the discussion between the citizens of the same *polis*; but as this discussion emerged from the indecisive struggle and from the fear of violence, likewise here a community of peoples is predicted as an end of the struggles between national gods of different traditions. The violent struggle between the faithful of these gods is not excluded but it doesn't decide anything: the veritable adversaries see themselves compelled to live together because they are immortal; the struggle is the struggle of the gods and it is in this way discussion, since none of the adversaries can be eliminated. The gods discuss in front of men, and it is [181] for them to decide. Yet, they cannot do so knowingly without having beforehand found the foundation of Being, the absolute unity that guides them in their choice: man turns himself from individualized, different, self-serving *gods*, towards *divinity*: there are gods, but divinity, in order to truly be divinity, must be one and unique. So the passage, if not to the self, at least to an exact equivalent of the self, becomes possible: man is before the one and unique divinity and seeks happiness, his happiness. And we have seen how faith discovers what is insufficient in this search for happiness.

This remark, showing what we could call the "history" of God, such as faith can reconstruct it in its consciousness, allows us to understand the divinity's features.

The unique God is the creator and the master of the unique world, discussion is eliminated, there are not actually, irreducibly opposed forces, contradictions, without ever disappearing for man (except at the moment, essentially fleeting, that unites his vision with that of God's), find their solution and their harmony in the divine plan, which accepts, which requires conflicts, but as means to agreement. It is necessary that it be so. Otherwise God would be limited, that is, a creature of someone above himself, and the world wouldn't be a world, that is, man would not have the means of orienting himself in his life. It is true that the god of a tradition (of certainty) gives man the same assistance. Thus, however, man finds his bearings only as a reasonable subject; his desire and his sentiment have remained off-limits. Yet, if success is lacking in an undertaking that man has committed himself to with his people he is thrown back onto himself: his tradition, his god, have failed, and he can't accept another's gods and their domination. For him, the discussion between gods must not

last: God is one, and what the others call by this name represents, at most, beings stronger than man, but still creatures subjected to the lord of the world's will. Man is alone before God and, like the self that found itself isolated before nature, either he opts for the enjoyment of goods that the creator put in his reach, abstaining from all desire that doesn't correspond to human nature, or he shuts himself away in the contemplation of divine wisdom and refuses his desire all dignity and all right.

It is at this point that God appears, no longer as an individual, but as a revealed self. It goes without saying that this passage is visible only to the philosopher (and to the historian who makes use of philosophical categories). The believer himself is situated in a world and faced with a fact, which is revelation. For him, the essential is that he can live in a new tradition, that the content of his certainty has passed through the fire of contradiction as through the ordeal of unhappiness and that it has come through it confirmed. He is not looking for happiness; for he knows that happiness is only exceptionally encountered in the world and only for brief instants. Man's nature is insufficient, and wanting to rid himself of this nature would be wanting to jump over his own shadow: man cannot save himself, he must let himself be saved by an all-powerful and loving self, who speaks to him and to whom he can speak, who loves him and who he can love without being fooled, betrayed, [182] abandoned. Man without God is unhappy because he is alone at the moment of failure: let sickness assail him, let him lose those that are dear to him, the fortune that allowed him to live as he saw fit, and he will sink into hopelessness. Not any more than the negation of feeling, will the memory of past gratification prevail against present sorrow, and even if this were possible, would not man's solitude be all the more terrifying? Would he not be reduced to absolute silence, a silence such that he could no longer even speak with himself? What content does he still possess, from the moment that he has arrived at what he sees as perfection? What action remains open to him? His life would have neither meaning nor value, and he would be better for him to be dead or to have never been born, since his existence would exhaust itself in the obstinacy of the negation. He would refuse to open his eyes in order to see what makes beatitude possible for man, he would be unhappy, because he would want to be, in clinging to his solitude. In truth, man is man and is self only there where he is not alone.

It's in this way that the believer lives in a world that answers his question. Admittedly, he doesn't continually ask questions, and ordinarily, he lets himself be, as we say: he labors in his field, raises his children, goes off to war and doesn't think more about the meaning of his life than the man of science thinks about objective truth, as long as he doesn't run into a difficulty. He follows (or breaks) his community's laws, knowing them to be of divine origin and at the same time making up everyday life. But when adversity comes about,

he will start to question and to address himself to God. Then, he will remember that he is to blame, that he has loved God less than the world; it is at this moment that he will see examples of divine ire in the others. It is above all at this moment that he will enter into dialogue with God, that he will speak to him, not in order to be right in the face of the source of all reason, but from heart to heart, and if he desires God to help him, to free him from the present evil, to protect him from the threat of danger, more than anything he desires that God console him and answer him. And in fact, God grants it. He has answered him in advance in his revelation; He has told him that his plan is above human understanding, but that it is absolutely good, because it comes from Him. God pours the salve of consolation upon him. It is in his heart that man hears His voice, and not with the ears of reason, which is always the reason of this world and accessible only to the speech of evil forces: God frees him precisely from this reason in renewing his heart, in granting him the grace of humility, the feelings of trust and of love, and makes him reborn an infant who gives himself to his father. His question becomes prayer. He no longer asks to know, but to cry before God, no longer asks to learn a truth which would in no way help him, but to hear the father's voice, not to understand, but to feel. Here is the essential. Of course, he who doesn't obey the revealed law shows that he is far from God's love. But a coldly calculated obedience, dictated by fear and interest, in truth sees this law as a simple magical instrument and is unaware of its essence. The man who, in God, sees merely the law continues to live in a world from before revelation, in a nature that adores those whom He has not elected and sanctified through his alliance: God looks at [183] the heart and not reason, and no sacrifice is agreeable to him if it is not a sign of love.

The language of faith is in this way the language of sentiment. Man is for himself heart, that is, sentiment that is not a sentiment of need, but of wealth. Through God and in God, he is given to himself, not only like the being placed at the highest rank of nature, not only as an image, reflection of the creator and of the judge, but as God's friend and interlocutor. He feels *himself* in God; he is born for the second time; he no longer is afraid, neither of nature, nor of men, nor, any longer, of himself, he no longer has to consider himself a stranger unknown to himself, as a bundle of interests that dominate him, or as an object of science, forever ungraspable in his individuality, or as a self always torn between desire and reason: as he feels, he proclaims, with his weaknesses that he judges according to the law and that he recognizes as inherent to his nature, with his love that he sings and that however he knows he is unable of remaining faithful to, with his disgrace that he confesses and which, for him, is at the same time the proof of his greatness. His heart doesn't take fright from contradictions; for, does not sentiment bind what is different, man to woman, soul to nature, creator to creature? Men who are reasonable with this world's reason are repelled by it, for

they see themselves only with blind eyes; looking for themselves, they avoid contradiction; but they avoid it because, empty themselves, they pursue emptiness; they don't live, since they don't feel the presence of divine love and since in this way their heart is dead.

Man's life is not in him, but in God. He who is unaware of it, who doesn't feel it, is condemned by God, and his sentence is eternal death: no success won in the world will benefit him, while no suffering will damage the man of God. The one will not live in his apparent happiness, for his heart is abandoned to fear, to sadness, to nothingness, the other will feel, in his pain, the paternal goodness that punishes the infant only for his own good. Therefore the believer is not *afraid* of God. He *fears* him, because he reveres him, because he desires being agreeable to him and because he knows himself to be naturally incapable of it. But he feels divine assistance, and if he trembles when he thinks of what he would become without this help, he feels that he will never be stripped of it, that solely doubting the lord's clemency, would be to separate himself from His love, would be to become lost and to become damned.

But in God's love, man doesn't only find himself; he also meets with the other. His solitude has disappeared, he lives with all men, his brothers, sons of the same father, who he understands and who understand him since they are united by the same love. He is linked to them by a communion completely different from that that links the man in the State to fellow citizens or in the working world to collaborators. Because, here, he is truly man, truly himself, he is in communion with all others: no interest, no particular and traditional function separates him any longer from himself or from them. The feeling of the same indigence and of the same dignity makes the one equal to the other, and in God they understand each other heart to heart. They don't need to agree with each other through discussion or in sight of the work to achieve; their communion has always been and [184] will always be established, and they expect nothing from one another, for everything comes to them from God.

It is through the community of believers that God consoles, directs, confirms each of His faithful, that He protects him from the temptations of the world, that He makes His law and His will known to him, that He pushes back doubt, that He purifies man and forgives the repented sinner. They are together before the face of God and each is alone there. And it is in this solitude before the Lord that they understand each other, that they love each other, that they help each other. Speaking for himself, each speaks for all and speaks in this way to all; expressing what he carries in his heart, he expresses the feeling of each: if he confesses his unworthiness, if he implores God's clemency, if he sings His praises, he does so for himself alone and at the same time for the community. His brothers in God suffer and delight like him; when he addresses himself to them, he is sure of being understood, being

understood in what he feels, and not only in his words, sure of not going before adversaries or judges, but towards men who feel with him.

Let us note that the believer's attitude towards the unbeliever confirms what the preceding analysis tends to show. The non-believer is excluded from communion. But it is not because the faithful doesn't understand him — on the contrary, he knows very well that it is this man with the heart hardened and empty of God, he who has achieved this spurious possibility of human freedom, from which he has himself been protected through the grace of God —, it is this other that doesn't understand the believer, since he denies himself the humility and the sentiment of divine presence, — because he rules himself out. The infidel is God's enemy and, consequently, man's as well. He has no worth, other than as a terrifying example, his life has no meaning, other than a function that it fills in the divine plan, he is no longer strictly speaking a human being since he has split from his father, the law doesn't guide him, but condemns him, nature doesn't provide for him, but is his undoing. Between him and the believer, there is only struggle, a brutal struggle coming from the infidel who is no better than an animal, an inspired and selfless struggle for God's servant, who is searching uniquely for the honor of his creator, a struggle therefore in which the believer is not looking for his advantage, but for the good of the one who fights him and whom he himself only fights in order to bring him into the communion of faith: in fighting him, the believer still loves the image of God in the infidel. Herein is his advantage over the other; while the believer, for the man of prior certainties, is merely a madman, that is, absolutely incomprehensible, the existence of the unbeliever is justified and sensible for the faithful, and it is noteworthy that this justification and this sense, while being negative, are of a necessary negativity: the believer understands the unbeliever so very well that he considers him as natural man and sees conversion as the effect of a direct intervention from God. Man is always the same in his spiritual essence, non-animal, because he possesses the possibility of the choice between two existences; but grace is required so that he makes the correct choice.

3. *Liberty and reason. — Essence and existence. — The heart of man.* — Free because responsible, here is the link that unites man's essence to his existence. It is then here that liberty shows itself for [185] the first time. It appears at this stage as a problem, not as a foundation.

Until this moment, freedom was not *essential*; man saw himself as composed of reason and of something else (interest, desire, etc...) that was neither reason nor reasonable, because this other part didn't exist *for itself*, but only *for the first*. This combination was not free, but understood in the world, and not only did freedom not suit it, but would have brought it nothing, having no meaning for it. Man's goal was situated in reason, and reason,

which doesn't act but understands, is not responsible: being free, for reason, would be not being reason, being able and needing to choose between reason and unreasonableness — which would be unreasonable. Therefore man's essence and his existence never met; the one was for the other an accident, a constituent accident (at least for the *self*), but which did not derive from the essence nor change it in itself. Yet, before God, man is not essentially reason opposed to a nature, but heart, and the heart is good or bad. Man acts and is judged on the feeling that inspires his action. It is all of him who is committed, and he can't reject a part of his being as an accident of nature: he finds the meaning of his life in his value before God, and this value is that that in his existence he gave to his essence. His freedom is not that of the free subject in the juridical sense, nor that of the reason that doesn't know disaccord as long as it is itself: it is at the depths of his existence; before he has entered into his existence, freedom has determined itself — poorly determined, since otherwise he would not find himself determined, but would be absolute love —, and while he is in existence, freedom is looking to determine itself in view of the return of its lost purity. Even the (relative) non-liberty of its existence is still the consequence of his essential liberty.

It is true that his experience shows his life to him as a series of events that he didn't want. He wants to love God and realizes that he has forgotten Him; he wants to obey the law and he has sinned before having thought of it. But this is not what matters for him. He knows all too well that God has created him free and that this loss of liberty is the result of a free action. He can merely offer God a soiled heart, but he can offer it to him. What he has lost is the liberty of his actions, not that of his feelings. He can be diverted from God, he can't be separated from God except by his own will. The path of return is not only open to him, but God invites him onto it and guides him along it. Were it a matter of reason, there would be no salvation for him, since his natural heart would not obey, even were — which is not the case — this reason strong enough to find the way. The opposition is not between reason and nature, which are both created, but between fallen reason and creative reason, the one and the other acting reason, non-contemplative, willpower-reason. The man who understands himself as the image of God is not satisfied by a thought that separates essence from existence. He doesn't negate the reality of this thought. But he understands it as a life tool in the world and knows that it is not to be confused with the essence-reason that, in God, is the source of existence and, in man, the *ground of the heart*, the source of the feeling of love in which he participates in God. The believer's reason, far from negating [186] the desire of its essence — it is the work of the understanding to opposed the animal desire (of existence) — is the origin of it. It is free, not at all because it refuses itself action, but as it is will.

Human reason is creator, not observer of an “animal” life, and its creation is man in the positive or negative values of his existence<sup>33</sup>.

Man finds himself in this way *united*. The opposition that occupies his thought is not between two beings, but between two possibilities of this single being that he calls his heart. The ground of his attitude is in the feeling of his free responsibility, a total responsibility for his acts, his feelings, his thoughts. He says that he offers his heart to God. The expression is curious; for it designates his heart as something that is his; which consequently is not him. It would be incomprehensible, if he was, for himself, anything other than the free will of feeling, before which every determined appears as exterior, as an object that can and must be annihilated in sacrifice. To love God is to let oneself go free, to desire only free will; to pray to Him is to not entrust oneself to determinations; to obey Him is abolish them; entrusting oneself to Him is being sure of one’s freedom. The sum of faith is remaking oneself, through the offering of the heart, image of the God creator, is knowing in one’s heart that, in the existence turned towards given things, man is an unfree thing.

4. *The category as the origin of total reflection. — The believer’s faith and life. — Liberty and sentiment.* — The present category possesses a particular importance: the production of the fundamental concepts of essence and existence would be sufficient to demonstrate that. But it is more important to insist on the birth of the reflection that takes place under this category.

This birth is “understood” as such only in later categories, and it is of the greatest importance to remember that it plays this role solely for us, that is, in the *modern* interpretation of man. In itself, any category is equivalent to any other: the believer doesn’t refute the Epicurean any more than the Epicurean refutes the believer, and the fact that the subsequent category understands, (and in this way surpasses) the prior doesn’t affect the man who lives in the more “ancient” attitude for the simple reason that the “new” problem didn’t exist for him. To his eyes, the passage is an act of madness and could not be anything else; it is only once the passage is performed that it demonstrates itself necessary at the new level that is then attained. But for us, it is under the category of *God* that, for the first time, man sees himself and interprets himself in the totality of [187] his life. It is not that man has been absent from the preceding categories, far from it; but it was not a matter of himself for himself, more exactly, if it were a matter of man, it was not (as in the *discussion*, for example)

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<sup>33</sup> Original sin explains his mode of existence to man; it is prior to his history and can’t be explained at the level of human history, which is based upon it. Therefore it plays a role only for he who reflects on faith, not for the believer, who interprets himself in his present: he sees himself stripped of his essence animal *desire* that is placed alongside human *will*. But this opposition (we will have to come back to it) proclaims in this way that it is not that of reason and will; it is the result of a reprise of the category of the self.

for himself that it was a matter of himself, but for us, observers of the attitude; and there where, as under the category of the *self*, man becomes conscious of himself, it was not of himself for him, but of reason, or of the *cosmos*. In order to employ the concepts developed by the present category, it was question, either of the essence, or of the existence of man, without both having ever been seen as the two sides of the same man, of the man who turns towards himself and knows that he turns towards himself. Presently, it is in his source, in his essence, in God, that he understands his existence; and it is in his existence that this essence is revealed. He lives in a world, in a tradition; but both draw meaning, existence, and legitimacy from the absolute *self*, from the essence. The concrete self disappears in this confrontation with God, and the heart's sacrifice immolates every given, all tradition, all law and burns them on the altar of feeling; thus, it is in this disappearance of every given that God appears. Relating to the essence, man is nothing: but it is for himself that he is nothing, and his annihilation is his glory and the glorification of his existence, God is infinite opposite the always determined man: but it is in the destruction through liberty that the determination of liberty exists and that God reveals himself in his truth: *in interiore homine habitat veritas*<sup>34</sup>

In the category of God, man does not only then surpass what he encounters: he surpassed himself in the totality of his existence. But he surpasses himself in order to see himself, that is: his interpretation of himself is reflected. It is evident that this reflection is not complete, since for itself the reflection is made in a being exterior to it. But it is sufficient in order to make man lose his naivety and his philosophical innocence. He doesn't see that the question that occupies him is still his and that his liberty is not outside of him. He sees however that the question doesn't bear on *something* in man, but on man himself and as a whole. For the first time man is the *principle*.

It's true that the believer himself sees the principle in God, not in himself. But in fact, it is in him that God exists, and the essence is that of man's existence. The believer continues to live in a world, and if he were not determined, caught in this fallen world, distorted sentiment, errant reason, he would have nothing to offer his God. Feeling is a devouring fire, but would go out were it not continually fed. For us, it is therefore not the burnt-offerings that matters, but what exits the flames: the reflection in God changes the essence of all things, but, in what concerns the world, it leaves their existence unchanged. Nothing resists freedom, but freedom exists solely as lost freedom. Man's unhappiness has acquired a meaning and a justification: but it remains unhappiness. The sentiment grasps the essence; but this grasp is inexpressible, ungraspable itself [188] in a world that, to the extent that it

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<sup>34</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV, 7.



exists, is still the world of the *self*. At every moment, man can turn, with a new heart, towards the source of all that exists; but in all of his own existence, man turns in the middle of a quasi-being of the given, quasi-being and given himself.

What matters to the believer thus differs in a decisive manner from what we observe in him, and it is necessary to insist on this difference, since the category can be poorly understood precisely because of its modernity. It is directly accessible, because man is the center of it. But this fact, the believer does not himself see: for him, the center is God, and man understands himself merely in his quality of a creature, a being living in the world created under a *law*. In his concrete attitude, he has abandoned none of the self's characteristics, neither reason, nor need. These characteristics are merely stripped of their value as final data. They have value only inasmuch as they indicate something inexpressible. In addition to the sensible and the true, there is the Meaning of Truth: *there is*, for Truth doesn't appear and can't appear; it therefore *is* not, it *creates*, but man doesn't create, and his feeling must be guided from above because he feels that neither reason nor natural desire are sufficient to lead man towards the source of his existence. The feeling therefore receives its concrete content from the negation that refuses the self and molds itself in faith and love of God. The believer doesn't know himself but knows himself to be known. His freedom is the abandonment of his self that, nevertheless, he knows that he can't abandon. The feeling, which for us is at the core of his attitude, is for himself a given; it is vitiated like every given and must be renewed and purified in a hereafter of existence (which is not necessarily an existence in the hereafter). In this life, he is desire, his reason, a servant of desire, is incapable of piercing the veil of appearances, the world in which he lives is not reasonable. But what the child of the world is looking for doesn't interest the believer: he doesn't want to be happy, he is looking for nothing, he demands nothing, for all must come to him from above, he prays merely in order to be able to love, believe, obey.

The category is thus the turning point of philosophical becoming, the most modern of the categories of antiquity, the most antiquated of the modern. In it, it is a question of the understanding of man; for us, man is all there is in it, but in this very attitude man is nothing (because, for himself, he is merely a reflection). His action is at stake, but his action, for him, is not his own. His sentiment is at stake, but for him this sentiment is not creative. His will is at stake, but for him this will is perverted. He has freed himself from the cosmos that

imprisoned him, but he has not built a world. He knows that all that is must be judged, but he has not taken the judgment into his own hands<sup>35</sup>.

[189] What we have called the category's modernity consists then in the discovery of freedom under the form of feeling or, what comes to the same thing, in the reflection of the existence in essence. Its antiquity is that there, freedom appears empty, as the opposition of a determined (deposed) sentiment to an infinite and actually creative sentiment, other than the sentiment of the concrete. Freedom is empty, since it is merely *at the bottom*. For the believer, it is therefore outside of him and is the *other* of himself, the essential attribute of [190] his essence, but which enters into his existence only through miracle. If he reflects humanly upon it, his life remains forsaken to the category of the self; for humanly he has no other category at his disposition. As soon as he forgets God or removes him from his thought, he has no advantage over the infidel or the animal. He knows that he is different from them,

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<sup>35</sup> Understanding is a rational activity only for the theorist of philosophy. The current usage rightly opposes understanding to intellectualism and attributes it to the heart, to feeling. "This can't be explained; it must be understood", or "he is intelligent, undoubtedly, but he doesn't understand" — here are some expressions that would have no meaning for the Stoic nor for the Sophist, and which doesn't have any either for modern "rationalism". They are in effect insufficient, because they take the feeling for something inexpressible and reason as the formalism of discussion. But the irreducible force of feeling reveals itself there, and philosophy must take it into account.

That it is a matter of this and not of something else is demonstrated by the role that Plato plays for the modern consciousness. Plato is far more *understandable* than Aristotle, he speaks to us more *directly*. Yet, each of Aristotle's theses seems more "reasonable" than the thesis that corresponds to it in Plato. If there is nevertheless a marked Platonism in all modern civilization, if the Renaissance is, in the most literal sense, a rebirth of Plato, it's that Plato is the philosopher of feeling. Love is at the center of his system, much more than is being let seen by the interpretations that, as new Procrustes, put it by force into the coffin of their concepts and who, more naïve than the brigand of yore, are astonished that the limbs of their victim don't want to enter into their crates. For Plato himself, it is feeling and feeling alone that founds philosophy, and it is not a whim if he declines communicating the truth by treatises and theoretical presentations that can only serve as an introduction: the essential, the access to truth which is at the core, cannot be taught; the spark passes from man to man thanks to love. It is therefore not at all astonishing that he recovers the ideas of God as creator, of God as an object of love and, above all, a loving subject in which man can put an absolute trust, of the fate that nonetheless expresses the free choice of man, of the natural science that is looking to recover the divine law, of the eternity that is opposed to time's infinite duration, of the world's formula that makes itself explicit in what is, of the essence which is the basis for existence. It is true that he presents almost all these "facts" in the form of myth. But this fact, instead of contradicting what has just been said, only confirms it and completes it. Plato's "poetry" explains nothing, and when it is referred to, the problems are eluded instead of being resolved, with a bunch of hot air. For this poetry *expresses* what cannot be *explained* at the level of *discussion* or the *object*, which no longer has anything to do with happiness such as it is understood by the tradition, this tradition that Plato accepts and cannot but accept, even though he judges it according to a transcendent measure. — Plato's philosophy, must it be said, possesses more than one layer. But at its deepest depths lies the attitude of the man of faith. The essence that is given through the transcendent view, beyond any theoretical reflection, is present to his feeling, and it is this presence of Being which speaks to the feeling of *modern* man, through myth and by its intervention. Therefore, his influence, aside from that which it exercised on modern physics, has been so much greater for having been more diffuse and less attached to determined theses: Platonists are hardly to be found among the interpreters of Plato who laboriously attempt to reconcile his "contradictions": it is not a coincidence that Aristotle has imposed his science on an entire era and that there wasn't a school of Plato, except ambiguously. In order to create it, a positive religion was needed, and Plato didn't want to create it (we add, in anticipation, because he didn't stick to the category of *God*); in his work myth remains separated from discourse, and even though all human discourse leads to myth, faith remains undetermined and life, at least that of the philosopher, must make do without (the *political* religion of the *Laws* in no way contradicts this).

because this life and its human interpretation don't interest him. But in order to continue his life, he must subject himself to a law, be it of the tradition, of revelation, or of Caesar, and his freedom becomes, for him, a liberty to obey. Nothing concrete is essential, and man, in order to be free, *must* make himself interiority without an exterior. He knows that his life has a meaning, but this meaning is not for him. His being is concentrated on a single point, in his heart.

5. *Reprises.* — *Their origin and role.* — *The love of beings.* — *The world as diversion.* — *The Prophets.* — *The Lord of the Armies.* — *Job and Glory's downfall.* — *Rational theology.* — *The theory of union.* — The believer doesn't have a positive language at his disposition. Revelation is not, for him, his language, but that of God. As heart, he does nothing other than negate every determination of his liberty. Every positive qualification has, at the most, merely a relative value: "Were I not a believer I would say..." Therefore the moment that man makes the least concession to the world, his faith, for as attached as he be to it, becomes problematic to him, and he will try to understand it under another category, in order to find a place for it. If he wants to know, the reprise is indispensable to him; for in itself, the category contains neither knowledge of God, nor that of man, and that of nature, which it allows more than invites, is without interest to such an extent that it doesn't even offer man, as the science of the object did, theoretical happiness. The feeling doesn't speak, it is expressed, and even that expression is his only for us. What the reprises allow man is speaking about his feeling.

But before speaking of these reprises, the point inside the category that the reprises start from must be determined.

Man understands himself in God — this formula has two meanings: it is in God that man sees himself, and: what man sees in God is himself. The two interpretations express a single fact, seen once from inside the category, and then again from outside, an identical fact however, because from both ways it is recognized that man's being is explained in and by divine Being. The second interpretation must not then be seen as an "atheist" opinion; atheism as a thesis teaching positively the non-existence of a personal God (a thesis that has meaning there where God is not seen as the ground of existence, but as something existing, different from the rest of the world solely concerning the degree of strength, etc...) has no signification for faith — nor against it. However, philosophy must undertake its analysis based on both points of view, and after having asked how man sees himself in God, philosophy will demand what he sees there. Said otherwise, after having looked for what, for the believer, signifies the fact that he is God's image, philosophy will have to look for what this relation signifies for itself. It is a matter of the unity-opposition between essence, which is

in God and at the divine depths of man, [191] and existence, which is the form of man's being as being deposed from its origin, as natural being.

What characterizes the natural man who is not regenerated through grace is that he is an animal, determined desire, not self-determining. But this is merely one limit-possibility for the believer: because he *feels* himself a believer, he is sure that his being is not exhausted in animality. If the infidel is cut off from God, the believer never is. He is merely led astray and he lives in a world that has lost its purity. But such as he is and such as the world is, both are understood in their actual state only in and through their state before the fall. The infidel fails in all his interpretive attempts precisely because he wants to understand what is based on what is. It is evident that in this way he can only end in despair and death. The believer knows that in reality man's existence has meaning only in relation to his essence. Man's veritable being is the coincidence of both, coincidence that he has destroyed, but that he keeps the idea of. It is the idea that allows him to judge what is, to see it, to see himself.

In his existence, man is subject to need, not only for us, but for himself. He is not self-sufficient. His feeling is repressed by the need that is translated into desire, an expression of his indigence. His life is made of work and toil, of struggle against a poor and hostile nature from which he must extract what he needs with the sweat of his brow in order to escape the destruction of this life. But he is not made for this life: the meaning of his existence is in the feeling of the presence of a good that is loved, not desired (that is, corresponding to a need and, consequently, giving no definitive satisfaction, since *this* need is destroyed in *this* satisfaction in letting *the* need persist and *the* desire renew itself). For us, this good, in order to be loved without desire nor destruction of its being through appropriation, can merely be the feeling itself which gives itself its object freely, which is, in a word, creative. For the faithful, his essence is God, his existence is the fall from the divine state. As a result of his downfall, the unity of his being only appears divided: need and feeling contradict each other just the same as desire and love, life and death, fear and union. But their contradiction is merely existential, not essential, and must disappear with man's return to God. What man is reveals itself in God; God is not anthropomorphic, save for the language of the world and of need: man is theomorphic.

In God, there is no opposition between existence and essence: the one contains the other. Therefore God *exists* only to the extent that he shows himself to fallen man. In himself, he *is*. But this being, which is a unity of essence and existence, freedom, not that negates the given, but a position that gives itself to itself, can be thought by man only as meaning and goal of his human existence, not as it is in itself. Canon of his existence, this ideal never reveals itself completely, because a total revelation would annihilate man's condition which,

as a result, would no longer be in need, but in unity's presence: it is not possible for man to see the face of God and live.

It is not possible, either, that he live without revelation. But the revelation that comes to him is negative and good solely in order to make him understand what he in fact is: desire and fear. His existence doesn't pour [192] from his essence and his world is exterior to him. He finds himself in need, because he is not self-sufficient. However, the world is God's creation and therefore perfect. If man wants to guide himself in his life, he must then grasp this world inasmuch as it is God's expression, inasmuch as it is one. Having himself lost the immediate *sight* of the essence; the *research* of this essence is not however forbidden to him. The difficulty is that this veritable being remains at the bottom of all that is. Therefore man's research goes from particularity to particularity. It can do no more than interpret these particularities according to the unity, it grasps this and that and wonders how this and that are justified in relation to the idea of creation. Yet, it is not the relation of things to man that counts, even though he, God's image, be at the center of the world: the key is not in determined relations; it is found in the inherent fact that nature is a single relation, and that for God the world is not the sum of becoming's oppositions, but the law of his will that doesn't go from the one to the other, but projects the whole in its unity in being.

Man is therefore, so to speak, placed on the wrong side as natural being; his language is not made in order to capture reality at its source. However, the very idea of such a source is the proof that it exceeds nature: by judging himself, he transcends himself. For the first time, he does not see himself compared to a reason that only observes and reduces or undoes observed contradictions, a reason which is still human reason, in the service of need or desire, and which resolves the contradictions only in destroying itself or in a dream of perfection. It is, on the contrary, human reason itself that has introduced contradictions into the world. Therefore his discourse races from point to point and cannot make the contradictions coincide. It finds one outside the other, one after another, because it is the expression of human interest and because it is always thus outside of itself, seeing nothing in the present except according to the future. Yet, the believer doesn't ignore this condition, which is his own, because he *exists* in the world of need, mortal and always busy escaping death's approach. And he knows at the same time that what we have called his theomorphism exceeds this condition: he will try to express essence, to look for the *law*, to no longer only believe, love, obey, but to understand.

It is this desire, that of possessing a *language* that gives rise to the reprises. The believer, in the pure attitude of faith, doesn't speak of himself, it's true: but he speaks, at least he is always tempted to speak of the man who has not been born anew, and in this way to speak of the world. Of course, he will not speak of it from God's point of view; but in this

way God ceases being faith's beloved, and becomes the explaining principle of what is. We will have to come back to this reflection in treating other categories that will make the particular importance of the present category appear for the whole of logic. Here, and before speaking in detail of the principal reprises, we can limit ourselves to the following remarks that resume what has just been said:

Man, speaking of himself in characterizing the unbeliever — who is none other than himself as he lives in the world — sees himself as a living being in natural need. In turning himself [193] towards God, he shows himself to himself as an animal, caught in nature, which is essentially inhuman. In this way he surpasses the preceding attitudes, none of which knew this absolute separation between the humanity in man and the world (the total reflection of existence in the essence). God, understood as the creator of both man and the world, constitutes the link between the world and the believer. But God, from this point of view, is merely creator: he is the Being who, through his will, gives being to all that is at the interior of the world. He is no longer the *self* in which man can find the satisfaction of the desire of his feeling, he is, as reason's source, an absolute and unknowable will, because absolute.

This judgment bearing on God — we will see which reprises help — allows searching for revelation not only in the interior speech that addresses itself to the heart, but also and above all in the divine speech pronounced through the intermediary of God's messengers, and also and above all, in the creator's works, that is, in the world of morality and in the world of nature: God is the guarantor of society's order as he is that for nature's order. In both cases, man will never be able to be sure of having grasped divine law in a definitive manner; but here and there, he will have the right of supposing a decree, and a decree consistent with itself: he will be able and will need to make suppositions, *hypotheses* about God's will, and moral law and natural law will be the only objects worthy of his interest. History and nature follow a coherent plan: the undertaking of the man who believes, but who believes at the interior of the world, will be to retrace this plan, always uncertain of every result, always assured that he will not be looking in vain.

These reprises will only later take on all their importance, when they themselves will be applied to categories that have not yet made their appearance. However, they must be mentioned here where they come into being.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The entire importance of concepts of *law*, *hypothesis*, etc., will appear only in the following categories that, freed from all traditional knowledge by the present category, but not living in God, are interested only in the law. The importance of the present category for any "rational" physics is so great that illustrations of it are encountered everywhere. The *model* of quantitative physics from the *Timaeus*, the Stoics' qualitative physics are based just as much on the divine decree as Descartes' physics (cf., for example, Meditation VI) or Kant's interpretation of Newtonian physics (cf., for example, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the *Transcendental Ideal*);

The category of Truth is the least useful to the believer who is looking for a language: all is shown at the level of feeling, all is good, all is beautiful, since all is divine. The category only forces the feeling out of itself and makes it meet the presence of love [194] in all that is, because every being, man, animal, plant, earth, air, sun, is the expression of the essence and therefore possesses a value that is symbolic at the same time that it is absolute for the heart that finds itself in it without being bound by interest, without losing his liberty. A universal brotherhood unites all creation. Man can speak of his feeling, he can unleash the outpouring of his heart, precisely because his language is not discourse, but the cry of love that goes towards God across His work<sup>37</sup>

This joy is answered by the negativism of the category of nonsense which is itself discourse. What it does not reveal but hides God from him. Everything is coldly closed upon itself, trying to subsist in its being, that, nevertheless, is nothing, is nothingness. The world has no meaning for man, divine truth does not appear to him here on earth, and any effort to grasp the essence in beings leads man to his ruin: this isn't God, God isn't this, because nothing is perfect — here is man's discourse, always repeated, to always repeat. What is merely is temptation that it is necessary to defend oneself from through relentless attention. Man is engaged in a false discourse that speaks to him of goods, of greatness, of advantages; none of this *is*, because Being is not of this world. Man must detach himself through the thought of the nullity, the finitude, of every given: God is what opposes itself to every particular being. He is, positively, the world's nonsense: no predicate applies to Him, and since He is the only subject, all judgment is undone and is destroyed, simply because it is judgment. Not only is meaning not of this world: this world itself is nonsense<sup>38</sup>.

In the reprise under the category of the true and the false, the world is divided. Another comprehension, which is false, opposes itself to a true comprehension; but both grasp the whole world. The believer had no discourse at his disposition, either because he expressed himself through the cry of the heart or because the discourse had no meaning, being a destructor of unity. Presently, this is no longer so, since the true discourse negates the false discourse: the essential is found in the world, it must be announced. This announcement, it's true, ends in silence, in the return into inwardness; but this silence is the result of the passage through discourse or rather through discourses. For discourses, being false, are innumerable.

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the differences, essential under other relations, between the eternalist theses of antiquity and the modern creationist theses, can be neglected here: the conceptions of antiquity, the merging of which gave rise to modern physics (the mathematization coming from Plato, the unity of the physical universe coming from the Stoics) have acted merely starting from the moment where they received a metaphysical *guarantee* in the idea of a master of nature whose will, united and coherent, promises a solution to all the problems that man, a finite and searching being, faces as excluded from any *immediate* access to the world's essence.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. for example the hymns of Saint Francis of Assisi.

<sup>38</sup> It is one of the fundamental attitudes of the Pascal of the *Pensées*.

The true discourse teaches that the world is in truth false: the world is not meaningless, it is not absurd, but what is presented to the ordinary man in ordinary discourse is not essential. The essential is grasped only on the condition of being instructed by the sole authentic master, by God, who communicates with man through the intervention of the one He has filled with his spirit and who bears His word: the prophet. Since man is incapable of remaining in the purity of feeling if he is left to his penchants, entirely of this world, God comes to his rescue. Yet, man is not worthy of receiving this help directly from the hands of his creator. God elects his instrument, and the prophet, as prophet, ceases being man. Or rather, God employs the prophet's humanity, who witnesses [195] this upsurge of the supernatural in his existence in trembling, disoriented, without means of resisting it or adding to it. The prophecy is not less exterior to the prophet than to his listener. The one, like the other, learns in prophecy that the given is not only without meaning: unhappiness reveals itself as punishment, as part of an educational plan, the success of the unjust and the infidel appears as a means of casting them further down, of losing them completely. Not everything can be explained to man; but each example confirms him in his faith and allows him to imagine what can fill his feeling: God's majesty, His power, His justice, the realization of his kingdom through the free conversion of all hearts, the entrance into eternity in the time at the end of time, the entrance of existence into essence by the immediate vision of God in another life, without need, without death, a life of fullness and of presence. Promise and explanation render the feeling understandable to the reason of this world; faith and love have received content<sup>39</sup>.

The justification that man thus gives to his fundamental attitude is even more apparent there where the infidel interprets his faith with the help of the category of *certainty*. Through its intervention, faith is changed into religion in the narrow and historic sense of the word. Now, God *exists*. He is a force in the world, not of this world, but for this world. If He exceeds it, it is not because He is the Being that grounds all that is, but because He is too large and too powerful for the world to be able to contain. But man encounters Him in the world, and the naive interest takes hold of Him: He takes care of man, and man must take care of Him, because God has become his God and because this relation is to man's advantage. There are hostile forces that threaten, adversaries that lay traps, natural dangers that can ruin harvests and kill children: his God will defend him. It is He who will bless the work of his hands, who will lead him to victory, who will overcome the devils and the spirits that the enemy will have known how to put to use. His God is not only one, but he is the

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<sup>39</sup> All biblical prophecy has the constitution of such content as goal. Cf. for the *ordination* of the prophet, for example Jeremiah 1; Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 2 sq.



strongest, and nothing can resist Him. A covenant unites Him to his faithful, who thus dominates the world or will dominate it. Man acts with God and on God, but the means of this action is not natural (magical), it is human: a law expresses the conditions of a God who can't be forced, but who is held by his own word. If man does what God requires of him, if he avoids doing what He has forbidden him, he is certain of success, because God, in giving him the law, has announced to him the rewards and the punishments that He has in hold for obedience and revolt. Obedience, faith, love, trust are the methods that bind two conscious beings, two free people, to each other. What takes precedence here is this bond, is certainty; it is not faith, but the content of belief, not the divine will, but the concrete and efficient rule; not love itself, but its object inasmuch as it is man's. Therefore the relation between man and God, more exactly, between man and his God is not dubious. The sole fact of the existence of another faith, [196] of another obedience becomes therefore a scandal, and, worse than that, a danger, because the true God is entitled to expect of His faithful that he will make Him recognized, honored and served by the whole world; the disciple of another religion is a traitor to God and the man of the covenant must reduce him to obedience or make him disappear; with him, there is only combat. God himself becomes the Lord of the Armies, struggling at the head of His, whether they are men or superhuman beings. Man is no longer theomorphic; it is God who is formed in man's image. He loves His people, the nation of His covenant, the sons of His friends. He is no longer love, but loving, jealous, merciful, tender, irascible, above need, but not a pure creative sentiment, not surging Being, but determined being, superhumanly human<sup>40</sup>.

It is in this way that God becomes the partner, the opposing party of the man in the *discussion*. There is, in principle, a possibility of struggle; but man yields: God can crush him, his resistance makes no sense. And God, calmed from His ire, finalizes a pact with humanity and guarantees its existence; he will punish and reward the individual, according to his merits or according to his faults, but He renounces wielding His power and He promises to retain his fury. Therefore He cannot require a blind obedience. His law is the basis of the treaty, and man has the right and the means of demanding his right, of starting a trial. That God be judge and party to it is inevitable, but it's not worrisome for man, because the divine promise protects him and because God's interest is not determined by need, but by will, by reasonable feeling, because God wants man to be free and to freely recognize the justice of His judgment. Man therefore discusses with God. The human voice opposes itself

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<sup>40</sup> This is the attitude of non-prophetic Judaism. It is expressed in numerous psalms, it is underlying the entire Hexateuch: as an adversary, it is targeted by the struggle of the Prophets against legalism.

to the divine voice in him at the level of historic and concrete revelation, the theomorphic man meets the anthropomorphic God.

Has man truly sinned? Has God held his promise? For he who lives in the feeling of believing love, the question makes no sense. But when man tries to speak of his feeling under the category of discussion, faith and desire confront each other in man, and between the two, the debate is open; since for man, it is no longer obvious that faith in God is right and desire wrong. It is no longer obvious that man has sinned, *because* he has been punished. God is just; but what does a justice that he doesn't understand signify for man? Is he less unhappy, because he knows that in principle his suffering is good, that is, for God such as he is for Himself, but not for man? Can creation be called perfect, if all around man encounters pain and unsatisfied need? How to understand the existence of evil that strikes indistinctly man and animal, because it is inherent to their constitution? And how to end a discussion that no longer depends on this or that interest in this or that tradition, but on man's interest in nature? The man in faith can renounce his interest; but once he has started to discuss, he can no longer go back into the living silence of feeling, and the renunciation will always [197] remain like a forced surrender, not acquiescence, before his eyes. It is in this way that the discussion, starting from morality, becomes cosmic; but, even though the world is at stake, the discussion remains human, because it is the feeling that protests. Man is looking neither to take possession of God, nor of the world; he doesn't want to convince collaborators in a community: what he desires, is to console himself in establishing unanimity between God and himself in his heart of hearts, unanimity with himself. He is aware of himself as unsatisfied feeling; he knows that he cannot but be unsatisfied in his life; but he knows also that he has a right to satisfaction, being a creature of God. The wrenching no longer comes from an awareness of his sins; it is born from the fact that he knows he is unable to be other than a sinner; not from the fact that he doesn't understand, but from the fact that he has the right and even the duty to understand and that he is incapable of doing so through his constitution willed by God. The whole world, man, and even God are in question.

The two possibilities of this discussion are thus the discussion between man and God on the one hand, and between man and himself on the subject of God on the other. What distinguishes them is that the first is subjected — and subjects God — to the tradition of revealed law, whereas the second discusses the possibility of that law's justice. In fact both find man's interior discussion in God. For the one, God's covenant and feeling confront each other, divine sentiment which is that of the absolute Good, therefore of the ire against imperfect humanity: God must be reminded that He Himself has limited his requirements and restricted the exercise of his wrath. For the other, God suffers from the limitation that he has

imposed on his creative feeling by the law: God, master and creator, and God, love, must be reconciled.

Lawful discussion happens at first in the form of trial. Knowing the law, interpreting it well, is the essential. Has man neglected nothing? If he has done what is incumbent upon him, why has God not kept his promise? But the form of trial can't be maintained; God's judgment is just, the disagreement can't come from His acts: it is necessary and sufficient that the judgment be completed by the grounds, in order for man to see the judgment's sense. Yet, the divine code is not unknown to man, who therefore has only one sole essential interest: the study of the law and what God has revealed about His being and about His action. Without this knowledge, man can neither direct himself, nor defend himself, nor defend God. For what distinguishes this discussion from the discussion in the human community is that man desires to be mistaken and to be refuted: if the mistake was with God, the believer's life would empty itself of its content and would become insupportable. That he does his best in order to accomplish the law, this goes without saying for him, but that God has not been lacking in his word, that God be God, not a force of nature that acts without reason nor reasons, here is what he holds infinitely dear in his heart. The understanding of God through the understanding of revelation is the essential goal of human life. Feeling is thus relegated to the background. However it has not disappeared: on the contrary, it is in order to protect it that the discussion about revelation continues between man and his reason. For man is once more a reasonable individual; but what, in him, is opposed to reason, is not particular interest; it is [198] the feeling that demands presence without mediation. Reason must intervene so that feeling is understood as filled with content through revelation and as directed by the law. The unanimity of the feeling with itself is no longer, as it was for the pure category, the basis and start of everything; it is at the end of the road, infinitely long, that leads to the agreement between the God of justice and the God of promise, between the individual who reasons as plaintiff and the individual who feels. God and man must both renounce their particularities; reason must limit man's pretensions, who would like to immediately find the solution to the conflict between his desire for friendship and his desire for God's justification; but what matters more than desire to the man of discussion is that there be no particularity in God. His feeling must pass the test of contradiction, or, to say it in his manner, there must be no contradiction in God for man. In God man will therefore find the unanimity that is not of this world; but since it must be searched for anew at every instant of his life, it is

thrown back into an indefinite future where the feeling will become reason, in a beyond of the finite existence where the law will be revealed in its essence<sup>41</sup>.

The discussion that does not proceed from the law, but is made on the subject of the law places reason and interest differently. What man desires in this case is not the justification of God, but his own; what he wants to understand is not the particular judgment and the isolated punishment, it is the fact that there is judgment and punishment in a world created by love for love. Man in the world cannot but sin. How can God receive him despite his inadequacy? How can the infinite God feel and understand the constraint of need, the pain of finiteness? And nevertheless, God understands man. Thus He too knows suffering. The contradiction that tears man apart between Good and Evil also tears God apart. For as soon as he created the world and the law, He is no longer free; He has entered into his handiwork, and all His power is not sufficient to undo what he has done, to make it so creation never existed. It is not need that pushes Him, but His suffering is no less great for it: it is deeper since it comes from feeling: He would like to love, He must condemn. What He has put of Himself into His creation turns away from Him and rises against Him: the act of creation provokes discussion in God. Evil is, and God cannot destroy Evil without destroying what is divine in creation, freedom. God is separated from His glory that has fallen into the prisons of matter, held back in the chains of the night. His heart is stripped of the love that needed to come back to Him from His world.

It is neither a matter of dualist religions here (which fall rather, in a double reprise, under the category of the true and the false mediatized through that of certainty) nor of those of the world's atonement through divine sacrifice (which take their origin here, but presuppose other categories). The religious attitude in question is that of dialogue. For discussion is transformed here into dialogue. The interest is that of love, in other words, that of selfless feeling. In the [199] prison of creation, God and man speak to each other, in order to establish, with the help of language, the agreement of feeling in which the particularities due to finitude disappear. Evil is not an independent being, it is in the being who believes himself to be independent — not in regards to his existence, but in regards to his feeling —, who doesn't feel with God. There is therefore no conflict between God and the man who gives himself to God: they speak as friends. But there is discussion between God and the man who holds himself back and who can't give himself entirely.

Since we are not dealing with the history of religions here (and since it would not be an objection that no religious theory corresponded to this attitude, which, for having not

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<sup>41</sup> The *Book of Job* explicitly discusses this problem, which implicitly dominates all the Talmud's "theological" thought.

“succeeded”, would not be any less real), we are not interested by the analyses of systems of faith which, such as the Gnostic system or Hasidism, have their origin in this reprise of the category of God under that of discussion. What characterizes them all is the feeling of the pain in God, the feeling of man’s love for the suffering God, the attempt to transform discussion into dialogue. It is of little consequence knowing which construction and which revelation, drawn from the tradition or from other reprises than the present one, serve as a foundation. The essential is that the believer wants to convince the others who don’t believe, not in order to save them, even though, for him, it is clear that they would reach their salvation in this way, but in order to save what there is of divine in them from suffering. Unanimity through faith is the goal; the dialogue between believers in the community is the reconciliation of God with Himself, the fullness of God. The discussion is the necessary means in order to succeed in making this community. It is only through discourse that the believer can show the other that he is in contradiction with himself, that he is clinging onto a particularity and does not notice that this particularity is in conflict with what his own essential desire is, that in discussing against God he is discussing against himself, that he is separated from his brothers whereas he can only find understanding in brotherhood, that in looking for happiness in creation, he keeps this creation, and himself with it, in finitude and unhappiness: the feeling is the end that discussion tends toward.

But this end is never attained at the human level, no more than divine justice is understood there. The discussion between man and God continues as does that between the faithful and the man who lives in the darkness of particularity, and man asks himself the question of knowing what God is. Said otherwise, the reprise of the *object* and of objective science can correspond to the reprise of the discussion: since this dialogue where heart understands the heart isn’t establish, since the action of the believer’s discourse doesn’t penetrate the incomprehension of the other who remains stuck in the tradition, since God doesn’t reabsorb this part of Himself that has entered into finitude, the solution of the contradictions must be found in the observation of divine reality which alone will allow deciding. Life is what it is and God is present to Himself. Both must be grasped in their essence: this grasping done, man will be able to choose knowingly and by avoiding the fortuitous agreement that could be the agreement on Evil. But, as was the case for the category of the object, its [200] application to God doesn’t lead to veritable choice and veritable action. Knowledge alone becomes the goal and the content, all the more easily as it is not need’s interest, but feeling that poses the problem: God and man are knowledge.

God as subject is in this way man’s only object. The world, life, man himself are understood in Him. He is the essence; but the essence no longer reveals itself to sentiment, even though it is grasped at first in it: in order to be perfectly revealed, it must be known

through reason. Science must find the infinite in the finite: God is in His creation, nature in its totality is the total expression of God. In scrutinizing the works man finds God in it. He finds him, because this creator is absolutely reasonable, because each of His acts is related to the whole and, through that, to the Good. If human intelligence is not sufficient to embrace the whole, the idea of this whole will nonetheless guide it in each of its steps. And, on the other hand, these steps make sense only to the extent that they reveal this unity. The science of natural theology is added and superimposed onto the natural science that flows from the idea of a creative will, a natural theology which cannot show what God is, but which wants to show that God is and that his existence is not opposed to his essence such as it is known through revelation. The world is a unity, that is *cosmos*, and this cosmos can be thought only as the creation of an infinite intelligence, destined for the joy of the intellect. Man is the center of the created world, because he alone is capable of seeing God in creation, of surpassing the enjoyment of satisfied need in order to look for that of the intellect. The man who pursues the knowledge of God corresponds to the God of wisdom. However if he is looking for the truth in the object he is not the man of objective science: it is not the particular interest that he wants to surpass — on the contrary, he recognizes that, at the interior of creation, man is essentially forsaken to need —, he wants to discover the presence of God all around, even to the point of need and suffering. But, for him, the feeling can be legitimate only on the condition of being an intellectual feeling. The sacrifice of reason is not possible for him, since it is reason that discovers what all sacrifice is addressed to and which opens the path leading to the possibility of the revelation of essence, which in itself remains nevertheless feeling. All rational theology stops at the God of Pascalian philosophers: there, feeling is only thought.

God is thus double for man, just as man is for himself, an essence that appears to science (which cannot be achieved here on earth), a feeling that declares itself in revelation. Or: reason and faith do not permeate each other. Man's situation is therefore that of the *self* that is looking for its happiness between reason and desire. However, here, the role of reason is opposed to the one that it played under the category of the self. Then, it was reason that, against the desire of tradition, represented the universal; now, it is seen as responsible for man's isolation and for his sterile opposition against the universality of sentiment that the self would take pleasure in as itself at the same time as taking pleasure from God. Presence is not in reasonable and objective data, but in the infinite feeling, enjoyment doesn't enjoy creation, but the creator. Happiness is in this way [201] to be achieved by the self. But precisely because it is looking to achieve it, it doesn't succeed in reaching an agreement between reason and feeling: the believer starts out from faith, which, for him is the sole human reality, the believing self wants to go towards the faith in which it hopes to find peace. Through

reason it renounces reason. But as the negation of the pain doesn't succeed in making it go away, likewise reason remains indestructible, and the ideal itself, supposedly attained, would merely offer, to the believing self, its destruction as self; the ideal must remain an ideal so that life keeps a content. The faith interpreted by the self must let this self, whose only goal is enjoying itself, endure. Its life is thus filled by the effort to destroy itself, in a series of conscious struggles against consciousness, with the help of the invention and the use of a technique destined to eliminate any technique. His God, who is, for him, pure enjoyment, is infinitely far: He is approached in principle, but He in reality never is by this self, who cannot surrender itself to feeling without disappearing. It is the contradiction of every *theoria* of mystical union: it is only resolved in the passage to the pure *lived* attitude<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> It is this passage that a Schleiermacher, for example, prescribes, in rejecting the reprises, who nevertheless does not live in and from *religiosity* — because he wants to grasp it in a discourse.

## CHAPTER IX THE CONDITION

**Faith leaves the man in freedom alone without a content that is determined by his freedom. It appears then to the man in life like a flight from the reality of that life — which is the *condition*.**

1. *The loss of faith. — Man in the condition and as condition. — Work, progress and discourse.* — For the believer, what is essential of his being is the freedom of the heart and of feeling: all content is on the side of God, and man's consent to the divine plan is blind, this plan being essentially unknown, unknowable and incomprehensible to human understanding, whose discourse produces, at most, merely a projection, always to verify, never verified, of the creative present. Faith doesn't possess a discourse of its own: as soon as the heart speaks, it is no longer the heart that speaks<sup>43</sup>; all attempts of grasping the *ground* with the help of the preceding categories doesn't correspond to the attitude in its purity, and are pushed back by it as falsifying the feeling.

Faith is therefore irrefutable, and, what's more and what distinguishes it from prior categories, knows itself to be irrefutable, because no discourse, whatever it be, because *the* discourse is worth nothing against feeling. But it is all the more easily surpassed. Man doesn't encounter his contentment in faith, everyday life remains what it is, and love and obedience must let their place in it be assigned to them. It's that man, even if he finds himself incapable of producing the feeling in himself, nevertheless sees himself obliged to continue his life: as he is, he is in no state to attain the presence in his heart, and finitude is no longer solely the result of his downfall, it resides positively in its own structure and in that of the world. Being the image of God no longer signifies anything when it concerns life; for that resemblance relates to an original that is known solely inside the domain of feeling.

It is clear that it is not a matter here of a simple return to the category of the *object*. First, such a "simple return" is an impossibility: if the individual cannot surpass a determined

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<sup>43</sup> Schiller, *Xenien, Sprache: Spricht die Seele, so spricht, ach! schon die Seele nicht mehr.* — When the soul speaks, already, alas! it is no longer the *soul* that speaks.



attitude (and at every moment of history we can imagine individuals living in surpassed attitudes), he can't "purely and simply" backtrack, because he would not come back the same. Romanticism [204] can be authentic at the human level, but the romantic return to a surpassed attitude shows by itself that the desire that inspires that return falls under another category. Next, this impossibility is particularly striking in the present case, because, in the passage through the categories of the *self* and of *God*, man has lost that natural place in the community and in the world that he watched what surrounded him from in order to come to a *theory*, a theory that included, it's true, man also and that made of him, if a language that is not of this category is used, a conditioned, but a conditioned as animal, not as reason and *sight*. This *clear conscience*, he has lost. He doesn't possess any cosmos, and theory no longer has an absolute worth for him, since the objective theory of reason is opposed to man's liberty: if it knows the eternal present, it knows it not as present to man and to the self and thus it doesn't admit the heart's desire. Finally, what is the most important is that there is no absolute truth for the man who comes from faith: after this passage, there is a contradiction between the terms of "truth" and "for man" and man would no longer be satisfied by the union with the impersonal One even if it were possible: man isn't on this earth in order to observe.

What then is the attitude of the man who leaves faith? Traditions, sciences, codes lose value by the comparison with the standard of the absolute self. And however, they are all there is; for this absolute measure is transcendent, and this transcendence must be taken seriously by the man who no longer lives in concrete faith: it truly transcends him and so doesn't concern him. Since feeling does not take priority in him, the justification of the tradition through revelation, which was sufficient for the believer, is not sufficient for him; he asks for something other than nondescript matter in order to exercise his obedience and the demonstration of his trust. He finds himself in an unknown world, himself a part of this world, incomprehensible and incapable of understanding himself, because reason is not in him and is inaccessible to him. Being, justice, virtue, all that is of this order, are, for him, words that seem to have a meaning in the absolute, but that nothing corresponds to since it is a matter of his experience. His feeling is there, and he can't fight it; but he doesn't succeed in grasping it either. His reason speaks, but all that it says to him is that it is, such as it presents itself, not *the* reason. He can't turn himself away from desire, because desire is everywhere, and he can't feel confident surrendering to it, since he doesn't know what reasonable desire could be. He encounters nothing but limits everywhere, and all knowledge within his reach is negative; the true is transcendent: it is therefore not of man's world.

Faith could remain mute; the man who no longer lives with God must speak, because he no longer lives through the heart. But he can't speak of himself, for he never encounters

himself. Nothing of what he says (or thinks) is essential; nothing essential can be grasped. On each point, man finds himself determined, precisely because he proceeds merely from point to point and because no point fills him. There are only *conditions*, and each condition is once more conditioned: [205] feeling has lost its creative force, and God is relegated to an infinitely far off, unattainable. Man speaks, as though there were a truth and a meaning, *as though*, not because he believes that there isn't one in reality, but because the word reality has no meaning for the man who knows that he is a man and who has no God.

This does not then signify that man is unhappy or, to be more precise, despairing. Despair, said banally, would here result from of a conflict between man's ideal and his reality. Yet, this man has neither the one nor the other: he settles into life, he accepts it such as it is, all the while knowing that there is nothing absolute about it. It is what it is, neither good nor bad, neither true nor false, nor even real or unreal. The whole of life is precisely settling into it. For if life as such is the enigma — and an absolute enigma, without an imaginable solution —, in life, there are merely secrets that man always ends up knowing, if he wants to put himself through the necessary trouble. Man is at home in the world, or rather, the world is such that, if he can't create it, nor create in it, he can transform it for the purpose of being at home in it. There is no objective knowledge; but useful knowledges, man can acquire them at will. And this utility itself is not something objectively valid: it is formed during the process of installation into the world. We cannot say what usefulness is; we only know what is useful.

For himself, man lives thus in a "naivety" which recalls that of certainty or of the tradition. But it is merely a memory or a comparison. The fact is that there is neither language nor science that he is certain of. He must acquire his knowledge, not like the individual who seizes knowledge that already exists, but in order to replace revelation: science is to be created, and it is so continually, because it never touches objective truth. The tradition is present, and it cannot be otherwise: the self had done nothing other than push it away and it had been made relative in God, without being negated however; but the tradition's role is now known, and, for man, it counts among the conditions that he can know (always to the extent that it is useful) and modify. The very usefulness of it is determined, but determined as everything here is: until further notice. A single task imposes itself, that of arranging life for the best.

The reality of this life is work, a reality not only for us, as was the case in the attitudes of *certainty*, of *discussion*, of the *object*, but for life itself. Any reflection that does not serve work's progress is superfluous, any philosophy that is searching only for understanding is absurd: the question of meaning doesn't have any meaning. Man finds himself in a nature that conditions him and that he conditions. He has understood that behind all the fine words

lies the struggle against nature. For nature is no longer the cosmos, where human labor has the goal of meeting the needs or desires that are in nature or derive from it. Work has no more goal than the rest, and man's needs and desires are merely conditioned conditions. Man struggles against the nature that he encounters both in and outside of himself, not in order to achieve an end (which would be the end of everything), but because such is his condition, because there is nothing else to do: happiness and salvation are of a [206] transcendent order, and this signifies that they have no place in this life, that man need not search for them. Quite the opposite, they are so very incomprehensible to the man living in this attitude that he has to wonder which conditions the appearance of such ideas are explained by. Life no longer has meaning; meaning, always hypothetical, is defined in life and through life, in relation to a condition given as existing or pre-given as wanted — and yet being mindful in employing the word given is necessary, because nothing is given definitively.

Man himself expresses these facts by saying that he has no language of his own, but that he speaks that of progressing science. In fact, speaking of himself would be a misconception: what is itself? One can know themselves, but only as a meeting point of series of conditions. There is Mr. X, we can determine and modify him; but whether he who undertakes this work is Mr. X in person is happenstance, a not very favorable happenstance, since others are better placed to analyze and to act on him. This "himself" that claims to be other than Mr. X is merely feeling, that is, a condition among others, a piece of the internal mechanism that we call mental, a piece that in the reality (of work) is only important to the extent that it interferes. One can speak only of man, and this "one" is the science of work, the technical science that is not searching for a so-called truth, but which is made use of and which only wants to be made use of. It is not there to speak, but to act by means of language. Yet, man only has this science in order to speak. Undoubtedly, he exists for himself merely to the extent that he speaks: but being for himself signifies, for him, being for science, and being for science is to not be language, but to be opposed to language as objects are opposed to theory. Being therefore, for us, action by means of language, this man is for himself merely a conditioned condition: knowing oneself is a fanciful goal, if knowing oneself signifies something other than changing one's condition. Science is essentially technical, man is a worker, language is only a tool, a pretty poor one at that and which will need to be replaced by another of greater precision.

As a worker, man uses all the tools that the previous attitudes have left him; more exactly, he takes all that he can see as a tool from them. He is well aware that his predecessors were primitives, that they asked questions that he, enlightened as he is, no longer asks. The fact remains that with logic, the psychology of desire, above all with the ideas of an object

and of natural law, they have found manners of proceeding which, true, they didn't know how to use because they always transcended the limits of the human condition, but which are usable and which have even stood the test of time by allowing man to arrive at the point of progress that he has now attained.

Man has always been a worker, he has always struggled against nature; but it is only presently that he knows it and that he acts knowingly. This is why he is free to remember. He can recognize himself all around, because all around he finds man's work, under other conditions, undoubtedly, but always the same, since he is [207] the being that changes conditions and that affirms his identity in and through the transformation: as man, he is characterized precisely by this invariable trait of modifying his world and of modifying himself, contrary to the animal, whose identity is static.

It is therefore not surprising if, in this attitude, we discover words already encountered in the languages of other attitudes and that we encounter them curiously mixed. They no longer have their original values, since they have entered into a new form. Thus, the certainty enters into consciousness in the form of evidence, as the form of what is *self-evident*, a form whose content changes freely, since this content has entirely lost its characteristic of absoluteness. Therefore the tradition as such becomes visible for man: devalued by faith, it becomes one of the conditions that determine him, and not the least; but since it is for him, it is at the same time nondescript: man is never without tradition, but the character of this tradition has no importance, provided that it doesn't divert man from work and from progress. All traditions are equal; all are interesting, since they have conditioned man and continue to do so. They all also express a relation between man and nature and, unless you want to eliminate the struggle with nature, they are true, that is, of a possible utility. Everything can be projected onto a unique plane, that of the active life, and this projection is conscious, since, thanks to the passage through transcendence and following its rejection, man no longer sees himself as partially determined, that is, partially distorted and only in that way, at least in principle, capable of becoming himself again, but as absolutely conditioned, a product of conditions.

The terms therefore change meaning, since they are conserved merely for their function. The *object* is no longer what decides discussion, it is what man forms or transforms through his work. Science is true if it allows producing what, formerly, hadn't existed. Nature is merely the set of working conditions, desire is merely the result and the expression, both modifiable, of the tradition, *God*, the naïve form that, on the one hand, non-enlightened man sees the form itself of the condition under, the organizing rules of work on the other: because man no longer believes in *the* truth and consequently sees language as conditioned, he interprets the language that he finds. Words *have* a meaning, like the object *has* a reality,

both of them relative to the condition: speech and its meaning, discourse and its signification are separated. Man is not understood by virtue of a λόγος that, if it existed, would infinitely transcend man; there are only men's discourses that are understandable relating to man. And these discourses reveal nothing, in the objective acceptance of the term, if not another discourse, possible or real, which, without being *true*, is *important*, because it plays the decisive role in man's struggle with nature.

Man is thus the being that acts by speaking, or as he says, since he distinguishes discourse and its signification, by thinking. It is not the discovery of truth: there would be truth for him if there were demonstration, this absolute demonstration that he still has the idea of, but as an unrealizable idea, a demonstration that would show the necessity [208] of the creator's free decision. It is merely an observation, said otherwise, a condition, unique solely through the fact that it is the ultimate condition on man's side. The man of this attitude is not *for himself*, and one must refrain from introducing concepts of a for-itself that would only be for us, such as those of negativity or liberty, into the analysis, concepts that we would introduce into it through the search for "conditions of possibility" (there the possibility would be vaguely conceived, according to a logic not yet made explicit): it is, for itself, *something*, a function depending on variable conditions. It is not a *self*. Precisely because language doesn't reveal an absolute, but is in a continual progress whose meaning is shown in a statement of fact as determined by the movement itself, there is only discourse, the *thought* that alone sets reality, but sets it relatively as a relative reality. However, what counts for the man of this attitude is this relative reality and not the thought; for the idea of a creative truth, although empty for him, nonetheless determines his search: he proceeds as if there were an objective reality and as if this reality could be revealed. This, he tells himself, is necessary (psychologically, given man's interior conditions) in order to work: this *is*, because this makes up part of human work that advances, because it succeeds. But he knows that this "doesn't mean anything", because *advancing*, *succeeding*, and *being* are one and the same thing, therefore with no relation outside of work and man: nothing reveals a *truth* (in the sense of the previous categories) if man is merely a self-modifying condition.

Language then becomes the technical thought liberated from any fetter. This is not the first time that work and technique play a role; what makes the difference is that here they no longer, in truth, play a role, but form the attitude itself. A place cannot be designated for them because they create the system of places. Nature is what man encounters as a condition of his work, and nature just as much exterior as interior, is therefore determined according to work's progress, always up until the new order. The subject (what is underlying) appears *to us* as the language that creates its object (what language opposes to itself by setting it before itself: *ob-jectus*) For the man in the attitude of the condition, there is, on the contrary,

only the conflict of nature with itself which is declared under the form of human work, that is, thinking, and that is mute in its essence, because both sides mutually modify each other without there being a measure, an absolute standard. But this silence is established only through and by the human tool of thought-discourse. The individual-man is mute, because the species-man thinks: the technical thought thinks the *multitude* of conditions, it cannot nor does it want to think *the* condition, because the thought itself is conditioned. What is negativity and liberty in action for us is for man himself the course, not necessary, but contingent, of history, the always modifiable, never conquered, condition of nature.

2. *Observation, hypothesis, experience. Mathematics and measurement. — The real understood through the possible. — The man [209] of science's disinterestedness.* — Nature here exists to the extent that it is transformable by man. The cosmos having been replaced, under the preceding category, through the humanly incomprehensible and invisible unity of the creative law, the enjoyment that the sight of the perfect and perfectly beautiful great Whole procured for man has disappeared. Man wants to master nature<sup>44</sup>

Nature appears then as the field of activity, and this field is boundless. Man does not declare war on nature, but on something in nature; what he sees is merely a fragment; more correctly, since the idea of a fragment contains that of the Whole, he sees a point, because he finds himself merely at a point. His attack is not destructive and couldn't be; he himself is a natural being, and his action remains natural: transforming nature comes naturally to him, so naturally that he doesn't wonder what good he is transforming it for, but rather he defines the good through the transformation. It's not about providing for his needs: whether he has any is evident; but he knows all too well that instead of struggling, he could be content with what nature and society offer him. He isn't content with this, because he doesn't want to be. What he finds doesn't satisfy him *because* he finds it, but he always finds something. The struggle never starts; at each point a certain amount of mastery is already acquired: when he makes up his mind to advance, man already possesses a base of knowledge, he possesses a technique and an organization of labor. Said otherwise, the working conditions are known, up until a certain point; man knows how go about fabricating, producing the things that he

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<sup>44</sup> Here, where explanation and history as such are in question, we don't have to give an analysis of the conditions that historically bring man to this attitude. They would be easily listed: destruction of the tradition by and in the subjugation to a master who reserves enjoyment for himself in unloading the struggle against nature onto the shoulders of the subject; the disappearance of the master, the growing awareness of the slave in the State, etc.: when we look at Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a treatise on history, we find all the necessary indications there, displayed by a master. It is a different problem for us, since we must remain at the inside of the attitude: the struggle with nature is therefore, for us, a *transcendental* that is not explained, because it is the ultimate fact.

doesn't find, he has penetrated a certain number of nature's secrets, noted how the given reacts to his intervention. He has only to progress.

The method is therefore that of experimentation, an accumulation of technical knowledge, an attempt of enlarging this knowledge. A lot of correct things can be said to understand nature, that it is one, that it is the creation of a good and wise God, that it can be described without contradiction in this manner or that: all this is idle for as long as it doesn't result in a process. The absence of contradiction or an overview doesn't prove anything, because the success of the undertaking is the only proof. It is not that science is superfluous, far from it; but it must be put to the test: what is now called theory is a knowledge of natural reactions faced with human action. A knowledge that is not satisfied by "theoretical" descriptions; for experimentation comes at the beginning and the end of theory and allows no limit to [210] its procedures. Whether its steps are understandable, that is, verifiable through experiences or compatible with the idea of unity or simply logically coherent, or whether they make no sense taken one by one is of little importance: it is not about understanding, nor even of creating an image, it is a matter of the possibility of acting. If a conception in contradiction with others, if a number or an "inconceivable" spatial schema, succeeds through experimentation, they are by that means true, up until the day where other more usable conceptions replace them. There is no longer an observation of a "real", there is only a calculation of conditions; there are no longer any final qualities, there are only useful hypotheses.

Useful, because of a concrete use. If man sees no limit to the transformation of the given, the given is not transformed in any old way. Man, a natural factor, plays natural factors against each other. What interests him is not what always is and always in the same way, it is not "substance", the immutable "real" behind "apparent" change; it is change as such. Nothing is more characteristic of the difference between this science and that of the *object* than the science of the condition's preferred term, that of *natural law*, a term that for the science of the object makes no sense: it knows moral and political laws, for it sees the irreducible change in man, but, in nature, it reduces the change to constant qualities and to a constant support (except by being a movement that repeats itself identically and thus negates change). Presently, nothing is stable. Everything acts upon everything, man has returned to nature, and there is neither the eternal nor the identical any longer. What man is looking for is no longer (*divine*) law, as it was for the believer, or rather as he could have done, if the question interested him —, but *the multitude* of laws that phenomena follow. Since everything is a variable, the relations that show where the variable "man" can intervene and in which way must be found.

The more man is understood as a natural factor, the more only being that matters to him, cleaned and freed from any “personal” factor. It is not X or Y that will find the natural laws, and they don’t go looking for them as X or Y. What they would have believed to find as persons would hardly have a chance of resisting the ordeal. For the type of law that man wants to wind up at does not recognize the person, which is defined by the particular feeling. Yet, it is necessary to eliminate the particular interest and feeling. It is therefore not by chance that this science uses that of the discussion and the object, which, on an entirely different level, ran into the same difficulty. Therefore mathematics provides the tool, for it is there that the elimination of particular interest is pushed to the limit, to the point that language no longer makes sense for the individual. But mathematics is no longer the goal and the ideal as it was for discussion. If, for discussion, contradiction was pure evil, here it is only bothersome to the extent that it can produce ambiguities: the irrational number, which from the object’s point of view, strips mathematics of all objective meaning, bestows a particular value [211] to mathematics here, because it allows mastering contradiction without eliminating it. Mathematics is used, it is no longer interesting in itself. Natural science asks it questions: it is up to mathematics to find the methods for responding. On the other hand, its role is unique because its process, that of measurement, eliminates feeling, which is incomparable from individual to individual. Only the measure is communicable and allows the constitution of an experience that is no longer only valid for X or Y, but for man and, what now amounts to the same thing, for nature. Science is *exact* only there where it has reduced all of the observed qualities into measurements, more precisely, in functional equations of measurements. As long as it has not succeeded in doing so, it has not arrived at the goal: all measurement depends on every other, here is the principle, and the only irreducible constants are those that come from human action that is measurement. Henceforth, these new mathematics’ predilection for the number, which constitutes the measurable magnitude. Instead of being without interest, as it was, because of its evidence, for *discussion*, it is what is the most useful, or even the most necessary. It is all there is — appropriately arranged — that can express, under the form of the function, the interdependence of conditions<sup>45</sup>.

Objective science would remark that all these measures and measurements don’t have a meaning by themselves, but only through what they measure. The science of the condition responds that this is absurd: it doesn’t measure what is known as a natural factor, but out of principle, it measures everything, for all that is measurable can be a factor, and

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<sup>45</sup> Even there where the mathematization is not perfect, for example in biology, science’s domain is coextensive with its own; if the idea of heredity is not (yet, the man of science would add) expressible in non-univocal functional coordination, it is however grasped with the help of the number: a wheat resisting a harsh climate has as a quality producing so many grains of such weight after a period of dormancy of so many days at such average temperature.



becomes one if a relation can be established between the change of this measure and the change of another. It is the measurement that makes up factors, that science cannot even imagine as independent from the measure and the function. The phenomena that are given to man under the form of qualities must be analyzed (that is: dissolved) so as to be reduced to a series of measures: a wave no more exist than a color; only it can be measured, and if the photon lends itself better to measurement than a wave, it will have a higher degree of scientific reality. What is indispensable is that we can come back from the functional calculation to experience and that the measures encountered in the act of measurement correspond to the “values” deduced from established equations. Ordinary language’s words therefore merely have a use of abbreviation in this domain. When I speak of body, force, space, wave, etc., it is not necessary to think of things or of impressions that I know or believe to know immediately. “In reality”, it is a matter of functions and of systems of functions, all reversible (movement is a function of space, and space is a function of movement), with one exception, formed by time, which is a function of [212] light, without light being a function of time, an exception because light is a unit of measurement (and still is it exact only there where the emission of a light ray constitutes an intervention of negligible importance; below that limit, there is no longer time for the individual event: one merely measures the statistical result).

Nature thus becomes the domain of the *possible*, and the science of conditions is that which separates the possible from what is not. It starts from a real measurement in order to arrive at a real measurement, at a result — and here’s what matters— that is has predicted: if, starting from such measurement, you do such thing in such measure, you will obtain such other measurement. The impossible seems characterized then by the fact that the intervention doesn’t produce the desired measurement. But desire plays no role in the man of science’s consciousness: he has forgotten the origin of his research in the struggle with nature, and he uses the word “impossible” in order to push back the demands of the man of the street. In itself, the word is employed only in the sense of “contradiction carrying an ambiguity”: the miracle is impossible, not because this would introduce an unknown force, but because this force could not be transformed into a function, could not be measured and would be nonetheless noticed. What occupies the man of science, it is not the fear of the impossible, nor, the search for the necessary either, which will show itself only at the end of days, once all the systems of measurement (all the factors) would be known; it is the possible as the essence of the real that he pursues. What is given is only a form of the possible. What is could and can be other: science is searching for possible modifications, dimensions of variability and their interdependence. It cannot free itself from reality’s given such as it exists in qualities. But this given is not true for science, since it does not lend itself to modification: only the theory of conditions reveals this truth of reality that is possibility. Or, if we prefer the

ingenuous language of the man of science: what we see, hear, smell, all this is not real: reality is law.

This science is that of the struggle with nature; but no one sees it less that the man who devotes himself to it. When, instead of working at it, he speaks of it, he does the impossible in order to show that he is completely “disinterested” and that his science is merely looking after its own progress. The sincerity of the statement is not in doubt, and it can even claim a partial truth. Indeed, science does not have man’s struggle with nature in mind during each of its procedures. But in its structure, it is not understandable otherwise. It opposes itself to the science of the object (that it has a tendency of identifying with not only in a reprise that we will have to come back to, but moreover because of the kinship that observation establishes between the two, despite the essential difference of its function in the two cases) precisely through its process that is fit to man: an inexpressible number for the science of the object, such as  $\pi$ , that for this science can’t replace the geometrical relation between the diameter and the circumference, is usable for the science of the condition as soon as it comes to determine it with the (limited) precision [213] that one will demand. This at first has no other meaning than that of allowing an applicable calculation, and makes itself explicit only later and for reasons relating to the discussion as a passage to the limit that one is nearing “as close as one will want”. This science is not bothered either by introducing “particles” or “non-material waves”, if such inventions serve in clarifying the interdependence of measured events, and this science doesn’t worry about whether these inventions are totally observable and measurable: provided that they permit calculation, they exist by that very fact, and the physicist will lament at most that the conditions of the human experience keep us from seeing them. — The science of the object, likewise, wants to understand the real as real: this science underpins a unique cause to a unique existence and its hypothesis (in particular there where it reprises the category of God) satisfies its reason: here, the hypothesis must allow a new experiment. If nevertheless the man of modern science doesn’t see its character, if he believes he is dealing with the real as real and not as a special case of the possible, it’s because the struggle with nature presents itself to him as the desire to transform nature and because the question of what must be transformed and to what purpose does not interest him: he seeks, truly disinterested in this sense, how transforming can be done, more exactly: what the conditions are of which transformations.

It is in this way that the man of the science of the condition can remain unaware of the meaning of what he does (of the meaning that what he does will have for other categories). The search for the process of transformation, the experiment made on nature, appear to him merely as the means of controlling his theory and verifying his hypothesis. He is, as

he happily says, positive, and the question of knowing what his activity signifies doesn't interest him. For us, he opposes himself to nature, whereas for himself, such an opposition is unthinkable. The attitude that elaborates the experimental technique is thus that which forbids itself, in the most categorical fashion, any reflection on the signification of this technique: precisely because it is technical and that is sufficient. Man here has no language for himself (we will have to speak of the wholly specific importance that, as a result of this fact, the reprises take) and the category appears as such to the man who serves it (more than he uses it) solely in the refusal of the prior attitudes and categories, as protest and negation. It is only in leaving the condition that man will grasp the category positively, in all its importance. As long as he sticks to it, he is disinterested, and if there isn't *theory* for him, the beatific *vision* of the object, he believes himself to be living entirely in theoretical science.

3. *Man for science. — Exact psychology. — The Enlightenment. — Society, the market, and the politics of well-understood interest.* — In this disinterested science man opposes himself to nature in nature; he is a natural factor for himself, he studies himself as such. He becomes an experimental fact, a factor that must be analyzed in order to be useable. Man is the measuring being; who must measure precisely, and under this account, he will be considered like all the other natural factors; how he reacts to [214] such condition must be known, and the science of conditions outside of man must be completed by that of the interior conditions. Man sees poorly, certain "realities" are inaccessible to his senses and are translated into another species of impressions in him; science attends to the necessary corrections (in fact, it is ordinarily only after the correction that the insufficiency is noticed). Science needs a normal man, of normal vision, normal reaction speed, normal reflexes. Science wants to know what the "psychological mechanisms" are, what the "behavioral factors" are.

Marking the place that belongs by right, in the science of the condition, to the so-called "laboratory" psychology is sufficient here. A single thing matters to it, namely understanding, or rather the non-understanding of man in this science: for himself, man is not here for himself, he is something in nature, a crisscross of series of conditions. He is not self-awareness, desire, in search of happiness; he is a machine, and a poorly enough made machine that replacing it insofar as possible by more precise apparatuses holds great interest, given that this is easier than neutralizing all these individual movements in him that make it so man often reacts in an abnormal manner, so the reaction of one is not identical to that of another. Man is but an object: science is the veritable subject. Let man feel, desire, have passions, etc., this doesn't count as long as this is not translated into functions. Man thinks he feels; "in reality", this feeling is no truer than an optical illusion: it is a fact that the stick

immersed in water seems to be broken, a fact also that man thinks he loves from the heart; the one like the other are inner phenomena that must be reduced to measurable factors (as there is an index of refraction, there is also one for *sex appeal*). What the unexpurgated language calls human consciousness is nothing other than the initial, insufficient and non-scientific, demarcation of a domain of natural events that must be analyzed and reduced to their fundamental functions in order to let them into science. Which signifies that the individual is but a case in the area of human possibility, a case that interests science only to the extent that it influences the creation of the average. Let the individual continue to attribute importance to what he calls his inner life, this is as natural as an optical illusion, and would be as negligible, once the problem is understood, if it didn't perturb science's progress. But, alas, this psychological illusion keeps people from being good servants and useful instruments of progress and makes it so they keep busy doing other things than the mastery over nature by means of exact science.

The man of science notes thus that he is not alone in the world. He lives among other men, *people* who do not deal with science, who even ignore it, all the while continually being subjected to its influence. This unconsciousness is expressed by the fact that they continue to believe in things that science has overcome or unveiled as impossible: people that science has not yet transformed. Science has its explanation at the ready; it is neither negligence on its part [215] nor constitutional insufficiency: simply it doesn't yet have all the tools on hand. However, one can see that man has evolved, and one need not be particularly optimistic to predict the continuation of this movement.

For he who, knowing what science is, doesn't directly contribute to it, but reflects on its conditions with the help of science's own concepts, man thus appears under two different aspects, in his reality and in what he believes being. This belief, from science's point of view, is the error, detrimental in that it slows humankind's progress. It is of the highest interest to fight it and remove it: one must enlighten man so that, in collaborating in the creation of a more advanced community, he becomes a useful member of humanity. He needs to be shown how scientific work pushed him forward to make him understand that his beliefs contain no truth and that the tradition he remains attached to deceives him and puts him in chains: his history must be explained to him.

His *true* history: the history established by the tradition is not that. He was spoken to about his community's history — but what is it besides a heap of crimes, of horrors, of mistakes? He is taught the sacred history — and what was found there if not a series of old wife's tales that science has rendered absurd and ridiculous? When one knows science, a single story is meaningful, that of science itself. How, from hypothesis to hypothesis, from

law to law, man freed himself from the clutches of error, how he learned to define the field of his knowledge and to own up to his own ignorance in order to know where he needs to focus his efforts, this is the sole subject both worthy of man and in his reach, this is the common thread that allows him to discover important events and their interdependence.

History, however, is not science; it is merely scientific. What it is missing is a complete analysis of man; for what man actually is would need to be known, and science, not ignorant of this, is still far from this goal: otherwise history would be written in formulas. In the actual state of things, it happens at the human level, it struggles with human nature, it is the attempt to clear the path to progress. It doesn't elaborate exact hypotheses (verifiable in the measuring experience), it is looking to make that elaboration possible. It doesn't build; it demolishes the obstacles.

Yet, in order to act on men, history must speak to them in their own way. And so, the only true and understandable history, that of science, is also the one that serves this science the least: is it not a matter of making the people who move in the obscurity of superstition acknowledge history? Admittedly, it would be enough to not have biases. But it is bias that leads people. Therefore the enlightened man, he who holds the idea of science in progress, must explain what man is to the others, or rather what he is not. He is not a being who must and can look for happiness, for happiness doesn't exist for the science that finds only pleasure and pain as evidence, inaccurate besides, of the well or poor functioning of the human machine. He isn't God's creature, for science can't concede an unconditioned beginning. Man is simply a being who struggles for his existence, and who struggles by means of reasonable work. [216] Therefore he is always found living in working communities. But he doesn't understand this, he believes that this work is not essential, he doesn't admit that he hasn't yet reached his perfection. This is why he doesn't attribute his failures to his ignorance, but attributes them to the supernatural forces that he imagines according to what he observes in his peers, as unreasonable, malevolent, irascible, jealous beings and that he must win over. So, other men take advantage of this disposition, they present themselves as mediators between the frightened barbarians and their gods, and they use these beliefs to defend their own advantages, declaring any undertaking that would strip them of these advantages impious. They rid themselves in this way of the struggle with nature; they make others work for them. Nothing could be more understandable consequently than their opposition to all scientific progress. Their hereditary or institutional advantages are only defensible so long as the people believe in their sacred function, and as the interested parties are well aware of this fact, they see this science that undermines faith in the supernatural as their most formidable enemy. They are necessarily reactionary, since they can't help being obscurantists: the day that the people would understand that the priest is superfluous and that the king with his

nobility have appropriated the rights to rewards that their ancestors had merited through services rendered to the community, but to which these idlers and pleasure-seekers are not entitled, on that day their domination would collapse. There will no longer be masters, men will no longer be distinguished except through their greater or lesser contribution to the common task, performed in brotherly collaboration.

In this way, history frees man from his errors by showing him how, step by step, he has already partly freed himself and in which direction he must continue. Since it is not a matter of science, we can obviously discuss whether the perfect state of humanity existed at the beginning of the evolution of humankind, if it was destroyed afterwards through the introduction of errors and must at the end be refound, or if man, brought out of animality, goes, in a zigzagging but continual step, towards perfection<sup>46</sup>. The fact remains that in this moment, he is not yet there, either gone back, or arrived. He lives in error and it is not possible that he frees himself from it in one fell stroke: there has been no science of man until today, and natural science does nothing more than show the impossibility of certain beliefs. So one must be patient with people. They have not evolved enough to content themselves with their work as such; moreover, natural science has not yet sufficiently transformed this work so that man can at any time give up on all consolation. In short, beliefs can't be completely eliminated, otherwise the wretched would destroy all organization of labor, wanting to benefit without producing. It is a matter of creating a code of pure beliefs that discipline people all the while guiding them progressively towards science: religion must be purified.

[217] And the problem is not insoluble. Taking the unreasonable elements out of faith suffices. Let man believe in the existence of a God, guarantor of the social order, this is useful, even indispensable. But let him cease counting on God's intervention: the prayers, the rites, the offerings do not exempt him from effort, he must take care of his own fate himself, he must obtain knowledge of nature himself, for there is neither revelation nor miracle. Between God and man, there are no other relations than those of morality, and man's piety comes down to his respect for the omniscient and absolutely just being. Defending God's "interests" is not the law's role: he doesn't have any, and those who attribute interests to him are thinking of their own and upset the peace of labor. Maybe God will judge men's acts after their death; the belief, if it has low probability, if, to tell the truth, it is false — for science doesn't imagine a soul separate from body — does a great favor, provided that the

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<sup>46</sup> Both conceptions are represented by countless authors: Hesiod's *regret* is opposed to Thucydides' "progressive" *archeology* like Rousseau to Voltaire, Burke to Adam Smith, Ruskin to J.S. Mill, the traditionalists to Comte. It goes with saying that in all these authors, with the exception of Voltaire and of Comte, categories other than the present are dominant.

precaution is taken to limit religion by social utility, aiming at humanity's progress in light of science.

Concerning morality in general, it is necessary to refrain from hasty affirmations. We know so little, and we only have the idea of the science of man. What is the Good? What is Truth? Where is the meaning of our lives? We don't know, and we don't even know if man will ever be able to answer such questions. Therefore there is nothing else to do but leave them unanswered. All the metaphysical systems, all the thoughts that have wanted to go beyond natural science have led to endless discussions, to struggles, persecutions, troubles. If man can't give this game up, don't let him take it seriously! Let him tell himself that both these dreams are equivalent. Would it not be doubly absurd were he to sacrifice his human interest, progress, to chimera that don't even protect real advantages? Tyranny serves, admittedly, the priest and the nobleman, but what does the metaphysician collect from his renunciation of this world's goods? Play, if we can't keep ourselves from doing so, and let the others play; but don't disturb the peace with vain discussions. The day will come when science will brush aside these problems or will resolve them, by giving them a precise meaning. Until then, let's work.

For, what the man of science doesn't see, caught up in his research, the historian thinking as a man of science notices thanks to his work of demolition. The struggle with nature — once the meaningless question of knowing whether it has been beneficial or not has been put aside — is what makes man, what makes man a civilized animal: *his* struggle, since he doesn't live only in a working community — otherwise he would be indistinguishable from bees and ants, who don't find their necessities individually and ready-made either, and who are organized for the transformation of the given — but in a community of progress. Neither the organization nor the methods of his work are definitively established.

What's more, humanity has only started to enter the path of progress consciously: there are civilized men, but they don't form the majority. This is why the State is necessary in humanity's present condition, because without police constraint, people, not being enlightened, would rush over one another in order [218] to take what there is, instead of producing what is necessary. However, it would be wrong to conclude from this technical necessity that man is essentially a citizen. On the contrary, belonging to this or that state is accidental, since the struggle with nature falls to all humankind — a historical accident from barbaric times that continue to play a role, because the privileged find their advantage therein. Man, even enlightened, can change nothing for the moment, except showing people that their sole veritable interest is moving humanity forward: above States, negating any historical frontier, is society. It is still only the society of enlightened men that know history's secret, and historic communities participates in it to different degrees, according to

the number and influence of these men; but the moment is coming where men of science will take power, where they will replace the obscurantists and the tyrants and will be able to freely educate the people. Then, and only then, will civilization, progress towards mastery over nature, unite all men.

But that's a distant future. For the moment, man must be taken as he is and not be addressed a perfectly reasonable being that doesn't yet exist anywhere. The educator must know his students. If he wants to free them from their prejudices and superstitions, to lift them above the beliefs that attach them to the tradition, he must ask himself what means he will use to make them act. Even unburdened of their errors, they don't achieve the thinker's clarity of conscience, and incidentally this is not desirable: the average man will always need to serve science as a tool, but he must find his interest in it and he must understand that he finds it there.

Happily, the difficulty resulting from the fact that there is not a sufficiently elaborated science of man is not insurmountable. True, science has not reduced all men's behavior to controllable factors; but the educator can transform man in view of a society where each will act according to understandable motives, where, consequently, he will determine himself in his relations with the others by calculable factors. Let him continue to believe, to love, to do as he sees fit, provided that he conforms himself in his actions to the idea of the rational man: the proposed ideal will become reality, provided that education is based on a factor acting in the current man and recognized by him as such, *a factor* in the eyes of the man of science that is at the same time *motive* for the ordinary man.

Well, such a factor exists and satisfies the two required conditions: it is found in man as he is and it lends itself to the scientific construction of a calculable society. It is the desire to possess. Natural to man as to many animals, it has been reinforced while power transformed itself into riches: the powerful have appropriated others' labor and the fruits of their labor. The idle rich are opposed to the poor workers that they keep from getting richer by taking the instruments of labor from them, thus employing the most effective means of forcing them to cede the product of their sweat. For both equally, property directs all their actions, to the extent that they are not misled [219] by bias. Yet, this is but the subjective expression of the struggle for the mastery of nature. For if man wants to possess, it is so he can have the product, transformed matter, at his disposal. Wanting to possess more is wanting to contribute to progress. The property instinct, far from being noxious or a perversion, is the motor of evolution — on one condition: that each can gain access to it and, which comes down to the same thing, that nobody possesses anything definitively. The goods necessary for production must circulate in order to go to he who draws the greatest profit from



it for himself and thus for society. Nothing must be excluded from the social domain, everything must have an owner and a value, be at the disposal of so-and-so and nonetheless be able to pass to any other's disposal. This then is how no part of nature will stay abandoned and how the community will draw the maximum profit from it.

The ideal society is in this way the society of the industrial market, where all values rest on work and are expressed, exactly measured, in money. The individual's thoughts and feelings are, for science, reduced to a measurable portion: they are useful to the extent that they pay; the individual is worth what he owns, and poverty is proof of the incapacity of a subject who is barely good enough to be employed as an instrument of production. The more capable the individual is of transforming raw material, the more skilled he is at finding and extracting it, the greater the service he renders to the community whose wealth he enlarges. It doesn't matter what he produces as long as he finds the means of exchanging his product for a profit; is not all production an enlargement of human potential? And if there are products that devour an effort that would be more productive were it employed otherwise, will not the competition of producers and products on the market chase them off? The interest of humanity and of every man is the same. Eternal human rights, natural, sentimental, historical connections between individuals, what silliness! There is but one right, that of growing rich through work, but one crime, that of wanting to achieve this otherwise, a crime not against nature, but against the subject's own interest, a crime of stupidity by he who doesn't understand his interest, who doesn't see that in attacking property he destroys the possibility of possessing it for himself<sup>47</sup>.

The problem posed is thus resolved, at a science of society has been created. Man's normal interest has been defined and has become measurable. Without possessing a science that touches every man, we can speak of the man who is truly man, because we know that it is man that works by calculation. What's left over no longer presents difficulties of principle: all the lines that must follow education and politics are drawn. For education and politics, inseparable from each other can tend only towards one end: instituting the market system, letting the differences between [220] individuals and between communities be measured. All individuals must take part in the technique in order to have equal chances, all nations must enter into competition on the market to be able to contribute to progress.

A civilized society will therefore give its members a scientific training that develops their aptitude in work and will free them at the same time from their biases, without however giving them desires that they will be incapable of satisfying by their own forces. But all

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<sup>47</sup> The theory, whose elements are found in the mix of metaphysical skepticism and of practical positivism of a Bayle or a Hume, receives in Bentham and A. Smith the form that it dominates liberalism's politico-economic thought in.

contemporary societies are not civilized, and it is the existence of primitive societies that compel the others to keep, for the moment, their historical form of the State. In principle, education should make this vestige of bygone days disappear, and ever the police would be superfluous among educated men in whom a social medicine would be sufficient for recognizing and treating asocial and antisocial elements and, where necessary, separating them from the others. In any case, if there were still politics, it could, in principle, only be interior and would only affect the organization of labor — a politics that would be set by the common agreement of all the workers, that is, of everyone, at least there where the training has touched every citizen. In reality, the non-evolved States still impose their law, the law of violence and of inter-human struggle. For these states are actually dangerous: even though they don't see themselves as communities in progress, they are nonetheless working communities; they can be powerful owing to favorable natural conditions, and the degree of well-being of civilized peoples can spur them to aggression. And even if they were neither powerful nor aggressive, they would always slow humanity's progress in sequestering a part of nature's potential wealth. It is for the good of humanity and for their own that they must be educated; if they don't agree to it, if, under the influence of biases favored by their interested masters, they object, it is necessary to break their resistance: war is an evil and a relic of barbaric times, but it is just if it is necessary in order to drive humanity forward towards the age of reasonable labor, if it is waged in order to rule out the possibility of any future war.

Until science's final victory, historical communities remain in this way history's subjects. Together, civilized communities lead the struggle against the barbarians; between them competition decides precedence. Work undertakings, political formations equal to the times have progressively freed themselves from purely historical and accidental elements: political history only explains their defects. Therefore the role of the individual in modern, that is, rational, history is strictly limited. The great man in the sense of national tradition, the hero that made the State what it is, is a mythical figure, scientific history demolishes his legend, he is not known to modern society, except when the struggle against primitive communities compels him to descend, in war, to their level. Civilized man is great as an inventor or as an organizer, and his greatness is measured by the services rendered to the cause of progress. Nothing else counts, and wanting to diminish this greatness by alleging, against the hero of progress, any so-called defaults of [221] character, morality, taste would be foolish, for in truth there are no great men, there are only great performances. Man is only the organ of society and he has more or less value according to whether he is replaced with more or less difficulty. No one is irreplaceable. The presence of a gifted man can give one State the edge over another, can save time — said otherwise, work —, but without him humanity would

have arrived at the same point, maybe later, maybe with a different great formation at the head of progress, but since humanity knows, thanks to science, what it is a question of, it will attain and surpass every given point. Progress won't stop as long as humanity, in its work, follows science. Man only counts in his group, the group only counts in relation to humanity's progress.

4. *The philosophy and historiography of the condition.* — The present attitude is particular in that, exiting the reflection of man in God and thus (for us) the reflection on a reflection, it is opposed to any search for a *meaning* that, for itself, is replaced by scientific and material enrichment. Personal questions, moral, aesthetic, religious anxieties are, in his eyes, epiphenomena of historical origin that must, admittedly, be explained in order to be dealt with, for they exist and act, but they can claim no legitimate influence. It is clear that the modern philosophical consciousness therefore finds itself embarrassed: it is looking to understand, it is looking for a *meaning*, a *value*, (it doesn't matter what this search presupposes for its part — above all: it doesn't matter to the modern philosophical consciousness), it is looking for itself, and it is precisely this “for itself” that it doesn't find here, and which has no place here. On the other hand, it is struck by the importance of the result that it neither can nor want to be unaware of, especially since it feels itself, and even admits to being, formed by this work. Its tendency is therefore that of adding to what it finds, of saying that “all this” must not be taken literally, that man has metaphysical needs that demand satisfaction (it is amusing to note how much the modern philosophical consciousness accepts the condition's language), that man, if, against all odds, were truly as he is described here, should be profoundly unhappy, that he couldn't live off the ideas of condition and progress alone. Yet, man succeeds very well living thus, and the analysis of the reprises will show us that the majority of these lamentations don't prove that our Jeremiahs have surpassed the category, but that they try, on the contrary, to subordinate the attitude to more ancient categories. In itself the attitude possesses everything that it needs — which, by the way, is a trivial statement, since it says only that this attitude is an attitude and not a novelist's invention — with morality, art, and philosophy.

Its philosophy starts by being a methodology, a reflection on the method of science, and particularly of first science, that of nature. The attitude doesn't have to ask itself how this science is possible: it is sufficient for the attitude to note that science exists and that, every day, it proves its worth. Its only worry is making it as pure, [222] and, that way, as useful as possible. Constantly, in fact, science such as men practice it must be watched; for man remains in the grip of his historical conditions; his fondness for a non-scientific interpretation — that he calls understandable — is nearly irrepressible and makes him commit

errors, all the more serious since they cost more in labor. It is why it is essential to reflect on the methods of scientific work. Man is not, as an individual, in direct relation with science's truth: it is outside of him without ever being present and achieved in act. Method alone can save him from error. But this is not yet sufficient; if he believes being in the truth and needing only a protection against error, man still advances lightly; for he is always in error, in the ignorance that takes itself for knowledge: method can only help him free himself from it. The very idea of a coincidence of subject and object in an absolute knowledge, this *ideal* of the category of the *object*, is absurd, and if science is defined in this manner, man will never know what ground things — because this so-called ground doesn't exist. If one wants to speak of an object — and the expression is convenient —, it is necessary to speak of an object of knowledge, not of reason or of a subject: reason is its own ground, and speaking of any other thing that would be located, who knows where, behind the phenomena, marked out and measured by science, is speaking without saying anything. There are sense data, qualities, there is the “object” of science, to which this science reduces these data and qualities, in other words, the functions connecting and constituting measurable factors, and that's all. The philosopher has but to present this technique in its purity<sup>48</sup>.

It is, however, no small task. For the individual who works for science remains individual, and the tradition can mislead him. Not every question has an immediate answer, and hypotheses, unverifiable for the moment, face off. Moreover, science is continually becoming more complex, and specialization, following division of labor, makes even the most powerful mind unable to see science in its entirety. It is made up of a multitude of sciences, all brought back to a single science, but relating back to that only for the philosopher, not for the specialist; nature, the totality of the measurable, is carved into domains, and the man working in only one of them easily forgets the existence of all the others. This is particularly true of socially useful processes; because, since this usefulness is partial, its very success puts into danger the progress of the science that, completely busy exploiting already acquired knowledge, neglects clearing new territories. Yet, this is science's essential goal, and a society that loses sight of this is a community of progress that reverts to a community of traditional labor. Alone, pure theory, impartial science, can protect it from this. Such a pure theory, as we have seen, exists in mathematics. It is opposed, by dominating them from above, to the measuring sciences as the science of measurement. It is in mathematics that [223] the philosopher discovers the theory's canon: only what can be mathematized is scientific. Let

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<sup>48</sup> This *pragmatism* is perhaps encountered in its purest form nowhere other than in Lotze (whose thought, however, it does not exhaust).

hypotheses be formed as one likes, let the most specialized research be pursued, contact with science is not lost.

But the man of applied science and the mathematician both work in isolation as if the other didn't exist, or at least, the physicist acts as though the mathematician worked only for him, the mathematician, as though the physicist were there only in order to amuse him with problems. The philosopher alone sees the unity and can save the one from empiricism, the other from the arrogance of the purely formal agreement. In establishing the junction and oppositions between the two, he shows them what the meaning of their efforts and their constructions is: to develop mathematics into a non-contradictory system of functions having a possibility of application as measurement, to develop natural science as a system of mathematizable hypotheses aiming at the determining of the interdependence of conditions. Although many other elements are found in science, nothing outside of this is science. It is a fact that we are often forced to act according to the tradition, that practice is different from theory or is not elucidated by it, that provisional orders serve as functional theories. The value of methodological reflection only becomes greater because of this: it fills, at the level of science, this role of purifier that history fills at the social level. Like history, it doesn't contribute directly to scientific progress; but in showing the arbitrary, that is, traditional, character of conjectures — currently useful and irreplaceable, since not everything is in progress, even in a modern society —, it opens the way and commits research to it<sup>49</sup>.

It is all the more regrettable for this philosophy that it only partly succeeds in guiding history. There are areas where it can declare itself content: the history of science, obviously, but also that of reasonable labor, economic relations are or can become scientific. Here, man's evolution merges with that of social conditions; progress's sense is defined, the results are measurable. But it is clear that the tradition plays a huge role everywhere: religious beliefs, metaphysical convictions, national sentiments, personal influences are, admittedly, not sufficient to explain events, since it is the progress that sets the outline; but the meandering of that line, the concrete events, are only understandable with the help of its factors — which are not measurable. They continue to act, to such a point that they render the experiment very difficult practically even in the areas that, judging by their constitution lend themselves to it. Nothing prevents establishing one and only one measurable factor in economy and that starting from there, predicting the result, the reaction of other factors. However, if the anticipated change is not produced, the initial hypothesis [224] cannot be concluded from that to

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<sup>49</sup> *Methodologists*, such as Mach or H. Poincaré, join Pragmatists on this point, and, for one part only of their thought, the Neo-Kantians.

have been false, since it is always possible that people have not reacted as purely economic subjects.

It is thus indispensable to turn towards “subjective” factors and to study man not as he is, but as he believes himself to be. The most disappointing study of all, since it is dealing with something essentially non-reasonable, with purely verbal expressions that can’t be analyzed; where these pseudo-thoughts that are important only insofar as they have stopped or, sometimes, fostered science’s progress must be taken seriously; where the purely historical becoming of these historical communities that States are must be elucidated, because their formation and their forms make the reaction of their members understood.

Making it understood: this is the hardest. For, in order to understand, the historian must think in ordinary language, approve or disapprove, evaluate, judge — in short, not only is his object not scientific, his attitude is not either and cannot be. What will he do to control himself? How will he know whether it’s not his historic attitude, his belonging to this or that State, his religion, his social position, which make him understand events as he understands them? Can they not be understood otherwise? Don’t other historians do so? In history, the impartial attitude is but an ideal. And nonetheless this ideal, that the historian only too easily loses sight of and that the philosopher is the guardian of, isn’t a pure chimera. If he thinks about it, the historian will learn to be wary of himself, establishing, insofar as possible, his personal ideological equation, refraining from overviews that are only mental constructs. Above all he will know how to distinguish reality, what is accessible to science, at least in principal, from ideologies. In short, he will be fully capable of fulfilling his essential task: man’s liberation from ideologies through their destruction<sup>50</sup>

Philosophy is thus historical and is understood as historical: it is necessary because — and only because — man has not yet merged with science and, to the extent that it reaches its goal, it makes itself superfluous. Methodology helps up until the day that the struggle with nature becomes the sole content of consciousness, either because man analyzes the conditions in order to make their modification possible, or because he contributes to this modification as a natural at the same time as social factor. In the meantime, philosophy guides him. Starting from the ideal of the man whose sole interest is that of society, whose sole particularity that of his function, philosophy points out man’s imperfections to him and the means of resolving them. In this way it supplies him with his morality: honesty in economic relations, defense of the community that he is a part of and which gives him the

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<sup>50</sup> This *sense* of historical research is dominant in the *Aufklärung* (cf. the historical treatment of religions in Gibbon or Voltaire) and in Marxist historians (more than in Marx). This historiography’s *theory* has been elaborated by the *sociology of knowledge* (see particularly Karl Mannheim, *Ideologie und Utopie*, Bonn, 1929), which will be understandable, however, only under the category of *intelligence*.

possibility of living in a civilized manner, ardor in work, whatever it be, effort towards the greatest wellbeing possible — here is all that [225] concerns him, because it is all that concerns society. As for the rest, to each his own.

5. *The art of the condition.* — Yet, this rest is still large. Man doesn't yet exclusively see to progress and labor; he is not yet, for himself, a calculable factor. Therefore work is exterior to him, an obligation that he feels as imposed from outside; it is only for some powerful and rare minds that science and progress are truly everything, minds that live in work and interrupt it only to the extent that their psycho-physiological constitution makes rest part of work's condition. The masses are not there. They flee work too often, and even those that are honest enough to not try appropriating its fruits through violence or cunning are ordinarily looking for satisfaction outside of work. They have surpassed the earlier steps of the evolution, but they have not yet settled into the modern attitude. They recognize life's seriousness, superstitions and prejudices no longer have a hold on them; but the change is still limited to their opinions and has not transformed their habits. They want to work, because they understand that this is necessary; but they want also to be entertained, because science and philosophy science and philosophy have not yet permeated them fully. They get bored, for they have kept feelings and desires.

Art corresponds then to a real social need. The heritage of bygone ages, wherein man expressed his feelings and wherein he found them expressed, art is commensurate with the big kids of modern times. Not all of the arts of the past: those that serve the claims of the traditional cults or the ancient masters only touch the heirs of the pleasure-seekers. The people demand something else. They want to play and spend their time agreeably. Music, expressing (according to most) desires and feelings without transforming them into theses, and story, acted or not, that relates what has happened to others, speaks of the dazzling successes that are perhaps in store for the spectators or readers, of the gruesome misfortune that were avoided, these are arts suitable for progress.

However, they are not of equal value. Music's effect is stronger and more direct: it doesn't speak to the intelligence, not even to the imagination, it acts on the nervous system as a stimulant or a sedative; therefore it is often, almost always, bound to rhythm and through that to dance, and moreover it introduces discipline, by making easier all jobs at a regular cadence. But because of this direct action, so very natural that its effect is often measurable and lends itself to precise experiments, it doesn't have an educational value. Literature is another story. Not only can it be instructive, it is necessarily so. For story speaks both to the intelligence and the imagination. From the moment man is spoken of, he is taught to see himself in his possibilities. Even when the author would have no intention, when, taken in

ideas that are not of the period or dreams without utility or justification, he would rebuff any thesis and any theory, he will not avoid illuminating the reader. It is only a matter of knowing if he does it well or poorly. His [226] audience accepts what he has to offer, provided that he entertains them, that he gives them the impression of understanding life. That there is nothing to understand, that what we name in this way is only a first approximation of analysis, the readers are always unaware of this, the authors often. In numerous cases, literature therefore has no value; are not writings seen all about that give imaginary satisfactions to people's lowest penchants, reinforcing their brutal and asocial instincts, if they are not frankly opposed to progress? Do people not descend on these productions that correspond to what there is the most primitive and backward in them? Happily there are other writers that, conscious of their task, address the present's problems seriously, showing the social mechanism to the general public, the weaknesses of an imperfect society, the unjust misfortune of the poor whom no chance is given to, the revolting splendor of the idle rich, the crimes of prejudice, the greatness of modern man — and show this to him the only way that suits him and that suits the subject in the absence of an elaborated social science. No historic morality binds these authors, since they have freed themselves of any useless tradition and since they know what it is about; they don't chase after an elusive beauty; their field is the real, with its vices and virtues, its joys and its sufferings, its problems and its goals.

In their works, modern man recognizes himself, what's more: discovers himself. For people are individuals for themselves and live in feelings. But they don't succeed in expressing themselves, the sole language accepted by their intelligence being that of science. The writer allows them to see what they are, he produces characters that speak in their place, who grant importance to these movements of the heart that their heads are ashamed of, that show them attitudes and manners they can imitate: the personal is taken seriously, they picture themselves in the place of the lords of old who, without working, were content with themselves and took care only of themselves, who had their own fate, a role where they were irreplaceable, who were personalities and heroes. And at the same time, they transform themselves, more precisely, they are transformed by the writer. They understand what the dangers of modern life are for those lingering in outdated forms of life, that nobility, faith, self-abnegation lead to catastrophe if they are not accompanied by a solid intelligence for real conditions, that nonetheless, this intelligence recognizes these values, without which the revolt of the poorly civilized would be inevitable because they can be taken no other way than through feelings, values without which, the civilized would not be able to hold themselves back either from a personal egotism that would keep them from understanding correctly their interest: in an imperfect society, having a heart is necessary.



Literature's poetic and analytical sides thus complete each other admirably. Giving satisfaction to what, in the individual, is not yet satisfied by progress and science, contributing to instruction through the portrait of a society in evolution, to education through the example of success and collapse, the writer is society's first man. If among the people truly equal to [227] progress, his glory is less than that of the man of science and of the philosopher's — for they know that his images can't be controlled — it is the only glory that is truly popular and (which distinguishes it from that of the actor) durable. It's because, for people, he represents at the same time both natural and social science and is a philosopher and historian, and he is superior to the specialists because he joins them together in himself. He doesn't match them, of course, in special expertise, but he surpasses them through the breadth of his vision and the extent of his horizon, to such a point that the specialists themselves turn to him as soon as they leave their specialty: once outside of it, they are not distinguishable from the average man, and are, from science, thrown back into the understanding that the author provides them.

The writer is in this way the venerated, envied and imitated master of the times, because he is the master of all individuals, apart from the small number of those that live only in science or in social labor. For these exceptional men, he is only an entertainer, a contemptible ne'er-do-well who addresses himself to man's less evolved factors, and who would be absolutely negligible if his work didn't correspond to a real need and didn't produce economically measurable results. They consequently recognize him, knowing that his mastery extends itself only to individuals in their historic individuality and that he doesn't put society's progress in danger, that on the contrary, if he conscientiously fills his function as the present's historian, he can play, knowingly or not, the role of the educator who, in the instruction, is that of the historian. Everywhere that the scientific theory of social organization doesn't reign, where methodological reflection can't guide thinking, for all this immense remainder that people call human, there is only the writer who gives a semblance of an answer to questions that seem to make sense. Since people don't tolerate the awareness of their ignorance, the writer provides the consolation that they are looking for. In him, the modern scientific spirit and the ancient feelings are united. Depicting the individual's condition in society for the ordinary man, he is himself this ordinary man in the pure state; still *me*, already in progress's service.

6. *Reprises. — Political romanticism. — Reprises and the average conscience of the present.* — But what is the serious man of this category-attitude? The tradition, already stripped of its absolute character by the preceding categories, is now negated. But it is replaced by nothing, and man, thrown about between the “still” and the “not yet”, must lose

himself in scientific and social labor in order to free himself from his individuality, which is what is false, historical, empirically given in him and not reduced to function and possibility. He should calculate and work according to the calculation; he shouldn't speak. For it is not him, but society that is the subject, and thought is not that of the individual, but of science: man is neither thinking nor thoughts; he is thought, and insufficiently thought in the actual state of things. The struggle with nature is not finished, and all that man says is provisional. The mathematical formula alone, the function expressing the condition as a modifiable possibility, possesses a precise meaning. But this meaning, experienced in the struggle [228] with nature, isn't an understandable meaning for the individual: science isn't for him, he is for science, and this science, contrary to that of the object doesn't lead to the One, since it is essentially unachieved and since the feeling is not legitimized. The believer gives his heart to God; but if he doesn't know what he gives nor whom he gives it to, he feels and he can hope to know. Here, it is not sacrifice of the understanding that is required, but total sacrifice, made to an understanding in evolution, human and supra-individual. And this divinity does not settle for feelings and intentions; he who has neither gifts nor strengths to offer is nothing, less than nothing; he gets in the way, and has only to vanish. Man is what he does, and only is to the extent that he does something. Therefore, one must not look for compensations and consolations for the evils of this existence. When evil is spoken of, conditions are criticized. But they are what they are, and the critique itself is conditioned. Things evolve; the next point—barring historical accident—is the better on the timeline, which is that of progress. Man struggles with nature; that is, he is never satisfied: so why complain about it? Doesn't he feel happy? This may be, but this doesn't interest science, no more — and no less — than his digestion or the composition of an ore or the effect of the discovery of a gold deposit on shifting market prices. There are no persons, there are only men; more exactly, there are only average human reactions, as there is only an average reaction of water molecules. What would be the difference in fluid science if this science were done by the particles that make up the liquid? Would they be less dominated by the laws because they knew them? And even if, in the manner of men, they modified the state of the liquid, would this state be less a state of the liquid for that? The man who thinks has ceased being a *self* (even if only in *God*); for him, there is only science<sup>51</sup>.

It is a fact that man can live in this attitude. But nowhere is the tendency to understand oneself with the help of previous categories stronger. For the other categories are negated

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<sup>51</sup> This is the way that *behaviorism* grasps its object, which is therefore no longer *psychological* (or isn't yet so).

only in principle. They are present, their presence is even recognized as necessary, and the serious man must provide a constant effort, a full-time vigilance in order to see their appearance as the indication of the presence of insufficiently known factors. Man, all the while knowing that this is not serious, puts on a certain *air*. The traditional language is not correct; but he himself lives in a society that is at once traditional and in progress and which doesn't know any other language for individual to individual relations: outside of renouncing these relations, even the man of science, the philosopher, the organizer speak this language of subjectivity and of feelings, and not only in addressing people who are not at their level, but in speaking to themselves. As for the others, they are, for themselves, only the series of their own feelings and moods. [229] Incapable of contributing to science or to social organization, they don't have any attitude at all; sufficiently enlightened in order to not let themselves be fooled, they feel, as soon as they start reflecting, the need to "give a meaning to their life", the need to "understand the world", of a "guide in existence", of "values".

The result is that reprises prevail in this life, and we have seen them in all the indispensable and necessarily non-scientific discourses, of the educator, of the historian, of the artist. These reprises are arbitrary, since one manner of understanding is worth the other, all being historical and accidental, and the choice is immense, for all the attitudes appear in the progress of the historic destruction of the historical. Certain are unconscious reprises, such as that of the *object* or of the *discussion*, that can guide (and lead astray) the philosopher of the method. More often, the reprises are conscious, that is, the most archaic categories are not directly employed, but by means of other categories which, themselves, know subjectivity or, at least, seem to know it in the eyes of the man who is opposed to his present because he doesn't manage to lose himself in it. For this man sees his world as external, all the while knowing that it is his own, and understands it as a condition, but as a condition for himself who feels himself to be an individuality. It is why he wants to grasp this world (not only to prevail over nature) on the one hand, and render himself graspable as an individual on the other. The reprises that he uses for this carry the mark of his feeling, express the flight faced with a world that he knows is hostile to inner life, to contemplation, to the tradition, to discussion, etc..., a nostalgic return to the attitudes where man "still had value".

The romanticism of individuality is not, for this reason, necessarily a dream and sadness. The romantic can indeed limit himself to that; but he can just as well consider the social state modifiable and to be modified and intervene in the evolution in order to realize the conditions that seem ideal to him in the attitude that he has chosen: from dreamer, he becomes rebel, sincerely convinced that his political line doesn't stem from a choice between the past's possibilities, but that this line is that of progress become finally understandable, forgetting on the other hand that these attitudes, there where they were authentic, didn't

understand themselves, but were the foundation of the understanding. He has retained that the world is modifiable, without admitting that this modification is not determined by the individual, but is determining for the individual. Therefore his political action, whatever it be, is, from the category's point of view, reactionary, felt as a danger and, if necessary, fought — precisely because it's political, not seeing politics and history as evils, at the most as means, but as irreducible. Regardless of the national, traditional, religious or moral content of these politics. Yet again, the choice is arbitrary. What is decisive is that man sees science and work as external conditions for himself, he who is not caught in the gears of conditions, which modifies without modifying itself nor being modified. Dreamer or rebel, he only knows the world of the condition; but he places himself outside of the world [230] that he lives in and judges it<sup>52</sup>. His judgment is still outside of him and falls back into the world that he doesn't surpass, because he wants or would want, him too, to modify it, but according to his taste. He thinks according to the category of the condition and spends his life in work, science, organization. The reprises help him only to establish himself, in addition, as an individuality. But this individuality is only historic, and the man who wants to act as himself is not free here for himself: he gives meaning to his work, but he only uses this meaning to justify acts that need it only from the point of view of preceding categories; an undertaking that always succeeds, because he can always give up on this ornament: concerning himself with historical or natural science is sufficient to show him that, at this stage, there are always ideas, but that these ideas don't count in the long run<sup>53</sup>.

Wanting to analyze the reprises in detail would be as superfluous as it would be difficult — superfluous because the sociologist historian sees to this work, difficult because all combinations are possible. They pass through the category of *God*, giving progressive theology, explaining and understanding progress as continuous revelation of the divine plan aiming at the education of humankind, or, using secondly that of the *self*, the theologies of man's unhappiness in an atheist and heartless world, etc...; they pass through the *self* and give the moralities of abnegation or of amoral and anti-moralist enjoyment; they use the category of the *object* in order to interpret the man of science as an intelligence soaring freely above the contradictions where commonplace people struggle. They can set out from what there is of negative in these reprises, turn away from a world without God, without morality, without a living intelligence towards more archaic attitudes that they "reanimate" in order

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<sup>52</sup> The rebel must not be confused with the revolutionary, who, himself, is precisely not rebellious. His attitude (consciously) presupposes the category of the condition, which means that it falls under another category.

<sup>53</sup> All political romanticism, whether it be that of a Ruskin or of a de Maistre, that of a K. L. von Haller or that of surrealism, falls under this reprise (under which, as in the last example, later categories will be able to be reprised).

to create the scientific myth, the tradition “renewed and understood in its scientific meaning”, the scientific *certainty* of a last and sole decisive factor such as race or sexuality. Or instead of reprising certainty, they can use the category of *discussion* which leads in this case to logistics, the modern form of the logic of non-contradiction, separated, by the always dominant condition, from the working community and its tradition, purely formal and of the scientific type, that is, excluding all meaning and requiring only technical utility, but reflected by the reprise and wanting to justify this exclusion by the so-called necessity of discourse’s formalization: more demanding in this way than the pure category, which recognizes the historicity of language and work.

These are only several examples, less than that, allusions to possible examples. The complete analysis would be nothing less [231] than the analysis of the average conscience of our times, average precisely in the sense of this category, average as the mean effect of isolatable factors to the extent required, never completely isolated.

For what characterizes this conscience and this language is that everything is acceptable, unless it is in contradiction with science. Yet, the attitude of the condition in itself, we repeat, is mute, if we bind understanding to language, as is necessary when philosophy is for-itself, when — which comes to the same thing — meaning, for it, is the (or: a) *transcendental* that guides it. For he who carries out the sacrifice of the self, science alone speaks; but its language doesn’t understand, it *serves*; the individual chats, and it is unfortunate, for the serious man, that the individual take his chatter seriously from time to time, but this doesn’t surprise him: he is individual because he acts in a non-scientific way. He knows — although he complains about it sometimes — that the only thing that counts is the progress of social labor through science: he only counts himself insofar as he sees himself as useful, and if what he calls his interests is elsewhere, he himself characterizes them as something apart, without consequence. Retaining this is essential, in order to not be tricked by the reprises’ verbiage and in order not to take, for a surpassing of the category, what is only the romantic misuse of the work’s results by the egotism of feeling, which doesn’t want to conquer the world of the condition, but to take advantage of it in order to give itself a dirt-cheap importance through protest, which doesn’t dare confront it, but which judges it, because it is itself incapable of the seriousness and of the immense and incessant effort of the man who has made a natural condition of himself in order to struggle with nature.

## CHAPTER X THE CONSCIENCE

**The man who is unable to surrender himself to the progress of scientific work and who, does not settle either for a language which he knows is surpassed by science, grasps himself as a *conscience*.**

1. *The difference between the conscience, the self, God, and the condition. — The I and the self. — Possibility and being, presence and time. — The world and freedom. — Knowledge and the absolute cause.* — The man in the attitude of the *conscience* must not be confused with the *self* nor with the *believer*. Like them, he opposes himself to the world. But this expression is ambiguous: them, they find themselves in a determined world, whether that determination is accessible to them or not, whereas he finds himself in a world that is never determined, because it is always on the path of determination and of transformation. The conscious man then opposes himself to a world, but neither man nor the world are posited once and for all, they continually shape and modify themselves by positing themselves and opposing each other. Man doesn't have the means — to be precise: he spurns all means — of interpreting himself as a being, a creature, a desire, for all determination has shown itself to be provisional, that is, as undetermined: only he remains, for whom the undetermined determinations follow one another. He is the void, always filled without ever being full, the point that everything relates back to, but which does not make a part of this whole, he to whom everything appears and who never himself appears. He is the only one *to be*, since all things are this or that; but not being this or that, he is, at the level of the things spoken about, nothingness. He is not what science or faith or philosophy speaks about; he is what speaks in all languages. Nothing that he grasps is him, he is — not even what grasps, for there would still be the appearance of a determined and of a determination, of a factor and function — he is the act of *grasping*. What is only is as it is grasped, *only* is because it is for consciousness.

All that is thus is on the same plane, the one where what is appears. And there are no exceptions: what the individual sees as himself possesses no particular dignity through the fact that it seems to be present in the most direct fashion. Science is right when it says that

analysis doesn't stop: if I speak about myself, I grasp myself like I grasp the tree, with the help of always provisional determinations, grounded by a theory that can always fail. The *I* who [234] speaks is not the *self* that language speaks of, and can never become that, otherwise it would once again become an object of science, and I would no longer be *I*, but this or that, not the speaking, but what is spoken about. All that man can say of himself in the attitude of the conscience is: *I am*, an expression that doesn't make sense for science, because science doesn't know being other than under the form of elucidated possibility, as what could and can be other and otherwise and not at all be, — an expression that doesn't make sense for man either; for making sense, no matter which way it is taken, is relating back to something else. "I am" is prior to all meaning; but without this "I am" there is no meaning at all.

Nothing forces man to enter this attitude. If he does enter, it is because he does not *want* to be content with the idea of progress, because he doesn't *want* to live in reprises that he must see as stripped of scientific value, to live in the provisional: man *can* refuse to do it, not only by stopping before the transition to science (which doesn't interest us here), but also after having accepted and made it.

For the man of the condition, there is only the provisional: which signifies for the new attitude that science is not all there is. But precisely because it is no longer everything, science at present is true, and the word true is taken in an absolute sense from the moment that the condition is surpassed. What the science of the condition called true was true for it only provisionally: for the conscience, the language of science is absolutely true, since it flows from the "I am" and works back up to it. Any thesis can be false; language cannot. Being false signified that a theory needed modification before being able to serve as a measure; the conscience responds that, if each standard can be changed, *the* standard as such cannot: it would be wanting to measure without a measurement. The man of science has neither the need nor the possibility of that reflection; it is born here as the act of a man who persists as undetermined and undeterminable facing determinations, as definitive facing the provisional or, to speak like him, as a conscience before content, as an absolute facing the conditioned, in sum: as an absolute condition.

No expression could express more strongly than that what separates this attitude from science's and what is paradoxical about it from science's point of view: an absolute condition is the condition of possibility, not of this possibility or of that other, but of possibility *itself*. It is, because of this, senseless for science, and makes sense only for the man who wants *to be*, more precisely: who wants to assert himself as *being* (once again, not to assert himself as this or that thing that is). Science doesn't think that it is for someone or for something (which is one and the same thing in its opinion); everything is for it and is merely to the

extent that it is for science. The man that affirms that science is for him and only through him and that nonetheless proves science right and doesn't seek to explain science through categories that he reprises only for the occasion, this man is not incompatible with science: for science, he, on the other hand, says nothing.

In this respect, the science of the condition is right, and the conscience proves [235] it right, since it doesn't want to say anything about itself at the level of science. Man has made the rounds of science, or has turned science around: none of science's statements is certain nor claims to be; but for the conscience, there is an ultimate foundation, namely that it has some content, whether it be true or false for science: that there be a structured possibility as science teaches, this *is*, for the being of possibility is the conscience, which comes down to nothing else.

This is not a piece of information about man; it is just the opposite. He is consciousness, but of something that is not consciousness. He *is*, but he grasps himself completely only as a realized or realizable possibility. He knows, but all that he knows can be true or false. He is an absolute condition, but for infinitely inter-dependent conditions. He has learned nothing about himself; all the information relates to science. But therefore he has not sought to obtain any about himself: precisely because he wants to withdraw from science and the condition. Yet, he knows that he cannot manage to do so by negating the condition, by trying to deprive it of its due. If he *is*, it is because science is not everything, because man has goals that matter to him more than science does, by comparison to which, for as serious as it is, science is but a game. There is progress, there is the struggle with nature, improvement through education, but, there is, and there is in truth, the man who is behind everything and who is first and foremost, who is looking for himself in everything, even though he knows that he will never find himself there, who scours everything in order to reject it because it is not him, who wants to realize himself and who can't forget that any realization falls in the realm of the condition. He has a goal, but this goal is not in the world of the condition: a goal never to be reached, because endlessly reached, which would be called *being* in science's language if it could appear there, and which is called *freedom* in the language of the conscious man<sup>54</sup>.

The condition is discourse for this man. Science is the attitude of the man who speaks (to not stop at the man who works in silence and has succeeded in forgetting himself), who speaks *because* language is invisible to him in the same way as the fact that it is him who

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Kant, *The Critic of Pure Reason*, The Canon of Pure Reason. We will see that the following analysis is guided by the Fichtean interpretation of Kant's philosophy, an interpretation whose narrowness constitutes an advantage here.



speaks; he rejects everything unformulated or at least believes himself capable of rejecting it. The result of this is that he can discover neither speaking nor the absolute condition, the sole *cause*: himself. He says: not yet, and he thinks that he has eliminated an accidental factor. But his “not yet” will never lead to a “now”: in the series of conditions, there is neither beginning nor end, and were there one or the other, would it not be a catastrophe for him? What would he still have, if he held everything and no longer had anything to acquire, if he knew all the factors, if he were the master of nature? He can be ignorant about it, and here is his force, but here is also what the conscience sees and does not want to lose sight of. All is discourse and is only discourse; but this *all* is a silence that speaks merely to reprise all words in itself: Freedom is at the bottom [236] of everything that is and all that is merely is for freedom, for the conscience. Language is not then a *thing* in the world; it is *speaking*, which conditions the world and, freely, conditions itself in the world.

But the condition, even if surpassed, is not error. Man’s goal is not the individual’s, as the *I* is not the me. What I know about myself, about life, about the world, about my desires, I know through science, which can be more or less perfect, but which always moves in conditions. Whether I desire this is something I don’t know with any more certainty than I know if X desires that. Maybe I am sick or have read the wrong books or am victim to suggestion; the desire would not come from me, but from outside. Will I go and see a doctor, a psychologist, a sociologist then? I will transform my desire, but the new desire will not be mine either, since it has been formed by the intervention of these specialists. Never will I know what I am as *I* know (or: knows). Every determination of discourse is foreign to the *I* that persists in speech. As a concrete individual, I am given to myself, and it is as a concrete individual that I must re-ascend to this *I* that I am given to by being given to myself; it is in discourse that I must find the path towards speech, it is as conditioned that I must turn back to the absolute condition, to the *cause*: science and its given must be surpassed, they must be understood then in relation to my being, and it is only by passing through discourse that I will arrive at the origin of speech.

What fills the concrete individual is what he encounters in the world. With more or less precision, according to its degree of evolution, science shows him this world as organized by regular interdependencies; in its finished form, finished at least in principle, science teaches him that everything is measurable. It digs no deeper; which is to say that it neglects a fact: that all is measurable only for me who measures. This fact, it has the right to overlook, but it becomes essential when it comes to me. Am I a being that measures? Certainly, and the existence of science proves it. But am I merely this? No more than I am discourse: everything is measurable except the act of measuring, as everything enters discourse, except

speaking. Seen from science, there is only the given, and the self that measures is but a given that must itself be measured and modified; but as soon as I say that *I am*, another plane is discovered, not for science, but for the self that I am, a plane that shows no determination, no knowledge — and which can't show any, since it is not a question of possibility, but of being, not of something that is and that is understood insofar as it could not exist, but of an absolute being, of an unconditioned condition. All that I know of myself — if I can call this knowing — is that I am; but this empty knowledge, this speaking that formulates no assertion besides that of its own being is of another dignity than all the wealth of the science that it transcends: it doesn't know modification. This is the profound reason why it isn't understandable, and why it knows that it isn't. It is, but it appears only in its acts which are not this knowledge, and which, nonetheless, [237] all refer back to it. It is not science, but it grounds science and guides it, ready to take science back into itself.

Indeed, the self who sees itself in a world, modified and modifiable, finds itself before a fact that it is unable to explain: the reality of the functions that regulate the change. Nothing is definitive, true, in the form of these functions; nevertheless, science is based on a postulate (that it neither sees nor states): that finding a functional interdependence is always possible. Asking the question about this non-modifiable possibility would be a misinterpretation for science, since for science possibility is essentially possible modification. But it is a meaningful question for me; moreover it is decisive. If I find myself always determined by the relations that science establishes, I can, I must ask what right does science have, once I have established the absolute foundation in the “I am”: the functions that determine the self in the world are *constituted* then by the consciousness that is surer than the world and all that it contains, and I can say how it happens that I find myself determined. Recognizing that the speaking self (*I*) is not the same as the self of whom I speak (*me*) is enough.

However, *I* and *me* are not separated: otherwise one would return to the category of God. Me, I am determined by my senses, my functions, my desires, I am in a world of always progressing determination; but the world is completely determinable (or, which is the same thing, is a *unified* world) only because it is for my *unified* consciousness: the world is one and determines me, because I am one and determine it. It is why I can understand science, raise myself above it — and limit its claims on me.

Function, condition, modification, all of these fundamental concepts relate back to time. Science predicts, and this is the essential for science. *I*, *I am*. In science's language this signifies: I am always present, and am only *present*, — which is a misinterpretation for science, for what always is is not present for science, but what has been and will be. Yet, this is not a misinterpretation for me: at this level that transcends science, that signifies that the

conscience in its originality is prior to time, but becomes concrete in time. What I know about myself, I know through temporal determinations helped along by the idea of unity — multiple determinations detach themselves from and join together in the language of science that, in its progress, constitutes its object according to its requirements. But alongside this knowledge that constitutes me as I am given, there is the knowledge of a being that constitutes the world as it is for science and constitutes science — one is inconceivable without the other —: *I* constitute any given by submitting it to the determinations that *I* provide.

This seems paradoxical. But it is not surprising that I cannot speak about it adequately. Discourse is always caught in determinations, and any expression takes place at the level of becoming and possibility, not at that of the present, of being and of reality. “I” — I am tempted to say “my I”, but “I” transcends precisely the concrete “my”, science’s “self” — find “myself” — and I would perhaps be better off saying: finds itself — only in destruction, with a view of the constituent, of the knowledge [238] constituted, in search of the real which, before the necessary and the possible, *actually* provides every determination and which then, because pure fact, could be different for the “I” that transcends it, whereas it is the incomprehensible absolute and is only to be remarked upon by the science that finds itself constituted (conditioned without the possibility of modification) by it. Whether I speak with the help of these fundamental determinations, whether the given is given to me as modifiable, that is, in time, is a reality that I understand as a possibility if I compare it to the idea of the absolute reality of the transcendent “I”, but as a possibility without a counter-possibility for me, as long as I want to know, since the self, science’s subject, constitutes itself only in determinations of time.

The conscience thus possesses a knowledge that is not that of science. Man, because he can withdraw himself from science, can understand it as one of his own possibilities. It is not that he can create or even imagine a truly different science: the reality of the fundamental determinations is the condition of possibility of the given science, because the given is merely given in these forms. Non-ordered material is never seen and is merely an idea-limit in the process of analysis: *I* am affected by something that cannot be positively thought, for what is thought always is in forms that make a determined thing in time of this “something”. What these forms are, I can learn by analyzing science, by turning myself not towards what it constitutes, but towards the procedure by which it constitutes, guided by the idea that it’s the “I” that gives form to what affects it. But this knowledge is necessarily regressive: scientific, it understands reality as possibility; turned towards the transcendent and not wanting to be science, it understands this possibility as the possibility of modification, so as unmodifiable itself. The theory of pure consciousness is thus negative from science’s point of view. If *I* am affected in the determinations of time, these determinations don’t determine the “I”

but only its experience. “I” *am* not as defined by experience. In other words, since experience bears upon the world and since science in its struggle with nature is busy with the modifiable, *I am not of* this world, even though I always find myself *in* the world, always naturally conditioned when I want to know myself.

But this knowledge is no longer negative when it is about this “I” for *I* itself and not for science. Its negativity appears then as the positivity of my freedom. Science says nothing about me as I *am*: it doesn’t succeed in reducing man as he is for himself to the determined being that he is for it. It is not that it is wrong in determining man as it determines each thing; its error is believing that man is only what it can determine — or rather that error, the one of the man who takes science for an absolute instead of understanding it as one of his own activities.

I *am* by doing science. *Am* I less by wanting to be me? *Am* I less in the heart’s sentiment? Is there no other thought than that of science? And is not the approach that I have just used [239] proof of such a thought’s existence? A thought that provides me no particular knowledge, it’s true. But it is not about any particular knowledge: have I not passed from the conditioned condition to the absolutely conditioning condition, to the *cause*? I want to act, doesn’t this word have a meaning for me, even though I find no actions in the world, but only conditioned and explainable acts? The final cause is never encountered in experience. But does it claim to be, as defined by the world and by science? Would it not negate itself by claiming to be? I of course don’t enlarge the scope of my knowledge when I speak of freedom, that is, of action before time, of the creation of myself through decision. But outside of the science of conditioned conditions, don’t I become myself for myself?

I indeed manage to, but only by retaining the fact that it is a matter of being, not of appearing. I know that I determine myself; I can’t know how I determine myself, because the *how* replaces me in the condition. After having been a decision and free, in my action I falls under science’s domain. Deciding, I am merely for myself, outside of temporal conditions that constitute nature; that I can’t even speak of this being in positive terms, this, far from being an objection, only confirms my position: discourse belongs to the man living in the world, and when I speak it is always the self who expresses itself in time, it is the self’s expressions that I must use. But the inadequacy of the expression shows only that the *self* is not everything: the thought that cannot be formulated, but which towers over all formulation, is added and opposes itself to the self’s discourse. And thus, the decision, capable of being formulated in the world, can be thought as *caused* by the law of the *I* that is freedom.

It *can* be thought under freedom’s law — a new paradox and a double paradox. For what is this possibility, what is the law of freedom? I can make a decision; therefore, I can

just as well not make a decision; in other words, I can see myself as I am in nature, letting myself go in the direction that these empirical conditions push me, and that I, a man of science, find in my character, — and I can separate myself from these data, I can freely decide. But this decision transcends the act in which it becomes visible. From there the paradox: the decision is free, but it appears only in the act that isn't. As soon as there is an act, it is only possible that, behind this act, there be a decision; me, to the extent that I know myself, I can know nothing of the decision. Moreover, in time, when I acted (in the past), my act has not been free: can I not always analyze it? And nonetheless, this analytical science rests on the *possibility* — the last possibility that I cannot lose — of withdrawing myself from the concrete condition, of making the decision to decide in a timeless *now*, of making the decision to be.

Yet, the possibility is no longer enough for me: I want to grasp that decision. It is necessary then that I give myself the law of my freedom, so that I grasp freedom as the unconditioned causality through which I determine myself. To what end? To be as an *I*.

Only one thing matters then, making a decision according to a law that regulates intentions, not acts. The act, situated in nature, does not carry the trace of its origin: not what I decide, but why [240] I decide on it, this is what matters. And if *I* must decide, the decision must be pure, not affected by the conditions of the *self*: *I* decide out of respect for freedom, in such a way that my intention leaves no room for explanation, that it has no goal outside of itself. The world gives me the question, *I* give the answer, and the intention aims at the creation of a reality that is that of the *I*, not of the self, which can be that of any man who keeps his being in consciousness. I will act so that the intention of my decision concerns the question only in itself and not in its relation to my individual character. Thus, it will be non-contradictory, whereas it would inevitably be contradictory if it relied on concrete individuality, caught in need and desire. It will make me choose among principles of possible conduct the one that corresponds to the idea of a free cause, to causation by man as pure conscience, aiming for a world in which the harmony of the conscience with itself alone is seen as a goal. There is but one single question, expressible in different forms, but unique as a question about freedom: is my intention such that it can be that of the conscience in any concrete individual, is it absolutely communicable, does it grasp men not as natural and modifiable objects, but as *beings* who then can be only final ends?

Once more, none of this is understandable at the level of nature and of science, where I don't know, and don't know absolutely what expressions like "free and non-apparent cause" or "final end" can mean. But the same terms have a precise meaning in the transcendent thought of the *I*. Moreover, I can't *think* of myself other than as will-freedom, and freely willing, it is not being satisfied *knowing* the leanings of my nature, it's willing according to

that law that, without being determined, determines the *I* by the thought alone of the *I*. The idea of the determination of the will through itself surpasses science (which is why it doesn't enter into conflict with science); and the *presence* of that determination gives it a completely different dignity than any idea bearing on nature has: the idea opposes reality, which is necessary for the possible to be possible, to possibility. In the idea, the reduction of the possible to being is realized, or rather, since the word "realize" belongs to science, in the idea the "I am" reveals itself as the source and the origin of all that is. In nature, I live as an individual, I never am *I*; I *establish* that my action, which had been freely decided, is determined: but the *establishing of that observation* belongs to the self that doesn't exit the condition, whereas at the level of pure *knowing*, the nature of science and the science of nature are merely determinations that *I* has opposed itself to in order to act freely on an exterior that it needs so that it not only be, but that it be for itself: how would *I* grasp itself as *I* if it weren't me? Nothing *is*, other than that act in which being and liberty merge; any sensible appearance, any natural determination stems from this absolute act, revealed in the absolute knowing of absolute reality which is the *I* determining itself as *I* by opposing itself to the non-*I* so that the *I* is for itself through the negation of the negation of freedom, a negation without which the *I* would be free, but would know itself neither as *I* nor as free.

[241] The pure conscience is thus, for itself, determination and knowledge of the determination, and it is both inseparably. Free determination alone gets me to leave conditioned knowledge; only the reflection about the determining act as a transcendent possibility gets me to see the absolute that I am as *I*, but which I don't know in the condition. "I am", that phrase expresses both the act through which I posit myself and the absolute knowledge of this act — I posit myself, to employ the paradoxical term, before time; an absolute condition starting from science, both absolute end and free cause, starting from the free determination, I am in myself an absolute act, so absolute that I, a concrete and conditioned individual, can see that act only with the help of the condition that I must make disappear in the act. My knowledge is absolute merely because it is empty. But for as empty as it is, it is, for me, in my concrete and always conditioned existence, the means of freeing myself from the condition. If for the science of the condition, which is my only science in my entire life, I am nothing other than a cog in the immense machine of the natural world, less than that, an individual case for the statistics of historians to come, how would I not admit that willingly, since I know absolutely that in the absolute I *am* and that science with all that it speaks of exists only because I *am* in an absolute act? Being for myself, I have what the world can receive only from me: value and dignity. The man who is a being in the world can forget that, he can see science as the subject for which he is. But he can, if he determines himself, take back the world, with the man that it imprisons, in the act of absolute knowing through

which *I* posits *me* in order to know itself as *I*, as *act*, as *knowing*. All that science says about the conditions is merely an incomprehensible language as long as I have not anchored these conditions in the cause that I am, as long as I have not brought them back to the being in act, the act in being that posits temporality with its determination for being for itself, which has negated its natural existence in order to negate its self-negation. The emptiness of the “I am” is the emptiness of freedom by being, man’s absolute value, the understanding and the end of the transcended condition in the pure thought that is not mine or yours, but *I* who acts because it has acted before any time.

2. *Reflection as access to the absolute.* — It seems, according to this explanation, that the conscience is the product of a theoretical reflection of subjectivity on the condition, of a reflection, so to speak, exacerbated and pushed to the limit. It would then be a pure construction, coherent of course, perhaps the only one capable of making the science of the condition understood in its essential difference with the logic of *discussion* and the science of the *object*, the only one fit to prevent the misunderstandings and the inevitable contradictions when one posits science = science, object = object without considering the categorical difference that hides the identity of terms — a construction erected however for the needs of a non-contradictory theory of the condition and that the concepts of the *I* and of the act would be added to as some ornaments in the tradition’s taste, either of the search for happiness, or of faith: the new category would merely be the awareness of that [242] of the condition, which would thus come to find a language for itself and which would understand itself. Yet, if this is effectively the conscience’s role (every category “becomes aware” of the one that precedes it), recalling that man can keep himself in the attitude of the condition, that he often does and that he doesn’t leave it except by surpassing it other than in theory, is sufficient to show the inadequacies of this way of seeing: the condition’s scientific theory requires no “awareness” and is self-sufficient. However, appearance persists, and this fact must be understood, since it is based in the character of the conscience that is (and that knows itself to be) reflection.

The conscience is born in science’s world: it is the abandoning of man to his world that is the point from which the conscience starts. The conscience is not satisfied with remedies that offer remedies for the “historic” man’s boredom. It knows and it recognizes both science’s and labor’s seriousness and doesn’t tolerate the distraction of sentiment and desire that literature offers it “while waiting for better”. It respects the effort and the results of man’s struggle with nature, as it admits, and would even require were it necessary, man’s education through the destruction of biases. It deals with the world, and it is in this world that the conscience asserts itself against the world. The idea of God and the condensing of

every human being in the faith of the heart still count for the conscience in the negative sense that they count for the man of the condition, and like him, the conscience knows that there is nothing for it outside of the condition, since it finds the given only in the condition: man's language is discourse that goes from one to the other indefinitely and never *is* because it is not creative. Man *can* fall silent in faith or in work; more precisely, his language *can* become a vehicle of sentiment or a tool, and it no longer then claims to reveal a truth. Man stops; he is satisfied. He who is not satisfied through the condition because he doesn't *want* to be, who neither *wants* to sacrifice all of discourse to sentiment and to faith, nor to lose himself entirely in work and in his science, who therefore neither wants then to betray sentiment out of a love for science nor science for sentiment, this man has no more than one path laid out before him, that of the scientific critique of science<sup>55</sup>.

His attitude constitutes itself at the theoretical level then, because the danger comes from theory: he knows that outside of the condition's discourse there is only silence, and nonetheless he can't access it, for he wants to justify *both* faith *and* work so as to be able to lose himself *both* in sentiment *and* in work with a "clear conscience". An incomprehensible and even absurd desire in the opinion of the believer and the worker, a superfluous undertaking according to the judgment of the man of science and the methodologist, he proves thereby that it is not about a theoretical interest: this critique is not made out of the love of [243] science, in which case it would need to complete, correct, or establish it on more solid grounds. Reflection can have such results, but its goal is different: its goal is to give science to the man who loses himself by looking, and by looking exclusively for mastery over nature. It is not that he is wrong in pursuing this struggle; on the contrary, in nature it is the struggle that raises man above nature; for he has a *goal*, and nature knows no goals; even where it seems to pursue some, the analysis of the conditions shows that it is the observer who provides the idea of it. But it must not be forgotten that discourse, which is the human means of struggle for and in progress, is *my* discourse, that the goal is *my* goal, and that all science is only meaningful for me, whatever be its signification in itself, if it allows me to be a modifying subject, and not only a modified object. Science is right to ask the question of man and to ask it in its manner, that is, seeking man's place in the world. What it teaches must not be forgotten and cannot be validly rejected. But by saying: must not, and: validly, I have already surpassed (not neglected or misrepresented) science. Searching for how this surpassing act is possible despite the determination of man for science, despite his life in the world of the

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<sup>55</sup> We are not speaking of those who, comfortably installed in the condition, seek to obtain supplementary advantages with the help of deliberately employed reprises: using the traditional sentiment of others, they treat the essential of their world, work, as inferior, but show their veritable position through their life, always being ready to sacrifice "sacred interests" to what they had just qualified as base.



condition is the concrete expression of the attitude of the conscience. What looks like theoretical reflection is the combat between the conscience and the theory of the condition which the conscience must overcome on the condition's own turf. Whether I am free, whether — and this is merely another way to express it — I claim my acts as my own the moment I decide, whether the only use I have of the condition is to excuse the past acts that I disapprove of (disapproval through which I recognize them, incidentally, still as my own), this *is*. The difficulty is that this *initial fact* doesn't enter science and that I find myself thus split, as he who does science, because he has decided to be so, and as he who is the object of science.

The conscience expresses itself necessarily then as reflection and critique, but it is not essentially so. It recognizes the attitude and the category of the condition, but it consciously surpasses them. It wants to justify itself before itself, because it recognizes its handiwork in the condition's science. The “now” of its “I am” does not compare itself to the “still” and “not yet” of progress, nor to that “always” of science that means “at any moment”. The conscience must bring back these determinations, which alone provide it with content, to this initial fact that is empty, it must reconcile its exterior with its interior, the determined, as that which it knows as itself, with the determinant that it is aware of being. It wants to be sheltered from its own objections.

Thus philosophy as critique is necessary for the man who, without it, would forget himself or surrender himself to dreams; but philosophy is not man's goal, it is only required so that he can reach this goal: man must know that he is not only a being in the world, a particular animal. But this knowledge is nothing if it transforms itself into a thesis, if it forgets its origin and presents itself as another science of another object, super-natural but in the world. Philosophy is not the goal, it has a goal, and this goal is not speaking about freedom, but steering man to determine [244] himself as free. Man is the being who surpasses the world of the *condition* — there is no other world — to enter into a world that now has a *meaning*: it is the realm of human decision, of the confrontation between freedom and conditional necessity.

The reflection is thus an integral part of the attitude and is always found there. Even there where the theory of science is not specifically present in the conscience, man opposes himself, as *responsible*, to the world of determination, and it is not by chance that the word conscience applies both to the conscious man and to the conscientious man. The world is what it is, neither good, nor bad, determined in its course by its conditions; man makes decisions according to his conscience, he does what he has to, he wants to remain himself, not in the empirical sense — there, he is aware of having a constitution that would push him precisely there where he doesn't want to go, — but as a *reasonable* being. But *reasonable*

doesn't, for him, signify being in contact with a reason that transcends the world in the world; it is not, either, the research of happiness as a natural good, since the very terms good and natural no longer go together; it is acting according to principles that are principles of freedom, principles that, far from being the products of psychological condition, express nothing but the mere agreement of the conscience with itself. Man is not responsible for the results of his acts in the world. If man were to have all of science at his disposal — and such is not his condition —, if he could foresee all the consequences of his action, the question would remain the same: what is the principle according to which he, a free agent before his human conscience, a conditioned agent according to science, must do this rather than that? And the answer would also be the same: choose the principle that doesn't take conditions into consideration, but only the agreement of the conscience with itself. I can't want to take ownership of something through theft, for through the principle of theft I negate the principle of property that nonetheless is my principle, since I want to take ownership of the stolen object. This doesn't prevent me from stealing, far from it. But by stealing, I again prove my freedom, since it is in freedom that I renounce it; it is as a reasonable being that I behave as a natural being. Whatever reason I give for my act — just by the giving of reasons, I announce that there is a law and a reason: the explanation doesn't claim that I acted well — it is intended to explain that the conditions have kept me from deciding, that the action has not been my own. Through free reflection, I renounce freedom.

For the man who lives in this attitude, the science of society, whether it presents itself as history or as an analysis of social factors, is then without value to the extent that he himself is in question, and, at the same time, constitutes a vital reflection insofar as it explains the behavior of others, of lots of others, who, in his view, have no principles and who take as a principles what is only the expression of their natural desire for power. But the science of society can't guide him, since it speaks of what is, maybe of what will be, never of what must be, that is, of the community of free men, free not in the political or economic sense, but in the moral sense, a community where each [245] in all his acts is guided only by the respect of the "humanity" in himself and in every other man. Science shows man that such a community doesn't exist: were he free, man would not be understandable for science. He is subject to the condition, and the struggle against nature is the struggle with himself in himself, where he always find nature, and with it, *evil*. The *self* and the *I* are forever opposite each other, man and humanity will never completely improve: the idea of an absolutely perfect man indicates only an infinitely distant and invisible ideal for the actual man; as perfect he would be a being above all determination and as such unknowable for himself. The moral man strives towards perfection, but he keeps colliding with his interior condition; the good

shows itself to him as an ought; were there perfection, there would be nothing left for him to do, and a world of truly virtuous men would no longer have any goal. The life of the man of the conscience is in that tension between the knowledge of the conditioned and knowing of the absolute; it gives him the opportunity to obey the law of freedom that he knows is his own in his reality that he knows as a conditioned condition, — between the reflection of the *self* in the *I* and of the *I* in the *self*.

Therefore he is busy with himself, not the others. The form of the community that he lives in is of no importance for him, only if it doesn't compel him to act against his conscience. The restriction is of great weight, but of little scope. For the idea of a political revolution is in itself immoral: the human community is constituted by the empirical law of the State, and it would be contradictory to speak of a law that regulates disobedience to the law in legitimizing revolt. For the moral man, the question of the legality of the established power can't be asked, since legality exists only inside the State. It is true that civil law is subject to examination, because it must correspond to moral law so that it makes the coexistence of the freedom of each with that of every other possible. But the simple citizen merely has the right to criticize; he can, he must try to enlighten the legal sovereign, but if this sovereign orders him to silence himself, he must obey. Even an immoral law doesn't give him the right to revolt: he would just oppose his own immoral act to another's, and in order to correct a wrong, he would commit another. Passively refusing his obedience and accepting to suffer the consequence is all he has left. Politics is not for him, it is for those whom the sovereign put in charge. Him, he will do his duty in his place, in the condition that is his own. It is his right and — at least if teaching the youth is his vocation — his duty of reflecting on the most perfect constitutional form, on the most appropriate laws for morality, but wanting to institute them through violent action would be a moral crime, since even passive disobedience is allowed only facing an order that would put his duty as a man in conflict with his duty as citizen.

The moral man's life is therefore private life. Its spiritual content consists in the search for duty — in the case where public law does not suffice. In other words, since this law regulates all relations between men who don't know each other, the moral conscience deals only with its near and dear and with itself. And once again, [246] traditional morality shows so clearly what is owed to family and to close friends that duties take shape on their own. Essentially, the conscience turns then towards itself: it is necessary to act out of respect for moral law, because it is only in this action that man can hope to be himself. Interior determinations, passions, since it is impossible to remove them, must be subjugated: they are the natural conditions of action in the world, but precisely because they are necessary,

they remain outside of morality and must not enter into the decision. Is there anything more dangerous for the moral being than the noble feelings that inspire so-called good actions? If it's them that have pushed man, they have stripped action of all value and they have made a simple reaction of natural and animal selfishness out of it. Let him surrender to noble feelings, and man loses that *dignity* that he preserves only by acting in his freedom, according to reason, through reason.

As for the rest, it is of little matter to him of what happens to the rest of the world, to the others, to himself. The desire for happiness is rooted in his nature, the wrongdoer's punishment, the virtuous person's reward, the good intention's outcome seem, to him, just and morally desirable. But should he notice that none of this realizes itself in nature, this would not change his attitude. It is himself that he seeks; it is the dignity that he knows himself capable of as a free and reasonable being according to his own law that he respects. Nothing keeps him from hoping that nature has a moral sense, that the condition serves freedom, for he is on ground where the condition no longer rules and where, consequently, there is no knowledge that can confirm or refute his hope. Guarding this hope is even moral, because, without it, his animal nature would have no motivation to put at reason's disposal and would rise up in the hopelessness of frustration. But he better be good and careful not to base his action on belief in this trans-natural sense! It would be the most dreadful misinterpretation; for he can hope, because there is freedom and reason in morality; but freedom, reason and morality would vanish if the belief in a finality of the world became selfish principle of behavior: hope cannot ground morality; it must be grounded on morality. It is the law that legitimizes the sentiment and the faith in the world having a sense: the law, being the reasonable source of all legitimacy, recognizes no judge above itself.

The world is thus the field of man's struggle with himself, and is so without a theoretical construction,gnoseological difficulties, the logical consequences of a philosophical position requiring it. A world exists, and this is the decisive fact for the conscience that reflects the world in itself to be able to reflect itself in it: reflection, to repeat, is the necessary expression of this attitude. But the attitude requires reflection without reflection producing nor being able to produce the attitude. No one has ever been able to give a moral conscience to a person who lacks one (and wants to): any work limits itself here to a more advanced elaboration of the concept of duty for (and through) the person to whom the idea of reasonable freedom in the condition is already present. Polus can be refuted by Socrates, but [247] the refutation counts only for certain witnesses of the exchange, and doesn't convince Polus

himself<sup>56</sup>. But where the attitude is present, it will shape all of life through reflection, a reflection that will be able to lead to the pure category, but that can also stop halfway, without being less decisive for man in his life. No objection of any science, whether that of the *object*, of the *self*, of *God*, of the *condition* or any other, will be heard, and if the individual doesn't succeed in understanding the world — which means in the case at hand: seeing it as the field of his free and reasonable action —, he would rather take refuge in the agnosticism than make his knowing subordinate to the knowledge of nature. Whether it concerns God or Nature, he will accept no idea about it that makes him something other than a conscience seeking itself in order to realize itself.

3. *The poet as present freedom. — The destruction of the condition through irony. — The poet and his public. — The poet's failure.* — This realization of the conscience by itself is its initial appearance for itself, its *expression*. It expresses its freedom by negating its interior condition in the decision that respects only the moral law of the *I*-reason. But in this way it still depends on the condition: the opportunity to negate the condition in a free act must itself come from the condition. Man, in ordinary life, will not feel that he needs these opportunities, he does not seek them out; certain of his freedom, he has no need to feel it in act. But that reflection forms the essential for the individual, that past attitudes are present to his mind, that he sees the decision as the archetypal situation of a conscience that external law no longer guides, that moreover the everyday life that fills the empirical conscience of the ordinary man no longer interests him, with his work and his particular interests, and the individual finds the need to make the content of his empirical conscience out of freedom itself, to find a form of life where the conscience makes itself concrete in order to take itself apart, where it enjoys its freedom in the destruction of a construction that is *its* construction only because it destroys it.

It is only here that we discover the poet. Poetry, it's true, goes with, like art in general, all the attitudes. But in none of them does man *know* himself as a poet: the master of true discourse, the self, the believer, for example, can speak poetically, and do, but they don't declare themselves poets as men. They are thinkers or philosophers or believers, and the fact that they are at the same time poets seems accidental to them, a gift, a grace, a quality that one can or cannot have. We will see later that poetry is not exhausted by the interpretation

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Plato, *Gorgias*, in particular 480 e. It is clear that this fact doesn't worry Plato, who here places himself in the category of *discussion*; later, he will posit the metaphysical problem that will then be treated with the help of the *condition* and *God*, both considered from the *object* (for example in the myth of the *Republic*, X, and in the *Timaeus*).

of the conscience and that, a fundamental datum for philosophy, it has not stopped worrying philosophy. But it's here that poetry as man's expression (and only [248] in this sense) enters philosophy's horizon, at the instant then that it appears incapable of furnishing what, up to now, it — and it alone — seems (for the conscience) to have given to man, contents that are both, for him, concrete and scientifically false: consciousness, to the extent that it is not moral, makes itself poetic, *because* poetry can no longer provide contents. Poetry is creation, the poet is creator, poetry creates; but his creation doesn't enter into existence as independent; it creates an *image* that remains in the creator's hands, that has life merely through its relation to him, which he can revoke just as he evoked it. He knows that in the past, poetry has had another function, that its words have contained, with certainty, all the life of an era or of a community that knew no other language than that of poetry. He himself doesn't use poetry to that end. Poetry is much more important for him: he must be a poet in order to live what he knows to be his own ground.

Therefore it is not the poetic work that interests the conscience, but the poet's activity. Poetry has expressed all past human content, without knowing that it was the *I* that expressed itself in poetry; there, the *I* was not for itself, but saw itself in the grasp of and grasped in a being, a God, a substance that was not itself. Now that man knows himself as *I*, he no longer has anything to express; precisely because of this, poetry provides the means by which he *grasps* that he frees himself from the condition — by creating imaginary worlds and conditions that, because imaginary and known as imaginary, allow him to prove his liberty to himself<sup>57</sup>.

Therefore, the creation must not break away from its creator. Whether there is poetry belongs to the past, whether there are poets, this alone has importance. It's possible that in days of yore the poet has had a message, a role in the community, that he was the guardian of the tradition, the prophet announcing the tasks, the trials, the goals of the nation or of the group, that he made men understand their hearts and their feelings by projecting them into a more powerful existence than that of their own life. This is no longer his role. For man has passed through the condition, and science has enlightened him. He no longer believes in any tradition, he knows that every absolute outside of himself is explained as a product of conditions and turns back into a condition itself. He can admire archaic poetry in its naivety and because of its naivety; is it not the unconscious expression of the conscience that surpasses conditions by creating non-natural conditions? But because he admires it, it doesn't constitute a

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<sup>57</sup> This conception of the pure state is found in Fr. Schlegel (*Lucinde*, contributions to the *Anthenaeum*). The link with Fichte is obvious (and admitted). — What follows will show that it is not a matter here of a phenomenon linked to a single historic era; it would be easy to find this attitude in any poetry *playing* with its subject, from the *Batrachomyomachia* to *Virgile Travesti*.

possibility for him: he knows that this poetry got caught up in its own game, that its force is so great only because it didn't recognize its own force in the force of its works, that its creatures had become creators for it, the conditions projected by it, conditions of the projection. The conscience has grasped the condition; this poetry, for the conscience, is a [249] historic form that has had its time and that belongs to the past that it is the most precious witness of, since it is in that naivety that man appears to the consciousness of freedom as free in spite of himself. But if his poetic work lives and could not perish for as long as a conscience finds itself therein, naive poetry no longer lives, because naivety has disappeared — or, more precisely, for the concrete individual can hold on to his naivety, because is not a possibility for the conscience. It does not have this world that poetry believes expressing, it no longer possesses it, it no longer needs nor wants to possess the seriousness with which naive poetry imagines speaking of *true* greatness, of *true* virtue, of *true* beauty, of *true* vice: for the conscience, the only truth is the *I* in its freedom that withdraws from every condition, and the only seriousness is the game that knows it is a game.

The death of poetry is the birth of the poet: man makes himself poet to realize his freedom for himself, moreover, this is the only possibility left for him. Everyday life is the life in the condition, and if it is the field of moral decision, it is not the field where freedom appears. For the individual, who is the site of freedom, the world is an exterior that he suffers in his concrete existence and that, unless he has the fearsome luck of finding himself before a terrible empirical decision, provides him only with the boredom of a life without decisive events: he is essentially idle if he doesn't create to be able to destroy, if he doesn't commit himself to be able to uncommit himself. What he creates matters little then: whether his work is good or bad in the sense of historic poetry, plausible or not according to scientific conceptions, the conceptions of the working world, moral or immoral according to received opinions, none of this enters into consideration. A single thing matters for man: that this work be his own, that in it he knows himself as creator, creator not of a condition — he would have then simply worked, organized, thought —, but of a final conditioned of no consequence. He doesn't want to reflect himself in the world, he wants to reflect the world in himself, not even reflecting the world that is or that should be, for *the* world is nothing before freedom, but an order of possible worlds, and which are possible only as his own.

If he creates a character, it will be an imaginary character who will reveal itself as imaginary, either it is *impossible* from science's point of view, or it does not detach itself from its author who will call it back to himself by commenting on its function or by cutting it off from speaking and by responding himself in order to destroy the illusion that belongs to naive poetry, or by making a conscious poet of the character who tries unsuccessfully to reflect himself in an imaginary work, since the author of this author is looking only to see,

in him, the destructive freedom of the conditions of the work inasmuch as the work is outside of its creator. He will not provide an image that he would not immediately destroy; or he will avoid every image, to provide only a music of ideas that negates music through idea, idea through music. He evokes a state of mind in order to refute it through an act, an act in order to plunge it back into the condition. He will oppose misinterpretation or nonsense to all set meaning — and all stated and stateable meaning is set.

The poet's works are thus not poetic work. It is grounded in [250] irony, which claims to be this or that and which at the same time shows that this claim is not serious in its content, but only inasmuch as a claim: what the characters believe, the author does not, since he believes nothing, any belief being an abandoning of freedom, any non-negated sentiment a collapse into the condition, any commitment in the working, struggling, organizing world an abdication, any meaning, a supposed and destructible meaning. The creative man must appear in his poem, which would not be his creation if he didn't destroy the illusion of it. Yet, since he must not show up in it with another seriousness — he would have only made use of an artifice —, he will show that he doesn't have any convictions by showing that he has all of them — ironically.

Therefore his irony is not a process that he uses to address the initiated and to give him value with those that love being in on the secret. It is an educational method. A self-education, first off. For the author finds himself in the condition, he lives in a tradition that determines his interests, his occupations, his problems; there are sentiments that push him towards this or that human being, towards this or that thing. Irony doesn't rid him of the condition, for he is what he is, and no amount of irony will make him enjoy music if he doesn't have an ear; but it frees him from it as a conscience. Alongside his reality, he will see others as so many possibilities, even if they don't constitute possibilities for him. At the same time as he is stirred by a woman or by the sunset's beauty, he will tell himself that the woman will be ugly in thirty years and that the sun will come back around tomorrow morning<sup>58</sup> — not with the conviction of having thus stated the truth about the woman or the sunset, not in order to do away with his sentiment, but on the contrary, in order to enjoy the sentiment as his own in his freedom that can recognize this sentiment after having thrown it out of the conscience, as a possibility that it can refuse, but that it actually makes no sense to refuse, since the conscience necessarily accepts whichever possibility, always being in reality.

The education of men follows, at least of certain men. For the liberation from the condition is that of man in his empirical being. Therefore the poet has his public. For his

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<sup>58</sup> H. Heine, *New Poems*, Miscellaneous, n. 11 (*Das Fräulein stand am Meere...*).



work is precisely not a public matter, as naive poetry was, essentially anonymous since it is the language of the community and which, consequently, is judged by that community. The naive author is the artisan whose work is better or worse, the substance of what he forms being for everyone: he doesn't create. The poet-creator doesn't speak for the whole world; his liberation is liberation from his own condition and it will matter only to those that are comparable to him. He doesn't create for the public, not even for this public that is close to him through affinity, which is his own. Like the moral man, he is merely dealing with himself. But the existence of the reader is necessary for the man who wants to free himself through poetry: for he is in the condition, in the world, and if no one is touched by his work, it could be possible that he has fooled himself, that he has not discovered the tradition that has him in chains, that the [251] condition has been toying with him. His work must have an effect if it truly liberates the *I*; that is, the others, certain others, must react, either because they see themselves freed in their poet, or because, wishing for the ability to surrender themselves completely to the tradition, but not capable of actually doing so, they accuse him of being immoral and of being a destructive mind: only the applause of the one and the vociferations of the other can prove to him that he is on the right path. In fact, the protests have more convincing force than adherence; for any sentimental or moralizing traditionalist will find obsequious flatters, and in all the great numbers the more unimaginative he is; finding readers who detest the work and the man and who nonetheless can't put it aside, here is what demonstrates, to the author, that he is free<sup>59</sup>. Without having wanted it, his work, if it is authentic, will be liberation for all those who are looking for freedom, just as the accomplishment of duty towards oneself by the moralist is in itself moral action towards others.

The poet reveals nothing, as poetry does: he bothers, he shocks. Depriving man of his contentment in the condition, he doesn't obligate him to anything— as all determined obligation is a condition —, the poet throws man back onto himself. He doesn't make him better or more useful for the society of progress; he unfetters him from everything in order to throw him back onto his essential freedom. What the other does with this freedom doesn't concern the poet, must not concern him. He has no other responsibility than that of pushing to freedom. He is alone, and he has neither the means nor the right to infringe on another's solitude, since it is precisely a matter of being alone, that is, with oneself, of withdrawing from the world of these others with whom he is always in the experience of life, but who, through ironic negation, must be thrown out of the creative life, of intimate life. The *I* is a creator of worlds, and the work of the poet gives, to the reader, the possibility of knowing

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<sup>59</sup> *Shocking bourgeois values* is essential to all "modern" poetry. Poetry succeeds in doing so only with those who would like to be "middle class", but who are no longer or not yet so. Cf. below, p. 288.

himself as a creator, because the work lets the reader participate in the creative destruction, because it shows him the possibility of worlds in their destructibility.

It is through language then that the poet frees the man of the condition, by revealing the condition as human language. The other arts achieve this merely through their relationship to language, either by the program that accompanies the mute work, or by the commentary that the work requires and obtains as “incomprehensible” and scandalous, that is, as it is ironically opposed to the tradition. If it pleases or displeases immediately, without, through the requirement of referring the work back to its creator, the spectator being thrown back into the reflection about freedom, the work doesn’t belong to the art of the conscience, which it is a part of only to the extent that gets it *spoken* about. The poet acts directly — not immediately — from conscience to conscience, because he lives in the medium of language. It is as a poet or by participation in poetic action through the work that man makes himself master of the condition. For the production of worlds, of conditions, of sentiments that [252] depend only on him and that he destroys at the chosen moment, he grasps that which in moral and theoretical reflection he merely knows: that he is an *I*. It is true that this act in which he grasps himself becomes visible as a creative act only thanks to reflection. It is still true that he doesn’t lift man above *the* condition, for the creation is a creation of negated conditions. But it lifts him above each given and possible condition, and if reflection is indispensable for him to know himself as a creator, it doesn’t fill the creator, who has passed through this stage and who, now rid of society’s false seriousness, enjoys his freedom by making light of conditions that exist only in language, and that he knows himself to be the creator and the master of.

How he creates, how intimate freedom goes about expressing itself, how he draws these creations, which he wants to be ephemeral, from language, not only does he not know, but he knows that this moment can’t be known: the question would belong to the domain of the science of the condition that he has left behind. Creation is a mystery, because it is based on the sacrosanct secret of the *I* and of freedom. How the poet creates his work can be no more known than the way that the *I* produces the first forms of knowledge can be learned or how it goes about determining itself according to moral law. He creates, and the creation is the demonstration of his own transcendent possibility; the question can come only from a man who has not hoisted himself onto the level conscious poetry, can come only from the bourgeois caught in work and understanding itself only as a function of its condition, in other words, who doesn’t understand that he understands himself: he ignores that essentially he is a speaking being, so free; for him, poetry is madness. He sees but one thing, namely that he is in this determined condition, and he views himself as a tool of progress. Therefore he has

no more receptiveness for poetic work than he does for moral spontaneity. He is neither touched nor shocked by the poet, whom he understands in his way, as an entertainer — little to his taste — or as a man skilled at exploiting, very reasonably, people's madness.

The fact is however that the poet has left, *knows* himself to be outside of this world and that the objections of common sense, if common sense deigns making them, don't touch him. It is his personal advantage over the critical philosophy of the condition and over the moralist. For their knowledge, for as unwavering as it is, is knowledge and unwavering merely as knowledge of transcendence, a reflection that comes out of life, and which knows itself to be life's ground, but which doesn't come back into life: in the practice of scientific research, everything happens between the empirical subject and the conditions of the world; in action, I can never know if I've followed the moral law or if I've let myself be pushed by empirical reasons; it is not doubtful that respect for the moral law must be my only motive, the agreement between freedom and my empirical character is only required by the law, I *must* see it as possible, but I can never experience it in my always given, thus always conditioned empirical existence. Freedom of knowledge is only the knowledge of freedom: life is left in the grasp of the whole of the experience of work, of interests, of the laws of the State, and the concrete man's freedom reduces itself to the freedom of the conscience. Only the poet does not accept [253] this; what he wants is consciousness of freedom, he wants *to be* a conscience, reflection in reflection.

Therefore he is content, not through something or in something, but in the infiniteness of his ironic creation's play. Whether he is always in a condition, whether he knows himself only under this or that empirical form, does not bother him, because each given form is subjected to his play. Playing with this, playing with that, what is the difference? He says nothing to the world, he expects nothing from it, neither a science in the analysis of which he finds the final conditions of knowledge as the first objectification of the *I*, nor the practical problems that would provide him the opportunity to make a decision: all that has been, all that will be or could have been or could be — *now*, he destroys them in his creation that lacks seriousness. The *I* is presence for the poet — not because he stops time, but because he takes all content out of it. The *I* is *present* in creation, because it is nothingness in action. All that is, and whatever way it be, has merely the merit of being capable of being the matter nourishing the devouring flame of the *I*'s presence — everything, and to start, the poet's work itself that has value only at the moment of creation and to the extent that it destroys itself: if ever it did something other than perpetuate the presence of the ironic instant, it would have betrayed its creator; it would be a lie, since it would create a belief in a truth other than that of the conscience reflected in itself.

But everything turns itself over and is overturned as soon as the poet of the conscience wants to grasp himself as a man. Free of any given condition, since for him every condition is only in language and since he is the master of language, the poet is nonetheless obsessed by one fear, that of losing his purity. When he ceases making poetry, when he reflects on himself, no so-called scientific truth impresses him, for he knows that there is no absolute science; no morality imposes itself on him, for any principle is good enough for him to serve as the foundation of a legislation in conformity with him; he can live as he sees fit, according to his preferences, his tastes, his natural faculties; in his freedom, he can leave his empirical life to the condition: but always with the caveat that he remains pure conscience. Yet, nothing helps him when it comes to avoiding the collapse into the condition. All human action belongs in experience, and the appearing of the interior is still appearance. There is the public, it's true. But to reflection (reflection of the poet on himself), if the public reacts, even if it balks, if the middle class is dismayed and scandalized, can't this reaction be, at the level of the condition, the result of his opposition to the condition, to the middling tradition? What assurance does the poet have that with his negation of this tradition he has not prepared, or even established a new tradition, different from the first only for this new tradition? Has he not let get caught up in the condition by negating this condition? He is free only by destroying everything. But in order to destroy everything, must he not destroy the appearance itself of his freedom? Language is the master of the condition, he himself, the master of language: but is he so completely if his language still holds onto a meaning, if it still remains understandable and therefore still in the condition, for as ironic as it is seen to be? There is only one [254] guaranty: the absurd<sup>60</sup>. But this guaranty itself is precarious; for the absurd itself invites the poet to install himself in it, to make a habit of it, a rule, a tradition — that it would be necessary to destroy, but to return then to what? to naivety? to meaning? to morality? So many impossibilities. Even the last possibility of a guaranty vanishes. There is no possible guaranty, since the very destruction of language can become language again — necessarily becomes language again, since it is liberation only for the reflection on the condition, and will become an understandable language again, understood precisely as poetic language. Freedom is present in the act of destructive creation, but this presence doesn't leave any trace in empirical existence, where it lives on only in the work, a past possibility of freedom that can and must be interpreted and can then be so as conditioned, unless it be so poetically, in a novel act of freedom that nonetheless, empirically, is only an empirical possibility.

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<sup>60</sup> This seems to have been the intention of the extravagant romanticism of the *Dada* movement.

It turns out then that any idea of freedom's guaranty contains a misinterpretation; if it existed, it would guarantee nothing less than freedom. The poet's reflection doesn't go any farther than that of the moralist. His act is lived immediately, but he pays for this advantage: as soon as he no longer creates he is nothing. Creation absolves him from everything, but doesn't allow him to commit in life as a poet. He must always risk anew the leap into the total irony of the destructive creation that tears him from experience: to the extent that he lives, he is not free; as soon as he knows himself free in the creative act, not in reflection, he has destroyed any possible life. His freedom, he doesn't think about it, he lives it; but the sole link between the creative instant and the man in the world is that of reflection, and his empirical me, the one that he *knows*, grasps the link only through analysis. Poetic creation doesn't any more *find* itself in life than the moral decision or the foundation of knowledge. What distinguishes it is that freedom appears to the individual there, not in his relationship to nature or to society, but in himself. It doesn't cut him off only from the world and the others, but from himself: at this price, he makes himself a possibility for the freedom in him.

4. *Reprises. — Philosophy and poetry of the conscience. — Kant.* — The man who knows he is freedom, reason, conscience, knows he is at the same time the legitimate heir of the past. Heir, and not only descendant: of course, those who have come before him had not penetrated all the way to the freedom that grounds man; but they could not err absolutely, since freedom was in them, unknown, poorly understood, negated perhaps, but active. Science can content itself with man's education, and it must be approved of and helped in its undertaking, since the path of the conscience leads through science's domain. With its negation of all that precedes it this education wrongs man's past, but if this education is justified when it says that man errs, it demeans him too much [255] when it claims that error is the necessary consequence of conditions: if man is deceived it is still he who has deceived himself. His reflection about himself is at the base of his error, but it shows also, being his own, that he is always free: because he is free, man is a philosopher; because he is not a philosopher all the way, he doesn't know himself that he is free.

The conscience is wary of reprises then — which doesn't mean that it always succeeds in avoiding them —, because it knows that man loses his way when he does not understand himself as the absolute condition, but interprets himself according to an empirical dimension, to an experience, to an absolute that is outside of him. The critique of the tradition through reflection is necessary in order to extract, from that tradition, the freedom that is hidden there. It is not a matter then of destroying man's past; on the contrary, man must be helped to recognize himself in it so that he can reprise himself, and this not so that he does

something else — freedom has nothing to offer him —, but so that he do what he does consciously.

Critical history is thus a task that the conscience can't refuse. But this history will not be universal in the common sense of the word. Critical history abandons the evolution of humanity organized in and for work to the science of the condition in order to keep that of reflection for itself, of what it recognizes as reflection. Its terrain is the positive critique that wants to clear away what still lives and what always lives from the past — history of religion, of morality, of laws, of science, of philosophy: history of ideas. Man has ideas of his own making, an expression that must be taken literally; but it is only the conscience that sees this fundamental *making*, which it is not a fact, but expresses itself in facts. In the idea of a just God, the moral law exists for the man who is free, but unconscious of his freedom, just as the idea of the science dominating the conditions represents — but represents only for the conscience — reason's spontaneity, just as that of the universal kingdom of law prefigures the free determination through the suppression of individual interest, as that of wisdom announces the total reflection of the *self* in the *I*. For the conscience, man has always tried to *make* himself in the condition, and has always betrayed himself in the two meanings of the word: betrayed by trying to abdicate his freedom, betrayed because he isn't able to do so and because his own attempt to objectify himself precisely demonstrates his fundamental spontaneity.

It seems then that no attitude is better informed about the danger of reprises than that of the conscience, that none is more qualified at detecting them, that, in sum it will be the necessary coincidence of attitude and category, that it must be pure or not be at all. And it is indeed what the conscience affirms. But it has already been shown that this affirmation is only true formally. The conscience is itself and is only itself, but it is itself in the context of something else. This "something else", of course, the conscience makes it disappear; but does it devour it completely? Does it not live off of what it destroys and would it not be absolute emptiness, if ever it made it to the end of its toil? It aspires to being pure discourse; but if it were so, if it had annihilated all content, would it not be silence, a silence significantly more absolute than that of faith or work, where man is still occupied with his heart or his task, a death's silence? Or, to [256] ask the same question in other terms: what would the *I* be without the *self*, freedom without the condition?

Seen in this way, the problem is completely overturned, to the point that it must be asked if the conscience is ever without reprise, if it doesn't necessarily interpret itself with the help of one of the preceding categories, as something in man, which, when it comes to the rest, is this or that. Indeed, the conscience doesn't escape this, as soon as, having left reflection, it speaks of something other than the reduction of discourse. In this realm, it can

stay pure; when it does nothing other than relate every expression of the interior to that interior, it keeps itself, in that action, away from any interpretation of itself as a being in a world, it remains a possibility as *potentia* and throws back any pretension from the exterior to a reality that it denounces as a simple possibility in the sense of *possibilitas*. The *I* is merely the condition of possibility then, and it therefore never *is*, if the term *being* must be reserved for its products that it renounces, and must renounce, to know the conditions of production. The fact remains that the temptation is irresistible to understand the *I*, to subsume it, to speak of it in terms that are significantly more positive than those of an *ungraspable ground*, and of an *impossible to reach limit* in experience, a temptation inherent to reflection, which lets the condition subsist for the individual's experience and life and even for the philosopher's, who speaks in the condition and for the condition<sup>61</sup>.

The reprises are limited in number. The conscience knows that it concerns itself, and the categories that precede that of the *self* are consequently useless to it, or are useful only through the intermediary of a more recent category. Thus, the category of the *object* can't serve to grasp the conscience; but the same category seen by that of the *self* serves to *explain* the subjectivity in the world: as me, the conscience is, not *an* object, but the *object*, the sole reality compared to which the rest is only unreal, secondary phenomenon, mental content. The self *believes* only being in the condition; in truth, there is no condition, it suffices that the mind understand the determination as an illusion for this illusion to no longer have a hold over it. Me alone, I am, and I fulfill myself completely if I free myself from the illusions that make me believe that things exist outside of me, without me, such as I am, declaring them such. That it is a matter of a reprise is visible in the fact that the self with its content is established as the only object and that satisfaction is found in the immediate reflection on the self. It would rather be doubted whether it is still a matter of the conscience, and not a matter of an exasperation, so to speak, of the attitude of the self that wants to satisfy itself at any cost. But in the attitude of the self, this exasperation is impossible, since in [257] the attitude the essential is precisely that man is looking for and finds happiness in the world that opposes itself to him, and since the path towards this happiness is man's action on himself as a being in world, as a living being. There is exasperation all right, but because the attitude doesn't correspond to the category in which it wants to grasp itself.

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<sup>61</sup> Therefore it can be said that a pure expression of the conscience is not encountered (cf., however, below, the remarks on Kant), but only the category without the attitude or the attitude without the category. The conscience as a category expressing an attitude will therefore only be grasped by the following categories that will define it by opposing themselves to it. Fichte constitutes the only exception, in this sense that he saw the paradox of the problem; but his evolution shows that he never believed that he resolved it.

This is perhaps still more clear when the reprise happens by means of the category of the *condition* and when the self, understood as science's object, is identified with the *I*, seen as an absolute condition of possible conditions. The error of this identification is so evident that one cannot not be surprised by the interpretation: after the elaboration of the pure category and its discourse, the "naturalization" of the subject is nonsense, whether it happens under the materialist or the psychologistic form. It can nonetheless be explained; for science precedes the conscience, and the man who succeeds in neither surrendering to progress nor in surpassing it consciously expresses himself in science's language then: he persists against work and science in the attitude of the conscience, but with the help of both, therefore in the language of the condition. He *senses* that he is the absolute condition, but *declares* being the last accessible condition, a condition beyond which one cannot go back because of technical conditions: man's mental and psychological structure is an inherent factor of all human activity, of science then too, and the description of this mechanism is the supreme task. It is worth noting that here again and for the same reasons, the condition's reprise seems exasperated. Indeed, it is no longer a matter of progress nor of a correction of personal anomalies, but of an analysis of factors that believes itself to be definitive, which, from science's point of view is a misinterpretation. Science is so, because man is so for science; in other words, science has its *ratio essendi* in a being of the man who has his *ratio cognoscendi* in science; man is determined then, but his determination either can't be thought as modifiable (it is a matter of the *normal* man) and consequently, no longer as understandable for science, or can be and is therefore not the last. An obvious misinterpretation once the reflection of the conscience is made in broad daylight, but inevitable as long as man doesn't leave the language of the condition.

These reprises, which precede the category — even though, in history, they easily persist after its first appearance —, nonetheless offer analysis far fewer difficulties than those that come with the category. We have said that the conscience expresses itself in the condition. It can be translated: philosophy is the business of the *self*, not of the *I*; and this is the profound reason that makes the attitude appear (to us) with more clarity there where it is the farthest from the category, in the poet. Man cannot be wise, for reflection can't, mustn't come to an end. What can I know? What ought I do? What, for me, are permissible hopes? These three questions that guide all of Kant's thought are questions of the concrete self, of the man in the world, and they have essentially negative answers, even before they are resolved as philosophical problems: there is the unknowable, there is the prohibited, [258]



there is the uncertain. With Kant<sup>62</sup>, this negative announces itself through the separation of the sensibility and the understanding on one side, and reason on the other: man has the idea of a perfect knowledge, and this idea remains eternally empty; moreover, as soon as he tries to fill it with content, he is mistaken. He can't not think a perfect intellect, that is, a creator, an *intellectus archetypus*, because it is only through the contrast between this idea and his own reality that he understands himself as limited; but he doesn't have the means of applying the predicate of *being* to this absolute *and* fully real condition because *being*, for him, suits only the finite being whose spontaneity exerts itself on the given, to the highest degree in reflection on science: *being* possesses a signification only in the condition.

The man in the world, who makes this philosophy and who frees himself through it without ever being free in his life is on one side a creature; he possesses, on the other, science: it is because he and nature are both created by God that he can possess a science. There is a harmony between the general conditions of knowledge and reality that allows him to pass from the general idea of an object of knowledge to the particular laws that come one after another and fit together in order to form a system: nature is not only knowable in principle, it is knowable in fact. But man is also a heart, and this is why he is not satisfied by this fact. Even science has value merely to the extent that it speaks to this heart: the nature that it shows is beautiful through its proportion to man's sentiment of self or majestic through the disproportion between its grandeur and the smallness of natural man, a disproportion against which man nonetheless asserts himself, thereby enjoying his heart's independence. However, this enjoyment of his situation in the world must be justified, because he has the science that doesn't speak of beauty, but of conditioned being. In thoughtless enjoyment, man would forget precisely that he is a creature, and he can discover it only through the consciousness of his freedom, the moral conscience; because he knows he is responsible for his acts, he knows he is free, and because he knows he is free, he knows he is a creature, a limited being, but intended for an end. The world *must* (it is morally obliged to do so) be such that the conditions ought to take part in the realization of this end: which means that science *must* be understood in such a way that it leaves the place for hope.

The *I* is therefore the end limit of the movement of return of the creature to God through the science of the condition, an end limit that can't be reached in the condition, but *must* be presupposed for the condition to make sense. Without ever seeing it head on, man always glimpses it and can thus try escaping being in order to get to sentiment, to a sentiment however that has not only depreciated the world, that is not only obedience, faith, and mute

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<sup>62</sup> The following remarks apply only to the first phase of transcendental thought. Even in that moment, *all* the categories are present and act; but it is only later that those that surpass that of the *conscience* will be characterized and that Kant himself will surpass of the present attitude-category.

love, but [259] that has beaten the condition by giving the condition its place in a discourse bearing on all discourse. Man's discourse is no longer outside of him; on the contrary, it is the *I* that expresses itself in him. The individual disappears, the *I* appears as the humanity in man. But neither this appearing nor this disappearing is ever complete. Freedom remains at the heart's ground. In other words, man can free himself, he cannot know himself as free; for he can know himself only in the condition, in being. He cannot *know* himself as a creature, but because he *aware* of being a creature, he can and must organize his discourse in such a way that science be possible for this knowledge, and this knowledge without contradiction with science. The *I* must, not be, but ground being; in man's discourse, he appears as the infinitely remote point in which knowledge and science, condition and freedom, coincide.

The conscience doesn't go any farther in its philosophical expression, and can't go any farther in this respect, since the philosopher essentially adheres to coherent discourse. If the poet realizes the conscience in a certain way, if he destroys the condition in the condition, the philosophy of the conscience is and remains *critical*. It neither changes the condition, nor science, nor the individual, nor the world. The reflection of the condition in freedom is his action, far more that its result, since it must not have any. It *leads* to a metaphysics, that is, to a theory of natural being and of duty as such, only because it has *started* by that. In its pure form, it does not exist without the reprise of the condition and of God (this could be recognized in Plato as well as in Kant), but a reprise that it recognizes as such, consequently, as a both inadequate and inevitable expression, as discourse's only possibility. Since it knows itself to be critical it maintains what it critiques as something that, disappearing, has its mode of being in this process of disappearing, a deficient mode, but necessary in this quality: truth is not in being, but in knowing, not in discourse, but in sentiment; but in each of these pairs, the second member comes about merely in the first, because man is not in truth, but *must* only go towards it. Freedom appears merely in the condition, and man is merely a creature, even though he has science: this is why philosophy exists and not wisdom. Man knows that he is a creature; but whether there is a good and just creator he can only hope; he knows that freedom is the ground of the human condition, but he can reach this freedom only in duty, in itself empty; he knows that he is, but the *I* is not posited, it is only supposed.

The subject for the philosophy of the conscience is man in the world. This man in his concretion and this world, philosophy furthermore accepts them and formalizes them: man is always determined for himself, he is always in a world; for philosophy, "determined" means that man is never a pure and empty conscience, and "world", that he is never exclusively occupied with himself. And it is this formalization that allows him to hold the *I* as a

(transcendental) *condition of possibility* outside reprise. [260] But there is thus no philosophical attitude — it is the word “philosophical” that matters — of the conscience, since there is no coherent discourse of the *I*, which is present only in the destruction of any coherence: man is always what he ought not to be, and it is only in this way that he knows what he must be. The *I* is in the *self*: this is inevitable because it is the fact that reflection takes its origin from; but *I* is not in nature, because it corresponds only to a question of rights. The reprise, accepted as necessary and, consequently, understood as such, doesn’t touch the *I*, which remains hidden to it in order to appear to pure reflection as an infinitely remote point.

The attempt at understanding man with the help of the reprise of God mediated by that of the condition thus produces philosophy in the modern sense: it is looking for an absolutely coherent discourse, that’s to say free, in the condition, and the result is that the category becomes pure form and precedes the attitude, and that the conscience becomes the humanity in man, the divine in creation. Man is *aware* of himself as a conscience, but *knows* himself to be devote, moral, knowledgeable in the world, as opposed to the infinite and deprived of presence. How the poet’s attitude achieves this pure knowledge and evades knowledge of its life has been seen. But the poet can’t speak of the *I*; as discourse, even negative, implies reprise and interpretation. The philosophy that discovers the *I* is itself one of *man*’s needs and must be understood as such: the *I* does not do philosophy. But philosophy is philosophically possible only because there is an *I*. Because the *I* is the *conditio sui*, it is not *causa sui*: it doesn’t produce itself, but it presupposes itself.

If the philosophy of reflection thus constituted attempts to free itself from this reprise that is present in its always unachieved disappearance, it can succeed in doing so; but it achieves this only through another reprise, that of the condition under the form of science, a reprise that, this time, attains subjectivity. The *I* is thus grasped in science and only in science. Philosophy itself, as an expression of the *I*, is science, that’s to say universally valid. It progresses in the discovery of the transcendental structures of the *I*, which appear to the analytical method as both the bases and the frameworks of knowledge. The *I* thus *exists*, not in the sense of physics, but visible for scientific philosophy, it can be described by its functions<sup>63</sup>. Subjectivity is understood, because it is necessary for science, which bases itself on it and which must turn to it from time to time, if it wants to defend its claims of universality. That’s all: speaking of the *I* is, truth be told, merely a handy way of indicating a method; the limitation of the *self*, the separation of the understanding and reason indicate only that man

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<sup>63</sup> This reprise characterizes, without characterizing it completely, the thought of a H. Cohen or of a Natorp, as well as that of Husserl’s *Transcendental Phenomenology*.

is not yet entirely devoted to science; [261] sentiment is a historic relic and must be eliminated. It is tempting to say that it is here a matter not of a reprise of the conscience, but of a particularly clear presentation of the methodology that served as philosophy to the condition. It's all in there: science, progress, the "not yet", and the "still", the sacrifice that the individual makes of himself to science, his transformation through education. There is only one point that is out of place on that line, namely, the question of science's *right* to universality, in other words, reflection: man remains in his being that transcends not only nature, but also science, and the condition is a condition for... But the *I* in the reprise, *is*, as the *x* that fills the place after *for*. It appears, and it appears completely, in science, and only there. For this philosophy, there is no nature, but a physics, no action but a jurisprudence, no art, but an aesthetic, and there is no man who frees himself, even though this philosophy is based on man's limits and their being surpassed thanks to freedom. It hides the category that it nonetheless lives by: subjectivity is present, but it is understood in the language of science: it is the condition of objectivity.

## CHAPTER XI INTELLIGENCE

**For man, the conscience is but one possibility among others for leading his life. It is in seeing the plurality of these possibilities that are the interests of men (not of the individual) that man frees himself as *intelligence*.**

1. *The intelligence and the preceding categories.* — *The discovery of the attitude as a constituent interest.* — *The understanding of history as the destruction of the transcendent.* — *The conceptual technique of the intelligent historian.* — If one wants to characterize the new attitude in the language of the philosophy of the conscience, it can be said that, whereas the philosophy of the conscience sees the *I* from the *self*, this attitude sees the *self* from the *I*. Indeed, when I speak of the interest that guides life<sup>64</sup>, man is seen as determined, but from a point of view that establishes itself in disinterest, in in-determination. However, this presentation, without being absolutely false, would have the major inconvenience of bringing man back, in appearance, to the *condition*: he would recognize simply that after all, he remains caught in the conditions of the tradition and that only science is disinterested, since its progress defines man's absolute interest (as a species) and merges with it then. Yet, man has passed through the attitude of the conscience, and that category, grasped in and through reflection, is not forgotten; the return to the condition is impossible since the condition as such has become visible in the act of the conscience that transcends it. Science is for man, not man for science, and the interest that it is about here is, if we like, a transcendental condition, it is not a natural or scientific condition.

Even in this last formula, the novelty of the attitude appears only insufficiently. What does this novelty consist in? Man takes interest, that is, he makes *himself* take interest. Asking why he takes interest is demonstrating an incomprehension that would conflate *taking interest* with *being interested*, that is, being caught in the world. Yet, the world exists only for man, and it is man who reveals the world. But presently, it is man, and not a trans-

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<sup>64</sup> It is not a matter of individual interests in the world of the tradition, and the meaning that the word will receive here must be distinguished from the one it has in the *discussion*.

individual *I*, which [264] itself appears merely in the revelation of the world through man's interest in it. Man does something, because he takes interest in it, we could say: he makes all "things"; and among these things, he makes the philosophy of the conscience.

The conscience had a vague feeling about it. It had decreed that man was free and, consequently, the absolute goal. But it was timorous: the question law, which guaranteed it the transcendence of the *I*, turned it away from man's reality. Busy responding, and not only responding, but also busy justifying this question of law, the conscience doesn't get to live nor to understand life; it succeeds only in withdrawing itself into the reflection about a given that it remains incapable of becoming the master of. The reflection, whether it presents itself as theoretical philosophy, as morality, or as poetic creation, is the essential in the *conscious* life: it is not, however, the essential of life, for the man of the conscience is merely free to reflect on his condition. The conscience makes the center of existence of itself, but this center — the present attitude discovers it — opposes itself, in order to negate it, to the circle that gives it its centrality, and this is why it *must* deem itself to be man's sole veritable interest that all the others *must* be brought back to: precisely because of this, its human interest for freedom is still a conditioned interest, even though this condition is transcendental, that is, irreducible.

For the present attitude, freedom fills life, it forms life in its concrete conscience as it forms the world of this conscience. It is real as *interest*. For the conscience, man's supreme interest was *known* through philosophy; this is where it drew its worth. But it becomes clear at present that this interest was not *realized* through philosophy. To the extent that it was — it only ever was to a certain extent —, it was realized through life, life aided, admittedly, through philosophical reflection, but essentially active life: philosophy itself is then only one of life's actions. Yet, if this is so, all of philosophy's prerogative must disappear. If man makes himself philosopher, it is because he takes interest in philosophy; but nothing forces him to do so, and the facts show that man loses interest in it, not only often, but almost always: the philosopher is the exception, and, as such, he must be understood from the common ground of humanity. Man is not reflection and *I*, man lives, and he lives in a human way. The philosophy of reflection is not wrong in saying that man is the living being that pursues goals; it makes a mistake when it affirms that he must pursue only one. The reflection of the conscience understands only one of man's interests; a step forward, and man becomes understandable with his philosophy, with his philosophies.

In this entire attitude, two elements are tightly linked to one another, and are thus outlined from the beginning: the priority that a category, which the attitude declares to be its own, has over the attitude for the attitude itself —, and the disinterestedness of the man in this attitude. He takes interest in *interest*, in the interests that form life, and he has no other

interest in life than the one that he takes in the interests of others. He has freed himself from the search for a personal direction for himself: he is, as a person, truly disinterested. It's because only the category [265] interests him; his pride is being an intelligence free of all interest. He reduces categories to attitudes in order to reduce his own attitude to a category, to knowledge, to an interpretation. Moreover, he is intelligent enough to know that, in his life, he too has an interest; but in his analysis of the human world, he has none, since he has them all. Therefore he knows and he admits what the philosopher of the reflection had to ignore and negate, namely that he is the exception, the one in whom man's great secret is discovered, to wit: that man *has* no interest, but *is* interest<sup>65</sup>.

We could say *attitude* instead of *interest*. As it is here that the concept of the attitude appears for the first time, not only to us, but to the attitude that we are speaking of<sup>66</sup>. However, it is not indifferent whether the attitude is seen under the form of interest. Intelligent interpretation can thus set itself apart: interest indicates to it that normally man wants something, whereas it wants nothing, because it has freed itself from desire, from need, from all that makes man act. Every man is in a world, which is *his* world in the strictest sense, because it is his interest that constitutes it. Interpretation states that it ends up letting itself get caught up in this world. He sees himself — and interpretation does nothing other than generalize the conscience's thesis about this point — as the creature of his creation, he now has an interest, or rather it is these interests that have him. He has interpreted himself without knowing what he was doing, and it is thus that he has interpreted man in function of the world, not the world in function of man. The liberation that reflection offers is not enough — does it even offer any? —, since it is always striving to put aside this or that interest without the interest as such ever entering into its horizon. It wants to reform man, to lead him towards freedom, and it doesn't understand that it replaces only one interest by another and destroys worlds in order to construct them. To the extent that the fact of knowing that one is compelled to construct grounds a greater freedom, reflection has progressed towards its goal. But if it must admit that this knowledge is a final interest that it can't succeed in surpassing — and it can't avoid this admission —, in the end its undertaking has failed. Yet, intelligence avoids this difficulty, because the fundamental impetus is no longer hidden from

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<sup>65</sup> This attitude establishes any *Science of Spirit* (*Geisteswissenschaften*), in the naivest historians of civilization (if they don't fall under the category of the condition), as well as in the reflection of a Dilthey. It is purely formulated (which doesn't mean: with depth) in K. Mannheim's theory (*Ideologie und Utopie*) of free intelligence (*frei schwebende Intelligenz*). Max Weber positions himself at the same level in methodological reflection but surpasses it in his historical, and above all, political thought.

<sup>66</sup> The category is thus paramount for the logic of philosophy. It is all the more necessary to understand it in its limitation: in order to do so it is sufficient to retain that, while producing the concept of *attitude*, it doesn't see that of the *category*, in other words, it understands, but doesn't understand itself.

it and because, consequently, it can neutralize the force of it. It would not be so sure about it, if it saw the attitude as an attitude, that is, as capable of going to the category and therefore as constitutive of all discourse, including its own; by seeing it [266] as interest, it opposes itself to it as intelligence to desire. It doesn't let itself get caught up in any of the worlds, because it takes its place, if we can speak in this way, outside of the world. It understands man and the cosmos because it is a-cosmic, dis-interested.

The attitude that it is a matter of here is therefore fundamentally a-philosophical, or even anti-philosophical (the word philosophical taken in the sense that the *conscience* gives it). This doesn't mean that it becomes disinterested in the philosophy, which is, on the contrary, a subject of predilection for it. But it is not itself philosophical, because philosophy is looking for an eminent *being*, the true Being, the true Good, the true Beauty, the true freedom, the true discourse, etc., a quintessential being in which man's anxiety finds its respite. Yet interpretation feels no need to look for this respite: it already has it without having gone to any effort, and this is precisely the ground of this attitude that frees itself from everything through understanding, not through the reflection's negation. All human interest is a human possibility for it, and since it recognizes, in every interest, this character of possibility, no concrete interest manages to chain it up. It succeeds there where the *self* had failed: the intelligent man is *spectator mundi*, and he can be, because this world that he watches and the sight of which delights him is no longer the nature nor the reason of the cosmos, but man himself. The object of the interpretation is history — the object, not the subject; for the man who understands history has quit it, and the avatars of interest don't fool him. He is above the interests that, live possibilities for the others, are behind him.

An altogether different history from those that faith, science, reflection had instituted. All of these were intended to justify the attitude that produced them; each of them needed to demonstrate that the entire past had only been the unconscious movement towards the point attained at present: the series of events, the transformation of conditions, the evolution of ideas got their meaning from this completion that they had, unconsciously, always been heading towards; history proved that, now, the goal had been reached. Interpretation doesn't require so much; it requires nothing. Sure of itself, it doesn't see the need of creating itself a lineage, it knows it is above the need of education through the destruction of biases. It doesn't *want* to be a conscience, it *is* so, and what matters more to it, a conscience of others. The history of other attitudes doesn't matter to it, because it is not ignorant about what they must be used for. For itself, history, instead of being the becoming of the intelligence, is the subjectivity of the others, seen and interpreted by the absolute disinterestedness in view of the discovery of interests.



Nonetheless, there are good reasons for it to still bear the name of history. Interpretation deals with human interest in its reality, that is, with what is because it has been. It doesn't see it then as a finished past — it was the science of the *condition's* process that would consider events in relation to progress, and that of the *conscience* that traced back its path towards itself across ideas —: it interprets the past reality as a plurality of present possibilities, possibilities that it discovers in their *past* [267] present. However, it can't renounce history's services — or histories' — such as it has been modeled by prior attitudes (not by the categories: it has no categories besides its own), for it is not facts that occupy it; moreover, for it, there are not even *facts*, because the fact constitutes itself exclusively in interest, to the point that what is decisive for one doesn't exist for the other: the interest of the man that is the object of the intelligence appears to the intelligence precisely in the history that man makes of himself. He doesn't ordinarily know what interest pushes him, he is often ignorant that it is a matter of interest, and there where he seems to use this concept, as this is characteristic of evolved and complicated attitudes, it is clear that he uses it wrongly, since he doesn't lift himself above concrete interest and since he finds an absolute instead of a human possibility among others in it. It is intelligence that holds the key, but it's history, the historical science of the interested man, that provides him with the opportunity to show the usefulness of it.

A history that man makes of himself, including the justifications that he gives of it in his science and his philosophy. In short, the field of the intelligence's investigations, the domain of the use of its tool is that of human documents. It is a matter of understanding what man calls his understanding of himself and his world, his *Weltanschauung*. Regardless of what he does; why he does it, this is the question. Man always believes himself to be living in a world that he depends on, in which he finds himself placed before real difficulties, objective problems, vital necessities. But reality exists only in function of interest. The savage's world is not that of the Greek, and that of the European does not compare itself to that of the Chinese or of the African. They have nothing to do with one another. Each must be understood in itself, and nothing would be falsier than wanting to find them a shared substrate, an objective and inhuman over-world.

Certain attitudes invite finding this shared substrate however, particularly that of the *condition* by its reduction of everything to objective factors — a surpassed attitude, but by no means eliminated by the *conscience*. In the condition there is a unified nature, ruled by a single system of laws; men often ignore these laws, more exactly, ignore a huge chunk of them, but they never ignore the essential part of them, that which allows them to live. The most primitive savage knows certain technical processes, possesses a certain experience of

regularities and interdependencies, an experience that he would perish without; it is not even impossible, in principle, to objectively know why he leaves it at that. Man is a being possessing certain distinctive characteristics; his needs joined to his specific traits explain his attitude, and science is perfectly capable of analyzing, thanks to those data, the essential factors of social history.

But this reasoning, as seductive as it appears, doesn't stand up to the intelligence's critique. Science explains man in virtue of its own interest; it doesn't understand him. Since it wants to succeed in dominating nature, it maintains that man has only ever wanted this mastery, and wants it essentially. Yet, this *unified* nature, this system of laws, this man determined by his physiological needs, [268] all are only understood as the concrete forms of a certain interest. Indeed, to allow man the natural victory over nature, it is indispensable that this nature first be modifiable, that is, that action's result be predictable, then, that nature be modifiable by man, that is, that man be included in nature. These postulates are irrefutable, but only because they are postulates that don't affect the other attitudes and aren't undermined by them. "Set the primitive aside", says the man of science, "he doesn't understand". He doesn't understand the physics of the condition, responds the intelligence. But he doesn't understand it, because he doesn't interest himself in mastery over nature, he interests himself in the cosmos not perishing; he wants this world to exist as it is: this world that is good and that gives man all he desires, the animals that let themselves be hunted rather than him hunting them, the fish that enter into his nets, the rain and the sun which, each at the right moment, make the plants that feed him grow for him, flow the springs that slake his thirst. Nothing in this world is to be modified, and the interest is, on the contrary, to exclude any modification: if the sun doesn't do this year what it has always done, the world will come tumbling down. All man's gestures *count* then, he must do what he has always done, otherwise the sun will no longer rise, the rains will stop, the animals will flee. There is no nature as the object of an analytical science, there is the eternal cooperation of living forces. In this harmony, which is harmony because this is the way that man has built his world, all of science's objections are incomprehensible, just as this harmony is invisible for science. Between the interest that aims for progress and the one that defends duration, there is neither common denominator nor judge. Success, progress's great argument, proves nothing. Science, of course, builds airplanes, primitive man does only what his divine ancestors have taught him; yet, primitive man doesn't want to build airplanes. The civilized man is stronger than the primitive one and can impose his domination on him. But he doesn't always succeed in doing so: often, primitive man dies when his world is disturbed and thus proves — for himself — that he was right to refuse to interfere in it. And that primitive man even accepts what the other calls civilization, what does this acceptance prove besides the possibility that

man has to change interest — a possibility that had never been doubted? All of science's proofs are excellent — for science. But what science calls success has no importance for the other attitudes, which don't necessarily declare themselves beaten: their defeat is the consequence of the mistakes of man in the world, it is not the fault of their world, which remains irreducible; this world can disappear, with those whose interest it expresses, but this disappearance itself is the decisive proof of its independence.

The relation is the same when it is about other attitudes which, more “modern”, possess a theory of the world and of nature and which, consequently, seem to be less stubbornly opposed to science. Aristotle develops a physics. This physics, says the *condition*, is poor, as it is incapable of explaining all phenomena through the reduction to co-variable factors, such that the future can be predicted with a practically complete certainty. He cannot [269] build his nature without the help of the notion of chance. He can't: does he want only that? His interest is finding peace in θεωρία, in the participation in the perfection of the cosmos, grounded in the absolute reason that everything turns itself towards in the same desire of participation, and which is turned only towards itself. The things here on earth can't help being imperfect, unreasonable, unshaped by reason. So that man can enjoy the aspect of perfection, he must be able to put aside, as a product of chance, the imperfect, the ugly. The world is beautiful in its essence. Wanting to modify it is to become attached to what is not good in the world, to lose the beauty of it that no work will make come down to the plane of becoming and of the ephemeral. What matters is discovering the plane of being and of the eternal, and since the physics of measurements is incapable of this, since, far from showing the beauty of the cosmos, it claims to destroy it, it would have neither value nor meaning for Aristotle. Whether at a given moment, one is no longer satisfied with his science merely proves one thing, namely, that one no longer takes an interest in the beauty of the world, that one no longer desires to enjoy its perfection.

About every point, the *interpretation*, which is the intelligence at work, thus refutes the claims of the history of the condition. We don't need to multiply the examples: *faith*, the *self* — to speak merely of the attitudes that this history prefers to tackle, because it sees them as particularly dangerous — find their champion in the intelligence, their justification in interest. Another history opposes itself to that of progress.

How this history is written is a question that doesn't concern us on its own. We are dealing with pure intelligence, not the use that it makes of its metaphysical category that interest is. It is incidentally easy to see the essential: men constitute, from their concrete interests, worlds (here, man could be defined as the being that builds worlds), and these worlds appear to the intelligence as such, in their unity, in their uniqueness, in their conflicts.

Above all in their conflicts, for a concrete interest characterizes itself as such, as irreducibly given for history, through the fact that the men who adhere to it and whose world receives its meaning from this center, are ready to sacrifice everything to this supreme value without which their existence would be stripped of meaning and of direction. Of course, reality does not only present men who are ready to die for their “ideals”; experience teaches, on the contrary, that the cases in which this sacrifice is accomplished are exceptional. People make do, they look for compromises, they kid themselves about the importance of the concessions they continually make to the circumstances (that is, to that which, according to themselves, should have no influence over their acts). But the intelligent historian, guided by the category of interest, doesn’t encounter any insurmountable difficulties when he undertakes untangling what people conflate. Nothing prevents him from putting himself in their place and building, according to the idea of non-contradiction, what their life should be if they were consistent with themselves: it will not always be easy to indicate such ideal types of behavior, and [270] a great number of documents, of observations, of analyses will need to be brought together; difficult as it is, the problem should not be insoluble.

For intelligence knows deep down what it is about: the free man (free in the sense that the conscience had given to this word: of a transcendent freedom) necessarily uses his freedom in order to construct himself a prison-dwelling, a system that can be contradictory, incoherent, absurd (and which life-system isn’t from the point of view where intelligence places itself, outside of any world?), but which allows him to orient himself or, since this expression could be understood in the sense of the science of the *object* or of that of the *condition*, which promises him satisfaction. He doesn’t want to be free, other than from the conditions that bother him inside of his world: he wants to be satisfied. This is at least what he declares. And this fools neither himself nor the intelligence — with this restriction, which the intelligence makes a point of introducing, that, truth be told, he is not looking for a total satisfaction, but particular satisfactions, that he cares about the possibility of contentment, and not at all about contentment itself. Moreover: he can’t want absolute contentment, which he speaks of only to give himself courage for the pursuit of particular satisfactions: he would be lost were he absolutely content, for he would have lost any need of direction and he would no longer live in a world. Yet, this is what matters to him, and what matters to him exclusively: incoherence, contradiction, absurdity, don’t characterize defective worlds, but any human world.

It is with the help of these reflections that the intelligent historian succeeds in writing humanity’s history, an incoherent history, in which nothing creates anything in an understandable manner, where any historic world is incoherent and unaware of its lack of coherence, but where any element is understandable through a reduction to ideal unities, whereas

any real construction of freedom alienates itself and is only the freedom to alienate itself. He will find factual connections, factual oppositions, factual (interested) interpretations, behaviors, religious systems, legal codes, social organizations, and everything will help him develop his category in concepts, in types, in “idealizing” analyses and “rationalizing” syntheses. All the worlds, all the debris, all the rough drafts, all the bits of world are given to the intelligence.

2. *The intelligent man facing himself and others.* — *His interests and his role in his era.* — The analysis of man and of his world finished, one question remains: that of the intelligence itself and of pure interest such that the intelligence understands it as its category. The intelligence has made itself explicit in a formal theory of the concrete man, a theory that understands man in his historic existence (which goes from one world to another, which evolves) supra-historically. Yet pure interest, as we’ve said, makes a free intelligence of the man who has this category at his disposal and renders his attitude extra-cosmic: he sees worlds, but since he understands them in their essence, as a concretization of human interest, all the historically real or only imaginable worlds are [271] worlds for the others, whereas he himself, having looked behind the veil, has found the void of freedom behind it.

It would therefore be perfectly absurd to ask him to explain himself or to interpret himself. He can do so, better than anyone, because all concrete interpretations, all ways of doing history are at his disposal, and he will construct, if he sees fit, his existence as the completion of whichever of these histories. Only, he will add as an aside for himself that all these constructions are equal, and that all of them are equally arbitrary. He can’t interpret himself “for good”, for such an interpretation would be possible only in regard to truth. Yet, in truth, he only knows one thing: that there is no truth, there exists only *some* truths.

The formula seems paradoxical, the thought isn’t though. The contradiction between *in truth* and *there is no truth* shocks; but it shocks only if contradiction is considered prohibited, in other words, if determined forms of knowledge are considered as the only valid forms, separately or in a systematic syncretism that “reconciles” the “ideas”, detaching them from their worlds, understanding them in a purely verbal manner, separating them from this human interest that cultivates them and keeps them alive by keeping them in life. There is no truth, that means here that there is no science beyond the sciences, no single metaphysics, beyond the variety of metaphysics, no wisdom beyond wisdoms. But this assertion itself is true, absolutely true, and it can be true only because it is so *absolutely*. For the fact that it is absolute doesn’t indicate an honor here, a superior rank in a hierarchy of ever vaster, ever deeper truths: it shows that it is not in contact with *the* truths, that nothing is based on it, nothing is deduced from it, that it neither encompasses nor organizes anything, that it neither

brings about nor illuminates any bit of knowledge — that it is *ab-solved* of everything. This absolute truth is not about a fact, it is not in the order *of the* truths, it is a fact.

It is the only fact. Therefore it can be expressed only through paradox and through negation. For all language is the language of the man in the world, of a man in the world, of a concrete interest, whereas the man possessing the category of interest is free, with an *absolute* freedom, not the freedom of doing or of suffering that any interest establishes as a possibility in its world. His freedom is *the* truth, the act in which he wrests himself from the worlds, through which he becomes pure intelligence and extra-cosmic disinterestedness, through which he ceases to be a man, if *being man* means *constructing worlds*. He speaks then — and nothing prohibits him from speaking —, but he doesn't negate language, as the thoughtful poet did, he negates languages through language. Transcendence is not to be sought in a great beyond of objects, of the self, of the world, it is not an activity: it is an act through which the concrete world is put in parentheses. In this world, it appears as a paradox and as a negation; in itself, it is the unique positive, the unique evident, the only act that is not replaceable by another, the only authentic act, the only fact. Therefore the negation of the world is not the destruction of it. *The* worlds are negated in their concretion, in their isolation, in their exclusiveness, [272] in a word, in their claim of uniqueness. But once this uniqueness is negated, they are reestablished with that much more solidity. As *expressions* of the man-interest, they are all true: they were not true beforehand, when each world still encircled man in his concrete and so-called unique interest, when man didn't interest himself, but was interested.

Their truth then is a truth for the intelligence. They reveal themselves in their being to the intelligence only. In themselves, they possess their truths, each their own, and each of these truths exclude all the others, or even, fight against them if its own structure allows it to see them and to discern their claim. For the intelligence, all these truths are equally true, equally false: it has no means of choosing among them. Nor will it add a novel truth of its invention, a world above worlds. It is not that it believes the series of worlds complete: it knows that interest never rests, that man's freedom can build itself new dwellings or demolish existing prisons or modernize old residences, but the intelligence itself has understood the game, and it has taken itself out of play: it knows that there is no truth that has content nor any content that is true, and it knows moreover that it is the only one to know.

Speaking of an attitude of the free intelligence is thus a misunderstanding for the intelligence. It does not grasp itself, it does not have to grasp itself, because it can't and knows that it can't. When an attitude is attributed to it, one is no longer at its level, and a man in the world is made out of a free intelligence. However, the man who lives as a free

intelligence seemingly lends himself to it. He understands the world in which his contemporaries live, he knows their interest and their interests, their conscious decisions and their hidden tendencies, and he will not object to their form of life. Why would he do so? He has no new world to offer them, he possesses no religious, historic, moral standards to measure the value of their activities and their actions, no canon to correct their theories and their systems. How would there be the stuff of conflict between him and them, since he holds nothing dear? How would he enter into debate or struggle, he who has nothing to win and who wants to win nothing? All that he asks is that he be left in peace.

To have peace, this is his only interest — which is not a constitutive interest (he knows all too well that worlds are built in struggle), but his personal interest; the others don't understand, they are aggressive, and it will be useful to act upon them to calm them. All the worlds are equal in merit, but they are not all equally viable for man as the bearer of intelligence. He is happy to comply with the habits and customs of his time and his milieu, and he demands no better, since he has nothing else to do. He cares only about the habits and customs not imposing a choice on him. He isn't ignorant about the fact that the man in his world conceives himself according to his interest, that the only thing that he can't bear is a disoriented life, that he thus puts his ideal above his life and that of others. He himself has no ideal and, consequently, there is only the span of his life and the peace of this life that has a, strictly [273] personal, value for him. He admires the convictions, the struggles, the sacrifices of others; but he would like them to leave him the leisure of admiring them.

This peace recalls the one that the philosopher of the *object* sought; but presently, the peace can no longer be grounded on an objective truth and in view of it. The intelligent man will not try to persuade the others of their *error*; for him, there is no error, and it would be of no use destroying the others' world because they would merely leave it to give themselves over to another with an increased force and violence. But he can try to make them feel that "all this" is not so important, that each can fashion his salvation and can create a direction for himself in his fashion, that life would be more agreeable if each wanted to amuse himself quietly on his own without disrupting the games of others. He can try to make them feel it, that is, he will put them in a situation where they will find themselves between worlds. In the end, he isn't ignorant of the fact that they will make up their mind; in the meantime, life will be good while their world breaks down and the new world has not yet been born. History will never be finished, for men will never hoist themselves up to the level of the intelligence; but there can be lulls, periods where men still make a profession of faith, but are already detached from the faith they profess. The intelligent man can contribute to establishing such a state. He can show the others that what they seek and appreciate is sought by other paths and appreciated elsewhere and by others, that common details bind men

together despite the differences of their convictions, that the atheist can be virtuous, the uncivilized, artist, the believer, independent thinker. This doesn't convince systematic, radical, zealous minds; but it neutralizes them, because the others, these others who matter because of their great numbers, no longer follow them. It suffices to instill them with the sentiment — they are impervious to thoughts — that what they venerate is indeed venerable, but that those who adore other gods are not necessarily dangerous and harmful, the sentiment — not the thesis, which they would push away in horror — that nothing is worth fighting for. He will speak to those who display reticence, that is, he will try to coax them onto the floor [*sol*] of discussion. Of course, they are right to hold their ideal above all else. But this ideal, have they sufficiently elaborated it? Is it without contradiction? Does it answer all the possible situations? Is their truth absolute? Is not another interpretation of the facts conceivable? These questions do not present him with any difficulties: they don't make sense, since they presuppose the existence of a universal truth that regulates concrete interest from the outside. He knows so, him, who has discovered interest. But his own existence shows that the world that he lives in is a world in decomposition, since he was able to break out of it, thanks to this discovery. He can try to use his head-start on the others, whom he will not free from their interest, but who he will make question, by catching hold of them through the development of his formal category<sup>67</sup>.

[274] Thus the intelligence neutralizes history. It can do so and it knows that it can, because it knows that it is the end of history, the end of worlds. The man who knows interest is the last man. Humanity will continue, worlds will be built, will struggle, will perish, the end is not an end in time, the last man will be followed by other generations; but the intelligent man has left the world, and for him there can be nothing new, since there can be nothing else. Everything is equal, and he lives in nothingness, since he understands the fullness of worlds and since this fullness doesn't fill him. He is content: nothing compels him, nothing gives him desires. He truly is what the *self* would have liked to be, *spectator mundi*, and he plays, not the *self's* comedy, whose roles are set by the its transcendent poet and its superhuman stage director, but his own game, for his own gain. He has fun, he passes the time, he has nothing *to do*, or, to say the same thing in another way, he's always busy, because he takes everything seriously. Both formulas express the same attitude: since he is intelligence, nothing has a particular value: since he is man and he knows himself man, everything interests him. In his attitude, his category frees him not only from everything but also for everything.

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<sup>67</sup> This attitude, clearly present in Montaigne, expresses its fullest development in Bayle.



For everything, art, poetry, religious feeling, science, magic, morality, any expression of concrete interest deserves him taking an interest in it, whichever allows him to play his game, to place himself in a world to give it a go. He understands everything, imitates everything, enjoys everything. He is far from the anxiety of the ironic poet who must again and again prove to himself that he was free, that he was not an object, but a creator. For the intelligence, man is always a creator: merely too much so. It doesn't want to take this role on itself. But it knows all the better how to appreciate the creations of others. Good and bad don't matter for the intelligence. Both equally express man's strength in a concrete form. If it desires something for itself, it is constantly finding other playthings and novel sustenance for its curiosity. It is insatiable. Once it has taken care of a phenomenon, once it has exhausted it by understanding it, by situating it between other types of interest and taking what can contribute to the image of a world from it, the intelligence turns its back on it, in search of something else that it can exert itself upon.

An exertion that the intelligent man never takes lightly. To do so, he would need to admit the existence of a value or of a truth, of a concrete absolute that he would come back to after his games. His game is serious because it is his only activity. Amateur, collector, connoisseur, historian, analyst, he can run from one to the other, today he's gushing over primitive art, tomorrow over a heroic world, some times over an artist who creates or destroys a world, at others over religious belief, at others still over value systems; he can just as well devote himself wholly to the patient collecting of materials for the purpose of the living portrait of a civilization, of an era, of a figure, undertaking protracted painstaking projects to establish within which world such man falls or which influences will meet in him, patiently seeking the "essential" implications of a scientific, philosophical, political "system". Regarding the substance, there is no difference: the *seriousness* of his activity belongs [275] to the world in which he lives and where, since it is a concrete world, the pursuit of a single goal is naturally held in higher esteem than the dispersal of forces. As conformists, since they have nothing to put into opposition with the world that they find themselves in, intelligent men will appraise themselves with the help of contemporary opinions; whereas one will deem himself the flower of civilization, or according to the circumstances, as rebellious, the other will see himself as the true man of science or as the last thinker — both empirically sincere and above the fray through their thought.

3. *The nature of the reprises. — Tolerance, renunciation, force.* — Thus, they take everything seriously, except themselves. They live in any old world, they recognize, to conform to it, any old interest, they speak any old language: but they have no language of their own to speak about themselves with. The only language available to them applies only to

the others, and it is the language of the *conscience*, with this difference that there is no *I* since there is no longer the condition that the *I* opposes itself to; there is interest, a formalized *I* that doesn't detach itself from a world, but that is caught up in it for good and that appears (as a formal category) only to free, extra-cosmic intelligence. The only category that the intelligence has doesn't apply to the intelligence itself, and its own attitude is the only one that is incomprehensible, because it is invisible. All the others, the intelligence reconstructs them as "concrete" forms of consciousness: the unity of consciousness in view of a possible satisfaction is the directing idea of the intelligence's method, inasmuch as this unity is the final condition of the constitution of a human world. But this unity doesn't reveal itself to the man who is in the world born of this unity, and philosophy as an attempt to break through the *self* to the *I*, as man's essential interest then, no longer has any justification. Arriving at the free intelligence is not one of man's essential *goals*, it is an unexplainable event, any explication having its place in a determined world.

The language of the conscience, even in this form detached of all content, has then no hold on the intelligence. It is not conscience of a world, but conscience of consciences; it is not opposed, but detached. The man in this attitude is two-fold: living in a world, he participates in the interest of this world; as a free intelligence, he knows that this interest does not bind him, but that he will always have a world or an interest, whatever they be. If he wants to speak of himself (ordinarily, the idea of doing so will not come to him, and he will do so merely when forced, either to defend his position in the world, or to get rid of an internal conflict between his intelligent conscience and the unconscious heritage that the intelligence knows as a heritage and as unconscious and that it wants to eliminate), he will speak as man, not as intelligence: in the reprises, the intelligence becomes one of man's qualities.

These reprises distinguish themselves in two ways from those of the *conscience*. In the first place, the category doesn't express the attitude, but is, on the contrary, the means by which the attitude positions itself outside of the world that is described by the intelligence with the help of its category [276] of interest: the intelligence is what it is, because it is not interest. It follows that the reprise, the explanation of the attitude through prior categories, is neither unconscious—which is the case wherever the category is not entirely elaborated—nor fought—as is found in the reprises of the conscience that see these reprises as a necessary evil that it can never get rid of in experience, but of which it *has* to always try to break free. The intelligence doesn't need reprises: since it knows that the world exists for it, but that it does not for the world, it is not compelled to speak of itself. If however the man who is the bearer of this intelligence *wants* to speak of himself, he presents himself as

a thinking being, a being whose thought is the essence. Any category that allows him to understand himself in this way can serve the reprise.

This is what produces the second characteristic of these reprises. From what precedes it is already clear that the prior categories lend themselves to reprises only through the intermediary of the reprise of the *conscience*. The latter is indeed indispensable in order to present a language to the intelligence: man is the final condition of the world. But as a necessary intermediary, the conscience is insufficient to form the sought reprises, because it would put the intelligence, understood as the conscience, in a determined world. It is only the most primitive categories that, understood as attitudes of the conscience, as conscious attitudes, can interpret the intelligent man. They, and they alone, lend themselves the interpretation, since man doesn't yet oppose himself to a world or a community, since, in the absence of any object and of any objectivity, his discourse is still strictly his own. After that of *certainity*, the categories no longer satisfy this condition.

On the other hand, the category of *the true and the false* can be used. The intelligent man is he who holds the idea of the true (a transformation due to the intervention of the *conscience*), whereas the others live in the false and don't have even an idea of the true. They are led astray by interest, what they take to be true is only an unconscious camouflage of the fears and the desires of their world, and they want to shutter themselves away as rapidly, as completely as possibly, because they cannot bear the anxiety of the search. The man who takes on this search is well aware that he doesn't possess the truth, but he possesses an idea of it. The intelligence then withdraws itself from the world to scrutinize it, to discern the contradictions in the tradition within it, to denounce the plurality of amalgamated surface interests, to put problems in their place, to establish peace between men. For men fight, not because one is in the true and the other is in error but because they all believe they are right and because they are all wrong in their pretensions. Man can be in the true, he can't be right against another. The intelligence alone is capable of deciding their disagreement. Patiently seeking the complete expression of two interests, it shows to those who believe in each of them that their conflict comes from the incoherence of their systems: were each of them consistent with themselves, they would not collide into the other, each would live happily provided that they close themselves in their truth.

The intelligence is thus understood as a human attitude in a [277] world of struggles and errors to which it opposes itself as the messenger of formal truth, of the relativity of concrete truths and thus as an emissary of peace. There can be contestation inside a concrete world as long as the inhabitants of this world have not completely explored it; struggle will no longer be possible as soon as they have understood that they head towards the same goal. There can be struggle between sectarians of different systems; after they've understood that,

in truth, they are not dealing with one another, there will no longer even be discussion. The intelligence provides the truth to the truths that without it are errors; it teaches man that he is the unity of consciousness rendered concrete in an arbitrary and fundamental interest; it gives him a science, that of the exploration of his world in view of the coherent constitution of this world; it provides an attitude: tolerance.

From there, the return to the category of *nonsense* becomes possible. Man always lives in a world; but the multiplicity of worlds proves that this is merely an epiphenomenon. At the bottom life dwells, the will to endure; any systematic construction is merely a wind-break for this blind force. Life has no orientation, it *is*. Thought in the world is only a tool through which this life maintains itself in man's particular case. Whether the system in which this thought organizes itself be more or less coherent and complete is not what matters. Intelligence needs to understand itself as what it is in any world, needs to admit and admit to itself the unreasonable character of its work and needs to stop serving unconscious force. As long as the intelligence is looking to establish an orientation in life's fortuitous appearances, man will remain the plaything of blind thrust. Out of an epiphenomenon, the intelligence must become, not an opposed force, for it would have let itself be led on anew, but the negation of the force, non-action, abstention. Not only being a conscience serving will, but the will's conscience, the intelligence ends up reducing the conscience. Any thought in the world is the expression of an interest, any interest professes a goal but is only an effect: the intelligence alone can lead to peace by understanding this mechanism as a mechanism and by negating world, orientation, and goal<sup>68</sup>.

The return to the language of nonsense is so striking here that one can ask themselves whether or not it is a conversion to a previous system, of a simple return, and not a reprise, an attempt to understand a new attitude in an ancient language. The answer depends on the attitude. Yet, the present attitude surpasses this language, and it cannot express itself in it totally. Both in the category of nonsense and in its reprise through the intelligence, man's interest is finding peace; but whereas in the attitude of nonsense, this peace can be attained only through the negation of thought, it can be attained here only through the intelligence, for which there is — and this is not incidental — a theory of man and of the conscience, without there being a world; within nonsense, on the contrary, there was a world, but any science was considered pernicious. Here, man is unhappy, because [278] he is will; within nonsense, he is so because he thinks. Once, it is the attitude that changes or eliminates thought; the other time, it is the thought that changes or claims to change the attitude.

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<sup>68</sup> The idea is found at the bottom of all the western doctrines that align themselves with Hinduism, from Schopenhauer to Aldous Huxley.

Therefore it is, in nonsense, a technique that frees man; here, it is a reflection: it is not man who is saved, it is the intelligent man, who doesn't detach himself from the particular interests in the world (there is no reason for him to do so), but detaches himself from the interest that builds worlds. In short, the difference of the attitudes is that between the direct grasp of the world and consciousness's reflection on the act of grasping. The attitude is not that of detachment, it is that of intelligence: life is nonsense, but it is the life of others, the intelligent man's life has, no doubt, its meaning, moreover, it gives meaning to life full-stop, which is producing the intelligence. A typical reprise, thought neither succeeds in catching up to the attitude whose language it speaks, nor in elaborating its own category.

It is not at all surprising then that the category of *Truth* takes the place of that of *nonsense* in order to allow the intelligence to grasp itself. Neither of the two categories recognizes any opposition in its domain that, from another point of view, is that of Being, and they lend themselves equally well to the intelligence's claim of universality. Here again, man is will, but the will, while being a primitive force, is not too strong in man, it is too weak in him, and this is the fault of the intelligence that has not been intelligent enough. Man let himself be taken, not by the will, but by the intelligence of the weak, who, instead of judging the intelligence through will, judge the will through intelligence. It is only natural that in this way they end up at deception, at nonsense, at unhappiness. Yet, the will is the hidden Truth that becomes visible Truth through the act of the intelligence that destroys all interests, all orientations, all prison-worlds. It frees itself from dead forms and at the same time becomes the will's liberator. The intelligence, which, installed in a world of the weak, had done everything to slow the momentum, now interprets this world and discovers weakness's cunning, which is not as weak as it seems, but is, on the contrary, strength, strength that preaches weakness, because it does not want to risk struggle, and which disguises itself to conquer through cunning. There are the weak, the true weak; but they are not the ones that build worlds: they seek, they ask for death, whereas the intelligence of the false weak is the intelligence of private, personal interest, social in a determined world that this interest wants to dominate by fashioning it bespoke. But although distorted and misleading in its interpretation of itself, it is nonetheless intelligence serving the will. Therefore, it can self-reflect, and instead of renouncing what it is, can say, "yes" to the will and to life. It is well aware that it does not replace the old message through a new announcement, that it is not the one who invents or will invent new orientations and new worlds. Its work is to make a clean sweep so that life can become confident in itself and always more fully realize itself. Between a crumbling world and a sturdy one, the intelligence discovers man's interest, which is to not be an intelligence, but a creative force. His role is to liberate this concrete force

[279] through his formal idea of interest. The man of the intelligence is not man in his fullness, but he makes the existence of this man possible<sup>69</sup>.

The remarks made regarding the reprise of *nonsense* are equally applicable here, even though they are not of the same usefulness. For it is clear that it is question of a reprise and not a revival or of a residue. The truth is a truth to attain and not a present truth, but since the intelligence understands the truth as conscience, it can, thanks to this mediation, interpret itself as Truth. Indeed, it is not a question, for the intelligence, of the opposition between the true and the false: what is, is and is good. But this is only a reprise of the category and not a rebirth of the attitude. Of course, all that is, is and is to joyfully be accepted as a form of the same force, of the *unified* and eternal life, but this shows itself only to the intelligent man who is the conscience of this life. The intelligence understands itself then as the Truth, as the universal plane where all is what it is and where nothing is false. But it thus understands itself in a world of freedom *and* of the condition, of immanent interest *and* of extra-cosmic disinterestedness, as the detachment from any world *in* any world. To arrive at its own category, the intelligence must still empty itself of this concrete content and establish itself apart any cosmos and any opposition, in a word, the intelligence must discover formal interest as its own category, for itself (not of us).

This pure category attained, the intelligence, as we've said, can live without reprises as an attitude. It is not that it understands itself through its category: it's that on the contrary, with the help of this category, the intelligence establishes itself as incomprehensible, as what cannot be *seized*, what wants neither to be seized nor to seize itself. It doesn't need self-understanding, because, thanks to its category, it can speak of everything and justify its silence about itself: it is not discourse but every discourse is at its disposition. The reprise, if it does not simply precede the discovery of the category in its formal purity, serves the intelligent man in the defense of his personal interest against the others — a real personal interest, because he lives in a world that knows personal interest and that compels him to defend his own particular interest (which is the detachment from any interest), if he does not want to struggle or perish (which nothing pushes him to do). But the reprise doesn't serve the intelligence itself, which neither needs any language of its own nor wants to make itself accessible to men in their worlds.

4. *A note concerning the particular function of the intelligence inside of the present Logic.* — The intelligence has the particularity of being able to *understand* all the preceding

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<sup>69</sup> Here are the roots (that other reprises can graft themselves onto) of the theories of *force* and of *violence* from Gobineau to G. Sorel, Pareto, Mussolini and A. Rosenberg. The Nietzsche of the *Zarathustra* rightly remains their most famous representative.

categories. Only the further development of our research can decide whether this understanding is adequate. However, it can be affirmed from here on out that this further development will either be [280] superfluous and thus erroneous, or will prove through its very existence that the intelligence is “insufficient” from philosophy’s point of view —therefore defining terms that here must remain vague, such as “philosophy” and “sufficient”.

In any event, it is certain that the intelligence occupies a special place: its claim, legitimate or not, is a fact. This fact will only be able to be clarified through the further development, in categories that surpass the intelligence, in other words, in which man appears as a being who is not only “intelligent”; but the fact nonetheless remains that our own discourse seems grounded in the present category and that the questions which can, if a precise form is required for them, only be asked later impose themselves as of now.

What does the (relative) novelty of the category of the intelligence consist of? Briefly said, of the fact that it recognizes all the preceding categories as they are for themselves, and doesn’t consider them in their role in the intelligence’s becoming. This implies two characteristics, which in truth depend on each other: man withdraws himself from the world to which he is no longer connected except accidentally, he makes himself discourse, and in that way, he discovers the idea itself of the attitude, distinct from attitudes, as a negation of what matters to him, namely, of his own metaphysical category. But the attitude remains, for him, a kind of matter to which he applies the form at his disposal, which he sees as *the* category, *interest*. The intelligence is thus the reflection of discourse in itself, but a reflection only for us, whereas, for the intelligent man, it appears as the direct grasp of human reality: thanks to interest, he takes hold of and frees himself from the “reality” that is a reality only for the “others”, for those that do not live in the medium of discourse, but remain caught in their worlds, and which no longer has a hold on him, the intelligent man, insofar as he is intelligent. The attitude and the category in which this attitude makes itself concrete for itself are therefore neatly separated: the intelligent man’s attitude is unthinkable for itself, precisely because it is free; its category thinks and encompasses everything, except itself and the attitude that produced it.

It is as a result of that separation that the intelligence can understand all that it encounters in history without depreciating it, without making a simple stage on the path that leads towards itself out of what it encounters, without convincing it of insufficiency or error. But it is also for the same reason that what the intelligence considers to be the only category is not a category for philosophy: for philosophy, the category is precisely this intelligence that, for itself, it only attitude; the intelligence is the organizing principle of what the man in this attitude takes for *the* philosophy and which appears insufficient due to the fact that this philosophy understands everything except itself.

Nevertheless, the intelligence's role is large: it is in the intelligence that we grasp the difference between an attitude and a category as such, even though the intelligence claims to grasp only attitudes without categories and a category with no attitude, thus placing what (we speak anticipatorily) neither can nor must be separated on different levels, if philosophy must exist.

[281] It is not astonishing then that the language of the intelligence, when it finds itself compelled to speak about itself, is that of the conscience: it is as an attitude that it has surpassed the conscience, not as a discourse and a category; speaking about men seems essential to the intelligence, but speaking of itself inessential; its life and its discourse do not oppose each other, but ignore each other, and when the outside world asks the intelligence to establish a relationship, the intelligence can understand this question only in the last category's language (an attitude, for the intelligence) which claimed to speak about the man living in this language, even though the question can be asked in an entirely different language and by an attitude/category subsequent to the intelligence. It is that, for the intelligence, there is no category except its own, but only attitudes and that all language understands itself exclusively as an expression of an interest, in a pinch: of an interest in discourse as such, that is, as a formalized conscience.

For us, the intelligence thus remains a *fact*, because it itself sees nothing but facts: it understands the facts, but it doesn't even wonder what *the* fact is (that of the intelligence) it speaks of freedom, but for itself, freedom is only alienated freedom (of others) or empty freedom (its own). Its strength is its weakness because it detaches itself from any concrete, it detaches and also forms the concept of the concrete; because it negates all discourse, it establishes the concept of discourse, because it does not recognize philosophical categories, it makes them be seen as such. But the intelligence doesn't see what it does: other categories will be needed to understand its understanding. The intelligence, which is merely language, is in reality mute, since it has no discourse for itself. In what it is as a category for philosophy, it is not a category for itself and is thus comparable to the categories of the furthest antiquity, which are categories only for us. It will be necessary to go farther along in the search in order to see this silence express itself as a conscious negation of discourse. Here, it can only be a question of indicating the particular function of the present category in the whole of philosophy, by means of terms that can have a precise meaning only in what follows and thanks to what follows.



## CHAPTER XII PERSONALITY

**The man who is not content with the game of the intelligence but interprets himself — without however renouncing the intelligence — constitutes himself as the center of a world that is that of his freedom. He is an absolute value, a source of values: a *personality*.**

1. *The refusal of existence outside the world. — The idea of a world of creative freedom.* — The intelligent man lives in the interpretation of others' worlds. His attitude satisfies him, since it obliges him to nothing. He is free of all obligation, since obligation is, for him, only the expression of a concrete interest that, to the conscience of the man living in the world of this interest, appears as the duty to subordinate personal interest (which is in the eyes of the intelligent man the good of another, gone or gestating, world) to the constituent interest (the safeguard of this world's cohesion and meaning). He doesn't act; at most he defends himself against the intrusions of others and the demands of their moralities. His life has no orientation and must not have any, since it is not the essential of his existence: the others live; him, he understands the others.

The simple application of his category to himself does not bring man out of this attitude. But he surpasses the attitude and his category, as soon as he is no longer content with the splitting of his life into a secret intelligence and an existence adapted to the world. It's not that he wants to return to this world or that he cedes to the nostalgia of an established orientation, to the desire of finding an order, a cosmos. If he has a change of attitude, it is not in order to take the world that he finds himself in seriously; it's that he wants to take himself seriously, it's that he doesn't want to *find himself*, as he *finds* other men or a system, a symphony, a stone.

It is necessary to insist here on the difference between that nostalgia that we have just spoken about and which expresses itself in sophisticated and well-thought-out reprises, and the use that an entirely different attitude makes of the concept of interest. The intelligence's attitude is that of enjoyment in play; but that enjoyment is not easy to attain, and that play is not painless: one must renounce the tradition's habits and desires, renounce being

right, working to pile up treasures of knowledge, being wary of one's own biases; it is necessary to bring *into play* all that one is in order to end up at the purity of the intelligence and at disinterestedness. Above all, nothing must [284] be asked of anyone, nothing required of anyone. Men are interesting, provided that one does not have a conflict of interests with them. Yet, if one does, if one wants to have one, it is tempting to confine oneself to the attitude of disinterestedness in order to refuse others the right to it: I can do what I like, because I am intelligent; the others need a morality, an ideal, a religion, a rule, because they would be dangerous if they were not kept on a leash. In the eyes of this intelligent man, the intelligence's progress is an evil. Naturally, he doesn't believe in myths; but if one must choose, well then, he'd sooner try believing in them than allow the others to not believe in them. Philosophically speaking — but it is not a matter of philosophy for this man —, this is not a reprise of discussion, even though man is interpreted in it as a natural desire that needs a rule. A false interpretation would thus be given: in this way of thinking, it is not a question of a reprise, of a self-interpretation of the intelligence with the help of a prior category, but of the attitude of the man in the persisting discussion: his means have changed, and disinterestedness is simply employed to silence the arguments of the tradition when they oppose personal interest. In fact, the world is recognized, man desires only that he be given priority in it, so that, as an exception, he can have exceptional advantages: cunning, when the process is conscious, nostalgia for a better world when the consciousness is missing<sup>70</sup>.

None of this speculation of personal interest is in the refusal of the attitude of the disinterested intelligence that concerns us here, nothing of nostalgic reprises either. Disinterestedness is maintained precisely in what is difficult about it. It is surpassed, because it is not demanding enough, more precisely, because its demand is not vast enough. There is a discipline of disinterestedness, [285] of the interpretation of others, but it only touches the intelligence and abandons man to empty freedom: he is free *from* everything; now he

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<sup>70</sup> The phenomenon deserves to be noted. If it is of scant philosophical interest, it's of great historic importance. It's a matter, in short, of the following: an attitude encounters in the world (which for the attitude is constituted by its own category) men whose discourse seems absurd to it, but it can't ignore their convictions, since these men's behavior is, according to their own testimony, dictated by their convictions and since they are too strong to be pushed aside or subjugated. In this case, the former uses the discourse of the latter to defend itself in life and to maintain the attitude that, for itself, forms its life. The later category is thus not only unknown to the earlier category (which is not at all remarkable), but the bygone attitude speaks the language of the more developed category; it can clearly know that it is using a mask, it can also get caught in its own game and no longer understand what it does. In this latter case, one may speak of *ideology*; in the former, of a lie. Both pose a false problem for the logic, which must consecrate its attention to the reprises, in which a more advanced attitude has not yet formed its language (if it can form one), where then the corresponding category has not yet been grasped, — which it will be, later on, either by the attitude itself, or by the following category that develops the former by opposing itself to it and by positing it in this way: ideology must be accounted for by the interpretation of the intelligence and its category of interest, which is not a category of philosophy. The concept of reprise itself falls, ultimately, within the remit of the totality of categories (only partly to the intelligence) and can be understood only through the understanding (self-understanding) of their system as a unity.

discovers that that freedom *from everything* is not a freedom *to do*. Anything is possible, therefore nothing is necessary or offered; man watches himself doing and interprets himself afterwards. As intelligence, he is at the end of times, as man, he has no future. To be free, he negates himself; but if he doesn't want to win freedom at this price, he finds himself before the task of understanding himself not only as an intelligence, but as a man: he can no longer live entirely in the interpretation of others. He no longer accepts the separation of the attitude and the category, he doesn't want to think freely without being free as a thinking being.

It seems then that the result of the surpassing of the interest's category is the return to that of the *conscience*. The conscious man was indeed free as a thinking being, more than this: he was essentially freedom, a freedom deeper than the world, prior to the world. But this more is an excess. He was freedom in his essence: he was only so then in his essence. The category of interest made man wary, and he doesn't forget what it taught him about the conscience's freedom, namely, that while not being, for itself, freedom caught *in* a determined world, it was nonetheless freedom caught in the struggle *against* a determined world, that of the *condition*. There, freedom consisted of the ought; yet, if man doesn't stop at the intelligence's interest, because he finds no future in it, he will not return to a category that only offers him the future of the infinitely distant and will not let himself be taken back by a world outside of him that is nonetheless an external world despite being negated in transcendence. If the whole in which man understands himself and orients himself must be called a world, it is, indeed, a world that he seeks. But he will only be content in a world that is his own, that he understands as he understands himself in it, that doesn't fool him about himself, doesn't enchain him, that he is not compelled to negate or leave, a world in which he can remain by remaining intelligent.

A reflection of the intelligence in itself can be spoken of then. The intelligent man (for it is him that it is a question of) wonders what his interest is, not his personal interest, but as an intelligent man. He has not been too intelligent, as certain reprises of the intelligence feared, he has not been intelligent enough. He was disinterested: this means that he had lost interest in himself. He was intelligent for everyone, he built them worlds, he explained their conflicts, he resolved their dilemmas, he discovered the good of each, and he himself had nothing. The play that filled his time doesn't fill the life of the man presented here: it is nothing more than a pastime for the hope-less, for the man who has nothing to hope for, nothing to fear, because, for himself, he is nothing, or rather, he must be nothing insomuch as an intelligent man. But if the man of the conscience *wasn't* anything, because he *had* to be everything, the man of the intelligence, who doesn't *have* to be anything, *is* he not everything? The one man had been presumptuous, wanting to free himself from the world

in the world; the other has, maybe, lacked courage by renouncing any human life worthy of the intelligence. It is a matter of living: and man no longer wants to be intelligent at the cost of his life, no more than he wants to sacrifice his intelligence to his life.

[286] The world he is asking for is therefore a world whose interest is understood as interest and who resists this understanding. Living signifies being in a world, having an interest. But now, this interest must be such that it can be compared to no other, exchanged against no other. There is no choosing between what interpretation had exposed and made explicit as concrete interests: the formal category, the tool-category of the intelligence that pure interest was made them acceptable. The world sought is the world of the man who has this tool-category at his disposal. Never again will man find his place in a world that *is* and that confines him. His world will need to be an open world, a world that will exist only to the extent that he makes it exist and that he will never forget that he is the creator of. Concrete interest did not bind the intelligent man because he had discovered that this world was merely the work of man, of men who had lost themselves in their work, who had made something bestowed with more meaning than them out of it. The new world will hold interest for man because it is the work of this man, though a work that he knows to be his own and that he wants to be his own. He lives in a world; but he doesn't find it, he doesn't accept it, he doesn't negate it, doesn't critique it, he creates it, and by creating it, he creates himself.

All that the intelligence has said about concrete interests, of worlds, of their reciprocal impermeability, man then accepts and retains. But he doesn't want to place himself outside of the world. He doesn't want to throw away his slice of humanity, to let go of it in a world that he no longer believes in. He wants to be like they were, those who built worlds of their contentment. But he does not want to content himself inside of a built world: it is in the construction of the world that he sees his contentment. In the construction, not in the destruction of worlds: it is what distinguishes him from the *conscious* poet. He does not fear for his freedom, for he has left the world of the condition. The *I* always to be tested, never proven no longer haunts him; the intelligence's disinterestedness has ruled out the obsession of a closed world for him. Freely, he takes hold of the condition.

This condition is no longer that of science, a condition that doesn't exist for man, but according to which man is what he is; it is not the absolute condition of conditions either, which is man's essence, but which is never man. It is man himself: man such as he knows himself as being the condition of a world that is his own, because he creates it and because he has never finished creating it.

2. *The self-creation of the personality. — The material of creation and the language of others. — Sincerity and sentiment. — The law of the personality and values.* — Man thus

understands himself as *personality*. The world is his personal world, unique world, ineffable by other means than through the personality that realizes itself in the world by realizing the world. I can only construct my world, and I am the only judge of my world, the only legislator. I am what my world is, and my world is what I am; it would be meaningless to seek, in the *self's* manner, an agreement between the self and the world, as though it were [287] a matter of two independent beings and each would be endowed with a stable nature. There is no more cosmos, and man is no longer a substance among other substances. Man *is* not, he *makes* himself, and the continuous act in which he makes himself is at the same time the creator of the world.

However, this creation is not a *creatio ex nihilo*. The error of the conscience was to place man's essence outside of his concrete existence, the insufficiency of the intelligence, to detach that essence from that existence. The personality doesn't want to be an abstraction. It wants to be itself just like the conscience; but moreover it knows that it can be itself only if it *lets* itself. The personality exists before being a personality: in other words, it is a real possibility for itself. It exists in a world of possibilities that is, for the personality, a possible world. This doesn't mean that this world is the condition of the personality: that would be the point of view of the intelligence that sees man — the other man — as the point of intersection of concrete interests. Here, man doesn't interpret himself in his concrete existence with the help of the intelligence as though he were a stranger, he wants to construct. Admittedly, he *finds* something, but what he finds is merely a material for him that does not impose any limit on him, being infinite in relation to his will. His goal lies where the means also lie: for the goal is nothing other than the use of this material that is merely material through the use the personality makes of it. Man wants to live in the world where he finds materials, he wants to live in it as he is.

As he is — the expression is dangerous, for this being is not a static or functional being; it is preferable to say: as he is *insofar as personality*, insofar as *willing to be*. He is for himself what he is not yet, he is his future, and it is according to his future that he sees himself such as he is at present. What science — biology, psychology, the history of ideas — grasps as his being is material for him. He is truly free to create, that is to say that all science understands him only after the fact, even, that it never understands him, since it sees and can only see creation, not the creative act. He no longer wants to understand, neither himself, nor the world, He *wants* to be, therein is his being. Therefore, the matter-world in which he creates himself towards being is not a world to see, a world to analyze or to transform. It *already* is his world, in the same way that he *already* is his personality. That man tells himself this suffices for him to see that being is being only because he creates it.

Man, to say the same thing differently, lives, and his life is oriented for him. He hasn't created this orientation; he knows that. He is not alone; he has had parents, friends, masters that have taught him a language, a morality, all that he understood later under the heading of concrete interest. He wasn't content with this world, because the world was the subject, and he was the object of the world. The freedom of the disinterested intelligence, he wants none of it, since it strips him of any human world. He wonders what he must do with himself, how he can choose between the possibilities. But these possibilities merely exist for the intelligence; they make no sense for he who wants to be and is in wanting to be himself. There are choices to make, decisions to make, but choices and decisions *in* life, not *for* [288] life. The man who wants to live doesn't have his life before him like something separate, distinct from him that he handles and that he forms or even that he abandons to the world's randomness. This life, this is him, who is nothing more, nothing less than this life. But, he is not yet himself nor is this life his own. A life is made for him: the others take care of him, want to impose an orientation of existence on him, a reason, a morality. They attempt to place him in their lives, they make of him what he doesn't want to be, a thing, an object, human, true, but determined, someone who *will* not *be*, but who *will have been*, that they want to understand from the point of view of his future biographer, someone who is not now, actually, in this present instant an open future. If he gives in to the others, he will be lost, lost above all in the eyes of those who, through their attitude, are his nearest and dearest, and for whom he will no longer be worth anything as soon as he will have listened to them. He will have to assert himself among them and against them, to make himself. But therefore he is thus with them, and they who have been prior to himself for himself will remain with him, against him, around him. He is not dealing with a world, less still with worlds: he is a man among men.

Not dealing with a world — the formula makes sense only for we who don't have the attitude of the personality: the personality, we will say, has accepted itself, and has also accepted what the intelligence would call its world. But, for the personality, this acceptance goes further than for the *intelligence*. For the intelligence, only disinterested play was serious and its acceptance of the world was no more serious than its own existence in this world, since this world, which it didn't in fact escape from, was, to its eyes, a negligible quantity. For the *personality*, this play exists; but what is at stake is this negligible quantity, the living man who plays, who is in play, and the intelligence's play reveals itself as the seriousness of a personality: there is not a plurality of worlds, except for a personality who wants to assert itself without declaring itself and who admits reality, not of worlds, but of men, through its very attempt of subtracting itself from their grip, from their influence, through this attempt of abolishing their reality by sacrificing — in speech — his very own. Interest,

says the personality addressing intelligent men, is the excuse of those who are afraid of being themselves: an excuse that is not false, as science or faith are not false; but in it one forgets what matters and deals with what is dead or deals with the living as though it lived no more. Yet, it is a matter of life, not of *the* life, but of your life and my own. There is a world, even a *unified* world, the one of men and their lives, but this world *is* not, it *is made* in and through and for my life and yours. This is not the world I deal with — it only exists for the abstraction of those who wear out their life to evade their life —; in this world, I deal with myself by way of others: it is only the theater of my struggle for myself with myself by way of others. The intelligent man is afraid of being himself<sup>71</sup>

[289] The personality does not justify itself then. It is above any universal, it recognizes no ban, it asks no permission, the personality is so far from this that these words make no sense for it; it does what it wants, it forbids itself what is not for it. Admittedly, it has a law, but this law is still itself; the law of others is no law: it is only the ruse that the others use to take possession of the personality, but a real ruse, dangerous, powerful and which being understood loses nothing of its reality. For the personality doesn't believe itself to be all-powerful, since it knows that it is not alone: man doesn't need justification, but he needs to defend himself. The others seek to realize themselves like him: how would he avoid conflict? His parents like his children, his friends like his adversaries, believers and skeptics, State and society, from all sides, they aspire to ask him, to impose on him, teach him something, to keep him from being himself, so that he doesn't bother the others; for as the others bother him, he is a bother for them: the world of men is the world of struggle.

But which struggle? Would we be brought back to this conflict of interests that was at the bottom of the world of *discussion*? Is the conflict of personalities the conflict of private interests? The question is important, since it exposes a misunderstanding: the identification of the personality with the individual in the community. Yet, it is essential to the *individual* to find his goal in the tradition; it is essential for the *personality* that it be its own goal. Individuals struggle because they agree, as François I was in actual agreement with Charles V about the value of Milan: the personality rises up against personalities because no agreement is possible, to such a point that the struggle is universally unilateral: each struggles against the encroachment of others, no one wants to encroach. The personality only wants one thing, to be itself; but it lives with the others, and this life with the others is the world in which it struggles for itself.

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<sup>71</sup> It's here, in the attitude of the personality, that the intelligence discloses itself, as a *philosophical* category, to philosophy: the man who orients himself thanks to interest is, thanks to his own discourse, understood as intelligence.

Goods, happiness, all that the tradition offers doesn't matter. The suffering, the insoluble conflict, the sacrifice without reward, the effort never crowned with success can all be more adequate, more desirable than all that is seen as satisfaction, since the reality of the personality's struggle and the creation of one's self in a matter-world are still the personality. It is tempted to give in. It is tempted to undergo the influence of others, to form itself according to a model, to accept a canon to avoid this struggle, which is the struggle against oneself: it would be so much easier to fix, once and for all, a conduct, an attitude, a rule of life, to no longer be alone, to know an authority, a God, a law, a science that takes on the responsibility. But this way out doesn't exist for the personality. Its sole guide is sentiment. It is a guide that neither speaks nor is silent: it indicates. It indicates a path that leads nowhere, that has neither end point nor direction, that is its own goal and its own space. It indicates that arrival is the loss of the path, that contentment is destruction, that becoming is being, and being, nothingness. It indicates that man understands himself when he creates himself and that he undoes himself when he understands himself. It indicates that man is alone with the others and that he is never isolated.

[290] For us, this signifies that man is never without language, but that the language that he finds does not suffice for him, that he doesn't fully recognize himself in it and that, nonetheless, he doesn't content himself with silence, even the loquacious silence of the intelligence that imitates all tongues to be able to say of each that it is not the intelligence's own. He wants to realize himself, and realizing oneself is, for man, *declaring oneself*. Being a personality is having one's own language, *to be oneself by being* language, a complete language that can say everything, and a personal language in which any expression expresses the personality. Said differently — since language is the world of man in its being for man —, the personality wants to take possession of the shared world in its totality (not of something in the world) to make its own world of it, to create its world. He must and he does want acquire his heritage<sup>72</sup>; for only through this creative appropriation can he possess it. What exists in shared language does not suffice for man; it is not *sufficient* for him, but renouncing it is out of the question: on the contrary, the world of men exists, but it is never enough that it be the world of men, if it is not *my own*.

The struggle thus presents itself like that of sincerity and hypocrisy. I lie when I say what the others say, and the lie is all the more profound when I conform my acts to my statements, for it is not *me* who speaks and acts. Of course, I live with the others; I understand them as they understand me, and a lot of things go without saying between us; but this

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<sup>72</sup> Goethe, *Faust I*, 2nd monologue:

*Was du ererbt von deinen Vätern hast,  
erwirb es, um es zu besitzen.*



understanding, this agreement (which is merely mute because formulating it would be too easy) creates precisely the temptation of lying. Man is this or that, doing this or that is required, this or that is amusing, this or that is serious, love is this or that — an interminable litany that counts out all the questions by adding ready-made answers to them. And all this is correct or, at least, is not always false. Men live this way, content, in agreement with their moral or artistic conscience, as useful members of the community or as science's useful servants. They are anything one wants — what they want — except sincere men. For what is the meaning of this life that is not their own, but is that of science or morality or reason? So be it, their arguments are solid; but what's the use of arguments, other than unloading me of myself? Letting myself be won over, is that not letting myself be overcome? Morality and freedom and love and happiness, this *can* exist. But none of this *exists* before these words are filled with my meaning, and I lie if I claim as my own what belongs to no one.

What carries this whole movement is sentiment; but it is not the sentiment of the believer, a sentiment of self in the renouncing of self, a mute sentiment that knows no conflict, but only insufficiency. This sentiment asserts itself and cares about asserting itself as the sentiment of this unified and unique personality whose meaning is in the personality, that depends on nothing, that tends towards nothing. It is in conflict with the world of men, not because he doesn't find happiness in it, [291] but because he doesn't live in it in its purity. Man has nothing to announce to the others, he has no message for them nor for himself, he has no truth to demonstrate, no error to refute, as long as he wants to remain sincere in the fidelity to his sentiment. He does not love because the object of his love is good and beautiful, but because he loves it; he does not believe in God because God gives a meaning to his life: God gives it meaning because he believes in Him; science reveals being to him only because he is interested in it. Nothing that is true does him any good; but all that does him good is true. The world is there, before his eyes and at his feet; his sentiment grasps whatever it pleases from this world in order to realize, in that material, his personal world, the true world.

However, this material in which the personality works and works on itself is not inert. Man deals with men. His sentiment is not an extra-worldly being that comes in from outside like in a storeroom of possibilities to help itself to what is there according to a preconceived plan. Man is *someone*, that is, someone who is always with others, always, and never more than when he is against them, distinguishing himself, separating himself, withdrawing himself from them. Sentiment advances on men; it is they and they alone who give it the reality in which it expresses itself and makes its mark. Love, hate, joy, sadness, unhappiness, satisfaction exists for man only through the intermediary of humanity. Nature, even — and maybe above all — when it forms the haven that shelters the personality from the contact of

men, is an inhuman nature only because it is mute: it is important for the personality because it offers the personality a hideaway, but it is a hideaway inside man, and in this interior the personality still finds the others. What man feels, others have felt before him; what he wants, others have wanted; his desires, he didn't invent them. But if they have taught him and bestowed their language upon him, they have also taken and distorted his sentiment. Anything can be said, there is a word and a formula for everything, but his sentiment must not remain everybody's feeling; it must be his own, new, sincere, with neither mold nor formula; it must not suffocate in the smoke of words. Yet, the others want to impose their speech, and with their speech their sentiment. They want him to love like they love, to be just or great or reasonable or wise or good or bad in their way.

And it is precisely against this that he rebels. He does not exist for the others, he exists for himself. They see him with their eyes and they ask him to conform to the image that they have made of him for themselves. But he knows that he cannot be comprehended, because he cannot be apprehended. Nothing matters outside of him, because mattering means mattering for him. What *is*, what *happens* or *comes about*, has no importance, for this belongs to the common domain, which has no truth *because* everyone agrees in it. A child is born, a man is killed, the sun rises, someone loses their place: here are the material facts that don't matter on their own, but that take on an incomparable importance if it is my child, if it is me who has killed that man, if the sun rises for me, if it is me who is driven to misery — and it is not my interest in the world that is at stake (“objectively”, for the others, it is), but *me*: I would not be me without this child and this death, this sun and this misery, and they are not mine [292] if I don't make them mine. It is not because this happens to me that it matters to me: I can repudiate the events, what the others consider to be events; it is the opposite of that: this happens to me, *because* I take it into account. This is the conflict: the others want to impose their way of feeling on me; what matters for me does not matter for them; what moves them leaves me cold; they have some values, I have my own: between us, there is only conflict, conflict without discussion, without any authority that can judge it, without any sign of victory, other than the sentiment of having remained faithful, of having escaped every bond.

It doesn't however mean that the personality is isolated. It is alone, but it is so with the others. Others exist for it in its sentiment, and it exposes itself to them. No doubt, in this relation, which is its concrete life, it remains irreducible. But the creative act happens in the world of men. Admittedly, what I have made of myself binds me no more than what the others make of me does; nonetheless, this was and, having been, is. At every moment of my existence I have been and what I have been, I have been with the others and through the

others, even when I was in conflict with them. Looking backwards, I see that it was their values that I have accepted or refused or transformed: what I am, I am through them in all my contents. This world of men that is the material of my creation is in me; what I have said and made and thought, I did so with them. The conflict is between me who *is* the others and me who wants to be myself, and the deeper I go into myself, the deeper I go into others. I am tension towards myself; but this tension towards... is always momentum taken from..., from a starting point that is the others in me: in truth, the personality is not in conflict with others, it is this conflict itself.

Not being the others would be being oneself; but wanting to not be the others is having been the others, it is being the others. The more I want to be unique and alone, the less I am isolated. It is in the environment of common values that I elaborate myself, and the fulcrum from which I set forth is not a simple datum: there too, there is a tension towards..., there too, there is a will to be. The difference consists in the fact that there the movement has assigned itself its goal, whereas me, I don't know mine, but create it and never create it completely, since I don't bind myself through the act but only to the creative act. Nonetheless, this act realizes itself in the human world and would be a pure impossibility if it didn't lean on something that was of its own nature. I don't understand myself because I don't want to be outside of myself, because I don't want to be subjected to the law of the tension towards previously fixed goals, making my future a future virtually passed. But this "I don't want" is a "I don't want *this*" and this *this* that I don't want, I understand: I am actually a personality, because I am always impersonal. I cannot want to be me without being in myself with the others, for the others, *the* others. I can want to be alone and unique, *because* I am not isolated.

All that I *do* is thus understandable to the others and is [293] understandable to me through the intermediary of their understanding. What's not understandable is not fact and being, but *making* and the *will to be*. Sentiment does not discuss because it doesn't need to justify itself, but the accomplished act is always up for discussion since it falls within the human environment. Am I one of the others then? Will I remain caught in my past? Far from it: put before this past, I can accept it or deny it. I can say: I would do it again, as I can say: it was not me, I was not myself. One or the other is inevitable, since, by acting, I have realized myself, and, through my act, the world of men has become different: I created, maybe myself, maybe a man that I don't want to be, but that others — and the others in me — identify with myself. I can't help judging myself — but according to what law? According to the law that I am myself for myself, an unformulated law, unable to be formulated, since this law is sentiment that anticipates, not a reality, but its own realization in creation. Myself is not a continuity of fact; it is a continuity of will that has always been towards itself, and

that, still being towards itself, creates its past as its own, as an essential past, the now in view of its reality to come. My past doesn't engage me; on the contrary, at every moment, I engage my past.

I therefore am what I am, because I *want* to be what I am. I am not a person, as the man in the freedom of the conscience was, an invisible that can never appear in its truth and that presents itself only in the mode of the *duty to be me* and the *never being me*: I am a real personality in my tension towards my realization that, in the conflict with others (a conflict that I *am*), leaves me free for this self to come that is real in its coming-forth. I am only lost when I let myself be; as soon as I am content, I no longer am, since I am no longer a creator: content, I am the past, I am a dead person: to desire that the present remains is to enter into what no longer is<sup>73</sup>. *There is* only this tension, or, if I translate into the language of others, this language of the past that is my language to the extent that I am my present past and my stuff of creation: the authentic source of all values (positive and negative) is the personality in the uniqueness of its tension.

3. *Man and values. — Crisis. — The past of the others and the coming-forth of the personality. — The image and the dead world. — Conflict [294] and tension. — Sincerity and the inauthentic.* — Man doesn't see himself, originally, as value. He sees values, and not abstract values, a beauty, a good, etc..., capable of being formulated, but objects that he loves or despises, actions to accomplish or to avoid, men to seek out or flee. He doesn't choose because such thing has such value; he finds himself having chosen, and these choices constitute his reality for him. 'This or nothing', 'not this or not me', here is the first expression of the personality, and it is in the development of these choices that the personality appears to itself. The abstract value of the object of choice only appears in the reflection of the personality in itself; in the inner conflict between its past and its future, both present.

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. Goethe, *Faust*, Part 1 (Faust and Mephistopheles)

*Werd' ich zum Augenblicke sagen:  
Verweile doch! du bist so schön;  
Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen,  
Dann will ich gern zu Grunde gehn!*

Cf. also Id., *West-östlicher Divan* (Book of Zuleika):

*Volk und Knecht und Ueberwinder,  
Sie gestehn zu jeder zeit:  
Höchstes Glück der Erdenkinder  
Sei nur dir Persönlichkeit.  
Jedes Leben sei zu führen  
Wenn man sich nicht selbst vermisst;  
Alles koenne man verlieren,  
Wenn man bliebe, was man ist.*

There is then no value understood as such for the man who is not touched by conflict, for he who is in agreement with the others (he who common usage refuses the quality of a strong personality to): values possess him, and it is not him who possesses values, he is the man living in one of those worlds that the intelligence had depicted, a man who does not surpass, in his attitude, the tradition, and for whom everything remains tradition. Value as such becomes a problem for man when he wants to be himself against himself. It reveals itself in the inner dialogue between he who *is* and is thus the others, and he who wants to be himself and wants to no longer be the others. It is in the return on himself that he reflects; what he pushes back today, he pursued yesterday; what would then seem interesting to him, now bores him; what would not affect him moves him. In the past I was seeking myself by seeking this or that thing; I see, I feel that this was not me; I am always *forthcoming*, but what I took as my coming-forth, this past future, was false.

Nonetheless, it was me; without this false, there would be nothing now. What then is this false, this not-me that I am in order to no longer be so? What I am, having been so, I am for myself through the intermediary of others. I had suffered them, because I had been with them; I had imagined being alone and unique, I knew that I was in relation with them, but I imagined being myself in this relation. Now, I see my mistake, I want to actually separate myself from them, to be sincere with myself. But this will to sincerity is still a way of being with them. It is in their language — that is in me and that is thus also my own — that I start the inner dialogue. ‘It is not me that wanted this, it was them in me’ — here is what I say now. I don’t say it to myself as I am forthcoming, coming forth, I say it to them who are me as my present past, and I therefore free myself from this past. But in the act of liberation, I recognize this past as my own, as me: me who frees myself is this me that I free myself from.

Liberation through creation happens in crisis (κρίσις) that is both a discerning view and judgment. I (present forthcoming) watch myself (present past) and judge myself. Without a doubt, the personality does not justify itself; it *is* the conflict to which it is the solution, and there is no authority to which it wants or can submit its case: it decides through self-creation. But it judges itself in its creation. Such as it is, having been, it is the stuff for itself such as it is to come forth. The past has been error or could have been so [295] (assuring oneself of this is necessary), and I am this past: precisely because I am now on the path towards myself, this past keeps its importance, otherwise wanting to escape error would still be an error; for if it is true that I let myself be guided and that I was not me, it is nonetheless this route and none other that has led me to today’s crisis. I *feel* what I want to be, I don’t *know* it; but to say *yes* to this creation-discovery of myself, I must know what I say *no* to: otherwise, how would I be sure of saying *no* sincerely?

The crisis is thus self-reflection, a legitimation (perhaps negative) of the past facing feeling. I had not listened to feeling, but something else, which was not feeling. I had pursued goals, I had obeyed principles and considerations that were not me, or rather, that were then me for me, but that I recognize today as strangers to my feeling: I want to rid myself of them. It is in this conflict that *values* appear as such, no longer only the things of value. Why have I done this, how can I have done it? Why have I forced this constraint onto myself? Why have I loved so-and-so, hated another, followed this or that line? Because I thought that it was *good*. There were things that were good, others that were not, and they were so for reasons that I bent before. I bent, because I subjugated my feeling to my thought. God or science or duty or happiness or disinterested play was what mattered: my feeling of self only got in the way. There were values, but among these values, there was no place for me: me, I had to conform to values, being a useful member of the community to not be exposed to the hostility of the others, or to free myself through the reflection of any concrete situation, or to consecrate my sentiment to God to not suffer misfortune, or to be disinterested in order to understand interests. My existence had a *meaning*, a meaning for others. What I did by recognizing their values was an attempt at making myself recognized as a value: did I not serve what they served? But what they had recognized was a service rendered and a value; it was not me. I was adept or conscientious or intelligent; but I have ended up seeing myself as a mannequin draped in tatters of qualities. Now, I want to live. What do I care about having values? There is but one: me. Values — what are named values —, where do they get their being from, if not me, from my service, from my recognition, from my fear?

Yes, from my fear. It is not because I loved them that I had accepted them. They had always (it is now that I dare admitting it to myself) appeared disagreeable, difficult, tiresome to me. If I didn't reject them, it was not because I had been attracted to them: it was that I was afraid of the consequences. But of what consequences? Being unhappy or uneasy? The danger was only apparent; how could have I been more so than I already was, torn between these principles and my feeling? And what do these words unhappiness or uneasiness mean for me if they are defined with the help of principles and values? I saw myself unhappy because the principles fore-saw unhappiness and uneasiness for me; confining myself to them, I judged myself from beyond my life, and I said to myself: *I will have been* [296] unhappy. And I would have been so, according to the principles. But what is there to say other than: if you want to be happy — what we call happy —, you *must* be happy (or satisfied or peaceful) when you will have attained what we call happiness, you *must* reckon yourself happy. But it is then no longer me who is happy; it would be the values in me. Me, I will perhaps be happy in what they call unhappiness and suffering, conflict, uneasiness, tragedy. For I can give a meaning to the word happiness, if it is necessary to employ a word so loaded

with memories and with bad memories: it is about being *me*, me in the conflict, me in this tension of myself, between the present past and the nothingness of the forth-coming present. There are no risks: what I had feared is terrible only as long as I fear it. There were no risks; I imagined them, I had been made to imagine them. Risks, there is only one, as there is only one value: me. I am above outside happiness and unhappiness.

But is there not an entirely different risk, a risk *for me*? I am not *independent* of others: if I recognize no pre-established world, then, they recognize only these worlds, and, ready to sacrifice their existence and their feeling to their principles, they will not hesitate sacrificing me, me, the other, the stranger who opposes my world to theirs, that doesn't even exist, but that I only want. A risk then exists, a single one: that of the struggle for recognition. For I am with the others: such as I am in my sentiment of myself — and I want myself such as I am —, I am among the others, in the world of men. What I am (having been so), I am so through them; them in me, it is the point from which I set forth. It is for them that I want to be for me. I cannot leave them: by abandoning them I would give up on myself: I would make myself intelligence<sup>74</sup>, I would give up on the sentiment that I am and want to be. I have to assert myself among them, against them, so that I can assert myself before myself, so that I know that what I assert is me, and not them in me; there is no way of being me other than being me in them. I am the unique value. This is as true as it is abstract; as long as I don't impose myself on others, this value has no *value*. The conflict in me is decided only in the conflict with them: I am a value only by imposing values on them, my values.

What I risk then is myself. But what does this mean? I risk my life and my liberty. They can kill me or they can lock me up like a criminal, because I threaten their values. They can treat me like a madman, because I don't 'understand' their values. But is this a veritable risk here? Will I not have thus forced them to recognize me as I am, irreducible, inaccessible to their values? What can they compel me to, since, at the end of the day, all their threats come back to the same thing, that of eliminating me? And if I am not afraid of death, if I know that life is not a value that I can have and can lose, but that my life is me and that to lose life is a meaningless expression? If life is a value only for the others whose values I don't recognize? [297] No, were conflict only this, the struggle to the death, it would not be a risk.

And however, I can fail, I can even be overcome. And it will not be an accident. I have not been myself, I have been the others. What is there to say other than up until today I have always given in? How would the simple conflict and the fact of struggle protect me

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<sup>74</sup> The category of nonsense, which equally detaches man, can be reprised by the man who has passed through the conscience only through the mediation of the intelligence.

from this? The others push me back, pursue me, threaten me. But does this not happen to any hoodlum who wants exactly what they want and who is a danger, not for the values of the community, but for the realization of these values, to any lunatic who doesn't share their values, simply because they don't know any? They have recognized me as irreducible: but I now see that it is only a (negative) recognition in the framework of their values. This was not worth the trouble. Death and persecution don't constitute risks, because they are not opportunities either. If I wanted to be — rather than have — simply *self-consciousness*, I would indeed be so by making myself a stumbling block for them: but I want to be as I am, and it is thus that I want to be recognized. The struggle to the death leads nowhere then. The true risk is that I don't impose myself. If I don't bring the others to recognize me as a concrete value (if from their point of view, they don't receive my values, for it is only thus that I am concretely a value for them), I will not have succeeded; I would be thrown back onto myself, and all my protests in spite of themselves will contain the admission of my defeat; for the fact of being thrown back onto myself would compel me to modify myself according to their values, whose supremacy I would need to recognize. In myself, I would be like them, since I would only be their contrary, their reversed and negative image.

The struggle is thus not a struggle to death. Death resolves nothing, since it makes the problem disappear, the problem in its reality that is the tension of the present past towards the present to come, in my sentiment. The struggle is a struggle for life, a struggle against values only because it is the struggle for values. It is the struggle for a world. The personality has surpassed the attitude of *intelligence*, because it wants to live. Surpassing the world is of no use to the personality. It has an interest, it *is* its interest: that is, it wants a world of its own. This world is a present coming-forth in its sentiment, and this sentiment makes itself concrete for the personality by imposing itself on the sentiments of others, by translating itself into language; only when it expresses itself and when it thus impresses itself on the others, the sentiment *is* for the personality, which wants to create itself from what it *is* as it was up until the crisis in which it discovers itself concretely as tension in conflict.

It is thus clear for the personality that it is not a matter of modifying the world, as had been the goal of progress and of science<sup>75</sup>. For the personality, the world is merely the matter in which it creates itself and that has no interest in itself. The world is what it is, with its progress, its modifications, its conditions. It has no value: [298] it's the personality that gives it value by creating itself. One speaks of values here — one, in other words, the others:

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<sup>75</sup> It is not a matter, either, of taking possession of the community's language, as the man of discussion had attempted to do in order to monopolize what everyone considered precious.



the intelligence has correctly seen that they don't possess values and that it is rather the values that possess them. But the intelligence lacked courage: man, instead of imposing himself by imposing his sentiment, gave up on himself because he dared not throw himself into the future, and thus transformed his open future into a future perfect tense, virtually enclosed and constituted in a concrete interest, in a closed world that he interpreted already as one of man's simple — maybe other, never new — possibilities. The intelligence itself thus appears to the personality as one of these values that possess man and that don't allow him to live as he is; but it also shows the personality that it is not the only one lacking courage, that concrete worlds serve to protect man from conflict and risk, to distance himself from his concrete sentiment, from life as his own, from the encounter with himself. Refusing flight, ready to put itself at risk, the personality will want nothing to do with a world of protection and excuse: it wants to impose its sentiment, to create a world of its own and to impose it on others, and, to start, on the others in itself.

Yet, the essential of this world is not its content. It contains values, but it contains them only for the others who find themselves made uneasy in their world. It is to them that the unique value of the personality appears like a plurality of values, because the personality shatters in their world into a multitude of values that are not their own — values for them only, because the personality tries to impose something else on them, something that has no place (of value) in their world, but that claims to have one. For the personality, this applies to it to the extent that it is the others, its past, its not-being-itself. But its past is for it only according to its future; therefore, it is its sentiment that it opposes, in its unity, to life in the world, which is, for it, rather a life of the world than a human life. It doesn't then enter into discussion with the others: there is no common ground; precisely the fact that the others discuss, that is, seek a general solution, valid for each, separates the personality from them, since it *feels*. What it wants to impose upon them is the world of its sentiment that does not compare itself to their world of convictions and impersonal truths, a world that neither worries nor interests it. It provides something else, the sincerity that imposes itself without argument, that convinces without discussion.

Sentiment then is not a lesser mode of presence, in the sense that one says: it is merely a sentiment. On the contrary, nothing matters to man except to the extent that he feels it, nothing is truly given to him unless he feels it. Inauthenticity consists precisely in the fact that man *speaks* of sentiment, that through his language he transforms it into a kind of clothing suiting everyone and suiting no one, that he kills the feeling that can only live as his own. Language allows him to speak about sentiments, conventions facilitate for him having sentiments that are needed at the moments and on the occasions that they are needed, without him however *being* this sentiment, without him *creating* himself through this sentiment.

Even the sentiment that towers over him, the fear of conflict, is not his own, since he is not himself for himself in [299] this flight that conventions are intended to cover and hide: only after making the decision to be himself, man detects, in himself as in the others, this core of cowardice in front of life and discovers that what the intelligence calls worlds had started, each time, by being sentiment and a personal life, in order to die a system of rules and of values, commonplace for those that don't want to run the risk.

Man has nothing to oppose to this language of the dead (that he has belonged to, and that he can fall into again), except the strength of his sentiment in its sincerity. It's this force which must impose itself on others, which must wake the sentiment in them, which, furthermore, must lift the personality above the fear that it has inherited by inheriting from the world, which must provide it the means of being for itself a present coming-forth, an open future. It doesn't know how to convince through reasonings nor persuade through discourses. It is one, a unique value; it imposes itself as unity. It is well aware that it will be torn limb from limb later on, that one day, its feeling will provide, to the fearful, another ready to wear garment. But this will not be, this must not be its fault. It neither explains itself nor makes itself explicit. It exposes itself, and it must impose itself through this exposing of its authenticity.

In the tradition's terms, the personality then is essentially a poet, and its essential expression, evocation. For the tradition, in fact, the poet (it is not a matter of the 'form', but of the poetic as it is understood in expressions like *poetic term*, *non-poetic image*, *prose poetry*, etc.) is the man who makes himself understood without reasoning, who says what everyone imagines having felt as soon as soon as he teaches them how to feel it, and this by means of a language that makes no sense and that nonetheless takes possession of man all of a sudden, as if by magic, that fills him and obsesses him without him being able to say what has happened to him.

An exact definition, but exact from the tradition's point of view, from a point of view outside and prior to the personality, an attempt then to neutralize the personality by transforming it into a spring of strong emotions, but fleeting and without consequence. Yet, the personality doesn't want to be a poet. The poet of the conscience wants to create a poetic world in order to destroy it; it is the possibility of destroying that proves the transcendence of his *I* over his *self* to him; he is a poet, a maker of worlds, which able to be made and un-made flow from his freedom that *must* be, *must* assert itself; he proves to himself that, at his core, he is not as he is in his conditioned initial appearance, that he is only conditioned *for* his freedom, the absolute condition of all conditions. The personality couldn't care less about this reflection from man of his conscience. It wants to express itself and to express itself as

it is (present future) in the world such as it is (present past). There is nothing that it can reject with more force than the reflection that, limited in the world, silences itself in it and accepts itself in it as limited in order to find its freedom, its being-for-itself, in a beyond inaccessible to its concrete existence, in such a way that for the personality the sentiment is its own only in the possibility of destroying all concrete sentiment.

Nevertheless, in its own way, the tradition grasps an essential trait of the [300] personality, which, indeed, doesn't live in the environment of discourse, but in the image. The tradition's error is to believe that the image possesses or should possess a *signification*, that it conceals a meaning that could be otherwise exposed, that it is a method, a way of grabbing man by the guts instead of tackling his intellectual faculties. Yet, for the personality, image is everything. It grasps nothing through the image, it grasps the image. Nor does it *form* images (this is the fundamental opposition between the personality and the poet of the conscience); the image *is* the reality of this world that it is, a reality that no more depends on the image than the image itself does on this reality. It is self-creation by oneself that discovers the image, as inversely it is in the discovery of the image that the personality creates itself.

This image then is the sentiment that exposes itself. It is not an image of something, it has no meaning outside of itself. If it is a symbol, this symbol allows all of the interpretations of the sentiment and doesn't justify any in particular, for the question of meaning and of the interpretation of the image doesn't exist for the personality. The personality is what it is for itself in its image, both as the personality's concrete being as it is forth-coming in the present and as the concrete being of the world that is a world of the personality in the image. There is neither discussion, nor justification, nor reason. All is, not given, but present in a total unity that *is* not *felt* as if it were an object, an *other* from sentiment, but which is the sentiment itself. The authenticity of the sentiment, the sincerity of the personality are nothing other than this total presence outside of which nothing exists, which knows no doubt, which *is* the knowledge that *this* matters, and this *alone*. It's what distinguishes them, for the personality, from the inauthenticity of the impersonal life in which *one* possesses sentiments, but where *one* has sentiments like *one* has other things, remaining separated from this sentiment that is therefore not existence itself, but contents itself with the role of an *emotion* that, depending on the case, *one* makes public or that one indulges themselves in, resolute and capable of taking themselves back: the emotion is not the subject, but an accident of the subject that does not create itself, but finds itself and accepts itself as determined. Therefore the emotion is inconsequential; it provides fear with the means of paying its tribute to sentiment without putting man in front of his *personal* future; it is the luxury and the ornament of an existence that refuses to be more than a particle in a world; it is and wants to be private, a side issue that takes up space only for those who take nothing seriously, not even the world

recognized by them. In particular, the emotion doesn't want to impose itself; it asks — sometimes, not always — to communicate itself, and all types of cults can be established between 'soul mates', cults of rapturous nature, of touched and touching goodness, of moving art, of a small, so sweet, God, etc. it is, above all, necessary to avoid any confusion between this emotion and the sentiment that, in the image, is the personality itself for the personality.

The personality is entirely in that image. Therefore, the conflict between the past and the future inside of the personality and the conflict for recognition between the personality and the others proceed from the personality. It is a matter of imposing the image, and of imposing it [301] both as sentiment and through sentiment. No method for this: for the personality itself, this image can possess precise contours, become an ideal of oneself lived as a present reality in the future's mode, acting like a conscience deeper than any conscious, refusing the tradition at the inside of the personality, saying with an authority above any challenge that *this* is not for it because otherwise it would no longer be itself — and it can be mute, an impulse, a driving force against which the inherited discourse rises up and disputes in vain. In one case like in the other, the image makes itself felt only in crisis, through conflict. In this creation of oneself, in this discovery of the image, the personality finds itself in the obligation of imposing itself on itself as on others; it becomes a stranger animal for itself than any beast of fable; it has pursued, it would still like, something in it would still like to pursue what *one* pursues: the conflict in itself doesn't differ, regarding the ground, from the conflict with the others, and the means of victory are the same.

The means? There is but one: the strength of the personality, its sincerity, the unity and uniqueness of its sentiment. The very idea of a technique, as a science of procedures to employ for the realization of an end, is absurd for the personality, the separation of ends and procedures being the negation of the personality. It imposes itself (or doesn't impose itself) without knowing, nor seeking to know how and why. Its behavior with itself as with the others has its root in sentiment itself. It can lose patience with itself and with the others; it knows how to wait and 'So let me seem, until I become so'<sup>76</sup>; it exhorts and it lives the example; at times it throws itself into dreams, at times it acts: nothing is preconceived, because nothing is detached from the personality. Making something and making it that way are not distinct points of view: nothing would be done were it not done *thus*. The personality is all in everything; for everything is only its self-creation.

If it is itself that is at stake in this conflict between the personality and the dead world, this world is just as much so. Up to now, the personality has done nothing but expose itself

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<sup>76</sup> Goethe, *Poetry, Mignon*: « *So lasst mich scheinen, bis ich werde.* »

in its image. But so that this image is not something in the world, an ideal for idle hours, a program of transformations, something explicable and reducible, it still needs to be imposed as image and sentiment. The struggle for recognition must be engaged. For the dead world is the world of men, and a world that, in its death, lives. There is not a world outside of men, a form independent of its content, a scene that would go on after the actors leave. This dead world is in men, it *is* men; it is in each of them. What makes the personality is feeling it and wanting nonetheless to live its life without feeding off the corpse of a past sentiment. But this corpse, the personality carries it in itself, as it carries in itself this world-stuff that it creates itself in. It has not been alive: otherwise it wouldn't need to create itself, it has not been dead: otherwise [302] how would it want to be? It has been like the others, inauthentic, insincere; it will not create itself without creating man. It wants to be as it is; but this will, being the courage of sentiment, isn't only for it, doesn't engage it all alone, it engages the world of men: the crisis and the conflict are one and the same thing, creating itself and creating a human world, escaping death and resuscitating the corpse of sentiment, one doesn't happen without the other.

It is important to exclude a possible misunderstanding here. The personality's qualifying term is appended — following reprises that we will have to study — to any historical figure whatsoever, that is, to any name that plays any role in history (understood according to any philosophical categories whatsoever). The personality that we are dealing with is characterized by the tension, the will to be oneself, the crisis and the conflict. One can be a great figure in one tradition, and there are categorial meanings of the term greatness that not only ignore conflict, but put it at a distance. One can be sincere in any morality, and moralities are very shrewd judges. Conflict and struggles are encountered elsewhere, as the sentiment holds a central place under other categories (if only under that of God). Never, however, is man everything for himself. Himself and the world, the others, life and death and their conflict, past and future and their tensions in crisis, he knows here that he *is so* and he wants to be. For him — and it is this alone that matters as long as man has not passed to another attitude and doesn't judge with the help of new category — for him, his being is in tension and in conflict, and if this tension slackens in a satisfaction, if this conflict results in anything other than a deeper conflict, he will have betrayed the sentiment, sincerity and life.

The personality only exists in conflict. The image, as we've said, doesn't exist for it as something separated, even less is there an explanation or an interpretation of this image. But if the image doesn't detach itself from man, if it does not *explain* itself for him, it nonetheless *makes itself explicit* in conflict. It determines itself, not through itself, but through what it is not. It becomes a concrete life in its effort to reanimate dead sentiment; it becomes positive through the negation of its contrary. Or rather it does not determine itself: it grasps

its reflection in its matter. It *exists* as tension, but it exists *for itself* inasmuch as this tension braces itself against a matter which, without being life, never ceases being human, which, despite not being an authentic sentiment, *has* nonetheless *had* its root in sentiment. Without this effort the personality would not be a personality for itself: it would exist only for the spectator. It thus makes itself explicit by opposing itself to the survival of sentiment in the dead world, and it thus discovers this sunken life. It establishes itself as personality in the acknowledgment that the others (the others, including the man it has been) are not sincere, are not personalities, that they believe in values, or rather that they proclaim to believe in values and that deep down these values have only one function, which is to exempt them from taking themselves seriously. What towers over them are their interests. They are bourgeois, members of a community where everyone can take anyone's place. They don't *have* places: [303] they *are* nothing other than their places, and they don't want to be anything more. They don't say: this is good because I desire it; they say: I desire this because this is good; they live in a world according to the meaning given to that expression by the intelligence, a world that has no unity, or has only the unity of its past, the unity of dead sentiment, the unity of the interest that determines their interests without them knowing.

The personality turns towards each value in this conflict, because each value hoists claims onto it and because it knows and recognizes the values to the extent that they raise these claims. The intelligence's cowardice stops, from the personality's point of view, at the refusal of these claims, there then where the effort of the crisis only starts for the personality. It creates itself *against* values, it imposes itself as alive to dead sentiments. The claim must be answered, either through the refusal, or through the approval, or through indifference, which is not a lack of interest, but a negation of interest. 'This is me', 'this is not me', 'this I rule out', these are the personality's reactions.

Re-actions only when they are seen by others and by the personality in this world of its existence in which it is the others: creations for the personality in its will to be itself. It creates itself in the stuff of the human world; that is to say that value is authentically value only on the condition of being felt by it as value. *For itself*, there are only two responses to the claim: 'this concerns me' and 'this doesn't concern me'. What strips something of value and a value of its authenticity is the fact that it doesn't touch the personality, that the personality cannot express itself in the value. 'To take seriously', 'to not taking seriously', these acts are acts of sentiment in which the sentiment's objects — to use the conscience's language — constitute themselves, objects that are never given, but created in their essential, in their life. How this constitution happens is here an incomprehensible question for the personality, since, in its opinion, this constitution would not be valid were it not spontaneous: the creation of values is the mystery of the self-creation that is at the bottom of all questions.

The conflict then is between the unity of the personality that creates itself and the values that claim to create the human person, a conflict that is never appeased, because the personality can never renounce its rights as creator nor renounce what opposes itself to it. It forever creates itself today from its yesterdays, but it doesn't have the possibility of creating itself once and for all: yesterday's today was today merely yesterday, and yesterday's self is today a man *among others*. Life continually falls back into death, and the personality's sustained effort is needed in order to not live in this death, since yesterday's self, having become one *among others*, lives off a life of death, with the others' claims. The personality is always in crisis; always, that is, at every instant, it creates itself by creating its image, which is its being to come. It is always in conflict with the others, with the past, with the inauthentic.

It is not however as if the personality *needed* to refuse the world's values to create other ones. It *can* do so; but it [304] can just as well recover in itself what is exterior for the others under the form of values. It can be conservative in a world where one is revolutionary, hard in a sentimental world, idealist in a society of confessed interests — just as it can be, from the others' point of view, conformist. What matters to the personality is being itself towards — and this is just as much *for* as *against* — each value, each claim. It is not looking to know if *this* is actually a value; to it, the question alone seems like an evasion and an act of cowardice; it asks if it is sincere when it says: this matters to me. The others' values exist for the personality, but as problems and as temptations.

That there can be no *demonstration* of sincerity is thus evident: where there is no discussion, there is no demonstration; since the sentiment is everything, the judgment doesn't distinguish itself from the image, which should provide the canon, but which could provide it only to the man who opposes himself to the sentiment. Man imposes himself on others, and on the others in him — the formula then takes a precise meaning: he has never succeeded, but he can succeed at every instant, provided that he choose to be what he is in the image of himself and of the human world, provided also that he not allow the image to congeal in a 'once and for all', provided that he never become a creature instead of a creator, provided finally that he answer to values, to the others' claims on him. Imposing myself on others, this is not compelling them to recognize 'my' values — I don't have any that can be communicated —, it is compelling them to themselves enter into the personal conflict and to thus recognize me in my authenticity, in the sincerity of my sentiment. This is the profound reason that conflict cannot become struggle, at least for the personality: conflict can become a struggle against the personality, in the event that the personality is not understood by the others; said otherwise, it risks its life. But as we have seen, this risk is real only in the others' opinion; what it itself fears is not death in the world out of the love of life, it is life in death out of love of the world. Perishing, the personality knows that it is right, because it

stayed sincere. Nonetheless, perishing or finding itself thrown back onto itself, it also knows that it has partially failed: it wasn't able to resuscitate the corpse of sentiment in the others, it was not able to wake the conflict in them. It is not death that announces his defeat to him; defeat declares itself in the *abstract* judgment by which the others condemn it. Death and danger are only accidents without importance and which only exist by the fact of the others; true defeat is found elsewhere: the personality has not imposed itself because the others have stayed in their world, because the force of the personality has not been sufficient to force them to authenticity. The personality has not overcome, not because the others have condemned it, but because the others have not seen it as the unique value, because they have measured it against values, because they have believed themselves capable of judging it. There is struggle, because the personality has not imposed its conflict on the others, and there is only that very failure that decides, and that decides even in the absence of any struggle, of any hostility. The personality did not know how to speak to the others, did not know how to pierce the veil of dead words that separates it from the others, [305] did not know how to free them for that creation of themselves in which the others would have *felt* it in the authenticity of its irreducible sentiment. It fails because it didn't know how to speak to *itself*, because its image in itself has not prevailed over the others in it, because its future has not beaten its past, because its will to exist has not been pure: it has not imposed the conflict and authenticity, because it was not entirely in conflict. If it had resuscitated its dead, it would have resuscitated the others' dead. The sentiment of others doesn't respond to the personality, because it opposed a simple emotion to them.

This here is the criterion of sincerity for the personality, for the personality, and not for the world that judges because it sticks to its rules, because, as defined by the intelligence, it has an interest, because, the personality would say, its only interest is its cowardice, still worldly in its choice of a position outside of the world. The personality is authentic for itself, and its sentiment is sincere if it imposes its image, if, by creating itself, the personality creates a world that is its expression. It knows that it is recognized, it *feels* itself recognized if the world ceases to be closed, if the others cease being the others, if life responds to life, sentiment to sentiment, if men accept their conflicts, accept the personality's, if between them and it there is nothing of worth that is not lived.

Therefore defeat and victory are never definitive. To speak paradoxically: if one or the other were — no matter which —, there would be definitive defeat, since man would no longer be personality. But this here is merely a paradox, the application of a foreign category; it is a possibility only for the others. The personality senses that it will never give up on itself, on conflict. Defeat or victory, it lives in both, because the reality of conflict consists of both. It will perhaps be ripped apart in defeat; but in this suffering, it will be authentic. It



will collide with values; but the collision itself will prove the personality's sincerity to itself. Between the abandonment and consent, never satisfied, never hopeless, it forms itself. Re-animating or burying values, it is sure of its uniqueness, sure of being the source of all authentic value, sure that it is its sentiment that makes it so that a value is more than a pretext and an excuse. Projecting itself into the human world, projecting the human world, it creates itself from bits of debris of prior creations and has never finished creating itself: tension, conflict, never ending, never starting, an always clear, always incomplete image, an incoherent language, and more *unified* than any speech from prudence and reflection, without argument, and convincing beyond any discussion and any system.

4. *The philosophy of the personality and its paradox.* — At the beginning, it seemed natural to pass from the intelligence to the personality (n.1) and to grasp it as a category (n. 2). Now, after having seen the personality as it is for itself, it seems almost impossible to attain the category from the attitude. Had we not made the task too easy on ourselves? Using the intelligence's language, have we not interpreted the personality in the same way that the intelligence interprets any concrete interest? And [306] is it not clear that the personality is unyielding to this treatment, that we have proceeded by means of a reprise, precisely a reprise of the intelligence, that the personality does not constitute any world in the sense of the intelligence, that it constitutes *itself*, and constitutes itself in creation and in conflict, that it never understands itself in a world, never lets itself be grasped with the help of its world, not ever, especially not, through the opposition to a world (as was the case of the conscience)? It is free and it knows itself to be free, so much so that the problem of freedom is not among those that worry it and that the world neither obsesses nor reassures it. It is at home in the world, because it takes back this world into itself. How then can the attitude articulate itself as a category? How does his language, which is full of evocation, a language towards...not a language of..., which is, for the tradition of discussion and of the reprises of discussion, a poetic language, for itself a language of image and of conflict, how does this language arrive at the concept? How does this sentiment that claim to be sentiment pass to thought? Can it only do so? Or do we find ourselves in a situation analogous situation to the one in which we placed the intelligence, because the category serving the attitude (interest) and the attitude (intelligence) didn't coincide there? Here, it would be even more serious; for here the attitude refuses any category and any concept: can there be any explanation whatsoever, when one time, in one concrete attitude, man has been for himself and nonetheless was not able, did not want to articulate himself. Man, while thinking — if at least thinking means: having a coherent discourse for the one who holds it —, would have left the domain of theory

(the word taken here in the largest sense); he would no longer have anything to teach, he would no longer claim any science, let alone a *valid* orientation.

These fears of the philosophical good sense are not empty. On the contrary, the fact is that the personality rejects any theory, any truth, any orientation. Its world is the human world, a non-world from the intelligence's point of view, a world which can't be grasped, because it refuses any fixings, which can't be described, because it refuses to wear features drawn once and for all, a world which renders any judgment impossible, because the personality sees the false eminently in judgment as such. Therefore, everything that is said about the personality is paradoxical: it is the tension towards the authenticity of others; it is essentially to come, and hence, is essentially its past. The origin of the paradox is rapidly detected: it is the intelligence that sees, in the personality, one of man's possibilities, and this possibility is characterized by the fact that as opposed to other possibilities, man does not create himself by creating a world that includes him, but aspires to be a creator as he is (in sentiment) prior to any world; said otherwise, it is a possibility that is not possibility, but absolute human reality. The intelligence, which knows only the relation man/being in the world, is logical then by calling on the help of the category of the conscience. And so, everything falls into place wonderfully: the personality becomes the *I*, the technique of analysis through conditions of possibility becomes once again applicable, a world — never known, always knowable — forms the new starting point of a transcendental research, of a philosophy of reflection that is enriched, along [307] the way, by the *results* of the interpretation of the personality's *phenomena*. Everything is in order, everything falls into place: man is authentic or he is not (these are equivalent possibilities), the existence of the personality is the condition of the discovery of being, the personality's future is the fundamental mode of man's temporality that grounds the time of what is, etc...<sup>77</sup>. None of this is false — and why would it be false, since a reprise consistent with itself (that is, which avoids the meta-basis) constitutes its truth for itself? The only drawback is that it is a reprise that makes no sense for the personality.

For pure personality laughs in the face of all the efforts of the reprises. It is too sure of itself to need a transcendence and a transcendental philosophy. It is free, and a philosophy of freedom would be, if it would only think about it, the last of its worries. And worries are not lacking: authenticity and conflict, life, death and sincerity of sentiment, the others, values — it is busy enough. Must it be said then that it appears as an attitude only to the reprises, as a category — maybe — to the categories or to the attitudes that come after? In other

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<sup>77</sup> This is how that analysis of the personality (of authentic/inauthentic *existence*) can make up, for Mr. Heidegger, in *Sein und Zeit*, the entry into ontology. — It is not, however, the central problem of the so-called 'existential' philosophy; cf. below, chap. XV.

words, would the personality be a category for a philosophy (whatever this term philosophy could mean) and would there be no category for it? One thing is certain: the personality does not possess and does not want to possess a philosophy like the *object* or the *conscience*, for example, and the *self* is no closer to it than *God* or the *conscience*, without even speaking of the *condition* and the *intelligence*, which for the personality are typical representatives of cowardice and flight before oneself.

However the personality speaks; speaking is essential for it. If its language is not a language in the world, which explains itself in relation to the world (man then is a sage or a creature, or a being who works reasonably towards progress, or who transcends the world in reflection, or who can, as intelligence, place himself outside of the world, etc...), if this language doesn't aspire to coherence, it is *unified* in the sentiment of conflict and imposes itself as this unity. For the personality — and nothing else must hold our attention here, where any *for us* would hide another category that has not yet appeared —, the personality has a language, a thought, a philosophy, and it is neither unsettling — still for it — nor especially surprising that this philosophy is not finished and can't be, precisely because it is a personal philosophy, lived and living, which teaches nothing.

The personality speaks without teaching; it speaks to others and in conflict; and it speaks of itself as it is, creating itself by expressing itself. This means that it does not speak about the personality. It is; *the* personality is nothing other than a dead word, a final screen for cowardice. In speaking of itself, it speaks of its image (not of *the* image — which, once again, would be an evasion); it shapes [308] its image. But this conflict with the others, this image, image for the others, which, all the while being *the* others, are *its* others, the personality shapes them in the stuff of the world. The personality does not see *itself* (as a 'structure', as an 'a priori' of any world); it sees the others as what, despite itself, it itself always is, having been so. It imposes itself on the others who are not themselves, and on itself as it is not itself, as it is the others. It *is* not, strictly speaking, a personality, for the personality *is* nothing, being to come. The others *are*; it never *is*, always being to come. What *is* is the inauthentic, the flight, the impersonal: world-stuff, a dead world, and a nonetheless human world.

A human world: this means that this dead world can be resuscitated, that this insincerity can be brought to sincerity, that the personality is not cut off from the others, that its language, if it teaches nothing, can wake. The others are also not outside of the conflict; for if they flee their conflict, is not this flight an homage to conflict? If they replace the self-creation in the image by the respect of the image set in values, do they not thus recognize that man doesn't live without an image? They are impersonal, but their impersonality is still life, although life in death. They have closed themselves off, but they can open themselves

up. Is it not the task that, at each instant, falls to the personality? To be frank, both they and the personality *can* understand each other, since the sentiment merely sleeps in them: they are men, as the personality is a human personality.

We have seen how the personality encounters values, and encounters them as the *being* of others. The personality, needing to turn itself towards values and to develop its image in this encounter, grasps the others there: by opposing itself to values, it speaks of values. It wants to impose the authenticity of its conflict: from the others' point of view (which is present to it, since it is in itself that it fights this point of view), its attack is the attempt, not of reanimating values, which is understandable only from the point of view of the personality to come, but of liquidating values, of making them fluid and stripping them of their rigidity which, for the others, forms their interest. This attempt has some chance of success in the eyes of the personality, as it constitutes a danger (which amounts to the same thing) for the others, who show this danger to the personality through their resistance. The personality then speaks of values, or rather: of the inauthenticity of values, and it speaks of it as a human being to other human beings. It is itself a human being in its will to being itself; the others are its fellow human beings in their possibility of willing themselves and in their actual refusal of creating themselves.

The first form in which the personality *thinks* itself through is thus the negation of its negation. The others are impersonal; it is not. They live in a dead world, with their set values, without conflict, etc... From there, the second form in which the personality understands itself: it is life, a renewal of all instants, against the treason in which the others lose their future. It is, finally, eminently a human being, whereas the others are [309] men according to a deficient mode<sup>78</sup>. This final form is the definitive one. The term *human being* corresponds to what we have named the personality, since we, who do not position ourselves in the present attitude, could not use an essentially ambiguous term, given that the plurality of categories (the simple plurality suffices) is present for us. For the personality, however, the term personality would be shocking; It sees, in it, a reduction of sentiment and conflict to a particularity in the world, to a value, whereas it is, for itself, the sincerity that takes seriously what alone is serious. It is not mistaken. The others' reaction, unless the personality imposes itself, is precisely seeing in the personality a curiosity, a character, a particular type, to speak only of the reactions falling under non-violent attitudes. Yet, it is the judgment as such that constitutes its failure for the personality. It doesn't want to be judged; it addresses itself to life and to sentiment, to that authentic man who sleeps in the others.

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. Goethe, *West-Oestlicher Divan*, Book of Paradise, The Poet:  
*Denn ich bin ein Mensch gewesen,*  
*Und das heisst ein Kämpfer sein.*

But this protest is but a precaution that does nothing to change the fact that the personality has attained its category. It can speak of itself to the others. Only it does so in its way. It can't stand the system: that is the others' affair, a pooling of conflicts, the depersonalization through discussion in the society that must make everyone reach an agreement about values, the establishing of a 'once and for all'. It detests the description that the intelligence gives of concrete interest even more, if that is possible, because not only has the intelligence, seeking its place outside the world, reached the highest degree of cowardice, but above all because this cowardice is not even capable of seeing man as he is in his essence, as a will to being oneself in sentiment, a will perhaps checked, perhaps distorted through the depersonalization that the recognition of established values is, but a will to life all the same, that can wake up in the others as it has woken in the personality. This intelligence has only one excuse, and it is not one that it can invoke, since it is too cowardly to see its sole merit: it's having made suspect all that pronounces itself definitive, all the systems, all values; it's having thrown man back onto himself, having put him in the conflict, having forced him to be sincere and to take seriously the human world as always to come; it is having made a clean slate of all that is set and having made its own disappearance possible. But that is all that the personality can take from the intelligence. The reconstruction of concrete interests is, for it, the work of a counterfeiter, in that it applies itself to reducing man to what he merely is *modo deficiente*: to the set expression of sentiment; it thus suppresses the essential, namely the fact that man, thanks to sentiment, is always capable of saying: 'This or death', 'Not that or not me', that, in the most closed-off world, he can launch himself into the living sentiment [310] in order to shatter this prison/world and to surpass it by taking it seriously. The intelligence sees that man loses himself in his world; the personality sees that what has lost itself in the world is still living man. The personality is not looking for a truth, even less the truth in the sense of traditional philosophy; it doesn't interpret, knowing that its substance is what nourishes the intelligence in its play: it speaks of itself, but its speaking is creative expression, ex-position of image, evocation, call, conflict, awakening others who sleep in the world of the dead.

Any expression then is philosophical for it, provided that it is an authentic expression of a sincere sentiment, of a seriousness. That there is neither method for this, nor guarantee, nor methodological and confident philosophy is evident: would this not be imagining that there be an impersonal truth, a valid measurement for all, for each, forever? Would this not be claiming that the conflict was but an appearance, an accident, threatened by extinction, a limitation of man, a finiteness that he would transcend by thinking of it as finiteness? The personality forbids itself these processes of the reflection in another. As it *has* no sentiment, it *has* no philosophy: it *is* one and the other. This is why a poem, a sculpture, a painting can

be more philosophical than what is ordinarily presented under the name of philosophy, because they directly express the personality, immediately impose the image. But they detach themselves from the personality and fall into the world: the personality no longer speaks in them; it spoke in them, and if, for the personality, this doesn't matter in its coming-forth, — it is always already elsewhere —, what it thus has exposed of itself nevertheless becomes for that future, its past, without future, without conflict. Discourse alone can stay open, because it alone can tackle life in death, can tackle values. It is the weakest expression of sentiment, the strongest of conflict, it is merely translating what the other expressions give immediately; but without this translation, these other forms would remain misunderstood in the world, since the world would understand them in its manner: as created things, not as creation in act, as interpretation, not as image, as values, not as conflict.

Discourse is without a doubt not sheltered from this 'understanding', but since it has grasped its organizing principle, discourse can continue in such a way that the world puts itself in the wrong as soon as it tries to understand discourse. For this discourse is not coherent in the sense of the world: it is the reflection of the personality, as conflict and future, in values, and consequently the reduction of values to seriousness — which seriousness reduces them to absurdity. The world may well try to find a fixed center there, an essential factor: it will merely find contradiction, unless it suppresses a part of the personality's facets, and will nonetheless not be able to avoid 'the impression' of finding itself before a unity more unified than that of any coherent discourse. If it does not want to put itself in the wrong, the world will need to admit the incomprehensible comprehensibility, the ungraspable meaning of the personality's discourse. So, the personality carries the day, and the other, ceasing to be other, enters into its own [311] conflict. Discourse has acted; it is not a simple critique of values, it overthrows values, and it does not replace them by others. It is true that the world imagines finding in it a simple revolution of values that the personality would have made make a full rotation: it says that beauty is nothing, and the world hears: beauty is elsewhere; it says that morality is cowardice, and the world sees in it the recipe for a morality of courage. But the world is wrong and ends up learning that, because the personality's discourse does not close in on itself: one has learned that morality is cowardice, and one is content to have a new rule, but one barely starts using it before this courage becomes a morality and that the cowardice is not creating oneself a morality. And it is always the same thing, as soon as *they* imagine having reached the bottom. They can continue to want to 'understand', but then they must understand personal discourse as contradictory, what means, either as madness, or as an expression of living conflict: push it back or suffer it.

The personality proper thus grasps itself as a future present in conflict with man's past present. It is rebellious towards this past, because nothing that is not future can be a

principle for the personality. Its discourse destroys values because these values are not serious, because their claims, remaining exterior, don't demand enough, because they don't demand at all. Its discipline is the discipline of conflict, its principle is the anxiety of risking oneself, its goal, the image that is never reached, but coming forth and a present forthcoming in creation. It can grasp values, it can even in the end oppose itself to inauthentic values as the unique authentic value, and so it uses the intelligence's language and speaks in a way to make itself 'understandable'; but it is not ignorant of the fact that it subjects itself to a foreign tongue in which it is unable to express itself, to express its being that never *is* — a tongue that others use to throw the others off. For by saying that it is personality, that it alone is value and that values are merely lies unless it creates them from the stuff of the human world, it knows that it proffers an absurdity: what is a value by the means of which *one* cannot orient oneself? It also knows that the use of this language is only a means of imposing the freedom from conflict on others, of undermining the foundations of the construction that they want to shelter themselves under. The personality itself would want nothing to do with the word personality: it is life in conflict, claiming to be as it *is* to come: a negation that posits itself, a positive negation, that knows itself as such, the attitude grasps itself in discourse, to create itself in ποίησις<sup>79</sup>.

It is hardly necessary to add that science doesn't exist for the personality, in whichever sense this word is taken: it is for itself the truth in its self-creation; recognizing a truth that is above it, that it depends on, that [312] it must conform to would be betraying its authenticity, it would be introducing a mediation between man and his life, the reflection of oneself in another, it would be admitting a world that would be more than the stuff grasped and organized directly by the sentiment in the image. Whatever the science, whether it be magic or the science of sciences, man is always the object of discourse in it, he is not the one who speaks and he who can't be spoken of. There is no essential anthropology, there is no essential history: both deal with the deficient man and only interest the man without personality.

5. *Reprises. — The historic role of the Concept of God as personality.* — The world is not wrong to note the poetic side of the personality. It's a fact, and a fact of great consequence, that the language of the personality targets the image, conserves the conflict, in a word, creates and creates itself. It is not a coincidence either if men who, in the attitude grasp the category, have considered their 'style' their 'art of writing' their 'masks', their 'lyricism'

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<sup>79</sup> Nietzsche's oeuvre would be unable to be understood, in all its complexity, under this category: the category nonetheless dominates it and constitutes its dynamic center, where the struggle against established values meets with the new morality and poetry.

as of the highest importance, and if they felt closer to poets than to ‘philosophers’, seeing them as more ‘profound’ than those. But a study of poetry as the personality’s expression is out of place here, where we deal with philosophy in the traditional sense, especially since, far more than in the attitudes of certainty and of the conscience, the poetic plays no particular role for the personality, because ποιησις is the goal of this discourse everywhere. Such an analysis would be a part of investigations bearing on the ambiguities of the term ‘poetry’ and in this context, the present category would allow ‘understanding’ modern poetry (that is, non-traditional) to the extent that it is not ironic. We will not insist, either, on the importance of the poetic as a reservoir of images for those who aspire to the personality and who, without risking themselves to create themselves, re-create themselves according to images taken from the personality — for those who choose ‘authenticity’ from among the other values at the market stall of the era and who would like to live in the emotion, desiring a handy ready-made conflict, because such a life seems to them, rightly, easier than a life of work, of struggle, or even of intelligence.

The power of the reprises must however be noted. Abandoning the old attitude is more difficult here than elsewhere, because it signifies a decision to creation and risk. The community of men no longer exists, and the *communion* of personalities is always to come, never established, to create, and always to create anew in conflict, for it will only be by participating in the same image and in the same conflict and will endure in its authenticity only as long as the image and the conflict is personal for each. Man tries to make himself understandable. But by introducing himself in the common language as personality, he will smash the framework of this language, which is that of all and of none. He notes then that he can’t use this language for the essential; if he can imprint the conflict on it (by means of paradox), he cannot [313] express his sentiment in it, what he is for himself in his present future. He imposes the conflict, but he doesn’t expose his image.

We have said how the category is grasped in this insufficiency of the common language, how the personality, from there, creates its poetic language and that it knows itself to be poetic, in order to reach the self-expression in its image and to obtain its recognition through the recognition of its conflict, not as conflict, but as *its* conflict. The reprises, on the other hand, are the result of the defeat, not so much of the defeat suffered in the struggle with the others as the one that the man in himself suffers when he doesn’t manage to impose himself on himself, when he succumbs to the temptation of the definitive solution, when he wants to *understand* himself: the personality then becomes something in an existing world, an established world, a living thing that we can speak of. Man keeps the attitude of the conflict, but he isn’t able to make himself conflict and treats conflict like an accident that can



take place or not: its category is that of a prior attitude, and he attempts to describe himself with this ready-made language.

In the modern era, any philosophy (this word taken in the sense of *Weltanschauung*, an overview of the world and the life) constitutes itself by reprising the personality under other categories, to the extent (the restriction is important) that this philosophy is idealist, that is, that it seeks man's contentment in the understanding of his being by himself and in his *immediate* action on himself. Moreover, one could define — and we will come back to this — this idealist philosophy by the role that this category plays in it.

These reprises, often of archaic categories, happen with the help of that of the *conscience*, reprising the concepts of transcendent freedom and of the 'external' world that this category has developed. Thus, to only cite some examples, the personality, as a *free conscience* of values, becomes history's decisive *factor*, and this then becomes the succession of creative conflicts (of heroes, of geniuses), which, through freedom made concrete in the image (the ideal), have changed the world. Or it is the *self* who attains happiness in the *conscience* of its uniqueness that frees it from the world: that the personality recognizes this world as it is as its own propriety as it is suffices. Or the conflict of personalities is the *discussion* between people who, conscious of their personal values, nonetheless recognize the common value of peaceful discussion and which seeks agreement through reconciliation. Or it is the absolute *truth* of the entire being that awakens in the image in which the personality becomes concrete, but which is not conscious in the ordinary personality, caught entirely in the realization of the image: its Truth, absolute because absolutely personal, only reveals itself through interpretation, which is the work of the *intelligence*, at the same time open to the personality and above all concrete personalities: it breaks through the veil of images in order to penetrate all the way to man's radical *freedom* that detaches itself against the ground of Being, losing itself there and reprising itself in conflict, distorting itself and abusing itself in the construction of definitive worlds of *concrete interest* and freeing itself from it in the awareness that presents Being to it as the ungraspable transcendent.

[314] One easily sees that this list can be continued. But it is not the logic's task to develop all the possibilities that it contains. For historic reasons, it is nonetheless useful to insist on the reprise of the category of *God*, because, in the reality of western civilization, the other reprises have emerged from it.

The personality is God, here is the thesis, because God is the absolute conscience: man is a conscious personality, because God is and because man is his image<sup>80</sup>. The conflict

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<sup>80</sup> An analysis of the historical phenomenon of Christianity would have to take into account the importance that reprises, in relation to prophetism, the mythical element of the tradition, that is, the importance of the reprise of *certainity*.

is in God, and it is through God that the conflict is imposed on man: God takes it on in his place, but He also takes it on in his interest; man, by tending towards the divine image, leaves the anonymity of the world to become unique, creating himself in the image of divine conflict, and he must stay vigilant, until his last day, so that he doesn't rush into the world and doesn't believe himself to be sheltered from the eternal death that is idleness, the cowardice of the finite solution. God is no longer content imposing His law on man, but wants to impose Himself as He is. He has truly made himself into man, that is, personality, and it is no longer essential that he be the creator of the world. He has entered into the world and the world didn't know Him. Love is the love that God bears for man, that He offers him, because He has unrobed himself of His power in order to impose himself on man in His authenticity, in His sentiment. Now, only now, has He revealed Himself in His truth: He is sentiment, life, communion: through His will, He has ceased being the absolute ground of a Being that would need to be accessible to reason and that is only felt by man; He is the present future that has submerged the past. Man is no longer under the law, since God has made Himself into personality and since, being God in the personality, He has decided the conflict: man, henceforth will live through His victory, he is glorified in His triumph, he will be a presence that doesn't change, thanks to the image that He has created. For man, following God suffices: no more seeking the divine will, no more questions concerning the meaning of the world, of events, of his life, of his fate, no more mute faith and blind love, all this belongs to the inauthenticity from which God has freed man. A single thing matters: taking up the divine conflict and believing in God's victory over the world. There is a single danger to flee, that of losing one's soul, of betraying life, of making oneself a whited sepulcher: man can fall from the divine image, he can try to find a definitive solution in this world, to invent or accept a rule, to yield to the wisdom that is madness, to give up his uniqueness that throws of the others into panic.

In all the reprises man conceives of himself as personality in his essence without this essence/personality merging, for man, with himself; he *is* not his conflict, he *is* not his future, the image is not his own: he finds himself *facing* conflict, *facing* the future, *facing* the image, that are situated, not in the past, but outside of the common time of common history, in an instant that, separating the past from the future, belongs neither to one nor to the other and [315] creates them; man has detached himself from the *condition*, he has made himself *conscience* and freedom, but an abstract conscience and an abstract freedom that allow him at most to withdraw himself, as *intelligence*, from any concrete — at the price of absolute disinterestedness. The only category that opens itself to him, if he wants to take on himself as he is, to not be content with taking his distance from what he is not and nonetheless to speak of himself in a common language, is that of God then. For this category alone provides him

with what he needs for this; it constitutes man through sentiment, it frees him through the depreciation of any tradition, and it presents, nonetheless, the possibility of speaking, if not of man in the sense of the category of the personality (which can speak, but can't do so in a common language), at least speaking of man as of a unique and irreplaceable being, speaking of freedom and of creation. Hence, the preponderant role of this reprise, also from this, the historic fact that man first reaches the divine personality before positing himself as personality. It is this idea of the *personal* God (in the sense that we have developed here) that allows man exit self-abandonment, exit the reflection in another, without in doing so presenting him with a *solution*, without proposing to him, with another cosmos, a technique for being happy.

This reprise, contained in Christian theology, does not however constitute Christianity (which *can*, after the fact, understand itself as the religion of the personality/God): it enters entirely into it, but exhausts neither Christianity nor its dogmatic system, and it would be a gross mistake to assign everything that is part, even an essential part, of that religion to it. But still, it is through this content that Christianity, through opposition to other religions, has had a direct and positive influence on philosophy. It is this reprise of the personality that has grounded its affinity with philosophy, that has pushed it to receive Greek thought (in what is non-Greek about it, if one conceives, as is currently done, despite all the affirmations to the contrary, this thought as essentially logical, cosmological and scientific in general) and that has ended up shattering it through the categorial contradiction that it has introduced into faith: on the one hand, man is only himself in the personal conflict between his past (the fall, law) and his future (liberty, hope); on the other, this conflict is outside of him, and its solution does not depend on him, since it has been decided, once and for all, in God and by God. The reprise then does not surpass, in its discourse, the category of God that it comes from, and Christianity is caught in the theology of a completed revelation. With Christ, God has truly come down to earth, he has truly made himself into a man; if God is no longer only God and if He descended to earth, man ascends to heaven; this is where the conflict takes place, outside of time, this is where he is personality, this is where he has imposed himself — but all this in the mode of *once and for all*. On earth, man is only an individual, subjected to the temptation of the world and too weak to resist it without the help of the divine personality; in heaven, humanity is saved, because it is recognized in its sentiment. Down here, man is free only in principle, and he must have the grace so that he can offer his heart to God: up there, his sacrifice has been definitively accepted, because [316] the Son of man has formed the human world according to his image. The earthy man runs risks; but he no longer has any personal conflict, which has taken place in God. He can lose his share in the victory; but he will never lose it more surely than when he tries to achieve his own victory. God/man

alone has had an open and present future: the individual knows what is waiting for him; it is not him who asks the question, it is not him who decides the answer.

But the new attitude will continue to protest against the old category that has grasped it, and man continues to seek until he knows himself as *being*, not having, conflict. As soon as man takes on conflict as he is, the transcendent God disappears, heaven and earth merge and there is no longer this decisive moment where the eternal fate of humanity played out in time. As long as the reprise prevails, Kierkegaard's 'paradox' continues to worry man. He puts up with it because both attitudes are linked to each other, because, in both, the (traditional) world loses value and because man grasps himself there in and through the sentiment that justifies without needing justification; in both, discourse can renounce discursive coherence, for, under the category of God, the goal of discourse is to annihilate itself, and under that of the personality, it fulfills itself in the image. It is for this reason that the paradox endures. It explodes in the end because the categorial contradiction, contained in the sentiment, grounds itself on a contradiction of attitudes, itself felt.

It still needs to be highlighted that this 'dialectic' of Christianity that we just developed and this understanding of the 'history' of the reprise of God are themselves grounded on the *category* of the personality: for the Christian, there is a dialectic of God and man, but not a dialectic of Christianity, for the simple reason that, for him, there is nothing outside of Christianity; therefore the problem of history poses itself only for he who is no longer Christian, that is, for he who, having grasped the category of the personality, recognizes a related category (but that has been surpassed by the present category) in the category of God. Under this condition, the personality can write its history, and it then makes use of the category of the *intelligence*, itself understood as the *conscience*. The intelligence, in itself freed from the whole world, makes itself freedom in the world and against the world that is the world of the *condition*. The personality, interpreting itself in this way, has a history then, and a necessary history, since it is reasonable in relation to its outcome. It draws to a close and finishes in the personality, which is conscious freedom because — still for it — man *is* deep down a personality, that is, he always has been: his history is the path that leads him to discover this. In this history, Christianity is the most important step that humanity has made. It's Christianity that has freed man, not only from the *cosmos* of the law (the prophetism was sufficient for that), but from the tradition, from *certainity*. It is also Christianity that gave him the possibility of living in the world as a conscious being, because, by freeing him from the condition, it makes him uncover the *condition* as being in its essence a condition for man, [317] because it places him, as *conscience*, at the center of a new world that organizes itself around him. It is finally Christianity that dissolves all the concrete interests through the

introduction of the absolute *interest* that freedom constitutes. The development of these moments is — for the personality understanding itself as conscious intelligence — the history of the education that God gives to humankind and through which he makes himself superfluous: man, as *that* conscience, is freely what he is. In this sense, the personality is the completion of Christianity, its discovered secret. The following categories no longer deduce themselves from it; they will at most establish a relation with it by opposing themselves to it. Even their reprises will not be drawn from Christianity, but will address themselves to the God creator, the obscure ground of Being. The anthropomorphic God and the theomorphic man disappear into the personality's attitude, grounding themselves in each other, and all their history provides is the stuff for the in-finite creation of man through himself in conflict. The personality can employ the Christian language, as it employs any other language — to impose itself. But its Christianity then is a faith without (a definite) man nor God (transcendent through a relation to a defined whole), it is man's faith in himself as the creator of himself out of his past.

The personality is thus, in the sense of the above characterized history, the product of the secularization of the Christian idea<sup>81</sup> *The intelligence*, which, applied to the personality, produces that history, will easily be able to come up with the interpretation of it. For us, the only thing that matters is noting that this interpretation, as accurate as it is on its own level, neither proceeds from the pure category and nor aims for it. Here, as everywhere, the attitude is not deduced (does not deduce itself): it is, for itself, fundamental and exclusive, and if there is a deduction of categories (which could only remain an open question here), this deduction will not, in any case, be historical: the history, which constitutes itself according to the categories, has itself a logical genesis.

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<sup>81</sup> Up to such correspondences as: authenticity, original state, 'the others', man in original sin, personality — sacrifice of the natural man, etc. — A good illustration in Lessing, *The Education of the Human Race*.

## CHAPTER XIII THE ABSOLUTE

**The man who is not content expressing himself in conflict as an image, but who turns towards conflict to grasp it in its concrete universality, winds up at the unique and absolutely coherent discourse in which he disappears as personality: it is thought that exists by thinking itself, the *Absolute*.**

1. *The personality seen inside of its world, and the idea of absolute coherence.* — In the attitude of the personality, man has discovered his grounding essence. Does he not grasp himself for himself? Does not conflict constitute his essence, never achieved, never finished? In the image, does he not create himself? The idea that he can surpass himself has no meaning for him then: what *is* can be surpassed (and must be), but the personality *is* not; it makes itself, between *having been* and *coming-forth*; it could not be surpassed, since it is the surpassing itself.

The personality's line of reasoning however proves only one thing: the personality, like all the other attitudes, is capable of judging what precedes it and is merely a bias about what follows. It is self-sufficient and, in this sense, it is correct in saying that it can neither be refuted nor surpassed, that is, refuted for itself, surpassed on its own line. But a new attitude will in fact surpass it, and by reaching its category, will establish its right, inconceivable for the personality.

As a personality, man knows himself (by creating himself). Does he actually grasp himself? When another attitude asks him this question, the personality will make a distinction: grasping himself as the man of the *condition*, of *faith*, of the *conscience* grasps himself for example: *no*, for it does not make something out of itself that *is* and that understands itself with the help of a kind of super-nature that man sees in the distance, — *yes*, when the word to grasp is taken as the personality does, if *grasping oneself* stands for *creating oneself*, if knowledge is the conflict. But it may be that the question is not satisfied by that answer: man says that he grasps himself in conflict; what is he speaking of when he talks like this? Of conflict, obviously, since there is no personality outside of conflict. Admittedly; however, does conflict not then become impossible, if man is personality, if man, as far as he is so, is

only for himself and unique? Without a doubt, the personality will repeat that man [320] must take on his conflict, that he is personality only in his essence, that he can thus fall from grace, as he often does, that he can be cowardly, inauthentic, insincere and that, consequently, conflict is possible, or even necessary, between the personality and this dead world that the personality continues to carry inside itself. It nonetheless remains, the new attitude will retort (which delineates itself as new precisely through this critique) that the personality lives on what it calls death, that this dead world is the only one and that without it there would be nothing, no dead heritage, no living personality. It is not a matter of the personality's will to conflict, it is a matter of the conflict's reality, of the reality of the conflicts that are the life of this world that the personality had declared dead.

Incidentally, had not the personality implicitly recognized this? Had it not understood that any realization of its image falls back into the world, that the world's law takes possession of it in order to give it a place in its system of values, in its organized and interminable discourse? The personality had wanted to stand in sentiment: had it not wound up, had it not been obliged to wind up speaking, forming a discourse, paradoxical, but discourse, incomprehensible, but referring itself in this way to the *inauthentic* and current understanding? The personality had known that, but it had neither seen the meaning of it and the scope nor what is contained in it of the immanent critique, of the personality's necessary 'dialectic'. It was not wrong (as any attitude/category is right) to the extent that it is impossible to refute it through its own arguments and through its own principles. It remains consistent with itself if it refuses to make headway on the terrain of the new attitude. Nonetheless, the new attitude is born and for this new attitude, the personality has fooled itself about its own essence: it appears idle to the new attitude, just as the *intelligence* had appeared cowardly to the personality; it has not broadened itself enough to see that what it is fighting is still itself along with its conflict, that this conflict is not at all personal, besides for the idleness that wants to avoid the work of genuine understanding, but is the world's conflict, a conflict of the world with itself in the individual, which must be understood, not from the outside, but in itself, both as insoluble and as reasonable, as an irreducible opposition and at the same time total and absolute coherence. The personality's error had not been to refuse the importance of what was the other for it, but to believe that it had refused it; the personality had recognized too much importance in this other, all the while being convinced that it recognized none: where would its refusal draw content from, its reason for being, if not this *other*? Had it not accepted everything convinced that it refused everything? Wanting to take responsibility for itself, had not the personality abandoned its freedom, and the conflict that it fancied having chosen as its own, had it not let this conflict be imposed on it by the *other*, by the *others*, by the *world*?

For the new attitude, it is thus no longer a matter of the *individual's* liberation and realization, but of *man's* liberty and reality. He who wants to free himself is not free and will not make himself free, because he remains connected to what he wants to free himself from and because he recognizes, through and in his very revolt, as the concrete ground of his act. [321] Conflict is real — the new attitude not only admits it, but it knows that it would not exist without this conflict —, but it is conflict between two worlds, between the worlds in a *unified* world: the *personal* conflict happens in a medium that is not personal, and its result is not personal; discourse is its origin, and it ends in discourse. The personality is, indeed, *crisis*, but it is the world's crisis. The image is not a myth, an invention of the personality, but it is an image in a coherent world. The call of the personality is authentic; but it is so only because it refers back to the totality of personal calls and because it realizes itself inside human discourse, a *unified* discourse because it is formed from the totality of these calls that refuse unified discourse. Conflict rejects thought: which is why it must be thought, it is also, as paradoxical as this seems, why it can be thought. The personality aspires to be both an individual and incomprehensible: it is in this way that it constructs the *man* who is absolute understanding, understanding and understood. There is coherence, here is what the new attitude says, absolute coherence in an absolutely coherent discourse.

There is no freedom where there is freedom's *other*, here is the result from which the man who leaves the attitude of the personality sets off. As long as there is an object for the subject, the subject is limited, that is, determined by the object. Whether he refuses or accepts it, whether he opposes himself or conforms to it, makes no difference, as whether this *object* is natural, divine, human doesn't make any difference either: where there is an object, there is no freedom. Which signifies that everything that the individual can try in order to free himself is in vain, that the individual is not free, that freedom — to say the same thing in another way — is not *this* or *that*, doesn't come down to *this* or *that*, doesn't detach itself from *this* or *that*, but *is*, and is alone, both subject and object, the absolute that refers back to nothing, to which nothing refers, since it is the being of all that is. There is no coherent discourse of the individual: there is coherent discourse.

Said otherwise, it is not the individual who thinks. The individual expresses himself, but does not understand himself in his expression: discourse comprehends everything, it contains everything because it is everything: the *individual* is understood, contained, because he is particular: *man* understands, provided that he *be* this discourse in its totality. What the attitude requires of man then is truly an effort that all the prior categories have characterized as beyond human force. Let's not be fooled by appearances. The *conscience*, the *condition*, the *self*, and still other categories had demanded that man conform to the universal, that, for



example, he put himself to progress's use, that, by transcending himself, he realizes the humanity in himself. What is now required of man — what he requires of himself — is more and something else: to conform oneself or subordinate oneself to *another* in order to find oneself transformed or reflected no longer suffices; it is a matter of the *Absolute* in which the individual disappears. The individual is happy, faithful, useful, free, and the opposites of all this, but he *is* not. Discourse *is*, and it contains faith, happiness, and the rest, including the individual. All is understood, nothing understands, if *nothing* means *this* or *that*; there is not even [322] understanding anymore, since *all* is a single discourse: if *understanding* means *speaking of*, understanding doesn't exist; nothing is the *other* of discourse.

What has made man's unhappiness, since he has left certainty's innocence, is that, he has, always, had an *other*. He has been a subject because he has found himself before something that limited him and required him to define himself. He has not been satisfied, since his individual discourse was never universal and could not become universal. Before him, there was Being, thought, transcendence, his *other*, that he understood according to different categories, that he tried to reduce to himself or that he tried to reduce himself to. But the more that he spoke about unity, the more he pulled away from it. He just didn't see that, the separation done, nothing can bring together the edges of the abyss that separates the individual from thought: if the individual *is*, thought *itself* is not; or thought is Being, and the individual is what *is* not, who knows that he is not and who wants to be. The personality is right: the individual *is* conflict. But by saying that, the personality has *spoken* and has lifted itself above conflict: this step needs to be recognized. *Man* comprehends (contains) the personality, and *man* is thought, and though is being. The new attitude is attained. It is no longer necessary to seek out how man and Being meet: they are *unified* in discourse. What needs to be, not explained, but made explicit, is this unity as the unity of conflicts in their totality.

For this unity is *achieved*; it is not *given*. It is not a stable *One*, into which one can withdraw as into a sacred stronghold where concrete interests and nature lose their power over the individual. Thought, that is, the absolutely coherent discourse, is not *separate*, and he who would like to find in it a remedy to his anxieties or the satisfaction of his needs as an individual would fool himself. Thought addresses itself to no one, it calls nobody up to freedom, it frees no one: it is freedom, since it has no *other* outside of itself, and man *is* free to the extent that he is thought. Making it explicit shows how the individual learns that he is free; if it wanted to explain to him what he must do to become so, it would push him back into the domain of particularity. Man, one could say, always starts by being an individual, but the individual does not always end up knowing that he is man; he is always free, he

doesn't always know that he is. But this absence of humanity, this ignorance, this non-thought are still in thought and only exist there; they are not the accidents of a substance *man*, they are the propositions of discourse, which have meaning only in discourse and without which, on the other hand, discourse would neither be complete nor understandable for itself. Man *is* thought, and thought *is* Being; but this Being is Becoming in its totality, thought is the making explicit of it, man is his conflict, the Absolute is the particular in its totality.

The personality's error then is to cling to individuality and to want to pass it on, as is, to the universal. Man does not exist for the individual; for this individual himself does not exist, other than as understood as particular by man. What the individual aims for, man alone achieves, to wit *Being*. For the individual, [323] there is only *nature* and the *negation* of this nature. Little matter how this nature is characterized, through which category it is grasped. Nature is always given to the individual and whether he claims to limit nature in this or that attitude changes nothing of the fact that it is nature that limits him. Whether it is a matter of the *object*, of the truth of the *discussion*, of *God*, of his own *transcendent being* for himself, of *historic worlds*, or of the *values* of others, they have a point in common: the world is the negation of the individual, and yet the individual only exists through that to which he is opposed; the individual's victory would be his disappearance. What the personality, rightly, called its courage was nothing other than the acceptance of man's unhappiness, inevitable for the personality: that he only exists humanly by destroying himself. The personality has stopped itself at sentiment, and for it, conflict was man's nature, given and immutable. But the man who elevates himself to thought, who, as universal being, thinks the individual that he *is* only because he thinks it, makes the leap that leads from individuality to freedom. The individual is limited, he is *negated* through that which isn't him: for the *Whole*, there is no *other*.

But for this to manifest, the *no* must be pronounced. That it be pronounced by him is the greatness and the pride of man. His greatness before being his pride, for he has pronounced it at every moment of every century before he knew what this act stood for and how it is an archetypal human act. The individual is an animal, he is part of nature and, in this role, he suffers the negation like any animal. But man opposes his *negativity* to this negation. He is not satisfied by his being such as he finds it, this being that exists in the *other*. He doesn't cling to his condition, he doesn't want to live through nature and in nature, as the ox or the wolf do: he transforms it. But speaking of progress, of the Good, etc., is meaningless here. What matters is man's negativity: he wants nothing, but there always is what he doesn't want. He doesn't struggle in nature, he struggles against nature. He doesn't struggle, truth be told, against what there is, but against any *there is*, against the given as such.

The category of the *condition* sets and expresses this struggle. What it forgets is that it is precisely what it would like above all to put aside: language. There is nothing *for* the animal, because the animal can't appropriate anything, for there is appropriation only there where the *other* is set in its being as *other*, where it is *named*. The animal has no food, it feeds itself by destroying or by possessing immediately; between it and what it needs, there is nothing; it is one with what, for man, is his other. Therefore, it can satisfy itself by satisfying its needs. Man doesn't satisfy himself in immediate possession, since he refuses to be possessed by need, by nature, by natural satisfaction. The *personality* saw this: man cannot find his contentment in nature, which, mute, doesn't know how to respond to him and how to recognize him as he is for himself. Only a spoken recognition, the recognition of his 'image', of his superiority by other men, that is, the negation of the negation through which the other attempted to negate him, gives him human satisfaction. He is free from nature as soon as he is the master of the master of nature: he enjoys nature, he has put need aside; for [324] it is the other, the anonymous, the inauthentic, who remains in front of nature and who transforms it, not for himself, but for the personality, the creator of values, the master.

The category of the condition had forgotten — or rather had not seen — this possibility of satisfaction. It is, from this vantage, the attitude of the vanquished who has remained before nature, negating it in his language, but in his language alone. The victor has no need for language; his negativity has been realized: he has obtained what he desires. But for that reason, he has become an object; he is not for himself, he only is for and through his slave, because it is the slave who turns himself towards discourse: being excluded from enjoyment, he directs his negativity against himself — said otherwise, he negates himself in what he is. He depreciates the satisfaction that is forbidden him because he was beaten, and as the fruit of his work in nature is not for him, he seeks his advantage in a work that he performs on himself: from the *condition*, he passes to the *conscience*; the human world shows itself to him in the *interpretation* that he gives, conscious now, of the attitudes that have been his own without him having recognized them either as attitudes or as his own, and, accepting the conflict, the *personality* prepares itself to pass to the absolute, to the Thought that is Being. The master was a personality without knowing it, the slave is aware of being a personality (deep down), without actually being one.

We won't deal with this evolution here<sup>82</sup>. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is devoted to it; the attitude of the man who lives in the absolute appears there and deduces itself there with such mastery that at most it permits some detailed remarks. Since the attitude's

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<sup>82</sup> We will however have to retrace the *logical* evolution of the category (cf. 2)

expression is perfectly adequate in the *Phenomenology*, any substantive critique would be absurd: the question is not knowing whether there is better, but whether there is anything else, that is, an attitude and a category that comprehend those of the Absolute and thus surpass them. Yet, this is a question of fact, to which no formal reflection can find an answer before the concepts of *fact*, *reflection* (philosophy) and *form* have received a categorial foundation, which is not the case up to now: only then will one be able to speak of the limits of this great book (which makes a logic of philosophy possible, but does not realize it). Whatever be the case, at this point, we can content ourselves to refer the reader to it. The *Phenomenology* does not exhaust itself in this deduction of the attitude (even though, in the eyes of Hegel, this is the book's essential task); like any philosophical work, it uses all the categories (and is thus, from the point of view of the logic of philosophy, susceptible to multiple 'understandings'). However, this deduction is there, and at the forefront. For us, it is a question of something else: this deduction of the attitude in the absolute is only possible if he who has deduced it has already reached it and sticks to it; he deduces it for the others who have not yet reached it, not for himself<sup>83</sup>.

For this man who proceeds to the deduction (not for him of whom this deduction speaks), the real problem is that of negativity. [325] Thought or discourse, being man and Being, is the absolute position: and this absolute position is the totality of negations. The object negates the subject, and this one negates that one; the universal negates the individual and is negated through it (nothing is more universal than the *I*, the *now*, the *here*, that suit any man, any instant, any place — nothing is more individualized than man, time, space, which always are — and always disappear, like *I*, *now*, *here*,); the individual negates the condition (which is his universal, as he is individual) and is negated through it. Man is in the Absolute provided that he be absolute, that he has suffered the totality of negations and that he has practiced his negativity totally: that he *be* the *becoming* in its totality.

This man then seems to have come back to *Truth*. Once more, Truth is everything; nothing that exists can aspire to an excellence. But this return is merely apparent. For if all that is is *true* and if all that is true *is*, the difference with Truth remains great, because the emphasis is placed on the *all*: *all* is no longer each thing (in the largest sense), but the unity of all the things — which are true, because they disappear into the totality of negations. Man has passed through the *condition* and he can no longer immediately vanish, without the help of the negation, in Truth. He has made himself an individual; he has lost the innocence of Truth and even that unawareness of his downfall that *certainty* was. The Truth can no longer be anything other than a result. This result come to, man no longer needs nor desires, no

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<sup>83</sup> Were the *Phenomenology* everything, why would Hegel have written the *Encyclopedia*?

longer being an individual: equal to himself in the totality of differences of himself (of conflicts), he is absolutely free, since he no longer has any *other*; but this arrival is the path itself in its totality.

The man who deduces the absolute, we repeat, deduces it because he has reached it. He has rid himself of individuality, since he has understood himself as individuality. He has reached it, we've said: in fact, *the individual* reaches it, in the wake of individuals, because *man*, totally coherent discourse, is always there. The difficulty is born and dies with individuality, which is neither free nor true because it is not everything. Man, total negativity, is the end of individuality: in him, the Whole — whether we call it world or history or God — finds itself and sees itself thus finding peace and giving it. For man, all that is individual is *produced*: everything is the source of everything, everything flows from everything and disappears into it. But this movement is the calm of the Absolute in itself, a discourse that is infinite and closed in on itself of which man is the voice and the ear. He who lives in the Absolute lives in God. The individual who refuses this death of individuality will not reach this life, and no argument, no call will persuade him to come to this sacrifice: there is mediation for everything, except for the leap from the finite to the infinite, from the relative to the absolute. The individual throws himself into it, and only then does the effort in which the absolute makes itself explicit start. If he doesn't dare, rather, if he hasn't dared, he will forever be deaf and mute. Discourse will not make sense for him because he seeks a sense *for himself*, whereas the sense *is* and is not any more for him than for another. Making it explicit *serves* no one: in it, the Absolute is self-satisfaction. There is no longer any attitude, there is no longer any 'disinterested' intelligence. The individual *speaks*, and in speaking he is no longer an individual, he is man. What was mortal in him has been devoured by the fire of discourse, in the crucible of the negativity [326] that eternally produces what it devours, eternally devours what it produces.

2. *The individual, the universal, the particular.* — *The category and its logical history.* — *The individual, violence and discourse.* — *Being, thought, Absolute.* — *Reasoning and sentiment.* — The result that we thus end up at is made to surprise. We aimed at the attitude of the man who finds the Absolute, or creates it, or forms it, — the number of possible expressions is great —, analogous to the prior attitudes and to their reprises. Yet, there is no attitude here; there is the free *man*, discourse, the Absolute, and this *there is* has no beginning, no entry, no *other*. The question of the attitude is asked *in* discourse, but not *for* discourse. In seeking the attitude, we have positioned ourselves in the attitude of the *intelligence* (if we have not backtracked all the way to the *conscience*). Man, both caught and real in his concrete interest, creates a world that he can live in; the intelligence, understanding

the process, escapes from this constraint and avoids the effort, the conflict, all the world's claims concerning the individual: from this point of view, the Absolute is merely the expression of an interest particularly sympathetic to the intelligence. For the personality has protested so much against the intelligence's cowardice that the intelligence is happy to meet somebody more deft, more cunning, more intelligent than itself, to be able to say, by reprising the new discourse for its own benefit, that all the personality's cries prove nothing and lead nowhere. What is the use of being moved if the personality, or even the individual, disappears into the Absolute? So be it: let the personality be right, let man, to truly be man, suffer conflict: is not the conflict always already appeased, since the totality of conflicts is the unity and the reconciliation of all the contradictions, since negativity is nothing other than the making explicit of the absolute position? How to find an attitude more agreeable than not having any for he who wants to stay on the sidelines? Is not letting the attitudes determine their business between themselves prudence's last straw, without just detaching oneself from concrete worlds?

The intelligence no longer even needs to interpret. A modest method to learn, a few well-distributed 'negations', a few 'positions', the whole tidied in any which way, this would suffice to lead it securely to the harbor of the Absolute, from where any effort and any conflict are pushed back by the breakwater of the 'objective dialectic': that's all there is to it. But intelligence is right only for itself. Its reprise of the absolute is a reprise. He who positions himself in the category of the Absolute finds no rest as an individual. What seemed so convenient to the intelligence, namely that the attitude has disappeared with individuality, is precisely the pain and the heartbreak of the man who, coming from the personality thinks of himself in the Absolute. For, thinking, he thinks of *himself* as he is in his always negated negativity: he is in the Absolute, he is not the Absolute, and the sacrifice does not make the personality disappear, but only makes it understand. The personality that thinks is no longer personality; in truth, it is already no longer the personality that thinks; but its conflict lives on, thought and all the more [327] irreconcilable. *Man* is the Absolute; *men* are the pain and the sorrow of finite negativity. Man is free; men are the struggle against nature, against the very personality that wants to perpetuate the conflict and, with the conflict, the *other*. But again this ultimate struggle does not *free* the individual: it *surpasses* him, and the freedom that is the Absolute leaves the individual in his place in the finite that, although it is understood as finite in the infinite, does not cease being finite for itself. At this level — the only that the intelligence sees —, courage has not become superfluous, it is more necessary than ever. If then one is keen to speak of attitude, it would be necessary to say that this attitude wants to be a category. It realizes itself only — and totally — by thinking itself. It is the

universal attitude, the totality of attitudes, not juxtaposed and added up, as they were in the intelligence's catalogue, but as the whole of negativity, organizing itself.

We have said that man, having reached the Absolute, can speak to others about the access to the Absolute. This seemed in open contradiction with the fact that man is or is not in the Absolute and that there is no passage from one to the other. But presently, the two formulae reveal themselves as aspects of the same truth: the category *is* the development of the attitudes, there is no difference between access and the goal, since the path *is* the arrival, since man is thought inasmuch as he thinks himself, since the Absolute is not a task, but Being, since he is neither past, nor future, but present. The difference appears and is real in the individual and for the individual. But, in the individual who thinks, it is the thought that thinks itself.

It thinks itself, however, in the individual and it is real, active, present only in the time of history. The individual is personality, and it cannot be a question of surpassing the existence of things, of events, of conflicts, to establish the Absolute in the manner of the unique substance, of the only Being in which all the beings purely and simply disappear: If there is an Absolute, if the Absolute *is*, it is only the individual's disappearance, the process in which the individual passes himself to the universal.

It is why the present category aspires to be and knows itself to be the heir of all the prior attitudes and all the prior categories. All the oppositions that men thought they had to choose between and that they did in fact choose between reveal themselves to the present category as aspects, as *moments* of its own being that is its own becoming: it can elaborate a discourse that is not only non-contradictory, but is absolutely coherent, since in it man grasps himself totally, no longer as a being opposed to other beings, to a transcendent Being, to a world that he finds himself in, encounters himself as he encounters and finds animals and stones, but as the consciousness of Being itself, as Being conscious of itself as Being and as consciousness, as real Spirit. Being can be thought, because it thinks itself.

It thinks itself in man, that is, the history of man is the history of Being himself. No step has been taken in vain, all opposition, all contradiction, all struggle was merely the process in which Being developed itself, fold after fold, in order to [328] understand itself as Spirit, in which Spirit penetrated, layer after layer, the *other* in order to give itself life and reality in it. For if man takes himself as the world's, substance's, God's other, if he erects himself up as sentiment and personality and freedom, he can do so only because he is always more than he believes being. He thinks himself as transcendent freedom and only transcendent, as such unknowable: but by believing that he renounces knowledge, he has attained it and it is only an arbitrary canon, an ideal of knowledge that keeps him from understanding

that he has understood himself in the deepest part of his being. He establishes himself as personality and rejects the world as that which is not him, and it is only a preconceived idea that prohibits him from seeing himself in what he considers as that which negates him and what he negates. He sees the meaning of his existence in God, and he is not able to admit to himself that it is the meaning of his existence that he sees in God. Category after category, attitude after attitude reveal themselves thus as what they are in the Absolute: the Absolute itself in its becoming.

They are the Absolute in its stages. But the Absolute is nothing outside of these. It is not man's error to have moved through them all, and there is no shortcut for Spirit. Spirit does not exist before its becoming and outside of its human becoming, and contradictions can reconcile themselves in total coherence only after having been real contradictions. Man cannot be satisfied before having satisfied himself; he can't be reasonable before having made his world reasonable. But he can make it reasonable only because the world is reasonable in itself, because Being is Reason: it is because he treats it as another, as what is unreasonable, that he forces it to appear as reason.

Said otherwise, the individual can access the universal because the universal does not exist as an abstract and absolute universal, cut off from everything, like an infinitely distant beyond, but is present and acts here and now, in all here and all now, and because he himself is not only an individual, but is an individual in a world, a determined-determining individual in a determined-determining world — because he is, at the bottom and without knowing it, but actually from the Absolute's point of view (*in* the Absolute, since the Absolute is not a point of view), *a* universal, just as his world is *a* universal, an aspect of the universal — because he and his world are *particulars*, presence of the infinite in the finite, of the Absolute in the relative. Man believes that he is himself and nothing else, and precisely because he believes that he is only himself, he refuses and negates the other, and by refusing and negating it, he makes it his own and does not let it live on outside of him, outside of Spirit. He is particular, that is to say determined in a determined world — and it is why he does not content himself with his given being in a given world, but realizes himself as freedom. He considers himself as sentiment, and he is actually reason, infinite reason that opposes itself to any finite form of reason, but that does yet not know itself, that will only ultimately know itself as reason. He feels Reason as the other, as what presses in from all sides; but his revolt against particularity is the realization of the universal, the realization and the understanding of the realization: the path towards absolute [329] contentment in the absolute knowledge of the Absolute. In a word, the Absolute realizes itself, but does not realize itself through thought of man (in the sense of the *self* or the *conscience* or the *personality*, etc.), but through its violent action against the particularity's violence — reasonable



violence in itself, but not for itself, on one side like on the other —, and it is at the end of action that the individual ceases seeing himself as the other of his other, that nature and the world and society and the State cease being exterior to him: the universal then allows man to recognize himself in the universal, because man has realized himself in the universal by moving through all the oppositions of all the particularities. He is satisfied since there is no other for him and since nothing is foreign to him, if he realizes, as soon as he has realized the totality of Being's forms: The freedom is total that has devoured all that simply *is*, that in all that is has found itself again as Reason, and that sees one of its own acts in any limit.

The attitude of the man for whom the world is reasonable and for whom the thinking subject is not an individual, but humanity, has shown itself for the first time<sup>84</sup> under the heading of the *condition*: nature was understood as reasonable, humanity as acting through violence on violence in view of its own realization; individuality had disappeared in the universal, since the individual was no longer anything other than his function in society: the individual, in society, was in his own opinion what he is from the Absolute's point of view. But discourse itself finds no place in the world of the condition. According to itself, the condition's discourse does not make man act, and consequently is not man himself, but his other: the coincidence of contraries in man *acting freely in the condition* only exists for us, not for the man of the condition; the particular thought splits away from universal thought in it and opposes itself to universal thought as the subjective (the historical, the psychological, etc.) to the objective: it has not been taken seriously, but simply treated as a factor. Negativity, it's true, needs only exert itself between the individual and its other, which is also particular, that is, in the world, but it exerts itself against this world that does not recognize it in what it is for itself. Man is not yet realized for himself, since thought and action split away from each other in thought; Being is already Thought, but Thought is not yet Being: the condition's discourse is particular.

Said otherwise, particularity, having understood individuality and having freed itself from it, does not yet enter into the universal. As a *conscience*, it sees the universal in the world, but remains itself outside of the world. The universal exists for it, but separated from it: *being* opposes itself to *appearing*, the *transcendent* to the *immanent*, the *I* and the *thing* to the *self* and to the *phenomenon* — as freedom to constraint (for with the passage from the individual to the particular that knows itself to be [330] particular, violence changes itself

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<sup>84</sup> In truth, this attitude already appears in the first category of reflection, under *God*. But the believer claims no discourse and, seen from the present question, the beginning belongs to the category of the *condition*, even though this beginning is understood, in the totality of coherent discourse, only through its opposition to the category of *God*: the Absolute will recognize itself precisely in the latter and will declare itself religion's truth (revealed being).

into constraint), and the universal forms the ground of the particular, a ground thought as inaccessible. What would only appear to us in the attitude of faith appears to the *conscious* man: if he does not want to enter into silence, his action must *both* be his own *and* reasonable in a reasonable world. But the reality of his essential character as well as that of the reason in him and in the world are only postulated, and man says. it is *necessary... if... or: I must...so that* reason is, etc. The transcendent is a fact in him, freedom *is* reality, and even the initial reality, recognized in its being that is that of coherent discourse, and that reality no longer transcends *man*, as it did when he found himself before God; but it transcends the *particular* because it does not exist for itself, but for the particular that *constructs* it to be mirrored in it. Particular discourse tends towards absolute discourse, and it knows it; but because it doesn't sacrifice itself, the absolute, as the coincidence of freedom and the condition, of the incomprehensible present and the inconsistent understanding, is rejected into the infinitely far-off of time.

It's that here, particularity does not fear contradiction, but the disappearance of contradiction that it now knows as its being. It has left the condition that, in the objective reason of the world and of history, had wanted to eliminate it without listening to it. Therefore it seeks to maintain contradiction for man, that is, for the others, when, assigning itself the role of the universal as *intelligence*, it withdrew itself from the conflict that it lets live on. The *personality* alone understands itself (but for us) as the source of particularity, being itself the universal that, positing itself and reprising itself in the conflict with its *other* that is in itself, creates itself by creating the human world. It neglects a single fact, namely that it is not itself that has excluded violence, but the condition with its work and its science. The personality no longer wants to be particularity, and its decision to be what it is and to take on the conflict is in itself the choice of the absolute; but in itself only, since the personality sees itself as universal thought opposed to the world of the others that is the world of work, and can't form an authentic discourse, but only call on the universal without discourse, sentiment.

For particularity, the last step is insurmountable, precisely because, in itself, it has already made it. Seen from the Absolute, particularity has already sacrificed itself, as soon as it renounces its particular discourse and beats in sentiment, *source* of conflict, the opposition between the subject and the object: being the conflict of both, it is both and the living negation of their separation. The personality does not understand this, because it creates no discourse. If it wanted to speak, it would note that its personal conflict is the least individual thing there is; for it is not thanks to the personality that the conflict exists, it is the personality that exists *through*, or rather *in* conflict, and this conflict is, at bottom (that is, for us), a single conflict, that of a reason that does not know itself as reason with itself. The personality thus neglects the world, as the condition had neglected subjectivity. Yet, it would not

be what it is (for itself as well as in itself) without the world of the condition, the world reasonable in itself, having become reasonable for the active man and through man's work. In fact, the personality has [331] entrusted itself to this world where violence is excluded and where sentiment's conflict can freely go with the flow: the nature of the individual has become human nature, the contradiction between individuality and the universal reconciled through the world's (negated) particularity: it is sentiment, pure being-for-itself, position and negation of itself by itself.

Therefore, the particular will not go any farther: the Absolute does not belong to the particular, but belongs to itself. However, the particular can place itself in the coherent discourse and know what it is: work and sentiment in a Whole that is Reason. What it wins with this knowledge is no small thing: it's that now it sees that Being is Reason and Reason is Being and that action does not need to become free because it is. Violence will not spare its individuality, and its negativity will find no rest, but the absurd of suffering itself possesses its meaning now that all question on the subject of meaning are asked by Thought to Thought on the subject of Thought. The personality's suffering and conflict are real. But in the human world, through the negativity of work, human violence has revealed its being that is Reason, and, in the personality's conflict, Reason has appeared in its truth that is being subject *and* object, that is, Being. Being thus understands itself as Reason, Reason as Being; more exactly: Reason is, for itself, both the in-itself and the for-itself of Being.

The *discussion* has thus lost its dominion: the contradiction will not disappear since contradiction is the life of the particular and since Reason and Being coincide not in a formal agreement or in a beyond, but in the totality of the particular. The agreement of the particularities such as the discussion conceives it, such as the *conscience* requires by postulating it in the transcendent, is only the desire of the particularity that wants to speak of itself and as itself, imposing itself on the others (directly in the discussion, through the mediation of the *I* in the conscience). But the discussion does not stop and the *I* never positively realizes itself: if the reason that the individuals seek exists before their quest and makes it possible, and is together both the quest and what the quest seeks, the individual who raises himself to the Absolute, the man who *thinks*, does not necessarily negate discussion: where there is negativity, there is particularity; he does not surpass it as the *conscience* or the *intelligence* claim to: where there is transcendence, there is finiteness; he abandons his particularity to particularity, living in the world that he knows to be Reason, knowing that his life happens and comes undone in the world where nothing particular is visible by itself, but is seen only in its *other* in which he has his particular life.

If then discussion loses its dominion, it loses neither its right nor its existence. It is not reason, it is reasoning, the particular's thinking on the subject of the particular, the language of struggle, of negation, of work, of constraint. In discussion, man fixes himself in place and fixes the world that he opposes himself to in order to posit himself. Nothing could be more legitimate than his desire to overcome contradiction, but also nothing could be more obvious than the necessity of his failure, as soon as reasoning claims to be absolute, that is to say that it affirms both its opposition to its matter and its victory over this matter: a contradiction reconciled in the totality of the Absolute *become* for-itself, irreconcilable for [332] reasoning, that does not want to overcome, cannot want to do so, since it does not want that victory to be universal (the winner disappears with the loser), but would want it to be its own. Its discourse must be and must not be coherent, contradiction being its being, coherence being the ground and the goal of this being. He thinks to realize himself and does not see that he is real before wanting to be so; his reasoning must serve his life, and this life, that he thinks of as a goal, which for him is nothing other than thought, is in itself real and has been realized through him before he had proposed it to himself as a goal to achieve. His reason is afraid of itself.

But Reason, by discerning the limits of reasoning, thus justifies it in these limits: the Whole is particularity in its totality, Reason, the totality of reasoning. Rejecting reasoning because it is particular, this is still an attitude of particularity, the protest of the for-itself, of self-consciousness limited against its limitation, but a protest that wants to maintain itself as particularity. From there the pride that refuses language because it takes all language for reasoning, from there the abandonment of sentiment because sentiment skims language and uses it at most to express itself, and because it is thus the universal for the particularity that views reasoning as the world's particularity: a pride that would be abandonment to brute nature and brute individuality, if it were not a matter of a reasoning against reasoning in which man, *speaking* against the particular discourse, asserts himself despite himself, as particularity. A struggle against itself, a struggle against the other, the particular tends towards the universal, with this difference that one time it negates itself to realize this and the other time negates any result of negativity to be able to believe in the realized universal in this negation itself — as if Reason were to realize, as if negativity were outside of what it negates. Formally, if we neglect the genesis of the Absolute, one's fear and another's pride are the same; what distinguishes them is that the one's work and trouble can well be without the *call* of sentiment, but this one would not exist without that other. In the Absolute, *man* is universal, *each man* is particular, and the particular that would like to make itself actually universal in its particularity would have but one means, which would be dying: he would have succeeded, but for the others, not for himself. Reasoning is thought corresponding to

the particular life's reality, as sentiment is life corresponding to the particular's discourse, in which discourse and life cannot coincide for him. In the Absolute, sentiment only exists through what it negates, it is not human reality, it is in this reality, nature for itself, that is to say given, stable, immutable, in itself a negation of the particularity of particular discourse, rising up against man's fixation since no condition is Thought yet, but only shaped through reasoning.

Sentiment's insufficiency thus jumps out: refusing itself particular discourse, it refuses coherent discourse; believing itself to be individual, it is in itself negativity's universal and is unaware of the Reason that it does not want to become for itself, because it mistakes it with reasoning. Reasoning's insufficiency is less striking. For reasoning does not oppose itself to coherent discourse: its own discourse constitutes in its opinion precisely this discourse. [333] But just as sentiment's universality believed itself to be individual expression, the conviction of its universality hides reasoning's particularity poorly. It reasons about religion, for example, or nature, or the State, constructing them, criticizing them, approving them, looking for the possibility, the conditions, the goal, demanding man's place, delimiting domains, keeping itself busy, attacking, defending — as if this were of the greatest importance. In the meantime, there is nothing to do since everything *is*, since there is Reason, Morality, State, Nature, and the problems that reasoning poses for itself have no solution, since they are meaningless. Reasoning discusses with Reason, because it holds its own facing Reason, because it wants to keep, for itself, the prerogative of being reasonable. But it would not be reasonable, if what it considers to be its *other* were not as reasonable as itself. It forgets this, and that is why it fails so lamentably, it which is so strong in the particular, as soon as it tackles the universal, to the extent that its own reason becomes the least reasonable thing there is to it: an inconceivable God, an incomprehensible Nature, a Morality that offers no guide, a State always based on the arbitrariness and the fear of arbitrariness, in a word: a reasoning that knows neither what it is, nor what it applies to, nor why it must apply, nor how it so happens that sometimes it does in fact apply.

Reason's failure then is more dangerous from the point of view of the absolutely coherent discourse than that of sentiment, in the sense that it leads man precisely to sentiment and to silence (not to muteness, but to the abandonment of the particular discourse making claims of coherence), more dangerous also in that sentiment does not surpass itself and, in a mongrel discourse, borrowed from the reasoning that impose it on sentiment, makes a stable datum for itself out of its negativity, whereas in sentiment reasoning recognizes its other that it owes it to itself to understand without ever managing to. In fact, the actual man becomes the man actually conscious of himself through reasoning. The advantage of discourse in the Absolute is explained then: it is this discourse, and not sentiment, that makes the actual world

human, by excluding violence; sentiment is merely the universal's protest against its exclusion, a protest that is itself still violent as long as it aspires to universality without being universal, a reconciliation of all the *each* through the mediation of the recognition of them all. Without reasoning, there is no Absolute that knows itself to be Absolute; without sentiment, no human world where the Absolute can know itself to be Absolute. The Absolute exists for man through the reasoning that surpasses itself in the personality's sentiment: but the sentiment itself appears to him only through the discourse to which he opposes himself (and which is the world) and appears to him only at the moment that he is ready to throw himself into the absolutely coherent discourse.

Renouncing discourse is, consequently, renouncing self-comprehension or, which amounts to the same thing for the man who has made himself the Absolute's language, renouncing himself. Renouncing sentiment, on the other hand, is impossible for man and is a purely imaginary danger; seen from the Absolute, reasoning pushes on to sentiment, precisely to the extent that it tries to negate sentiment and to set it in a position that is the negation of its negativity. Because reasoning [334] is particular, because it doesn't think the *Whole*, because it makes discourse the other of the world that it considers to be founded on violence, the universal is outside of reasoning and cannot use its language: man is not content being what reasoning enjoins him to be. Being negativity, man can silence (for himself, not for us, but here it is a matter of man such as he is for himself) the particular discourse that says: you are *this*; not the cry that expresses: *this* is not what I am; for the sentiment, when he wants to grasp it, remains for him discourse's *other*, this violence, this nature that surrounds the reasonable, threatens and maintains it. It is why particularity can believe itself to be sentiment (through a reasoning, it's true, but that it does not recognize as such), but cannot believe itself to be reasonable, if not *at the bottom, in its essence*, etc., in a word, in what it admits not really being.

Therefore particularity, that is to say man living in the world, is thrown from reasoning to sentiment, and from sentiment (if he does not accept violence) to reasoning, or, to use more standard terms and because of this more ambiguous, from objectivity to subjectivity, from this to that. What *becomes* in this coming-and-going, by no means infinite since it comes to fruition, without end however, since its completion is merely the revelation of its being, is the coherent discourse that knows itself to be Being. It is both man's history and his thought, his becoming and what he has always been; he is both the nature that opposes itself to work and the science that, being man's work in nature, negates it and reveals it; he is both the individual that negates all the others in his cry, and the negation in which the individual makes, of his cry, the particular discourse of he who speaks as a particular because he lives in the universal. In the living man, the two are together: he lives as man because he

speaks, he speaks as man because he lives; the two sides of his being are not grounded in his reflection, they only are grounded in the Absolute, the revelation of his action as the unity of discourse and life. But with the Absolute's revelation, reasoning and sentiment, object and subject have disappeared, and there is no longer any *other*: science and freedom are no longer opposed, for in this science Being knows itself to be Reason, and Reason knows itself to be Being. Reflection's circle is traveled, and man in the totality of his being has recognized himself as Being in its totality, as the un-folding of God.

Man's attitude in the Absolute, as we've said, is to aspire to be a category. Now, this expression has lost its paradoxical character: the particular always lives in the Absolute, but the Absolute does not show itself to the particular as such. It therefore has an attitude, that is, a manner of negating what, for it, is the other. But the Absolute revealed as such, the particular understands its particularity: it ceases acting because action has come to an end and because man is realized and present in the totality of his history. For the man who thinks in the Absolute, particularity is a moment of the Absolute, and because he knows that this moment is in the Absolute, he, as particular, has no questions to ask and *is*, for himself, his place in the Whole; professor, family man, etc. This creates some difficulties because particularity is never *for itself* what it is *in itself*, [335] and because, at its level, subjectivity and objectivity come face to face; this asks no questions, because questions belong to discourse and because life's problem resolves itself through action. This man speaks then and knows that he speaks. Seen by the others, he has an attitude and he thinks: for himself, he is thought.

3. *Absolute science as Being's un-folding. — Absolute science and understanding. — Science and history* — What Thought/man calls science is radically different from everything that has been so called since *certainty*. Up to here, the term designated the discourse of particularity, destined to rule out contradiction. How this contradiction appeared, how it was eliminated, this formed the category of the particular attitude. In each case, man was on one side, the world, the real, the object, the essence on the other, and discourse was there to allow man to orient himself in the world, without there having been a difference, as for this, between discourse taken as 'reasonable' and the language of sentiment that negated itself in a transcendent. Now, discourse no longer exists for man, it exists for itself, absolutely coherent, not excluding contradiction, but realizing itself in it: the *other*, violence, the transcendent have entered discourse since it has recognized itself in them. Science is not in the world; the Absolute is not unloosened (*absolutus*) from a remnant, it is Whole.

Said otherwise, science has become what had been the point towards which it strained without reaching, without even believing that it could get there: philosophy. For

from philosophy, from the Absolute's point of view, only the idea existed. What assumed this title was either a postulate or a critique: a critique, when the universal was posited as man's for-himself outside of man, a pure consciousness that wiped out any particular discourse by reducing it for the particular to the irreconcilable contradiction; a postulate when the Whole was posited as universal in itself to which no for-itself corresponded in this Whole. Particular discourse, the mediation between this here consciousness and that there object, went, since it was discourse, towards the Whole that thinks itself and dared not plunge itself into it, being particular. There were philosophers, men thinking the spirit that would think of the Being that would be spirit; there was no philosophy, no science in which Being becomes for itself what it is in its reality: spirit.

This is not to say that the ancient philosophy was false. On the contrary, what was false was rather what called itself science, what claimed to reduce the universal to the particular. Against this science, philosophers had maintained the universal. If they didn't think it, but only thought the *idea* of the Whole as a separated and abstract idea, it's that, remaining particular for themselves, they suffered the particular science. But it was not a mistake on their part. The attitude that they took in their category was the attitude of their world, which was still as particular world: true philosophy, which is the true science, can appear only after having realized itself in the world. As long as the particular has the universal in front of it as *another* power that it must negate because it can negate it, Being cannot be for itself, [336] since the particular *senses itself* pushed by it. Mastery of nature and society is not for each and every person, and the discourse of particulars, necessarily different, can't actually negate their differences then: the organization of work puts nobody in the lord's place in relation to nature, a place that, nonetheless, each must desire; the State is not the State of all citizens. The unity of everyone must be *realized*; before, it can't be thought of other than under the form of the transcendent or that of essence, since it exists only as inaccessible or as ungraspable.

But inversely, if it is thought once, it is just as soon evident that it exists. Its existence, which falls in particularity, will show with more or less perfection what it in itself is; but as its existence is that of being thought, its defects are merely accidental and called to disappear. Society and State are realized, *since* they are thought. In them, the particular discourse has become both discourse *and* particular for itself, unity in contradiction. Veritable science adds nothing other to reality then; it is absolute knowing in which realized Reason knows itself to be realized Reason. It is not used to make man happy, to procure him satisfaction: if particularity opts for discourse, it can learn but one thing in it, namely that it has opted, *in itself*, for the Absolute and that as particularity, it disappears in the universal. It can learn in it — and this is the same thing — that it no longer needs reasoning in order to build itself a



human world: the human world exists, and what's more, exists for particularity in its active everyday life, its life as a member of society and the State; its sentiment itself is recognized, expressed, even realized in the community of religious organizations; its natural individuality has entered into the universal through the intermediary of the family, its unique and subjective value imposed by itself on others in art — to live, it has merely to live, has merely to act in its place in this world that is Reason, without letting itself be misled by the rebellious sentiment, which is merely just in an unreasonable world. Whether there can be misfortunes, conflicts, even catastrophes, for the individual in his particularity is not contradicted here, since he is an individual according to nature, a particular in the community; but misfortune is the particular's misfortune, catastrophe, that of the individual; in discourse, they have ceased being absolute. They are particularity's accidents from which particularity defends itself and protects itself through reasoning, about which it consoles itself through sentiment. Philosophy does not attend to it, except to say to particularity that there can be no coherence for particularity; it will answer questions, all the questions, provided that it is a matter of questions, and not of difficulties and so-called human problems. What it does is let the Reason that *is* speak.

History then has reached its end, as the history of philosophy and as the history of man; as the history of man because man is free: through his action, particularity has become, for itself, what it is in itself, particularity in the universal; as the history of philosophy, because [337] discourse has become coherent as the universality of the particular. *Become* — in two ways: the world has a history, it is nothing other than this history; but this history has come back to its beginning, to non-historic Being, and *become*, Being *is*: the role of human negativity is finished, of that negativity that has been the representative of spirit against matter, of subjectivity against objectivity, of life against death, of reason against the absurd, of law against violence, of the for-itself against the in-itself, finished because its victory has been total: in itself, spirit is for itself: for itself, spirit is in itself, or, if we take these words in their true meaning: matter is spirit, spirit is matter. Science is nothing other than this reconciliation of spirit with itself, present in coherent discourse.

Thus dissolve the fundamental oppositions of bygone metaphysics, of particular views on the Absolute. Being is not form or matter, no more than it is thought opposite a matter; reason is not a product of nature, nor this nature, a creation of reason. Or rather, each of these theses is as true as its contrary because one and the other are particular. The man who works is realist, and is idealist when he wants to know; he will be materialist to be capable of acting, spiritualist when he seeks his contentment in itself. Philosophy in the Absolute *places* these points of view; choosing between them is precisely what particularity does, the particularity that develops towards the Absolute in the movement from the one to

the other: for the science of philosophy, all theses form its history, its past becoming that it sees in its living totality. The reciprocal negation of the points of view does not make them disappear in a zero or in an infinite, one and the other limited; it makes them raise themselves up, until, in the *condition*, Being is determined as the in-itself, in the *conscience*, as the for-itself, in the *personality* as the for-itself that must be in-itself — until, with the conflict understood, the Absolute reveals itself as being-in-itself-and-for-itself knowing itself as such.

But it is only the historic side of the Absolute, the Absolute's becoming in time, that is, in consciousness, Being's becoming from the for-itself. To this history (which is science because it is total), corresponds, as its counterpart, a-historic and a-temporal genesis of the in-itself, the science of Being as such.

Ontology or logic is not an alternative, for Being is discourse, discourse Being. For particularity, the question of the relationship between the two arises when it wants to attain the Whole through reasoning — arises and appears insoluble: the category of the *conscience* thought of its discourse as directed by the idea of a Whole unreachable in the reality of discourse, that of the *personality* thought, in its discourse, of reality as the impossible coherence of the Whole in its unique value. Both were merely the unfolding of what was enveloped in the categories of the *object* and *discussion*. Science goes farther back. For science, the root is found in the category of *the true and the false*, which doesn't yet know undecided discussion between men [338] where each can be right because he can (in principle) convince all the others; the false is the true's other, it *exists* as much as the true, but it exists in the mode of non-being as the other in that of being. Its discourse is the true *and* the false where one would not exist without the other. But this category is the root, it is not the fruit: there is no return to it, since the path travelled has not been a superfluous and avoidable detour: Being is historical, and before becoming Spirit for itself, it is impossible to recognize the Absolute, realized in the particular's totality, in the true and false of the ancient category. However, the signaling of the Absolute is contained in it, even though the proclamation is not so understood until the end: the True that does not merge with the False, and nonetheless does not exist without the False, reveals itself as the universal that does not merge with the particular and nonetheless does not exist without it. A mere proclamation, for the Absolute does not appear in it in its truth, which is to be in itself (Being) for itself (Spirit) and to know that identity; it is still the simple negation of its other, of negativity: particularity is not reconciled with the universal, it is pushed back, and the universal is, for particularity, mute Being without spirit, the hostility of the unmoved violence. All reasoning's work and all sentiment's toil will be necessary to make this promise understandable by fulfilling it, to bring Being to life.

Therefore, the doctrine of Being and that of discourse needed to remain distinct since *certainty* and *discussion*. Their first union, in the *object* could not last since it could not fix the negativity of the for-itself, but only establish the identity of Being and Spirit in an abstract way, that is, as the *necessity* of coherent discourse. Spirit could not *develop* in it and stayed as a being in the world, particular as universal, separated from the world that was not for itself, but that, while being understandable for Spirit, remained accidental in relation to Spirit in its existence. However, if science was not realized, it was *conceived*: if there must be science, it will be Being's discourse and Being in discourse; discourse and ontology will be one and the same thing.

There *are* so here. But facing that science, reasoning finds itself left helpless. It has not raised itself to the Absolute, and absolute science seems incomprehensible to it. The Absolute as an infinitely distant goal, as method's guiding idea, is useful, or even necessary; the Absolute as a particular existence apart from the particular is explained by the thirst of the unconditioned, natural, as it were, to man, present as his sentiment's requirement. But the Absolute developed into a science is a scandal for the understanding — particularly since 'reprising' the attitude in the Absolute under the category of the conscience is forbidden to the understanding, which would like to flee at once through this reprise: not only does the attitude declare that it is the category itself, it develops itself as such, by not opposing itself to the other attitudes, but by understanding them, and, consequently, by detaching itself from them by the means of the demonstration of their relative legitimacy. Studying the behavior, the concrete interest, the world, the faith of the man who elaborates absolute science leads to nothing here: this man has no attitude, since he dominates and possesses all the attitudes in the absolutely coherent discourse, and since, [339] at the personal level, he is everybody else, without interest, instead only in an interest. Saying that as a philosopher he lingers over his era, that he returns to a primitive science, this doesn't give any results either, since absolute science skips no step and justifies them all: absolute philosophy would be entirely prepared to recognize reprises from the Absolute in all that, in each category, is called philosophy, if it had the concept of the reprise at its disposal (which it does not: the other's philosophies are merely historical for the philosophy of the Absolute, and however logical their history be, they do not constitute science's categories); but this would not move forward reasoning, which would not find itself thinking the new attitude, but would find itself thought by a new category. In fact, reasoning deprives itself no reprises, declaring that absolute science is a false attitude, because man is this or that; said differently, reasoning engages the discussion, which, for it, is a natural reaction. But this discussion is disappointing; for as often as reasoning screams: you are wrong, absolute philosophy responds: you have every right to think that. The realist will accuse it of idealism, the idealist, of realism, without this

affecting it, since absolute philosophy knows that it contains both and is neither: it overrules particularity's objections, not because it finds them false, but because it finds them true — in and for particularity.

It starts then calmly by Being, because it has reached the Absolute, where Being is Spirit. What makes it developed itself is the movement that leads the Being of the in-itself to its for-itself. Being is, that is, it exists in discourse; it determines itself then and determines itself by the exclusion of all negation, of all limitation, of all determination: it is Nothingness, and Nothingness, not distinguishing itself from Being, is thus Being, grounds itself in it without merging with it, and, united to Being, appears as becoming — becoming that *is* as the unity and as the mutual destruction of Being and Nothingness: Existence. — Science continues, Being comes into contact with itself, it is for-itself, beforehand only in-itself, that is, for we who alone see its return into itself, afterwards for it, up until being in the end in-itself and for-itself, and this still for itself: what sees and what is seen as it sees itself seen and seeing. The *concept* is Being that knows itself to be Being, that posits itself as Being in nature, that reconciles itself in its historic reality with this existence that it has had outside of itself.

We don't have to follow it on this journey: in a categorial analysis, it is not the elaboration, the developed system, that matters, but the philosophical category that makes this system possible for us and necessary for itself. One can give up on it all the more easily since the presentation (a presentation) of the system is laid out for all to see in Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. We simply refer the reader to it, without fear of confusion; the differences between his system and the present categorial analysis are all too clear, as far as the goal is concerned as well as the beginning, and what follows in the present work will make them all the more visible: the Absolute is not the final category here. But it is, as is the case at each step of the analysis, the last up to the [340] point where we are established for the moment, and so the Hegelian system is more than an illustration, it is a realization of the category. Said differently, the system in itself is true; the way in which it interprets itself is not, because that interpretation, while being inevitable, falls outside of the system. But this is a remark that can justify itself only in what follows and that, at this spot, is made *ad hominem*, as a warning about the falseness of all the 'critics' of Hegel, critics of the reasoning who are always right, because, in fact, they do nothing other than affirm, with great tenacity and great noise, their particular category as being the absolute, thus proving that all that they have taken from their so-called adversary is the sound of this word. Yet, at the systematic level, the system is irrefutable, since it does not exist at the level of discussion; it can be refused, but then — we speak of reasoning — it is necessary to fall silent, just to clarify: it

is necessary to renounce discourse's coherence. What follows will show what this decision signifies.

What concerns us here is the reality of the system. We say: the reality of the system, for it is only in this reality that the Absolute ceases being the *other* of the finite and, consequently, ceases being finite itself, something outside of the world and in that way caught in the world. The system is not the result of the use of a more appropriate *method* than others or more correct or more modern: there is no method that we can apply to the Absolute, as if there were first of all an object, and then a discourse that tried to grasp this object. Science is its own becoming and it has neither a point of view nor a starting point. To the particular man, it appears following a decision, that of thinking; but this decision itself finds its place in science: once a decision is made, it is also understood, and particularity has already surpassed itself. Asking if there would be science without this decision is asking if there can be discourse without discourse, coherence without the will to coherence.

The question of method has a meaning inside the system; it even has many in it: particularity finds its *other* differently at the different steps that it travels through. Therefore, there is the possibility of error *for it*, that is to say the possibility, and ever the logical necessity, of going from one form of opposition and reconciliation between a limited subject and a limited object to the other — which it judges to be the correction of an error. But in the coherent discourse, this necessity is understood as the becoming of the concept for itself in the totality of its moments. It is the concept that declares itself in science, and if there is a difficulty, it merely concerns the particular and historic conditions of the period where sciences appear: reasoning must be kept from distorting the presentation of science through its always living forms that are legitimate for these real forms of Spirit in which Spirit is for itself, but not knowing this, sees itself as the particular man's *other* and is seen as the *other* by this particular man: religion, State, society's work. The concept realizes itself nonetheless; not intervening, not fixing down one of these moments at the expense of the others suffices. It will develop in the etymological sense of the word; all that is required is taking it as it is given, as it thinks itself. [341] This beginning, which is the hardest for reasoning, is the simplest then: Being is merely Being, nothing is stated about it, it states nothing, it declares itself and it makes itself Nothingness.

But if the system, if at least *an* absolute system, did not really exist, if the philosophical category had not been elaborated, even if only once, as metaphysical categories and scientific concepts, the system would not exist, not even as a possibility: a program would merely be a requirement and one would have come back to prior categories, either of the object, or of the conscience. Being ceases to be the other of discourse only if it realizes itself as discourse in the totality of the system worked out right down to the details. If the form

that this system has taken in Hegel is a definitive form, *the* form of the system, if this concrete form holds what it promises, the question is without a doubt one of the most important for the philosopher and the historian of philosophy. But whichever way that one responds to it, even when one supposes a negative response, the fact nonetheless remains that Hegel was the last in the short list of great philosophers: he discovered the philosophical category of philosophy itself. It is possible that he discovered it in itself, that is, for us, who understand, in a world changed by his discovery, which he discovered without, maybe, understanding it completely. But this critique — if it is one at all —, was made possible by him.

4. *The Absolute as the category where philosophy constitutes itself for itself. — Reprises. — The new problem.* — The Absolute is the first *category of philosophy*. To be clear: it is not the first *philosophical category*, for all the categories developed so far belong to philosophy and determine the ways in which thought thinks itself and self-constitutes for itself. But in the category of philosophy, it is not only a matter of thought, nor of thinking *thought*, but of thinking *thinking*. The opening categories, up to and including the *Self*, think; the following ones — and this becomes clear in the personality — think of thought as man's *other*, which is *thinking*. With the Absolute, it's a matter of the thinking itself. What is translated into discourse in it is understanding and discourse itself. Philosophy appears as the understanding of everything and as self-understanding.

An understanding of everything as an understanding of the Whole, constituted as a unity through the unity of the understanding, was until this moment the formal definition of science, a self-understanding as bearer, real or virtual, present or future of this science, which is philosophy. Science was not philosophy, because it did not deal with itself (the fact that philosophy is sometimes presented as the science of science does not contradict this, because it rests on a particular interpretation that philosophy gives about itself), philosophy does not deal with the Whole as a whole unity of everything, but with comprehension of the whole, with its comprehensibility, in a word, with the possibility of the infinite that for philosophy is the possibility of the unity, since the infinite alone can be both totality and thought. The ways of formulating this opposition between 'philosophy' and 'science' differ from category to category: myth and magic, discussion and positive law, metaphysics and physics, [342] morality and knowledge of the world, divine thought and human thought, methodology and applied science, the domain of freedom and that of nature, intelligence and interest, authentic conflict and values; but their differences, seen from the Absolute, are all reduced to the same fundamental difference between understanding and self-understanding, a difference grasped for the first time in the *conscience*, active from the moment man splits into discourse and action, for-itself and in-itself, from the category of *God*. Now, after the negation of the

understanding by the lack of self-understanding in the *intelligence*, after the decision, wanted unrealizable, of making self-understanding absolute understanding — in the *personality* —, science *must* no longer *become* philosophy, nor philosophy science, but science *is* philosophy, the understanding of the Whole is self-understanding, self-understanding the understanding of the Whole.

Thus, disappears the duality that, for philosophy, opposed opinion to truth, existence to essence, phenomenon to noumenon — the *one* is no longer only bound to the *other* as the infinite to the finite to which it appears and in which it is not what it truly is. Philosophy is no longer knowledge of human ignorance, it is *knowledge*; science is no longer man's know-how in the world, the given and incomprehensible understanding, it is self-understanding and, as such, understanding of the Whole.

Philosophy is thus everything for itself, for the first time. It is not an invention of man, an activity that he can or cannot devote himself to as man: philosophy is the reality of the Absolute that makes him man, and in-itself, from the point of view of philosophy, it is of no importance whether, as particular, he knows it or not. Reason is not a quality, a faculty, an attribute of man; it *is*, it is in *being for itself in itself* and *being in itself for itself*, and man *is* reason. Discourse is no longer the result of a relationship between man and the world (the right of the relationship is recognized with the admission of the two terms that make it up: the negativity and the given, one and the other together constitute particularity), but the totality of the concrete forms of that relationship, and that totality is for-itself, having become for itself in the double becoming of the concept in itself in nature, and the concept for itself in history, a becoming double recognizing itself *unified* in absolute knowledge. Discourse is discourse for discourse and is everything. Understanding and self-understanding (or the possibility of understanding) are not separated, but only separable for a moment, through a separation that grounds itself on their unity as it comes to an end in it; philosophy and science are merely aspects of the same knowledge according to the particular way-stations along the track that is the reality and realization of it. The problem, were there still problems, would not be finding the possibility of knowledge — in this language, knowledge would be the possibility of all possibilities —, but rather of finding the reason for reason's doubt about its own reality — a problem that posits itself and undoes itself with the particularity that asserts itself in its limitation and, by asserting itself, posits the infinite as its *other*, which it negates and which is nonetheless the source of its reality. In absolute knowledge, philosophy has ceased being reflection in another: the circle of reflections has been traveled through.

[343] The Absolute is thus the first category of philosophy, the first category where philosophy is everything and is so for itself, when one positions oneself inside the category. But when one looks on from the outside, what does that affirmation become? We ask the

question, because the modern conscience loves asking it; and we ask it in order to eliminate it, since, for philosophy, it makes no sense, more precisely, because it proves that the category has not been grasped. In fact, it is easily conceded that one can place themselves on the outside and *objectively* compare the entitlements of the diverse categories (which, then, do not appear as such); it seems that a good number among them, if not all of them, can clamor for the honor of having discovered philosophy and the absolute, or at least of having given philosophy back to itself and that their reasons are equal: in short, that one can *do* all sorts of philosophy. But it would appear immediately that this place *outside*, this Archimedean point, does not exist, no longer exists, since man has renounced the attitude of the *intelligence*. As long as thought is man's *other*, the question is justified: once the Absolute is attained in coherent discourse (it would be more precise to say: has revealed itself as coherent discourse), it is no more than the obstinacy of reasoning and particularity.

It is a matter then of a reprise of intelligence, but a reprise of a particular kind, since it does not bear on the *attitude* — we have already said that such reprises exist and why they present no interest —, but on the category: the intelligence, employing prior categories, tries to grasp the *category* of the absolute. It can't help hearing the man of absolute knowledge protest against any attempt of entering into his private life, in his particular existence. But it is even more 'natural' for it to want to 'understand' what he says, that is, to reduce absolute knowledge to a theory, a teaching, a faith, a technique, a method, in short, to something other than what it is. What bothers the intelligence is precisely this claim knowledge makes of being both the result and the beginning, of being the first category of philosophy.

The question arises, ordinarily, in the simplest of ways: was there not philosophy before the system and absolute knowledge? The answer then is no less simple: yes, there was philosophy before absolute knowledge constituted itself as the system of the totality of particularity and contradictions, because the Absolute *is* before *knowing itself* to be Absolute in the particular, because the Absolute is understood before understanding itself.

In other words: where there is philosophy, there is coherent discourse; the very idea of coherent discourse, that is to say the *idea* of the absolute, is the idea that produces philosophy under each category. One can say then that the reprises of the Absolute are nothing other than the philosophical doctrines of each attitude. The theory that appears in each attitude, the fact that in each attitude, even those that finish at man's silence in his life, man justifies himself and seeks coherence, the fact that he speaks is the initial appearance of the Absolute in the particular. Thus, what man could not see in the prior categories is visible for us, namely that man *can* always want his attitude to become a category. It's just that this possibility grasps itself as such only in [344] the pure category of the Absolute. Up to here, coherence is merely required (by *discussion*), made possible, but as the in-itself, by the



*object*, *certainty*'s heir. Coherence appears as man's *other*, either under the form of truth or under that of being, and the possibility is that of man's relation to this other, realized in the attitude, uttered in the category. Each philosophy is thus a reprise of the Absolute, in that it grounds itself on it, as the knowledge of comprehensibility — and it is merely a reprise, since comprehensibility becomes comprehension for no one, but remains a *fact*, through which man understands himself as the possibility of comprehension, but which, as a fact, itself incomprehensible, separates man from comprehension, which is only present as transcending man (at the level of being or that of truth).

We will not follow this line of research any further, especially since we will have to come back to it in when dealing with other categories, which are categories of philosophy in the indicated sense. Let's be content here to indicate — but at this point this is an anticipation — that the kind of reprises defined here can serve to elucidate the passage from the attitude to the category, but do not elucidate the possibility (or impossibility) of a passage from the category to the attitude. Philosophy, such as it is understood in the living tradition, is constituted by this category from the start: it has always been systematic and monist — which means the same thing, dualism and pluralism being located merely on the side of content — , it always maintains understanding's unity, even when it considers this unity to be unrealizable for man, and it maintains the unity of the understandable, even when it sees it as inaccessible. In every attitude, man, if and when he speaks, speaks of the Absolute and of coherent discourse, which realizes itself only in the category of the Absolute where it absorbs the attitude. By reaching this, philosophy completes itself: it has understood everything and itself. The question, if there still is one, will no longer be capable of being philosophical in the tradition's sense, it is no longer seeking coherence, which has been realized. If it is asked, it will be asked by the man who opposes himself to philosophy, who, while understanding particularity and his particularity in the Absolute and in coherent discourse, refuses coherence in order to not be particular. From the point of view of traditional philosophy, such a question is absurd; it would translate itself by the formula: does meaning have a meaning? Nonetheless, the question cannot be excluded, precisely because it is absurd, no more than *Truth* excludes *Nonsense*.

Whatever the case — and only what follows in the concrete research will be able to inform us —, it seems clear that the formal reflections that precede contain categories of philosophy (the term philosophy taken in an undetermined sense, but different than that of the tradition) which are not yet explicitly presented, such as the category of *meaning*. The only thing to do then is go on, without worrying about the difficulties, the largest of which could express itself through the question: is it not necessary to stick to the category of the

Absolute in its purity in order to not fall into reprises, that is, in order to not see, as new and revolutionary, what has long been surpassed and is no more than reasoning's stubbornness?

CHAPTER XIV THE WORK [*Œuvre*]

**The Absolute leaves the particular man to his concrete freedom. He can be busy without being busy with himself and without opposing himself to his occupation: to be man is to act, and man is what he does: his *work* [*œuvre*].**

1. *The scandal of reason: the refusal of absolutely coherent discourse and of reasonable contentment. — The character of this refusal.* — The category of the Absolute's specificity is that it encompasses discussion — under whichever form that it presents itself, that is, whichever later category that it reprises — and is aware of encompassing it. There is no possibility then of discussing with the category, of opposing a new category to it which makes what it did not see seen, what it did not understand understood. It understands everything and itself: man can possess the science of philosophy, particularity can grasp itself as particularity and *make* itself universal: the totality of problems is their solution.

That the passage from one category to the next is free and 'incomprehensible' appears here with more clarity than anywhere else. Precisely because the category of the Absolute can show a necessary progress in its own onto-logical categories (those of discourse-Being), it seems impossible from its point of view that anything else could follow, be it an attitude or a category. How would such a category be anything other than a reprise, whether simple or complicated, of the Absolute, anything other than a viewpoint, from a particular angle, on coherent discourse, anything other than some system where coherence, in the best-case scenario, would be present without being understood? And how would the attitude be more than a concrete form of particularity, an expression of negativity, distinct from the others only at the historical level and which, now, no longer represents anything? The book is closed, history will be nothing more than repetition and continuation, since negativity has found peace. Thought *is* Thought: after this, what remains?

The scandal of reason remains. Man cannot think farther than the Absolute, since thinking is seeking coherence, and since coherence is everything, in itself and for itself. But man can *have thought*, he can have subscribed to all that science teaches, and he is capable of not *thinking*, not *wanting to think*, refusing Thought. For [346] the Absolute, this is

nothing but scandal, as every passage is a scandal for the surpassed. He thought, he has science, he *knows* what negativity is, he knows particularity and its unreasonable stubbornness, and he *wants* himself to be stubborn and unreasonable; he knows that, in Thought he disappears and that this disappearance is legitimate if it accepts thinking: and this is why he rejects Thought. He does not want to think, he wants to be, not, like the personality, behind and against everyone and everything, not, like the intelligence, apart from everyone and everything, but being everyone and everything. The Absolute has taught him that opposition and comparison are methods of reflection and that they lead, in the end, to coherent discourse. For him, it is a matter of ridding himself of the universal of Thought in order to be universal, not of thinking of himself as reconciled, but being reconciled. *When* he thinks of himself, he thinks of himself as a scandal.

The category then can only appear to us there where the attitude agrees to oppose itself to other attitudes or, more frequently, if it is not yet completely established and remains caught in the desire to justify itself, in sum, if it interprets itself with the help of a reprise. So, it is counter-thought, the universal and absolute negation of the universal and the absolute. But in its normal and, so to speak, natural form, it is merely detachment with regard to Thought. It has no conflict with Thought, with Being, with the Universal; it asks nothing, defends itself against nothing, is looking no more for itself than for the others or something else: it *is*. The Absolute is for it, like for reasoning, something that *must* (or must not) be thought: it *is*, and the it expects nothing from this Being, which it is as certain about as itself. It would agree with the category of the Absolute about its freedom; it would willingly recognize, if this worried it, that the contradictions of particularity are integrated into Thought and that this Thought is concretely present in human reality. But this would still be abstract in its opinion. Thought has become, in the Absolute, a particular occupation of the particular: once Being is thought, Thought realized, the universal can withdraw itself from the stage, and the questions that concern it don't make sense anymore since the difficulty has disappeared into total coherence. To still speak about it is to fall back into reflection, it is, instead of making particularity disappear in total comprehension, to try to maintain it with the help of this Absolute that is its end. From discourse's point of view, particularity is integrated once and for all, said differently, discourse is really over, and to want to continue it is to disregard that fact. The particular no longer has to worry, it no longer even has to note that worry serves no more purpose. There is nothing else to do but live.

The Absolute is by no means refuted, and the new attitude does not think about refuting it. On the contrary, it is right, and it is proved right: if it is about thinking, it is necessary to think in the Absolute. But is thought necessary? Is man a thinking being? Before the Absolute, the question couldn't find a clear answer; for it was not clear what 'to think' and

‘thinking’ signified. Presently, it is: ‘to think’ is the attitude of Thought that does not yet know itself to be everything, to be [347] Being; ‘thinking’ is the attitude of the particularity that sees the universal as its *other*. The Absolute can then respond and say that man is indeed a thinking being, that to think is necessary; but his response is ironic: as soon as man is spoken of, *to think* opposes itself to *Thought* as the particular and the partial to the universal and the absolute: Thought is in man, but in man in his historic totality, it is not entirely in each man for itself like it is in itself; the particular, at the end of history, is reasonable, but it is not so, as particular, for itself. Precisely because reason *is*, and has become for itself, particular men, when they think, can remain in the domain of reasoning and reason about what concerns them in their particularity. The system is there, definitive, the finishing touches to be done on the details perhaps, but purely and simply to preserve with regard to the essential: in this sense, there is nothing left to think, there is only science to learn. The philosopher, as a particular man, is henceforth a specialist, an expert in a field among others.

The result of the Absolute’s irony here seems to be the return to *certainty*. The Absolute, in any case, would not protest against such a translation: particularity negates itself until it understands itself in the universal; this done, it goes back to its affairs in a world that is recognized as reasonable, that is, where any problem is meaningful and has a reasonable solution and where this solution can be found and realized by a particularity that places its trust in the historically realized universal. For the Absolute, it is thus perfectly in order that man returns to certainty, since in the Absolute, he knows what he has to do and where he stands; man had started off by living in a particular absolute, without knowing it as such, reasoning had wanted to speak about the universal like about its *other* and was put back in its place: the trek is finished, and it had not been in vain, since the new certainty is universal; it knew the risk and has dodged it for good.

But if the Absolute imagines having overcome particularity by conceding that all that it does is good and that it has merely to continue, it is fooling itself. Man *can* no longer want any of that freedom, and this life to which he is reduced *can* be insufficient for him. It may be that history is finished, that, for coherent discourse, man’s life closes back in on itself, that nothing new can emerge. Yet, he doesn’t care about this. There is certainty, so be it: what does this certainty bring him? Everything is understood in advance, every problem is meaningful and has a solution, so be it, but what’s the use *now* where what is understood in advance is *not yet*? Man *will have* played a role, had a place, exercised a function in the *unified* world that is thought Being and Thought in being; but here and now, this world is not complete, since man, this man here, is not yet dead, because the circle has not yet closed for him. The Absolute, it’s true, gives him freedom, a freedom that is not only negative, but also positive, a freedom of the concrete man in a concrete world where there is something

to do for him. But this freedom makes all the more clearly visible what is abstract in coherent discourse.

[348] It makes it *visible*: to be exact, it is necessary to say that this freedom makes what is abstract *felt*. Freedom is a freedom understood, it merely *is* in understanding; it is reason for itself; the particular's freedom is the freedom of the universal in the particular or, which amounts to the same thing, the disappearance-realization of the particular in the universal. The particular's for-itself interests reason merely in its totality, that is to say as in-itself, as what it is for reason. Of course, science gives the particular the means of surpassing itself, of understanding, if it so desires, that it wanted what happens to it. But particularity doesn't understand it this way: it prefers that what it wants happens to it, even if discourse would demonstrate to it that it does not believe that it wants what it wants and believes that it wants what it doesn't want. There is nothing surprising about this for absolute science, which has understood the particular's stubbornness; but if discourse understands it, discourse changes nothing about it (which, besides, it doesn't see as its task). For man, this freedom is an abstract freedom, *abstracted* from its for-itself: the freer he is, the more his existence is meaningful for discourse and science, and the less he takes advantage of it; he is free from reasoning's partial discourse, he is free in science's coherent discourse — for himself, this signifies that he is forsaken and empty: everything is meaningful in itself, nothing is for him. He can speak about everything, because discourse encompasses everything, but any speaking about the world goes over his head: he understands, he is understood, and all this brings him nothing, since he cannot live with it. He now knows what speaking means and that all reasoning winds up at Reason, he knows that he has nothing more to ask if he doesn't want to be absurd, he knows that he is satisfied if it is a question of knowing and of science, he knows that Thought is honesty itself, and he feels that he has been played and that he is unhappy.

It must be observed that this does not imply a return to the attitude of the personality. For philosophy, the idea of such a return makes no sense, since the latter category understands the former. At the historical level, this return is, in principle, not excluded. Indeed, it is possible for a given category to not succeed in imposing itself on a given moment and on the conscience of the time; the result of its failure would be a reinforcement, a renovation of the still dominant attitude which would rid itself of the intruder with the help of a reprise, interpreting the new attitude by means of its own category. But philosophically speaking, there is here no return to the personality, for the simple reason that everything finds its place in discourse, everything, including conflict, which in it is seen, foreseen, understood. The cry, the call, everything is meaningful in the Absolute and therefore is meaningless for the particular. It does not follow from this that one can't come across men in the attitude of the

personality during the same time that the attitude that we are speaking of is found: it is even likely one does, since the attitudes don't disappear when their category is surpassed and when another category has presented its credentials. But such a coexistence does not interest us. What matters is that the man who knows that there is an absolute science (he need not possess it) will not seek the way out in a discourse, whichever it be. For him, the personality's conflict does not suffice, because science has stripped this conflict [349] of the possibility of believing itself absolute; man, as particular and as negativity, is always conflict, and it is why this conflict brings nothing: the conflict with the Absolute, if this term is to be employed, is much deeper than that of the personality.

If then there is a return towards a prior attitude (not towards a category) it will be towards the work of the *condition*. There, indeed, discourse can be set aside. Work is freeing from the discourse's abstract freedom, from the boredom of the circularity of the particular in the Absolute, and gives to man, if not content, at least an explanation of the absence of content: discourse doesn't concern the man who works and who, in his work and thanks to it, knows what he has to do; if he is not content with his actual condition, he has the certainty of progress and, in that certainty, satisfaction concerning the world. Therefore, the man of the condition is the normal "contemporary" of the one that we are dealing with here — not a particularly surprising fact that for the one like for the other, the language of the particular has become suspect and that only the world (however they understand this word) matters to these two<sup>85</sup>.

But, like before, it is not a matter of a return in the philosophical sense of the term. It is a historical relatedness that brings two attitudes closer, not two categories. For even if here we found ourselves in the presence of an attitude that does not want to be a category — and we have encountered clues of this —, it would still remain that the attitude uses the category of the Absolute and still bears its mark. The condition can be the form of life that man returns to; after passing through reflection, he is no longer the same, and the renunciation of reflection, carried out by the *condition* after reflection's appearance in the *self*, cannot be repeated in the same way ever since, with the Absolute, reflection has been reabsorbed, so to speak, in the universal that is, for itself, in-and-for-itself. The problem is no longer to understand the world, it is to live in it, even though it is understood, and understood as completely perfect according to its own possible perfection, to live in it, even though there is nothing more to do, besides to continue on, even though all the oppositions are reconciled in Thought, even though progress has become the simple persistence of the particularity that,

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<sup>85</sup> In this sense, one can say that the *condition* has become aware of itself in the Absolute and that man can, all his scruples set aside, surrender himself in good conscience to the world *understood* as reasonable.

in itself, has *reached* the end of its journey and understands that it has, as soon as it cares about understanding it. The return to the condition as a form of life is a conscious return then, not a pure and simple return, and it is an act of despair: there is nothing else that can pass the time.

Man is a thinking being, this response then is no longer complete. Here, where everything is ironic since the absolutely coherent discourse is in question — or rather: has become *problematic*, for the questions fall under discourse —, the complete response is: man is alas merely a thinking being! He thinks, but this doesn't lead him anywhere. He can't help thinking, because it's his way of being, his condition; but he would do better to limit himself to reasoning, to this thought in lower-case that is the servant [350] of work: there is nothing to gain in elevating himself to the Absolute, other than silencing all the voices that promised him a greater dignity, a more authentic value, a more complete detachment. This was hardly worth the trouble of navigating these dire straits which, at the price of so much trouble, lead him back, as poor as he was setting off, to his starting point. The Absolute may well understand itself as the coincidence of life and discourse: this brings nothing to life, and all this is reduced to the platitude that teaches that Thought is Thought and that life is life, that it is possible to speak about everything, and that life merely has to handle things as it can and wants by trusting discourse for understanding. Man is a thinking being, true, but all his thought does not make him richer; he would have done better to not get caught up in this game.

However, this grievance, as sincere as it is, cannot make it — as sincerely as it desires it — forget its origin in coherent discourse. What it says is: sentiment, having appeared to man in the attitude before *God*, has opposed him to the world and has taught him to speak for himself; the speaking was him, the world — different according to different categories —, was the *other* that he wanted to free himself from, modifying it, modifying himself, little matter; but with the Absolute, the circle of reflection is travelled through, and something new has not so much presented itself as imposed itself: discourse, or, if one prefers, thought — is not the world's other, it is not the man who lives and feels, it is the world, the world is him, and man remains alone, worse than alone, since he can no longer even claim to be alone without exposing himself to discourse's refutation and being told that in fact, that is, in the Absolute, he is not at all alone. Coherent discourse, all things considered, has had the sole result of stripping all discourse of what it calls the particular. It is this result that matters, and it matters merely as a result: man returns to his starting point, but it is not the same man that returns to it, for he has understood that the path that he had taken has no way out.

The situation in which man finds himself is comparable — if *comparing* is allowed, even though the philosophical meaning of such a comparison can only be elucidated at the



end of the work — to his own situation in the attitude of the *self*. Thanks to the *object*, all difficulty seemed resolved, not just put aside, the truth established in being, the discussion settled; and as here, man stayed there, lost, with the question, absurd from the results' point of view, that asked: how can all this interest me and what does being understood or even understanding myself matter to me, if it is merely understanding? The same embarrassment in both cases, an embarrassment of riches that do not nourish, the same impossibility of speaking about this embarrassment, since language has transformed itself into this sterile richness of discourse. For the *self*, the solution was the sacrifice of language, the renunciation of understanding, the abandonment to sentiment. The problem will not be able to be resolved in the same way by the man who comes from the Absolute. He has had the experience of sentiment, he knows that it leads to transcendence and, from there, to [351] another discourse, to another *object* that will leave him just as alone as the first. Experience has made him prudent. But no prudence will be able to keep him from making another go at it, since he is, since he feels himself to be unhappy, despite, not because of the satisfaction that the Absolute has found in itself for particularity.

2. *The refusal of the universal and the immediate positivity of the work [œuvre].* — The new attitude characterizes itself through traits that are absolutely contradictory and irreconcilable from thought's point of view, under whichever category that thought is understood. On one hand, the agreement is total with the absolutely coherent discourse, which the attitude proves right, and that it recognizes as Reason; consequently, reasoning has received satisfaction in its totality and in all its aspects (the aspect's definition matters little, since absolutely coherent discourse discerns and encompasses all speaking categories that precede it): there is a place for the science of the condition, for religion, enjoyment, poetry, family, violence, law, nature, the State, for everything finally, and man is satisfied in a certainty that, in opposition to the initial one, has justified itself, since its discourse exists and knows itself to be universal. On the other hand, there is an emptiness, a sentiment of abandonment and of unhappiness as absolute as Reason's satisfaction in Reason is, a sentiment that is the result of precisely this satisfaction, a position of mute despair, because man knows that, as soon as he starts talking, he necessarily speaks in terms that imply satisfaction, that speaking reasonably is being satisfied.

This is what must be retained to start with, if one doesn't want to deform what is new in this attitude. But this only describes the starting point. It is necessary to try to see the attitude that develops concretely from this first point.

Man, it seems, opposes himself to discourse and, as language has merged with discourse, to language itself; yet, he does so by speaking. But the arguments that the man of

absolute science draws from this contradiction have no hold on the man that we are dealing with, no more than the famous refutation of skepticism has ever kept people from being skeptical. He does so by speaking, what does this mean, if not that speaking is not what matters? Speaking leads to coherent discourse? Why not? This is not what it's about; it's about *being* despite discourse. Man speaks, that's understood, and he doesn't distinguish himself from his language, on the condition however that he is fine being content with language. But what language can forbid him, not from declaring himself something else (which would be being subjected to language by attaching a value to the declaration), but of being something else and of using, as this being who is not language, language like one uses a tool or a domestic animal, without however being this animal or this tool?

One sees what it's about: under a negative form, it is the refusal, or rather, since language is not essential, the abandoning of the universal. Positively, it is the reign of sentiment and, which amounts to the same thing, violence. Discourse is absolutely coherent, and coherent discourse is Reason and Being; but it is stripped of interest, it does not [352] concern man, of whom it may well speak, but to whom it gives nothing that he doesn't already have; it comforts him in his possession, which is perhaps fine and well, but is also perfectly useless, since man has parted with discourse. The question of rightfulness is asked *for* discourse and *in* discourse — all the better for discourse if it successfully resolves the question in a way that suits it: for man, this signifies nothing, especially since discourse justifies particularity only as particularity, that is, leaves man exposed to accidents, that he will understand, if he so wants, after the fact, but that to start with he must merely endure. *Rightful* satisfaction doesn't compensate for *factual* boredom. For, to repeat, it is a matter of boredom and detachment, not of opposition. The universal, discourse, Reason, the Absolute are not declared false or inadmissible or debatable: this would still be recognizing the kind of reflection that has led man to the point where he finds himself and that would make him set out again on the road that he wants to get off of. Discourse is not meaningful for the particular who can't *live* with it. Absolute science is perfected, but it is a science bearing on men, not a science *for* man and this one here neither accepts it nor spurns it, since it does not concern him, him who has turned his eyes away from it to attend to himself.

Himself: that is, to his sentiment of self and to the realization of this sentiment. There is a world, that's understood, and this world has multiple aspects; there is man's condition, his science, his conscience, poetry, religion and so on — absolute science has gone to enough trouble to put them in order —; now, the question is about knowing *what I do with them*. I will certainly not do with them what the *personality* did, a stuff of conflict, the field where the other's values and my authenticity go head-to-head: how does this attitude differ from others, besides having its particular way of wanting to be right, in other words, of wanting

to get Reason on its side? Doing something with them, this can no longer mean anything other than *doing something*, not feeling creative in the way of the personality, not proving one's freedom to oneself by creating in order to undo, as the ironic poet of the *conscience*, but creating to create.

Creating: doing *something* that did not exist beforehand, not creating oneself and thus falling back into reflection, into division, into reasoning and under Reason. Creating *something*, with no regard for discourses, for values, for freedom, for all these abstractions, these pale copies of life. Creating, and thus having something that interests man, because it is his thing, his own in an entirely different way than the problems that he calls his own, the language, the conflict, and which are his own merely through the force, oh so feeble, of 'personal' claims outside of which they are everyone's: if coherent discourse has shown one important fact, it is clearly that any problem of language finds its solution in the universal. But the universal is also the common, the public thing that belongs to nobody because it belongs to everyone. Man has merely his *work* that is truly his own; for the work depends on him, and him, he does not depend on the work.

[353] The world, one could say, thus becomes stuff for man again. And, of course, he would grant that willingly: the world is transformed by him, it receives a meaning that it didn't have, a new form, another content. But it is necessary to be prudent: what was granted could indeed illuminate us, were it not precisely the universal that the work [*œuvre*] was destined to replace. What is left of all these qualifications, understandable only in the universal, if they are admitted *because* they no longer have any importance? The one that wants the work [*œuvre*] doesn't have to worry and doesn't worry about the interpretation of his undertaking. He knows that words are powerless, these, reasoning's words that Reason is the totality of, and whether the work [*œuvre*] does or does not make sense is in his opinion a question both pedantic and puerile. He is above this kind of consideration, since he is above all consideration: it would be more accurate to say that he lives in *certainty* — but in a formal certainty, a certainty that says neither what must be done nor how it must be done. Of course, he takes the world as it is: what he wants to do, he does according to the world's conditions (whence the relatedness between this attitude and the that of the *condition*); but he is not *under* the condition, as he is not *in* this world: he is facing both of them, alone, and in no way ready to enter into a discussion or to accept unhelpful reasonings. Nothing binds him to the others, because nothing binds him.

As he is seen by himself, he is essentially violent then, that is, in the speech of others, immoral, tasteless, faithless and lawless, in a word, incomprehensible. This reaction, which is natural before any new attitude, is here grounded in the attitude itself, which is in itself

incomprehensible, because it aspires to be so. Between this man and the others, there is no relation of community or any communion and there must not be any whatsoever. He is not only unique (as the personality was), but alone. It would be absurd for him to imagine himself in another's place, for there are neither places nor comparable beings. There are no *men*, except in the sense that the species *homo* must be treated differently than the species *canis*; there is *him*, and even this is nearly false, since it is not a matter of being, but of doing, and since any 'theoretical' judgment is without impact if there is none in the practical order. He is alone, absolutely alone, not isolated like someone who is cut off or who has cut himself off from a community that they continue to belong to. The others see him as one of their own: too bad for them; he can leave them in that opinion, or even confirm it, as he can appear to be their indomitable enemy whom 'there is no way of living with', who is 'crazy' or 'brilliant': this depends on him, on his work [*œuvre*] and on the means that he judges appropriate to realize it. Violence is present — hidden, admitted, displayed, extolled, concealed —, but always aware of itself.

But, once more, we must be prudent; for we are speaking about someone who does not speak about himself, who does not express himself, who, in the language of the Absolute, is not for-himself, moreover, who doesn't *want* to be for himself. We've just said that this man is essentially violent, as he sees himself. Yet, he does not see himself, he only sees his work [*œuvre*], and moreover, the term violence means nothing to him, since he knows no alternative. He [354] can speak of violence, as he can speak of other things, because speaking about certain things in a certain way can serve the work [*œuvre*]; but the language that he uses is never his language, it is that of the others, who he less addresses than uses. For himself — if we can still use this expression —, he is a sentiment, but not of himself: he is the sentiment of his work [*œuvre*], he is that immediate assurance (in order to avoid the word certainty) through which, better: in which, he knows what he has to do, what his business is, even though the technical questions and the details would not yet be settled. But it is this sentiment that is called violence in the language of men for whom the truth of existence is living with others; it is what the man of the work [*œuvre*] thus calls himself, if this seems indicated to him; it is a total violence, no less total than discourse and which knows nothing outside of itself, the violence that has created, creates, and will create all that was, is, will be. Discourse is refuted by the *fact*; nothing is understood or understandable in front of the creative fact, history is not finished: there is no history, no understanding, no discourse that matters in front of the sentiment of the work [*œuvre*].

It is true that the term sentiment equally demands a prudent utilization, and for the same reasons. It does not designate sentiment opposed to reasoning or to will or to

intelligence here, because, being total, it leaves nothing that it can oppose itself to or that one can oppose it to, except through a μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος. But the danger is smaller in the case of sentiment, since the term is not welcomed into the tradition's language, other than in the domain that is called the intimate sphere of life. The temptation will therefore be smaller to attribute a philosophical meaning to it foreign to what it indicates here and what is, formally speaking, *immediateness*. Up to now, sentiment signified, for us, a relation of the man in the world to the essential of the *world*, be it *God*, or *freedom*, or *conflict*; it was the silence in language, it was what was *indicated* in the middle of what *appeared*, it was particularity's *for-itself* in its indomitable stubbornness, and as such, it was understood in the absolutely coherent discourse. Yet, after this discourse, all these forms reveal themselves to be *mediated* by what they oppose themselves to. This sentiment was not feeling, but speaking of the sentiment: if it had been any different, man would not have wasted his time justifying himself, he would have created; he would not have sought satisfaction, even less so the possibility of his satisfaction, he would be satisfied.

This is how the man of the work [*œuvre*] grasps his feeling. It is clear that for us he is not as immediate as he thinks. But what is there to say, other than that by speaking we position ourselves inside of discourse, where, clearly, sentiment again becomes particularity opposed to the universal, that is, negativity mediated in itself? Were it any different, we would wind up with the result of the work [*œuvre*] merging with desire in primitive certainty. Yet, no less clearly, that is not the case. The work [*œuvre*] is not the means of satisfying a desire that has its place in the world, and the man of the work [*œuvre*] does not [355] have any desires that he wants to satisfy: he does not desire: he *does*. If one wanted to defend the other thesis, it would be necessary to go further and say that man before the work [*œuvre*] is like the animal before its food that it ingests without further ado — and so the misconception would burst, since the work [*œuvre*] exists in its realization and is not given. It is indeed true that the work [*œuvre*] comes from the discourse that it puts aside and that it can be grasped by discourse, which grasps everything, as an expression of particularity: however, this does not affect this man, since only the work [*œuvre*] and its realization matter to him. He is immediately in his work [*œuvre*], precisely because the mediation of the particular in the Absolute has been total; he is not a philosopher, not because philosophy does not yet exist, but because it exists and is knowledge.

3. *The language of the work [œuvre]: myth. — Efficiency and sincerity. — The work and the masses.* — The category's 'contradictions' are thus reduced to a single one, and which is not incumbent upon the attitude, namely between the fundamental fact of its immediateness and the temptation of mediation that constitutes the undertaking of speaking about

it. The man of the work [*œuvre*] is outside of ‘philosophical’ language. However, not only can the discourse that has reached maturity speak about him<sup>86</sup>, not only does the man in the assurance of his work [*œuvre*] let himself be spoken about, knowing that one can speak about everything: he himself speaks. But this language is fundamentally different from any precedent language. It does not aspire to coherence, which it on the contrary rejects because there would be no work [*œuvre*] in a perfect world, already entirely *made*, in a world understood and closed off in and through understanding. It does not claim to reveal anything, since there is nothing to reveal and since there is thus *neither true nor false*. It starts no *discussion* nor finalizes any agreement, as there are neither *men*, in the sense of all traditional philosophy, nor an *object* that can be agreed upon. It does not even lift itself above conflicts as the *intelligence* does, since this height and this intelligence threaten it in its immediacy and would make it comparable, as if it were a language, an interest, a human possibility among others. The only language with which this language can align itself is that of the *condition*, because that language, just like the present one, is a means and a tool, at the bottom speaks of nothing, but plays a role in activity and justifies itself that way. This however is merely a superficial connection and is quickly denied; for the condition is self-sufficient in progress and does not recognize what alone matters here: the work [*œuvre*]; its subject precisely is men, humanity, whereas here, in order to speak in the condition’s terms, man alone and unique, is not conditioned and explainable, but a real condition and this word ‘real’ is sufficient to forever separate the present attitude from that of the *conscience*, in which man is the ultimate and absolute [356] condition, but the condition behind the conditions and that is discovered merely as a condition of conditions, not as a factor essentially above factors *in reality*: its freedom is merely a *known* freedom, *conceived* of as active, but that does not act, because it is humanity’s freedom in its discourse.

The man of the work [*œuvre*] has no language (to be more exact, according to the category of the Absolute: he is not language). He uses language. Let’s be wary of asking what he uses it for. For saying that he uses it for the work [*œuvre*] would merely be the appearance of an answer, since the work [*œuvre*] is not conceived before the creation, nor is it separated from it: were that not the case, man would live in the *thought* of the work [*œuvre*] and the creation itself would be rendered superfluous by the anticipation of the result; said differently, it would be the conception of a determined existence in relation to which man would merely be a tool of realization, and whose realization, because thought about, would fall in the domain of the universal. Man uses language, this means nothing other than the

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<sup>86</sup> This is how Hegel, in his philosophy of history, can introduce the concepts of *passion*, *the great man*, *the hero*, etc., that all target the violence of the work [*œuvre*]. This is also how a Hitler is understandable for us. — The contradiction mentioned will be dealt with in section 4.

fact that he *is* the master of it, in the same sense that the man of the *discussion wanted* to make himself the master of it. Here man is sure of his mastery and he is equally sure that this mastery is of no absolute importance, since, opposed to the discussion, he allows violence; if language plays a leading role, it is because men speak.

For, to repeat, man creates his work [*œuvre*] in the world and knows that he does so. The world does not bind him; what he wants he can make. But this in no way prevents him from needing to go about it in the right way; for if the work [*œuvre*] is never impossible, it can founder through a faulty choice of means. Which amounts to saying that all means are allowed, that all are not right, but that there is always a means. The world is how the science of the condition discovered and described it; but this world of factors and of means now gets a meaning, an end, which is the work [*œuvre*]. Yet, this world is the world of work and of the organization of men, the world of society and of the State, and its existence is grounded on language. But the language of the condition — in both its forms as scientific language and as the language of education — is no longer for itself a means of progress nor in itself (as it appears in the subsequent categories) a goal for itself. It serves the work [*œuvre*]. How then to dominate this language in its totality, that is, dominate society and the State?

Men speak and believe in language; it is only through them that the work can be realized; it is therefore necessary that they subordinate their language of work and of organization to a new language that corresponds to the work [*œuvre*]. The work [*œuvre*] then produces its own language, a language in which it presents itself and imposes itself on men who, themselves, have no work [*œuvre*]. From their point of view, the work's [*œuvre*] essential is present in this language: they learn that their life has not had any meaning until now, that their values were not authentic, that they were not free, that they were naïve enough to let themselves be caught in a concrete interest that, wrongly, claimed to be unique, that they were given in to the weariness and the boredom of a life whose meaning was established above them; in short, all the categories contribute in turn and according to the requirements of the work [*œuvre*] to create the void where the work [*œuvre*] [357] can take its place to direct them. From the creator's side, it's a different story. The categories matter, because they matter to the others, because they are good for detaching men from the life in work that is in itself (for the Absolute) life in the Absolute, for making them open to the work's [*œuvre*] proposition. But the work [*œuvre*] makes light of the categories that it knows are not serious, in that any understanding avoids a creation that would render it unthinkable. It uses them, it does not trust them, as it trusts no other thought than the immediately applicable one. However, it is not content creating the void in order to make a place for itself: men would not contribute to the work [*œuvre*] through a simple lack of satisfaction; on the contrary, if such a state were possible, it would result in throwing men back into the violent struggle of

desires, or even needs, in the struggle of all against all for immediate mastery and immediate satisfaction, and would thus make the work [*œuvre*] impossible: if all are alone, the man of the work [*œuvre*] is no longer different from anybody else. The work's [*œuvre*] creation requires an organized world in view of the work [*œuvre*]; what men consider a positive idea, a project, a precise goal is needed.

The man of the work [*œuvre*] knows perfectly that this requirement is absurd: the work [*œuvre*] has no meaning in the world; it only gives a meaning to the world, and this meaning is not to be anticipated because it exists in the realization. One cannot speak about the work [*œuvre*] as about an object to be fabricated by work. But if it can't be anticipated, it can be projected (in the etymological sense of the term, thrown forward, ahead of the present): what now is, is the preparatory period, the sacrificed generation, the unhappy times, knowable as such thanks to the project, only the realized work [*œuvre*] will give something lasting, the full life, happiness. It is merely provided that men have this faith that they will give themselves to the work [*œuvre*], will submit themselves to he who announces it. Yet, there is nothing that prevents this person from speaking to men; he can even speak to them sincerely, for he can count on their lack of understanding, since they have no work [*œuvre*] to accomplish, since they continue to position themselves in the ordinary existence of their tradition which is the tradition of work, they 'will understand' the project of work [*œuvre*] in their own way in their world. Not keeping them from committing this error suffices to be able to say everything.

Seen from the other categories, this *everything* that the man of the work [*œuvre*] can say is not a lot. For himself, everything is immediately clear in the sentiment, and nothing is more foreign to him than wanting "to follow through". This matters — and he doesn't forget this — at the technical level, at the level of the world and of the condition. But that's none of his business; the organization in itself does not interest him, no more than the work for which it is necessary, and as with the work, he offloads this organization on his *people*, those that adhere to his project. The work [*œuvre*] in itself is never finished and cannot be conceived as finished by its creator. It is creation, creation in the world (not creation of oneself as pursued by the personality), and this creation could not come to an end. It is movement, more than being in movement, since stopping would refute it by bringing it back, *ex parte* [358] *post*, to a simple goal of reasoning: on the contrary, all that can be uttered about it with the precision of the science of work, is, for this very reason, a means of realizing the work [*œuvre*], not the work [*œuvre*] itself.

The language of the man of the work [*œuvre*] is thus the language of sentiment and addresses itself to sentiment. It is what allows him to be sincere, for it is not his words or their content that matters. He can speak of himself using all the categories, qualifying himself



as a prophet, a man of destiny, a master, a clairvoyant among the blind, an intelligence among the obtuse; he can expose his project in any way he likes, as the meaning of history, as the realization of freedom, as a perfect organization —nothing limits him in his choice of terms, provided that these terms express his uniqueness and that of his work [*œuvre*], and provided that they win him the cooperation of the others. Contradiction doesn't bother him, it's meaningless for him; for all that one can say about the creator and his work [*œuvre*] is merely *image*, and the choice depends exclusively on the effect over men. For their part, they will take the image as an image and will receive it without judging it according to reasoning, even more so not refusing it because it is image: those who reason can by no account be used for the work [*œuvre*] and must be treated as enemies.

The language of the man of the work [*œuvre*] signifies then nothing within the meaning of the preceding categories (which does not mean that his language cannot be understood under these categories, far from it: it is false, or absurd, or criminal, or impious, or revolutionary, etc.). The creator wants to create, language is technically necessary, but this language has no worth on its own: language acts, it procures this power over the men that is indispensable to it, it is not itself the goal. What the creator says is always the same thing then: "I am the creator of the work [*œuvre*]; the project that I bring before you, ahead of you, must be realized, ahead of you; it is necessary to feel that you must subordinate yourselves to it with all that you have and all that you are". In everything that he says, the creator is thus sincere; the forms do not count for him, and whether he speaks of greatness or goodness, of love or struggle, of salvation or joy, he does not lie; if only because at this level the idea of a lie could find no place, given that in the movement there can be no truth: truth and lies exist together for other categories, these other categories surpassed, the opposition disappears with the terms that form it.

What the creator says does not form a discourse then, if a term is needed to designate its moving and always identical (for us) content, one can call it *myth*. However, this myth distinguishes itself from the myth of *certainity* in that it is aware of being a myth and opposes itself to technical thought as the goal to the means (even though the man of the work [*œuvre*] treats it as a means in relation to the work [*œuvre*] and knows that his work [*œuvre*] is not a goal for reasoning). The content of this myth is neither destined to nor apt to regulate the lives and acts of the men who follow and must follow the recipes of the working community. It is not based on a real tradition (the living tradition of the community is counted among the factors of a technical order), but creates a tradition for itself, itself mythical. It does not give man a [359] stable place in a world understood, but allows him to hold himself in a ready-position for the movement that will carry him off with the world of his living tradition. The man of the work's [*œuvre*] language and the myth that it contains do not judge themselves

and can't be judged: they either are effective or not; for they are the expression — more precisely, the action — of the only man that, in the domain of his work and his myth, has no one at his side. He has collaborators, he can have some friends among them who, without collaborating in his work [*œuvre*], accept his myth, he knows enemies, precisely those who oppose another myth to his own (because for him all is myth, that is: any human expression, even the one that seems to exclude action on men, merely aims at the action and has no other meaning); but he can have no equal. Men are the *masses*, the material of the work [*œuvre*].

Of course, these masses are not absolutely shapeless, they are not a simple sum of individuals, on the contrary, they are organized into society and into the State, and, far from undoing this organization, it is in the work's [*œuvre*] best interest to maintain this organization in order to use it, but at the same time opposing its myth to it. In historic reality (in the sense of the category of the condition), the myth's hold will be more or less great depending on the role that, for men, is played by work on the one hand, and sentiment on the other, and unless desire feels itself to be unsatisfied, that is, unless men escape the organization of society and the State to a certain extent, they don't feel the need for something better and are not accessible to the promise of the project, a promise which is empty, and empty of meaning for the thought of the condition, satisfied as it is in the idea of progress, and satisfying for those that are not equal to this idea, by providing them a substitute for thought. The work [*œuvre*], while maintaining the organization, tackle the substitute, not to make the need for this substitute disappear, but in order to use it by directing it. Its myth, true, neither consoles, nor amuses, nor instructs men, but it promises a new dignity to the faithful, unheard of until now, and announces it to them for the imminent future; they will be the progress's masters imminently, now. The job is done, obedience to organization will no longer be required — all hardship will fall on the others, on the enemies, those that do not follow the creator: a small effort, a little discipline, some trust! We're there, or almost! And men, each staying in his place, will struggle to put the organization itself at the disposal of the one who, far from being for them their master, is their leader. Let's repeat one last time that there is no insincerity in this promise. For he who makes the promise, the project is present and at the point of taking shape in the work [*œuvre*]; but since this work [*œuvre*] is indistinguishable from its realization in creation, it can't be spoken about besides in images and for sentiment, and the sentiment of men is formed through the tradition of progress, through desire for the best. Perhaps it will be possible to form another generation for a new tradition, cleared of reasoning when it is a matter of work's meaning, strained entirely towards movement and the work [*œuvre*], towards collaboration with the creator: for the moment, the creator cannot [360] use a language that would have no effect, he can only imply that the advantages don't constitute the essential, that the only thing they do is accompany the work [*œuvre*]. The others

are duped, but it is not the creator that has mislead them, it is their lack of understanding for the work [*œuvre*] and for the creator. The creator himself cannot speak differently than he does: men are merely means (those who refuse this are merely obstacles — which changes nothing), language serves to use them, but is in itself meaningless, that is, independently of this function: being useful to the work [*œuvre*], he is sincere.

4. *The work [*œuvre*] as a category, for itself and for philosophy in its totality.* — The result of all that we have just said about the man of the work [*œuvre*] seems not only meager, but also, and more importantly, tarnished by insurmountable difficulties. The attitude repels all the categories in order to use them all; can such an attitude lead to a category, given that it refuses discourse, understanding, the universal, that it establishes itself in the *doing*, not in the *thinking*, that it grounds itself on uniqueness and excludes any community, any communion, except at the technical level that is not its own, that, consequently, agreement and dialogue (as well as their contraries) are ruled out and that the only thing that remains between the creator and men is violence and cunning, which is merely a unilateral violence, in that it is felt as such merely by he who practices it? Don't say that that it is the return to *certainty*; we have seen the differences that separate the two attitudes, the passage through universal language first of all — the universally human language is not unknown, but rejected —, through the science of the *condition* afterwards, where man does not know *what* to do, but indeed knows *how* to do it. And nonetheless discourse is rejected, and the fact remains that the attitude is not only a-philosophical, but anti-philosophical, deliberately anti-philosophical. Can it have a philosophical importance for philosophy?

It is beyond a doubt that in any case it has great importance for philosophy in its real existence. Indeed, the man of the work [*œuvre*] will always consider philosophy as the fundamental attitude of his enemies, of those who refuse to collaborate because, if they are ready to act, they want *to judge* the project and because, if they renounce judgement, they refuse action, being content *to understand* what is; unusable in both cases, either they turn men away from the project or they dissuade them. As far as effectiveness is concerned — and effectiveness alone matters —, philosophy is neither true nor false, but harmful, and it is clear that the creator's violence menaces, if not philosophy, at least philosophers in their existence.

However, this does not make the relationship between philosophy and the work [*œuvre*] and clearer. Whatever philosophy is — and nothing confirms or belies the definition that the creator just gave of it —, it can't negate what is. The question then is knowing if, *for philosophy*, this attitude makes itself into a category, even though the attitude would not do so for itself, said differently, if there can be [361] irreducible attitudes, which *are thought*

in equally irreducible categories, but which don't *think* about themselves. One fact, in any case, is beyond doubt: which is that we can speak of such attitudes, since we have just spoken about them. This observation does not lead very far, true, since it may be that we speak with the help of categories that precede this attitude; if as a result — and this trivial and important result is often neglected — the man who does not think can be thought, the difficulty for us remains in examining the categories' order of precedence, of anteriority and posteriority: it is necessary to know if the present attitude can or can't be grasped by prior categories. If it can't be (the other response leads to the banal solution that refuses originality to the attitude), it would follow that the category corresponding to the attitude is not developed by this attitude, but exists and is indispensable to philosophy: it would be discovered with the help of a later category (or multiple categories), which would not matter, given that philosophy is unified and only understands itself totally in its totality.

In order to clarify the question, we could reprise what we have said at the beginning of this chapter: in the language of the Absolute, the work [*œuvre*] is nothing other than the expression of the stubbornness of the particular, which, instead of disappearing into the universal, defends itself, ready to become an individual in violence rather than abdicating. It is certain that this constitutes an understanding of the work [*œuvre*]: would we have despite everything spoken about the work [*œuvre*] with the help of a reprise? This reprise then would certainly be more complicated than reprises ordinarily were; it would be less naïve, given that coherent discourse distrusts this kind of interpretation. It would be necessary to say that it is in no way a matter of a reduction of the work [*œuvre*] to coherent discourse, that man really can live without philosophy, even turn against philosophy, that there is no means, much less an argument, capable of convincing him, but that, once this is all admitted, an *in-itself* and a truth exist next to this, rather at the bottom of this *for-itself*, and that *for philosophy*, the for-itself is deduced from the in-itself and is reduced to it. And the absolutely coherent discourse could line up an argument of considerable weight: the work [*œuvre*] is made in the world according to the world's conditions; in other terms, the creator recognizes the world of the *condition*, the world which is nothing other than Reason in-itself, Reason that doesn't not know itself as Reason in the particulars, but that is the total mediation between the individual's negativity and the universal. Discourse then would be right in contesting any of the work's [*œuvre*] claims about originality, whether that claim is made by the work's [*œuvre*] creator or by the representative of a philosophy, otherwise undetermined, but affirming that it surpasses — in whichever meaning this word takes in the course of the determination of this philosophy — absolute science.

Yet, it is the force of the argument that turns to its refutation. The creator, for coherent discourse, is the particularity that wants to be recognized in its particularity by all others,

who then does not back up before violence and does not fear the struggle to the death, [362] but who, nonetheless, recognizes the organized world of work, what particularity is looking for consequently is the recognition of its creation in a world where creation is unknown. Such a contradiction does not shock discourse; negative freedom is well-known to discourse: such great personalities were geniuses, as long as, through them, Reason advanced from the in-itself to the for-itself. But for the proof to be complete, it would be necessary for a path to lead from this man and for this man to absolute discourse, or, which amounts to the same thing, for this man to have his place in the becoming of Reason. He does not have it. In the essentially historical construction of absolute science, he is like an a-historic block, a phenomenon that can appear at any moment, always a beginning and an end in-itself, without relation to a before or a after, a hero as well as a madman and criminal. He is truly the scandal of discourse, and the appearance of this scandal is the proof that the reprise is only a reprise.

This insufficiency bursts when one notes that this scandal, excluding any order in the categorial succession, disappears as soon as this problem is considered from the side of the work [*œuvre*], instead of envisaging it from the side of coherent discourse. The creator is not as primitive as discourse would like (and must) depict him. He is well aware of what absolute discourse, real Reason, reasonable reality are: if he rejects them, it's knowingly. He fully admits that for discourse, which is universal, he is himself particularity, an understood object, not a subject understanding as a creator. What he won't admit is the first postulate of discourse affirming that there must be understanding. The hypothetical necessity of his comprehensibility does not disturb him, and he is aware that he is, in principle, capable of studying, of continuing, of perfecting absolute science, of having a valid and — philosophically — satisfying language for each and every person. In the sense of absolute discourse, he has a language, that of coherent discourse; he himself would say rather (and absolute science would not dispute this) that he is thrown back by absolute discourse onto the language of the condition. The difference is not important, since the condition ends up at discourse and since discourse has its objective reality in the condition. What decides is that the man of the work [*œuvre*] grants everything — philosophically — and he doesn't *want* any of it for himself: he knows that all knowledge leads to absolute science; he doesn't want to know, not because he would believe not being a particularity — in the domain of being and of knowledge, he is *aware* of being this and nothing else —, but because he does not *want* to be particularity, something that has its being and its meaning, not in another (to not say: not even in another), but in his disappearance into the universal is.

This consciousness of the universal, this refusal of a known distinguishes the attitude from all those that enter into the absolutely coherent discourse because they are prior to it (and which appear as prior for that very reason). From the work [*œuvre*], no path leads to

the Absolute, for the creator of the work [*œuvre*] comes from the Absolute; if he needed to refer himself to a preceding category, it would be the most ancient of discourse, the emptiest commensurate to absolute science, that of the true and the false, and it would still merely be by way of analogy: the [363] project is true, and everything becomes visible through the opposition to the project that, itself, is *alone*; but the analogy stops there, for the creator has the entire history of thought behind him and he knows that his new start is essentially a starting over, the universal negation of the universal (in language of absolute science).

The language of absolute science that we have just spoken possesses, for us, the advantage of philosophically expressing the philosophical impossibility (the word philosophy taken in the sense of absolute science) of the work [*œuvre*] and of the creation. It is not the language of the attitude, which rejects all language of comprehension. The language that is its own and that it recognizes as its own is the language of the imperative. It is not necessary to insist at length on the differences between this language and that of duty and of the moral imperative, which does not contain a single concrete imperative, no enforceable order, but only judgments, to be more exact, a rule capable of serving to ground judgments on the subject of possible acts none of which is immediately and concretely imposed; if Reason is *practical* there, it is always *Reason* that is so, that is to say the universal, the universally valid. The man of the work [*œuvre*] does not judge, qualities like good or bad boil down to technical questions that interest him merely subordinately; he commands, and his command has no need of justification: “Do this, do that. The work [*œuvre*] requires it!”, here is his language that neither is nor claims to be thought, since it does not concern he who speaks, (except through a reprise, when, for technical reasons, the imperative is presented as a principle and the creator as the first servant of the work [*œuvre*]); it is a means of realization, not an instance of judgment about the project: the project is not judged, it judges, and reason is for he who takes it.

But this conscious refusal of the absolutely coherent discourse and of Reason’s tribunal provides the category of this attitude. It turns out — which was expected — that the category matters little to the attitude, which actually and actively attends to the work [*œuvre*], moreover, which *is* the work [*œuvre*] and is nothing but the work [*œuvre*]; however, it also turns out that it possesses this category and that it has a language at its disposal. For this imperative language in which it addresses the others grounds itself on a language that is only valid for the attitude, the poorest language of all, in no way ‘theoretical’, and nonetheless, referring back to the theory in its totality. This language says only one thing: “The work [*œuvre*] matters and nothing else”; but this unique proposition suffices to refuse and reject all thought, that is, the universal in the sense of the absolutely coherent discourse, and in

order to replace that by the work [*œuvre*] which thus becomes a category with the help of which everything receives its function in the judgments of the man of the attitude.

That these judgments be of an extraordinary primitiveness, compared to the richness and to the gradation of the other categories, is as irrelevant as it is obvious. An objection however could be made to this conception of the work [*œuvre*] as a *category*. So be it, one would say, but does this category exist for the man in the attitude? Is it not the product (indispensable perhaps for him) of the philosopher who, in an analogous, if not identical, attitude to that of the intelligence, observes and interprets the attitude of the man of the work [*œuvre*]? Let's not even [364] speak of categories: can the simple *concept* of the work [*œuvre*] be formed by someone who does not know the plurality of works [*œuvre*], who is not distinguishable from his work [*œuvre*], who does not succeed in detaching himself from it sufficiently to judge it, who cannot even speak of it, but whose relation to it is immediate, that is, for himself, a relation of identification? The objection merits being taken into consideration. The objection is not interesting or (which would amount to the same thing) difficult to resolve; but it is, so to speak, natural and in the line of a philosophical tradition that originates (directly or through the intermediary of reprises of later categories) in *discussion*. For the objection, indeed, the category, a species of super-concept, can merely play some role at the inside of dialogue: it is the *principium disputationis* implicitly recognized by all those who don't want to be excluded from discussion. Were this so, the category would effectively not exist for the man of the work [*œuvre*]; for him, there is no discussion, there is no implicit recognition, much less explicit, of a fundamental concept. Yet, it is in no way the matter of a concept, but of what makes concepts possible (philosophically possible, that is, bearers of *meaning*; we will have to come back to this question at length) or, if one so prefers, of what constitutes a language in which — rather than: with which — man lives. The category is not an abstract concept, a concept that one has abstracted from a plurality of objects or phenomena, but is what alone institutes any abstraction, if however, a process of abstraction exists elsewhere than in the very special forms of 'the' science (which is a language corresponding to a discussion complicated by the presence of other categories). The categories then appear only in opposition to other categories; therefore, the first is a mute attitude, unless (but for the moment this is only speculation) a category without any attitude corresponds to it and merges with it. The attitude does not make its category explicit, but contents itself with its concepts. What is shocking for the tradition in the category of the work [*œuvre*] is therefore not, as it affirms, the introduction of it, which is nothing special, but the fact that this category refuses to elaborate itself in concepts and that, consequently, an analysis through discussion or transcendental analyses or interpretation is impossible, for lack of material. The category is thus unsettling. But it is so, because it shows more brutally

than the others what is common to all of them, and which can only be clarified at the end of this research.

One can remark then that this unsettling character of the category originates from the fact that the category does not create any concepts, but uses those that other categories have produced. In a way that is only apparently paradoxical, it understands all the discourses of all the categories and is content to consider them absurd; more than this, (and this is how it reveals itself as a category), to declare them absurd. By speaking every tongue, it *knows* that none of them are meaningful for it. But its own all-tongue negating language is perfectly understandable, just as much for itself as for us: for itself, [365] because it lives in it, and for us, because we have surpassed it and because we speak with the help of categories that have not yet made themselves explicit. The attitude is unsettling because it does not *want* to understand itself; it produces its category because it *proclaims* its refusal. The Absolute's absolutely coherent discourse was able to declare that violence had thought itself in it and that it had appeased itself by understanding negativity in its totality: the work [*œuvre*] opposes the violence of its discourse to this discourse of violence; what has formed the absolutely coherent discourse is violence, true, but this violence has ceased acting; violence *has thought itself* in discourse, it no longer *thinks itself in it*, in it, it is violence for thought, past and thought violence: the present violence proclaims itself in the work [*œuvre*].

5. *The work's masks and reprises. — Justification and evaluation.* — The reprises of the category are not only numerous and multiform, they are duplicated by pseudo-reprises that are not always easy to distinguish from veritable reprises, at least in the historical cases. For even, (perhaps: above all) there where the attitude has grasped itself in its category, it does not express itself with the help of this category: the man of the work [*œuvre*] is alone and knows himself to be unique; he cannot speak *with* the others, but only *to* the others; the project that he wants to realize must be proposed to them in *their* language, in the language that has an effect on them: already the separation of the creator and the work [*œuvre*], the conception of the project as a working plan in view of a goal, are formulae belonging to the language of men. The creator then will use the other categories as he pleases in order to present his project, in order to present himself under the most varied forms. His choice will depend on the varying degrees of usefulness of this or that category on this or that group; it will have the greatest technical importance and none at the categorial level, being merely a means destined to allow the creator to finally be able to employ his natural language, the imperative.

It is evident that, in these cases, it is not, strictly speaking, a matter of reprises, for the simple reason that the attitude is not at all thought — other than in its own category —,



but presented under a form it itself considered foreign. In practice, it will not be easy to distinguish the veritable reprises from the masks: he who concretely tackles a historic problem of this order will need to ask himself if he has not suffered (or feared suffering too much) the influence of a 'presentation', and, where necessary, if the multiplicity and the multifor- mity of the reprises (which would constitute an indication of pseudo reprise) are not on the contrary a product of a unconscious categorial confusion that can be the expression of a desire for clarity. For us, who do not deal with these questions of application, the distinction in principle suffices.

But the authentic reprises themselves present another difficulty, and which is of a philosophical nature. The attitude is entirely in the work [*œuvre*]; the reprise, a view on the work [*œuvre*] from another category, can then be carried out in two ways, according to whether it is carried out by the man who lives in this attitude (by acting), but who only thinks it in a prior category, or by someone who, living and thinking in another attitude-category, seeks to understand [366] the work [*œuvre*]. Formally, this distinction is possible for each category; it becomes necessary at this point, because for the first time, the realization separates itself from discourse and happens, not without, but against discourse. Untangling whether one finds himself before a *justification* of the work [*œuvre*] that the creator seeks to procure before the tribunal of his thought, or an attempt at understanding this creator in an *evaluation* is of the highest importance.

Enumerating all the numerous reprises that develop in both cases is superfluous: not only are they of a simple enough nature, they are, moreover, extremely widespread and well-known. The first, those that one could name the justificatory reprises, all have in common that, in them, the work [*œuvre*] transforms itself into a *mission*, the creator into the *chosen one*, without the Category of *God* being anything more than a mediation. This mediation is indeed necessary, because, without it, the depreciation of the tradition would not be grounded, a depreciation that there is no possibility of creation without, the world being well-ordered and, so to speak, too full for man to intervene in it. But this in no way entails that the category of *God* alone is used for the reprise. On the contrary, much as its mediation is required, its direct use is rare, once faith is abandoned in favor of other categories. The man of *God* exists all right, but it must be noted that most often it is not this man who gives himself this title; it is the others who attribute it to him in a reprise not of justification but of evaluation. Ordinarily, the prophet has no work to realize, but a determined and limited mes- sage to transmit, and it is merely in the eyes of the evaluation that this message and above all the messages that follow transform themselves into a work [*œuvre*]. However, if there are examples where the attitude of the work [*œuvre*] justifies itself through a divine order (as in Mohammed's case), the cases where the justification is sought with the help of other

categories are infinitely more numerous. The type is always the same: the man of the work [*œuvre*] is the only one qualified to complete the goal that the category proposes. He is a *genius* who realizes freedom, he is the *historic figure* of his era that sets up the way-stops on the path to progress, the *personality* that brings conflict to an end by writing a new tablet of values, etc.; in short, he is the chosen one, and herein resides the importance of the category of God: the other categories, before being able to serve justification, must be reprised under this category, so that the relation can be established between a level of the world (as a formal and empty idea, since revelation has disappeared) and the work [*œuvre*] of man, who in this way takes on, and in this way only, the double role of a creator and of a source of revelation.

Again, in practice, one does not distinguish with absolute sureness between the veritable reprises and the pseudo-reprises, precisely because the pseudo-reprises will apply themselves to imitating the veritable reprises as well as possible. The problem arises above all for the evaluative reprises, since the judgement that distinguishes initiatives of justification and pseudo-reprises is itself grounded on a reprise of the work [*œuvre*], a reprise in which the function of mediation falls to the *personality*. It is indeed a matter of the creator's authenticity, and it is in relation to this authenticity that his reprise is recognized or rejected as a [367] mask. This does not imply that the judge considers himself to be personality; his attitude will express itself in this way only in the case where he *justifies* himself, not as a simple adversary, but as a rival who opposes his own project to another's recognized work, and the evaluative reprise then serves as a justificatory reprise. However, for the simple evaluation, the category of the personality is just as indispensable, because it alone allows the passage from the level of the work [*œuvre*] to the level of the language which is that of the critique. The evaluation does not by pure chance make use of this term personality to which, like a substance, it adds a categorial qualifying term by way of an attribute: a religious or historic or poetic (in the sense of the poetry of the *conscience*) or revolutionary (in the sense of the *intelligence*, that is, an inventor or a renovator of a concrete interest) personality, and so on, according to the categories or reprises of categories employed.

It is clear, after what has just been said, that these evaluations, since they transpose the work [*œuvre*] onto the level of discourse, are grounded on the attitude of the *intelligence*. The *category* of the intelligence does not need to be present: ordinarily, the evaluation takes itself as a stance in favor of the work [*œuvre*] or against it; that is, it does not attend to the work [*œuvre*] itself, but to its own discourse about the work [*œuvre*], and avoids collaborating in the realization of the project or opposing it. Therefore, the creator has but contempt for these men who are *not even* adversaries, other than by accident, but weaken the faith of the adherents. As for these adherents and their adversaries, they live in the attitude of *the true and the false*, and the creator is either their leader or their seducer, unless the adversary

is a rival and has his own work [*œuvre*] and project, in which case the adversary will negate the very existence of the project of the former and will try to battle him like a resistance to his project which is the unique one for him.

Whether these attitudes are the only stances possible towards the work [*œuvre*] is a question that must remain open for the moment, until the nature of the following categories have appeared. What should be retained in any case is that the discourses about the work [*œuvre*] that we have sketched are reprises and, if they ground, for their authors, any attitudes of approval or refusal — both are, according to the cases, verbal or active —, they neither attain the attitude nor the category: an important remark in an era where the ‘philosophy’ of the work [*œuvre*], of action, of engagement is in fashion, conceived in a way to allow the discourse on the subject of the work [*œuvre*] and the abstention at the only level that interests the work [*œuvre*], that of the realization in the world of the condition, at the level that is (in a different sense than that in which the category of the condition had taken the word, and which is not the ultimate sense of this dangerous word) the *political* level. Or, to say the same thing in a manner closer to absolute science, the work [*œuvre*], for whichever discourse, plays a historic role and closes the history, the prehistory, of the work [*œuvre*]: for the creator, history starts only with the work [*œuvre*], and this, as is suitable, is an absurdity for all coherent discourse.

## CHAPTER XV THE FINITE

**Man can refuse the work [*œuvre*] without accepting discourse: he positions himself then in the medium of language, but he is in it as a *finite being* for whom there is neither work nor coherent discourse.**

1. *The double refusal and the double impossibility of the work [*œuvre*] and of absolutely coherent discourse. — The opposition to prior categories.* — Through the work [*œuvre*], man has declared that he does not want to be *for the absolute* and that he does not want to be *for himself*: he creates his work [*œuvre*] and he *is* in this creation. His own language only has one value, that of allowing him to be entirely in his work [*œuvre*] and to totally reject discourse. The attitude and the category are irreducible, the one understanding prior categories as necessary for its own categorial consciousness<sup>87</sup>, the other rejecting any other attitude as an unsatisfying by-product.

This is in no way particular to this category-attitude, and we have encountered the same traits at every step. But from a formal point of view, a special difficulty emerges here. Formally speaking — to summarize, let's stick to the forms of the *Absolute*; which is not the only possibility to define —, the progress of the categories is governed by an oscillatory movement between the *for-itself* and the *in-itself*, or, if preferred, between the particular and the universal. The movement is philosophical for philosophy, for which man is not content to be without understanding nor to understand without being. Yet, this movement has become a circular and closed movement with coherent discourse, which is the *Absolute*. Progress is no longer possible. If there must be something else, this *new thing* must be philosophy's *other* — a conceivable possibility for coherent discourse, but one that it cannot elaborate, because its realization falls outside of the *Absolute's* becoming. Nevertheless, this possibility realizes itself in the work [*œuvre*], and we have thus been — still from a formal

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<sup>87</sup> It is necessary to say that the attitude, never seeking understanding, never uses its own category to understand the role of the preceding categories in its own genesis. The expression of the text then is imprecise: it is us who have surpassed the category and the attitude and who reconstruct the prehistory of the attitude with the help of its category; it is not the attitude itself. But since the problem of the irreducibility of the category equally only exists for us, the formula presents no inconvenience.

point of view — up to the extreme limit, or even beyond, [370] in an extra-spatial void, so to speak, where movement and, especially, a direction and a motor of the movement is no longer conceivable.

The solution is that the formalism of this reflection no longer has any right here, that it is unjustified (and unjustifiable until further notice) to speak about philosophy as if this word designated a tribunal without appeal, a final reality from which everything would flow or in which everything should be reflected. This is not the case, and the *work* [œuvre] just did better than proving as much, it showed it. Claiming that it depends on philosophy because the absolutely coherent discourse serves as a buffer and, alone, allows it to overturn the movement is merely one of the reprise's tricks: there no longer is any philosophical movement, not even in another sense than that of the Absolute, and history never ends, it starts, which means that there is no longer any history as discourse defined it, for that very history is always finishing, but can never begin, whereas, now, history is that of the future. The opposition to discourse is not thought, it is real, and if the man of the work [œuvre] is distinct from the man of the desire of *certainty* such as *discussion* sees him and rules him out, because he knows discussion and what follows it, 'philosophical' reflection cannot invoke it: against the immediate sentiment and violence, its cunning is without strength.

But if the formal objection is lifted, it is that much more pressing to look for the fact by which an *other* of the work [œuvre] presents itself, an other that is not a simple return to discourse or to a category that leads to discourse. For only a fact can provide that *other*: reflection will only ever be another philosophy, which, through the dialectical path (διαλέγειν) will re-find in the work [œuvre] the discourse that it has put into it. What this fact is, this is a question that reflection can only give a formal response to: a new categorial fact is what, seen from the preceding one, cannot be deduced, that is, can be grasped in no other way than through a negative categorial judgement (as: madness or absurdity), cannot be understood then as either a surpassed attitude or a category.

This *fact* is that here man can see the work [œuvre] and refuse it, not that he would criticize it in relation to a value, that the work [œuvre] would seem false or impious to him, or immoral, or impossible, or impersonal, etc. (this would be the return to the coherent discourse or to a discourse that leads to it), but because he does not *believe* in the work [œuvre]: the work [œuvre] is possible, just, necessary, it possesses all the qualities that one could want, but he does not believe in it. This is his way of expressing himself, and this expression matters. It is first of all ambiguous: any attitude can thus express itself before a new fact, to the extent that it has transformed itself into a tradition and, not feeling threatened, has lost its combativeness. However, this is not what it's a question of here: man sees the work [œuvre] as a possibility for himself, not as the undertaking of another that he watches and

that he doesn't take seriously. And so, the expression indicates that man rejects this possibility for himself because it doesn't promise him satisfaction, no more than any other attitude. This means that man 'believes' in *neither* discourse *nor* violence.

Would we have come back to the attitude and the category of [371] meaninglessness then? It indeed seems that this is precisely what the abandoning of discourse *and* of the work [*œuvre*] are. But this only seems to be the case; for man has passed through discourse and is not, is no longer, before the *Truth* into which all that is not this Truth disappears. It is true that he too has lost the truth of things; but he has lost it, because he wanted nothing to do with the Absolute that was the conservation of the particular in and through its disappearance. The work [*œuvre*] would have already established this new *meaninglessness*, the legacy of which would come out of the work [*œuvre*], were there any legacy. Man no longer lives in the Truth nor refers to it: in his "I don't believe in it", the 'I' cannot be replaced by a 'one' or any other impersonal form. He truly comes from the work [*œuvre*], from the violence of the immediate sentiment.

This also rules out the return to the attitude of the *intelligence*. True, for the work [*œuvre*] it constitutes what the work [*œuvre*] sees as the behavior the most opposed to its own and the least pardonable, in that it refuses to even take a position, and treats the project like the business of others, only good enough to interest the intelligence in its boredom. But it is not a question of going from the work [*œuvre*] to what the work [*œuvre*] detests and what matters to the intelligence; it is a matter of real satisfaction: the 'it' in 'not believing in it', the work [*œuvre*], is essential, and is not so only for us who speak, but for the man of whom we speak.

What is this *believing* then? The word is hardly scientific. *Thinking, demonstrating*, this would give us the possibility of binding this refusal to a theory, to a system, to a philosophy. But it is precisely what the term eliminates. From the work [*œuvre*], man keeps the refusal of discourse, and what he opposes to the work [*œuvre*] is not a refutation, but is still a refusal. He does not *believe* in it, because he doesn't *want* it. But, for us, this refusal is reflected in the work [*œuvre*], as the work [*œuvre*] was reflected in discourse through the refusal of it: discourse is, for the work [*œuvre*], the only (impossible) possibility outside of itself, and, here, it is the work [*œuvre*] that holds the place of this unique im-possibility. It was necessary to create, because discourse was insufficient; now it is necessary — little matter what is necessary; is it only necessary? —: the fact remains that the work [*œuvre*] does not suffice.

It doesn't suffice for you, the creator of the work [*œuvre*] would say, because you don't believe in it; for it to suffice believing in it suffices. Indeed, for the creator, this response is perfectly legitimate; it is even acceptable for the other, only, he doesn't accept it

as it is given. Believing in it suffices, indeed, for the question of knowing if one can or if one must believe in it to be no longer asked; but the question has been asked once: is believing not in the work [*œuvre*], but in the faith in the work [*œuvre*] still believing? Is there still satisfaction when I no longer seek the realization of the project, but satisfaction in belief, knowing moreover that I am only asking of this belief for the oblivion of the satisfaction that I don't *immediately* find in the work [*œuvre*]? Does not the creator himself, who asks me to believe in *his* work [*œuvre*] and not in my own, admit as much? And would not wanting to believe in the panacean work [*œuvre*], the anonymous work [*œuvre*], the work full-stop, be a misconception? If I am spoken to differently, with 'reasons', isn't because the creator wants to use me? So, from my point of view, he lies to me: I can clearly see [372] that the creator finds satisfaction in his work [*œuvre*], to the point that he does not even seek satisfaction, but has it immediately; but in this way he shows me that it is the unique satisfaction in the unique work [*œuvre*] and that there is no satisfaction for me in this, not even the possibility of forgetting satisfaction, since I have spoken: one no longer believes in the work [*œuvre*] once they no longer speak *for* the work [*œuvre*], but *of* the work [*œuvre*], once one has interposed a distance between the work and oneself.

For as soon as the work [*œuvre*] is considered as a possibility, to take or to leave, it has become impossible. The work [*œuvre*] and its creator split apart in the medium of language, and man's life is no longer in what he makes. The creator, who has totally rejected the totality of discourse, is not affected by this separation. But he who does not create loses the possibility of the work [*œuvre*] precisely by constituting it as a possibility: the work [*œuvre*] exists in the refusal of discourse or it does not exist, it is indistinguishable from its realization. Yet, even though the man who judges creation, who *envisages* it, might refuse coherent discourse — and he does —, everything is language for him. The work [*œuvre*] belongs to the other, or rather faith in the work [*œuvre*]; it will never belong to him, and he knows it. For him, the work [*œuvre*] is not creating the work [*œuvre*]; he wants something, that is, the finished work [*œuvre*], not to create it, but the creation, and he notes that there is nothing finished, nothing created, nothing done, but movement in the void, without direction, without the possibility of direction. For this man, the creator never creates, he speaks, and his speaking makes no more sense than his movement. The work [*œuvre*] is *always* a project, an anticipation of something that will never be, — a project, yes, but in which man pro-jects himself into nothingness.

Only, he also knows that the lack of faith is in him and is not in the other, that his incapacity to move does not stop the movement, that the discourse's attempt has failed and that violence *is*, that no absolute will defend him nor console him, that his refusal of action will not subtract him from the other's action, that he will always be able to drown the fear

of the threat in the absolute reconciliation, but that the threat nonetheless remains real and present. There is no return to discourse and there is no work [*œuvre*], and yet, the work [*œuvre*] alone could lead somewhere other than the Absolute. Creating *would be necessary*, being able to create *would be necessary*, and only failure remains, a failure that is not accidental and avoidable, but that reveals itself now as the ground of the work [*œuvre*].

The man who, for himself, is a creator and is so immediately, for the other does nothing but speak. He has refused coherent discourse, and he has even destroyed it, but his victory is based on an ambivalence and crumbles with it; what he has undone is not discourse, but the coherence of discourse: has he not let the world subsist? He can always claim to be a creator in the world, a creator of history to come, it makes no difference if he *creates* in what *exists*. That the world is that of the *condition* and that he raises himself above this condition to use it like a tool explains how he can believe in the work [*œuvre*]; but the very fact of the explanation of his faith shows that, for the man who sees him without following him, nor fighting against him, the creator is only bandying about empty words. In order to be fairer towards the creator, let's say that he who has no work [*œuvre*] [373] would bandy about empty words if he wanted to convince himself that he could believe in the other's work [*œuvre*] or have his own work [*œuvre*].

He does not create, because there would only be creation for him if he could create absolutely, create — it's the same thing — the absolute and coherent discourse. Yet, the work excludes this possibility by making violence seen; since there's violence, there's not coherence; at most one can forget this by putting oneself on violence's side, making it immediately their own, but the forgetfulness changes nothing about the fact, forgotten by the creator, now unforgettable. Man had imagined creating in the world: presently he is answered that, to be a creator, he would have needed to create the world. He hasn't done so and he has remained in the condition; like the man of the condition, he counts on the future in order *to be*, like him he has no language that expresses him. What distinguishes him from the man in the condition is that, for himself, the condition does not confine him and that his action is irreducible to conditions; but this aggravates his case, for the violence that he has set free (and that has set him free) no longer knows any limits; one cannot get rid of him by calling him crazy, since he has destroyed Reason: if he didn't create it, he nonetheless succeeded in undoing the world.

The *condition* is what remains. But it is not the condition of the world, this condition that, as an attitude and as a category, had made the world knowable to man and had rid him of himself. This condition is human, the condition of the man in an unknowable world, thrown back onto a language that does not end up at a coherent discourse, a world where he is delivered to violence without being able to escape violence, a world that he can no longer



even speak of, except in negations, in which he can merely understand his failures, without these failures referring him back to an author or to a source, to something outside of himself through which he could gain access to an absolute justifying the failure and thus making it bearable. The condition is in man, it is man himself and at the same time it is inaccessible to man, more inaccessible and inaccessible differently than any of the world's conditions: being inaccessible is the essence of the condition, and it is why the work [*œuvre*] is a failure and is nonetheless right facing Reason. Or, to say it in other terms, man always has a discourse but this discourse is never coherent. There is always a discourse, because the human condition does not eliminate the world's condition: this attitude eliminates no prior attitude, being on the contrary the refusal of forgetfulness. Man even has all discourses at his disposal, just as the work [*œuvre*] used them all, but, for him as well as for the work [*œuvre*], no discourse surpasses the technical level. However the role of technique is no longer the same here: the creator immediately knew what he wanted, he felt it, and the means were there to serve him; presently, man knows that, *if he* makes a being of himself, he is a speaking being in the world, but that at the bottom he does not succeed in both being and speaking, that consequently, his discourse always succeeds to the extent that he forgets himself and that he forgets violence, but that the discourse of man (or the man of discourse) collapses as soon as he starts to speak about himself: all discourse speaks about what is, and man is not, because he cannot help being a creator for himself and because, nonetheless, he does not create. His discourse does not deal with him.

[374] In a certain sense, one could say that man has come back to the attitude of the *conscience*. There, indeed, man is graspable in discourse alone, but for this very reason he does not grasp himself in what he essentially is: a source of discourse, that is, freedom against the discourse that is about the world, dealing with the world, and remaining in the world. But the difference between the present attitude and that of the conscience is no less striking than the analogy existing between them. If for the conscience the world is the field of violence, and if then there can be no coherence and freedom in the finite of phenomena, the finite even with the violence and the ever unfinished and never coherent discourse is merely a phenomenon and as such infinitely below the fundamental reality that does not appear, but is even less doubtful: the insufficiency was on the side of the man in the world, but this insufficiency was based on the absolutely sufficient Reason, sufficient even to indicate in which way this insufficiency is, if not understood, at least understandable. And it is this possibility of an understanding in the transcendent, this unrealizable possibility for man, but surer than all the realities of the world which were only possible thanks to this first possibility, — it is this transcendent (and transcendental) foundation that has disappeared. With the Absolute, the transcendent has descended into the discourse that is the world; with

the *work* [*œuvre*], it has undone itself: the transcendent was also a means of forgetting violence or to console oneself about it, and since it is recognized as this means, it can no longer be used.

What remains? That man should create and can't create, that he should understand and that the idea itself of understanding is not understandable, that he must have a philosophy and that any coherent language is a language that discards the essential through forgetfulness, precisely because it is coherent.

2. *Man as a fact for himself. — Nothingness and man's project. — Immanent transcendence and the native coherence of the incoherent. — Temporality, man's Being and non-being. — Freedom and failure, the Absolute, the work [œuvre], and finiteness. — Truth, finiteness and philosophy.* — One can say — this in no way differs from what precedes — that man is truly man when and only when he is a philosopher, but that he is a philosopher only if he understands the impossibility of philosophy. The problem before which he finds himself, the πρόβλημα, what is thrown before him there where there had been a path for the absolutely coherent discourse is the impossible creation. This impossibility of the creation is that of discourse: there can be discourse only if there is Being, because discourse can only ground its coherence on Being; and if there is Being, there can be no discourse, because Being is never revealed to man in its totality.

It is the *conscience* that was the first to have seen the problem. It had tried escaping from the problem by splitting discourse in two, into a discourse that grasps, but grasps only the phenomena and is never then coherent, and into coherent discourse, but only thought of as being [375] coherent in the formal thought of the never-grasped Being. Yet, this solution has become a subterfuge since discourse has absolutely realized itself in the *Absolute* and since man, in the *work* [*œuvre*], has grasped himself as violence: it is no longer enough for him, it can no longer be enough for him *to think* a coherence that is satisfied with the simple non-contradiction; he wants to think *himself*, this is always true but is so particularly here, where he has left the attitude of the work [*œuvre*], but he wants to think himself as himself, as the being who aims at the creation and who knows that creation is failure. He no longer wants to forget his insufficiency.

It is customary to highlight the 'problem' of death, when it is a question of elucidating man's finiteness. Regardless of whether this preference possesses historical (in particular in Christianity), sociological, esthetic or other roots; what must decide the importance of the phenomenon is its role for the present category itself. This category understands itself and expresses itself in the word 'finite' or 'finiteness' that it opposes to any conception that claims to grasp, indicate, or think the infinite. Yet, it is a fact that man's life is finite, because

man dies, because man can be interrupted by death at any instant, stopped, kept from finishing what he started. What is more natural than seeing in the knowledge of death's possibility, certain to come true, the source of the awareness of finiteness?

But — and we set aside what is dubious in any research about the psychological or historic conditions, which always presupposes what it is trying to explain in the final analysis — is it so certain that the awareness of death creates (or provokes) awareness of finiteness? Must it not be said, on the contrary, that there would be no awareness of death, of my own death, if I didn't already have the category of finiteness? In other words, how could my death interest me, if I didn't project myself, if I didn't throw myself forward? The man who settles into a closed world forgets death; but does he settle in because he forgets death, or does he forget death because he has settled in? Do not all the *consolationes* of the moralists' tradition say that man is afraid of death, because he *wants* something, and does not their testimony prove that death reveals itself only to him who has a project, who pro-jects himself forward?

The concrete world in which man always lives is, of course, always an unfinished, *lacunary* world; man's intervention is not only possible, it is required. But this intervention itself is foreseen, and man's projects are made *for* him, not *by* him. It is why any constituted world is a world of forgetfulness, which makes a thing among others out of man, a man-thing among other man-things. It is in this world that he is mortal, and it is in this world that he can rid himself of the apprehension of his death: he will die, this means that he will be dead for the others, this means that there will be a difficult time to get through in his life (at the end of his life), but *in* his life; while he is still living, there is still hope for him, and as long as he will be there, death won't be. Death is always the death of others or death for the others; I will not cry over my own passing. If death is important, it is not so then because it will interrupt [376] my activity and my life, but because I look it directly in the eye after having grasped my essential finiteness.

The true finiteness is that man only ever finds himself before the *fact*. Yet, when he is measured to discourse, the fact is what can be other than it is. This is what the man of the work [*œuvre*] had wanted to forget: by engaging himself in his project, he has engaged himself in something that could have been different and that will no longer be able to be so because he has engaged himself in this path and not into another. He was a creator before creating, he could negate all that was, but he was then a creator without creation and was therefore not a creator; he has made himself a creator in his work [*œuvre*], but by making himself a creator, he has stripped himself of creative freedom and has ceased being a creator. He is a creature without being somebody's creature, he finds himself thrown into the condition (and the man of the work [*œuvre*] recognizes this, all the while declaring that these are *merely* 'circumstances'), he *finds* himself, in the simplest sense of the word *find*. The work

[*œuvre*] is clearly a project, and a free project, the world is clearly a human world that man projects by projecting himself; but the work [*œuvre*] is essentially failure, because it is not a creation *ex nihilo*, but a creation *ad nihil*. Man is free, because no world binds him; he is not free, because he always finds himself in a world and because he cannot leave it without enclosing himself into another one.

There are things to do, but man can't do everything at once, one has to start with the essential, in other words, man never reaches the essential. For the essential is to create, and man's reality is to be a creature, a conditioned being, not only on one side or through one factor (or multiple factors), but an essentially conditioned being in such a way that the words 'unconditioned existence' form a contradiction of terms. This is not to say that man is totally conditioned (such an affirmation would make no more sense than the thesis of an unconditioned existence, since the condition only reveals itself in discourse, which is what is human in man); but this signifies that the work [*œuvre*], in its essence, heads ever towards failure, even when it succeeds, for the work [*œuvre*] is never total, it is only ever *one* work [*œuvre*], it never leads man to Being and to the present. After the work [*œuvre*], successful or not, the work [*œuvre*] is still to realize, all is not done, all cannot be done and so nothing is done. There is no end to the projects, because every project is finite. Man encounters himself, he *finds* himself in a world that is not sufficient for him. His project throws him back onto himself.

This rejection through which man encounters himself in the world like a being in the world does not make a thing out of him; on the contrary, this rejection and the failure separates him from all things: the thing is what it is, whereas he is never what he is, since he exists in his project, in his future, and since rejection is nothing other than the encounter of the future in its impossible possibility of a present. The human present (in the sense, for example, of the category of the *self*) is in its future, but this future will never be present. Man is a being in the world of things that is a present world, but its way of being is not of this world: failure is the guarantee of this and is so for him, because, in failure, his being reveals itself as finite and as open at the same time, incomparable to the being of things, [377] for which the terms of finiteness and opening don't make sense except in relation to the being for which they are not sufficient, for man.

Nothing would be falser than to infer from this that man escapes the world. That would be the pure and simple return to the category of the *conscience*, an impossible return since the man who meets himself and the man that he meets by meeting himself are merged into one and the same man. This man, true, transcends himself, but he doesn't reach a transcendent, for his transcendence happens in time and stays there, — in time, the expression is inadequate; it would be in its proper place if it were still a matter of the conscience, if man

still believed himself to be robbed of himself in the world of the condition, his freedom at risk, activity subjected to doubt, if he saw his unique salvation in a reason beyond and at the bottom of the world. He has learned that it is the opposing danger that threatens him, not the loss of freedom, but that of the world in which he can be free. He is not in time like the content in the container, time is not the supra-sensible condition of all experience either like if there were a Being outside of time that would enter it here, necessarily with respect to man, accidentally with respect to itself: time is man's being itself.

This 'being time' of man, his temporality, is not a 'quality' that affects his 'acts' or his 'conduct', it is this temporality that grounds his life as human. Man *has* time or he doesn't, because he *is* time. His being in which he is outside of himself, ahead of himself, his pro-ject, is nothing other than this time itself, prior to any measurable time, given, grasped, prior to any cosmic and external time. The project is not in this time here, that he is, on the contrary, the source of, and the future of the project is not a dimension of clock-time, but the human-being of the man who exists only by projecting himself and is himself only by knowingly projecting himself, that is, by projecting himself into failure. The project does not come to an end; it has no end, because man is temporality in the world.

We are not dealing with the use of the category here and can therefore refer, for the elaboration of temporality, to Mr. Heidegger's analyses which provide the model, even though his method is debatable following a reprise of the *conscience* (and, logically, the transcendental method, looking for the 'conditions of possibility'). What occupies us is the finite and failure.

Man is a finite being, because he is not the creator of the present, because he is a being among beings, different from things inasmuch as he *possesses* his insufficiency and can accept his finiteness, because, being always in the world, he can always take himself back from the world in this acceptance. His insufficiency is thus freedom: he is free only in his insufficiency, he is insufficient only through his freedom. To be oneself is to see and to accept this identity, to accept that insufficiency is everywhere, not forgetting this or rather taking oneself back from the forgetfulness that is man's being in the world. Every possibility exists for man, moreover: man *is* all possibilities, for the possibility is in the project, in the temporality that is man's being; but precisely because he is all possibilities, his life in the world, his life in which he *finds* himself (and which [378] is the only life) is failure, because it is the realization of the impossibility of possibilities and because man's action is essentially the future's abandonment. At every moment, man dies, at every moment, man *has been* future, has been free and has been insufficient.

It is therefore before the finiteness of his existence that man becomes himself. He is always *becoming* himself, because he also never *is* himself: it is in the world that he makes

himself a philosopher and, as a philosopher, he remains a man in the world. To repeat, he never masters finiteness, he appropriates it; he throws himself into his discourse in order to surpass it, and his discourse always reminds him that he does not surpass finiteness, because this discourse itself is finite, knows itself to be finite, claims to be finite.

Man is discourse in a situation. He speaks, because his situation is essentially failure, insufficiency, incapacity to create. He is never everything; he is situated at a place in the world (the word *place* not being taken in a spatial sense, no more than the word *world*) from which he projects himself, because it is insufficient for him just as he is insufficient for it. He occupies himself with the world, because the world occupies him; his situation is nothing other than this pre-occupation that is the concrete form of his life in the world, of this life in which man surrenders to the world and where he forgets himself; and he has the possibility of forgetting his insufficiency precisely because this insufficiency preoccupies him and because all his attempts of finding a solution for finiteness are merely the admission of this same finiteness, an admission that he has preoccupied himself to not hear: he occupies himself to not be preoccupied, to make the world a refuge instead of a preoccupation, to make a definitive position out of the situation instead of a starting point that is what it is only in virtue of the project.

Reprising the prior categories one by one is not necessary to show this *occupation* in each of them from this point of view: the coherent discourse has embraced all of them and, by reaching totality, has perfected them. Speaking about it suffices. With the *Absolute*, indeed, man has rid himself of the project, even of the preoccupation of the project, which within the Absolute becomes man's intra-worldly condition, not the human condition that reveals the world; man is not the center of the world, but the world is its own center and what happens to man only happens to particularity. Finiteness then is not negated, no more than the project is, but both are reabsorbed into the contradiction's total reconciliation. There is no presence for particularity, but there is the Absolute which is presence and of which particularity is merely the *aspect*. Man is truly 'placed' inside of the world, he is occupied by the world and doesn't need occupy himself with it; even death is understood, and not even *by* him (who does not need to understand, since he is sufficiently oriented in his place), but *for* him.

Therefore, violence was needed in order to give back to man the possibility of being himself. The *work* [*œuvre*] does not refute, it genuinely throws itself into the world, or rather, into what it wants to create as a world; it is therefore the most complete surrender to the world and the setting free of finiteness, the active refusal of the given place, a refusal to even recognize that there can be a place given, and a blind trust in the possibility, not of finding,

but of creating: man [379] as violence opposes himself to violence, in order to take hold of violence. To use the language of absolute science, he negates history, he doesn't want to be historic. However, it is necessary to be careful not to take this *use* of the absolute language for the Absolute's judgment about the work [*œuvre*]; for this use is only possible for the category of the finite, which sees and understands the Absolute and the work [*œuvre*], whereas for science, prior to the work [*œuvre*], this is merely a crime or madness because, in the history that, for it, is the real history, the work [*œuvre*] is no longer in its place since the struggle of individuals for recognition has finished and been sublimated in the total mediation. It is only here that the work [*œuvre*] (which refuses to see itself) becomes visible as it really is: a refusal of history, a refusal, consequently, of satisfaction in the coherent discourse. For itself, history does not yet exist, it wants history to exist, and that is why man is ready to gamble with its life, not to be recognized by the others (this is what matters to him according to absolute science, but which is in the work only a means for him), but in order to realize the work [*œuvre*] by using others who are not at his level and who, in his eyes, can give him nothing with their recognition. In the work [*œuvre*], man realizes the possibility of being himself by refusing coherent history.

He thus accepts being finite in a finite world. However, the man who realizes the possibility and who has thus accepted finiteness, does not grasp the possibility as a possibility and does not want to know that he accepts finiteness. He surrenders to the world and alienates his freedom by putting it to work: all the while refusing the given world and history (that is to say coherent discourse), he accepts them at the same time as coming forth through his creation. Yet, this fact remains hidden to him, precisely because it is a *fundamental* fact. He wants to be recognized, says absolute science, and he does indeed; but for him, this recognition can only be the recognition of himself by himself; he is not content to know himself as mediated negativity and so universally recognized, he actively negates, and what he negates is mediation itself. He is not satisfied, because he doesn't *want* to be, because he doesn't *want* to be without a project. Again, it is only here that the bottom of the attitude appears: for the man of the work [*œuvre*], it is a matter of the work [*œuvre*] and he considers the project, which is in language, as an admittedly necessary means in the world, but not essential. That the sole project or, more exactly, the sole possibility of projecting oneself matters, he does not understand nor can he understand that. Because the realization matters to him and because he does not see that with the realization he would have lost everything since he would have realized not his work, but a given world, a finished history, a coherent discourse, he forgets his essential freedom at the same time that he realizes it. He faces failure, he even accepts it, but this acceptance is always forgotten and he imagines heading towards success, as though success were still possible after the refusal of coherence.

For man to be himself, it is not then enough for him to refuse the pale copy of the present that the Absolute offers him; he still needs to grasp the project in its truth, which is of not being a pro-ject in a present to come, but a project in nothingness: a failure. In the Absolute, the project and man's finiteness had been entirely forgotten, [380] especially since this forgetting was not a repression of finiteness, but reasoned and justified forgetfulness: man is finite, he is mortal, he is so essentially, but this essence only exists in discourse, and the man who reached coherence has reached, although mortal, the present and, identifying himself with discourse, no longer deals with finiteness, which is enclosed in total knowledge; satisfied, he is not preoccupied with an *understood* insufficiency in the etymological sense of the word. Yet, the *work* [*œuvre*], while negating the presence of the Absolute in its totality, has not succeeded in ridding itself of the idea of the presence: if it is true that it affirms — not with the help of a demonstration, but through the violence in the reality of life — that it is not satisfied, it is still chasing after satisfaction. The view of *finiteness* alone discovers that freedom is failure and that success is oblivion.

This is why the work's [*œuvre*] strength is also its weakness: coherent discourse must be refused, along with satisfaction through the reconciliation of particularity with and through and in the universal, and nothing is done without this refusal. But besides the refusal, the refutation, which can only be an act, but an act in language, is needed, the real destruction of coherent discourse through discourse, the coherent establishment of human discourse in its incoherence. Man acts in the world and on the world as a being in the world: he is himself by reprising his action in himself, by reducing it to man's essential possibility.

It is necessary here to rule out a misunderstanding which is, so to speak, natural to the traditional philosophy of reason (this reason understood as a faculty of understanding that is objective, impersonal, universal, etc., without one needing to think about it necessarily as absolute knowledge: ordinarily, it is simply a matter of the discussion's non-contradiction or the condition's methodology), a misunderstanding that sees in this return to the possibility a case of simple interpretation of the concrete by the detached and disinterested *intelligence*. It concerns a reprise, — not of the present *attitude* under the category of interest<sup>88</sup>, but a reprise of the category of the *finite* under this prior category. In other words, the intelligence imagines recognizing, in the finite, what is its category for itself, concrete interest. And indeed, the reduction of man's being to possibility lends itself to this confusion. Man *is* not in the world, he projects himself and he forgets his project as his own to *find* himself in the

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<sup>88</sup> This reprise is met. It is, incidentally, so easy to spot that dwelling on it is useless: in it the attitude is understood as the concrete interest in which man wants to both free himself from traditional obligation and give himself an importance before the others as engaged in an undertaking that he is responsible for only before himself, etc., which, at the level of interpretation, is not necessarily false, but does not grasp the attitude, precisely because this can be true for the intelligence.



world under the form of a singular thing — thinking, acting, it makes no difference — that receives its meaning from the world: how does this man of forgetfulness differ from the men that the intelligence interprets, how does he distinguish himself from the intelligent man who, having understood the mechanism of concrete interest and of forgetfulness, is no longer subjected to its hold and safeguards his essential freedom? The answer is as simple as it is absurd for the disinterested intelligence: namely that there is no disinterested intelligence and that the attitude of the intelligence is a [381] form of forgetfulness, an all the more dangerous form due to the fact that the forgetfulness is deeper here, because it hides the fact of *existence* in the world of the intelligent man. There is no disinterested intelligence, there are only men that assume the attitude of disinterestedness in order to elude the project, that is to say being and finiteness, which they leave to the others, renouncing what there always is of the others and of the world in themselves. They postulate, without realizing it, the coherent discourse about the incoherence that, for them, is human, but that does not concern them. Therefore, discourse's coherence prevails over this claim of forgetfulness; as a last resort, it is the violence of the work [*œuvre*] that actually really refutes them, after the Absolute has put them at the same level as their 'others', particularities the former and the latter.

The man who wants to be himself in the finite knows what difficulty awaits him then when he wants to coherently establish incoherence. For the man of the Absolute, it was a matter of bringing incoherence (the particular) into the coherent (discourse), and this remains possible. But this possibility has appeared as the possibility of forgetfulness, and it follows that this possibility originates in a deeper possibility, precisely the one that it forgets: it is a matter then of bringing coherence into the incoherent. In other words, the problem is that of the Being that is never present, that never reveals itself to man in its totality (never coincides with discourse), which is absolutely more powerful than man and which nonetheless is merely Being revealed to man and revealed through man, and this not despite man's finiteness, but because of it. Any other idea of Being leads either to oblivion, in absolute knowledge, or eliminates all discourse; yet, on the one hand, there is no absolute knowledge, because man is temporality and finiteness, and on the other, discourse exists, because man is in a world: the one, because his preoccupation is failure (saying that it leads to failure is not enough), the other, because it is meaningful.

The fundamental fact is thus that there are facts for man and that the fact exists only for man in his factual existence, which means that truth (in which any fact appears) is a fact and that it makes no sense then to question the truth of this ultimate fact: man is *capax veritatis*, and what is, is for him; man is capable of revealing what is, and what is, is capable of revealing itself to man. The coherent incoherence consists in the fact that man does not

reveal himself and is not revealed in his true being, because man *is* not, but reveals; *truth* and *being* are terms that apply to man only in the mode of self-oblivion, when he knows himself objectively, that is, when he has made a being in the world of himself, an object of his preoccupation. Man *is* not, man *can*.

Strictly speaking, the question that asks what man is therefore makes no sense and has no answer: man *makes himself*. Yet, this includes that man *has* always *made himself*, and in this sense one can say that man *is*; but he is a precarious being then, that is merely the project (the non-being) of the past man a failure inasmuch as past, and thus not only the starting point of another project, but constituted [382] (because revealed) by this project: saying that man *is* project, finiteness, temporality and — we can now add this — historicity (not history, that is the forgetting of the historicity it transforms into an ‘objective’ quality of the world), signifies that man, even by *being* in this sense, is not as man in the only meaning that the word being possesses in the discourses of preoccupation and of the world. Man *is* always *not-being*, more simply, the only predicate that man can utter about himself is that of *being capable of being*. Being himself in the world thus signifies for man: accepting concrete finiteness, accepting being this or that, an acceptance whose freedom is in the possible negation of any *this* and any *that*, and that finds its finiteness in the impossibility of not accepting either *this* or *that*.

What has been said above, namely that being oneself is being a philosopher, is explained in this way. Man *is* not himself, he *can* be so, or, more precisely, being oneself is knowing that man can be himself. The apparent absurdity of the formula comes from the inevitable use of the word being: there is the *fact* and the fact is that man *is* and thus is in the world; yet, the fact is a fact merely for man, who would not be the *for whom* of the fact if he were a thing in the world and not a project that reveals the world. The paradox is that man is a project in Being, which is Being for him inasmuch as he is a possibility and is active Nothingness for him inasmuch as he is a being in the world that does not suffice for Being and finds himself annihilated by it. But the Being that annihilates him thereby gives being to man, by giving him the freedom of the acceptance of the annihilation of his being in the world, the freedom that frees him, in which he frees himself from oblivion. Being oneself then is in truth being nothing, and is being nothing because man is always something that is nothing; it is being nothing (being a being *nilated* by Being that is a *nilating* Nothingness), and it is knowingly being nothing.

Philosophy is thus the human act of the man in the world through which he accepts the rejection of the project onto himself as a source of the project’s possibility in which the world constitutes itself. It is an act in the world and is therefore never anything other than insufficiency and failure; it is the revelation of the possibility of the world and in that way,

reveals itself as a possibility that cannot be lost. Thus, the coherence of the incoherent in which the incoherent is not reduced to the coherent through forgetfulness is explained. It traces back to an original unit of what is not and can never be unified. Man does not grasp himself in philosophy, as absolute knowledge tried to, which stripped man of his non-being and, at the same time, of his capacity to be; in philosophy, man freely opens himself for violence, for that loss of his freedom that his being in the world is, a possibility, always realized, of a loss that is the result and, as refused, the foundation of his freedom. The act of essential freedom in which the world and the truth of the beings in the world constitute themselves is this rift in human discourse that cannot be closed, but only forgotten, — in the discourse that is nonetheless *unified* before any unity.

Man is therefore essentially discourse, but this discourse is essentially an act, and an act of a subject that is essentially temporality (project, failure). It is why the question of philosophy [383] is not asked about man (even though it is the question of man), but bears upon truth or, which is identically the same question, concerns Being: what reveals itself (is recognized, is true) in man's act is what is as it is, provided that man's act be a free act, that is, accepts man's finiteness and thus frees what is com-prehended in the discourse through the abandonment (coherent in its origin) of coherence. The truth of things (= what is) exists for the man who, knowing himself to be finite, keeps himself open to things; by admitting to be in the world, he safeguards his access to the world, the access of the world to him.

The impossibility of the Absolute and of coherent discourse thus appears with an increased clarity and at the same time in a new light. The Absolute cannot be, for in order to be it would need to be in the world; discourse cannot be coherent, for to be so it would need to be the discourse of a coherent man, that is, closed without finiteness. But the acceptance of the being in the world and of the incoherence of discourse only happens in the discourse of the Absolute and of coherence, of Being and of truth: finiteness is accepted merely as the possibility of the infinite that is *in fact* an impossible possibility. The insufficiency of the discourse of the Absolute is to have forgotten these two words: *in fact*. The discourse of the Absolute was right to conclude that man thinks through the infinite by thinking through the finite and that it therefore suffices to turn the thought over in order to bring the finite into the infinite: its insufficiency is forgetting the fact of being in the world of violence. Thinking through the finite in the infinite, this is perfectly possible *in thought*, as this is perfectly impossible *in fact*, because it is finiteness that reveals the infinite as the impossible possibility, — as the *fact's* negation, which is merely a thought negation, — like the being that is not, — like the horizon in which all that is is, — like the truth that, invisible, makes visible all that appears in fact, in the world.

That man can speak of Being and truth is therefore another expression of the accepted finiteness. He is not only preoccupied with the world, he accepts himself as preoccupied, and his freedom is the freedom of surrendering to the world in preoccupation. He constitutes himself as a *possibility* in the etymological sense deriving from *posse* = can, but he constitutes himself in the finiteness as a finite possibility. The Absolute had designated this possibility under the name of negativity, and it was nothing other than the possibility of not being *this* or *that* in the world, that is, of being for itself; yet, the *in-itself* without which this *for-itself* makes no sense if it is a matter of coherence, this in-itself now appears as the horizon that is, in *fact*, the impossible goal: thus, it can be thought, thought about as an always existing possibility, but which always remains a possibility: an impossible possibility. In other words, Being always reveals itself in truth and precisely because it always reveals itself, it never *is* revealed: there is no presence, and, within the horizon of truth, there is error.

Error is thus not an accident limited to the particularity and which reabsorbs itself into the totality of coherent discourse: it is the very essence of the discourse of the man in its finitude. What is, is revealed in the temporal act, and its truth is of being an error though the fact of its finite and temporal revelation, since the revealed is revealed through a [384] bygone project: a truth has been revealed, it *has been* so and it no longer is so, for the sole reason that it has been so. From the point of view of the reflection of what is in the Being that is not, this means that any truth is unfinished in that it does not reveal (and, *in fact*, cannot reveal) Being. However, this reflection is merely an expression derived from the freedom that is freedom for failure: the thing seen is true in its world, which not only is not definitive, but is a world transcended through the fact of the revelation of this thing; for the revelation of the thing is the revelation of the failure of the project that projected this world and un-covers the thing as the violence that annihilates the project: the thing appears in its truth, *because* the world in which it appears is insufficient. It is because the level at which it shows up is false (otherwise it would not appear) that it reveals itself in its false truth, a truth because it shows up, false because it shows up only in a finite and non-definitive world.

It is hardly necessary to say that this error and this false must not be confused with the false and the error of the man in the world. Each project, each world establishes its false, in relation to its internal revelation, as each world contains its failure for the man who has surrendered to this world in the forgetting of his possibility. But this false and this failure stem from the fundamental false and the fundamental failure: man is mistaken, more precisely, man was mistaken (for it is absurd to say: I am mistaken at this very moment), because he has not kept himself open to the world, because he has not allowed the *thing* to appear, because he has intervened, because he has wanted something, because he has sought coherence and tried to force the thing to be in tune with a falsely definitive, bygone project,

with his understanding of himself in the so-called closed world. Therefore, this error allows, or even, demands correction (which is the correction of discourse, a transformation of discourse for the purpose of the acceptance of the truth — unless this truth is forgotten as inessential — thanks to a transformation of man's discourse about himself). Yet, the decisive trait is not this intra-worldly error, but the fact that grounds it: man lives in a truth that is insufficient in relation to Being because it is sufficient in relation to what is; this is why he can be mistaken and note that he has been mistaken.

The question of Being (and of truth) is thus the ultimate question, because it is not a question that man posits, but the question that *posits man*. Speaking about it under the form: 'a question that posits itself for man' or 'a question that Being posits to man' is already betraying its fundamental character; so, a problem in the world would be made out of it, while it is the possibility of any problem, it *is* man. And since it *is* man, since it is possibility, since it is the origin of the project and of temporality, it cannot be formulated. Asking what Being is, is the question of the man who knows that he cannot avoid answering it, that he has always answered it and that there is no answer. At his core, he is a project in the world, and this is why Being reveals itself and is never revealed, but is the mystery that indicates without utterance, that says *no* and never says *yes*, that is the power of the annihilation raised up against the possibility [385] of being that it reveals as an impossible and real possibility in its impossibility, real in its insufficiency, real in its failure.

Real also in its freedom that is grounded in failure and in insufficiency: with freedom comes an open *and* finite temporality, a project that breaks against Being/Nothingness, that itself breaks, because it is itself that it projects itself, and that is the possibility in its project. In a closed time, in the present, in coherent discourse, freedom does not exist, because freedom has no other. *Qui potest mori non potest cogi*: the being who has the possibility of accepting failure is not a part of the world, precisely because he has *accepted* being in the world in which there is violence; for violence is only revealed in his project. *Qui non potest mori non potest non cogi*: the infinite has no freedom, because its action (if we allow the misconception of an action in the infinite) can't help succeeding and is therefore necessary in the strictest sense; no 'temporalization' of the Absolute can do anything, other than show that particularity *has been free*. In his open discourse, man is free as the possibility that he in fact is; in the discourse that reveals the incoherence of human discourse, he is himself, because, by accepting his finiteness, he makes himself free for the failure that is more his than anything in the world.

3. *Finiteness and the conscience. — The world's morality. — Poetry, the originating project, as the ground and the completion of philosophy. — The fundamental difference*

between the category of the *finite* and that of the *work* [*œuvre*] consists in the fact that one affirms discourse's essential role, whereas the other rejects discourse. The finite detaches itself from the *Absolute* through its search for freedom and Being: the man of the work [*œuvre*] opposes himself to it through his search for satisfaction. The analogy between the category of the finite and that of the *conscience* is thus striking. And not only for us and at the level of comparison: the finite itself sees a sort of precursor in the conscience, of course inadequate and insufficiently radical, misled by forgetfulness, still seduced by the ideas of presence, of satisfaction, of coherence, but only misled and seduced, and consequently, tending already towards the goal that is now achieved.

The man of the conscience knows that he is free and finite, free in his finiteness, a possibility and a possibility of being oneself; what he does not know, or rather what he forgets is that he is temporality and failure, that being in time is not the accident of a reasonable 'essence', that to fail is not a misfortune that man must console himself about, that to be able to console himself about it is precisely man's possibility of not being himself. The conscience has let itself be led on by the idea of a coherent discourse because it has stayed caught in the tradition of the *object*; it has not gone all the way to the end, it has however glimpsed at it when it discovered the impossibility of coherence inside of the world. Coherence is impossible in this world that, with its never completely realized comprehensibility, is *fact*, but it stays maintained for the conscience in a beyond that is not a fact, but a hope as ungraspable as irrefutable in the world that is: it is conceived as the Being at the bottom of what is, at the [386] bottom then also of the man in the world who, in this *idea* beyond any content transcends the world, more exactly, understands in this idea that he has transcended it before having entered into it. But this wandering in oblivion, which makes out of the man transcending the world and transcended by Being a non-being who transcends Being itself in reason, does not suffice to hide from an informed eye (that of the category of the finite) man's finiteness that is un-covered in it, even though the finiteness does not uncover itself in it: as a last resort, what is at stake for man is always his life, his life to lead as his own, the project in the world that he is responsible for, and responsible before himself.

Comparing the two categories is all the more instructive since the reprise of the present attitude by the earlier category is, so to speak, natural, considering the kinship that exists between the two; in fact, it is so widespread that it would be difficult to find a pure presentation of the category (if there are other reprises, they all pass through the conscience). One speaks of a 'condition of possibility', of an 'in-itself', forgetting that these concepts only make any sense in relation to coherent discourse, realized or posited as a guiding principle; a true theory (well beyond or well within of science) is made out of philosophy instead of an act of the man in the world, and it is forgotten that the essential of this condition and of

this in-itself is being without truth, since the condition of the authentic life and man's in-itself consists in the absence of coherence, even (and maybe above all) as a guiding principle. In the conscience, man protects himself from the science of the *condition*, from the discourse that makes him a thing in the world for himself; it is enough for him to convince himself at the theoretical level of the possibility, although unrealizable for him, of another truth (revelation) of Being. Here, the threat of the condition is merely a reminiscence; the *Absolute*, without mentioning the work [*œuvre*], has ruled it out forever: there is no longer any problem for man, he *is* the problem, because nothing is 'thrown before' him, except himself by himself.

Therefore, the major question of the conscience, that of free action in the world, for the present category falls within the guilty conscience that belongs only to the tradition. The conscience needed to ask itself how it realized freedom for itself, freedom being transcendent in relation to a world that was nevertheless the site of all discourse, even that of freedom, without mentioning the fact that the practical consequences of moral discourse were abandoned to the world. The idea of coherence in the transcendent answered it. Here, the problem and its solution disappear together: man is unique in his project and in his finiteness and is accountable to no one, precisely because he is in a world and responsible to himself; for his responsibility concerns his world and his being in the world, and cannot be translated into a *tally*, since it is total, since it is the reality of his total acceptance of the world in the world through which he transcends the world (this world being understood as a possibility and a project, but not as a coherent and satisfied discourse) and, by transcending it in finiteness, makes it his own. In the human world, there is merely freedom, as long as man is himself, as often (which is the same thing) as he poses the question of freedom; as often as he does not [387] pose it, as he forgets it, there is necessity, but still a necessity for the man who *freely* closed himself off, has forgotten himself as possibility, has made himself into a thing.

This human freedom is therefore not that of the conscience, which was freedom from the world, but freedom for the world and in the world. It is by projecting himself from the present world in his past and from the past world in his present that man is free in his finiteness; accepting the human condition, renouncing any guarantee, any satisfaction (which could only be found in coherent discourse): man makes a choice in the world, makes a choice in what is as he *is* through his past-project, taking responsibility for himself and freeing himself. He is unique. He is not alone: being alone is a way of being in the world, of being with the others; he is unique, because he is in a world with the others and because nobody is responsible for him, nobody is responsible in his place, nobody is responsible for his place. The world is not outside of him, and all the subtle distinctions between subject and object can't free him from his responsibility that is his freedom; he might apologize by recalling

his insufficiency, but he himself is this insufficiency. He always falls into forgetfulness, but he nonetheless *wanted* this world and this forgetfulness; there are always reasons and causes for his concrete responsibility, and he is nonetheless responsible for this concrete responsibility.

Speaking of moral responsibility is only meaningful in the world. It is the project that grounds, with its world, a moral responsibility, that is to say from man to man, inside of this world. There is always a morality, since man is always bound to men, always being in a world; but this morality does not transcend the world: the idea of the coherence of goals is merely the morality of a world and the closest morality to forgetfulness, because it is the most kindred to coherent discourse, as a morality for beings who are infinite in their essence. Each world has its good and its evil, its virtue and its vice, its satisfaction and its punishment — and man is responsible for all of this, and none of this judges him in his authentic being, which is not being, but possibility. Coherence (given and insufficient) commits man (given and insufficient); man, knowing himself to be insufficient commits himself for the purpose of a coherence that he accepts as insufficient, transcending the given in the project.

What has just been said can be articulated differently in the language of faith (a language that, on this point, all the subsequent categories have accepted, to the extent that they did not prohibit man from speaking about himself): sentiment is the essential of the individual, that is, the *immediate* relation between the unique and Being. It is clear that this formulation does not suffice here; for the absolutely coherent discourse has established the complete *mediation*: if then there is a sentiment, the sentiment must be everything and must cease being one of life's *aspects*, one *relationship* between one *man* and one *world*, separated from one another and bound by all sorts of relationships among which sentiment would *also* lie: man is no longer a man of sentiment as a particular *type*, he has no *moments* dedicated to sentiment, he does not have *some* sentiments, he *is* entirely sentiment, prior to any opposition of the individual and the universal, of the subjective and the objective.

[388] But it is also clear that this manner of speaking itself still falls under a language that has not reached finiteness: it is only for the man who has surrendered to the world that the sentiment appears as such; if the sentiment were truly everything for the unique (or if man were truly unique), for this very reason the sentiment would not appear to him. However, while falling under a language that is a language in the world, the thesis justifies itself, from the point of view of the finite, to the extent that man is always in a world and caught in his world, that he *is* therefore never unique, *is* not outside of what he is and since he must speak about man like about a particular thing in the world: his non-being becomes a particular being in his language, and he cannot speak without speaking *about* sentiment, without



stopping to speak *as* sentiment, without seeing *one* of his possibilities in sentiment, all the while knowing that the sentiment is what he has understood as *the* possibility. Man creates, but he does not create in reality, he creates reality, — creates it in failure, but it is he who creates the failure and this failure is more real than all reality because it is the insufficiency that reveals itself and thus reveals Being.

Yet, if this is so, man is a philosopher only in order to recognize the ground of his existence in *poetry*: his philosophical discourse leads him, and leads him back to poetry. How would he be touched by objections of absolute discourse, which in poetry sees only a mask of total philosophy, an unconscious form of the Absolute's presence? The man who knows himself to be finite will willingly grant that — at the level of discourse: if one surrenders himself to discourse, if man forgets that he is unique, then, indeed, poetry, a creative act that reveals and constitutes by revealing man's world, must be reduced to formal coherence. But precisely, it is a question of not falling into forgetfulness, but of grasping oneself in one's proper authenticity, in one's project, in this coherent-incoherent discourse of poetry (ποιητής, does not the word designate he who creates?), a native coherence and thereby an incoherence for any anonymous and 'universal' discourse. It is the poet that is the authentic man, and man is *himself* to the extent that he is a poet. It is in poetry, in the pro-ject of oneself towards Being and in the failure of this pro-ject that human possibility realizes itself as a possibility, here is where it first constitutes the world where reason and poetry, reality and dream, necessity and freedom will oppose each other. Inside of the world, man is or is not a poet, but this world is the work of the man-creator in his finiteness, and it is not an accident that he bears the title of ποιητής.

It is therefore not a question of *idealism*, of a *form* that man (as reason or as apperception) would impose on a shapeless matter: man is finite, he is always in a world, he is situated, and it is he who situates himself; he is not a *reason*, an *I*, that finds an empirical *self*. He creates the world as his own world, as a world for which he is responsible because he accepts it in his project: a free creation of freedom in and through and for the revelation of Being, a creation *ad nihilum*. Poetry is the revelation that reveals mystery as mystery, that does not betray it, does not *resolve* it and is not afraid of betraying it (as the poet of the conscience was): in poetry, pure possibility projects itself purely out of forgetfulness (of the man [389] who is in the world) into the purity of the Being that annihilates it, and grasps itself in its failure.

If poetry is thus philosophy's ground, will one conclude that the philosophy of the finite is self-refuting? It would be as natural an objection as it would be irrelevant, comparable to the other one that accuses the attitude of immoralism. Man is (positively or negatively) always moral in his world: as he is (given), his project calls him and his world into

question at the same time, and his finite decision commits him not in accordance with a morality, but to a morality. Likewise, man is (positively or negatively) always a philosopher in the world: it is poetic creation that commits him, not in accordance with a philosophy, but to a philosophy. Poetry does not oppose itself to philosophy, it is philosophy taken at the source. The misunderstanding comes from the fact that the critique forgets the essential, namely that philosophy is an act of man in his accepted finiteness, an act towards Being and towards failure; in other words, the critique forgets that the coherence is in the source, in the *possibility* as the coherence of the project that accepts itself as failure. If the critique hadn't forgotten this, it would see that poetry *is* philosophy and that what it itself conceives as philosophy is not poetry simply because this 'philosophy' is the *science* of man in the world and is therefore not authentic philosophy.

But this forgetfulness is not a repairable and avoidable accident, since man is himself in the world, in the mode of non-being — in the forgetfulness that is the insufficiency of the possibility before Being: he *is* not himself (we have spoken of the misinterpretation of this expression), he is *towards* himself by projecting himself into failure — which is to have been, which is the world that *is* and in which he *is*. The forgetfulness of the critique is thus grounded in man's intra-worldly existence: man can't help but forget, he can't help but be a philosopher, and the critique is justified by this fact (which is *the* fact), but justified in the eyes of he who has reached the category of finiteness, whereas it is wrong if what it says is taken in the sense that it says it.

Poetry then is actually philosophy at its source; it's in poetry that philosophy's given constitutes itself and takes form, a given from which philosophy can return to its origin: it is only in poetry that the project appears as the act of pro-jecting. What the critique says is well-founded, but doesn't constitute a critique, being a simple reprise of the category under the category of the *Absolute* (or, in less perfect forms, of the *conscience*). However, poetry is merely philosophy at its source, a project that only knows itself as such provided that it turn back onto itself, and this return is done in the world that is constituted by poetry, but that no longer knows itself as poetic. In other words, in poetry, in the 'poetic moment', man is possibility, but he is so for he who, through this possibility's realization, finds himself disassociated from creation and seeks the path of his return by way of discourse and violence. Poetry reveals, philosophy reveals the fact of poetic revelation.

Philosophy separated from the poetry in the world, unified with it in the project of the world, is therefore *protreptic*, a λόγος προτρεπτικός [390] πρὸς ποίησιν: man is always a poet, but is not one all the time, he is a poet *and* a philosopher, but he is a philosopher only because he is a poet, and he knows himself to be a poet only because he is a philosopher. Without poetry, philosophy would be empty, without philosophy, poetry would be blind.

But philosophy is always tempted to forget its origin and no longer sees that it is only an understanding or rather an initiation to the understanding of poetry, a forgetfulness that is based on success, if it allows to speak in this way, of poetry that has succeeded in its project. This is why philosophy is necessary in the world for the man who does not always realize the possibility and who does not even grasp himself as a possibility: as a result of poetry (but not in the poetic moment), man is a thing in the world for himself, and he needs the reflection of this thing in the established world, that is to say in violence, so that he finds himself. For the philosophy of finiteness, it is in poetry that discourse reveals itself as insufficient: poetry is *not yet* discourse, because, already, it no *longer* is discourse, it is *not yet* coherent, because, already it no *longer* is; but being in the world only ‘before’ or ‘after’ discourse, it only reveals itself as it is to the discourse of finiteness.

This is why poetry possesses a unique honor: it is the parent (*alma parens*) of discourse; it is incoherent discourse projecting itself out of the original coherence into Being; in other words, in poetry discourse returns to language, but it is discourse that returns to it, and not the language of antiquity that reestablishes itself as *Truth* or *Meaninglessness* or only as a magical force. This language, a direct expression of the world in which man is so at home that he doesn’t even realize he’s at home in it, has split from speech in discussion. It is true that the project equally grounds art that is non language-based, that does not speak in words and concepts and is as ambiguous for discourse as man himself, that is therefore a project, and a project all the way down; but this project is exposed to the discourse of reflection and can’t defend itself against ‘understanding’ once man has forgotten himself in the world of discourse: the artist becomes the exception and takes himself for an exception, because, as an artist, he does not participate in language and nonetheless participates in discourse as a man in the world. Poetry alone reunites discourse with its source, with language; without it there would be free men in and through art, there would be no liberation of man. For *in* the world — to speak with the category of the *Absolute*, which is the category in which man grasps himself *in* the world — only negation frees, and it only exists in discourse; but it is only in philosophy’s return to poetry that negation disappears by being applied to itself.

4. *A note about the reprises* — In what precedes, the problem of the reprise has been posed particularly with the splitting of philosophy into poetic philosophy (ποιητική) and philosophy in the world (ποταρπειτική), and it has been posed for the category itself, which follows the category of the *Absolute* on this point, recognizing for itself the obligation to understand the preceding categories as legitimate but insufficient viewpoints [391] on what it has un-covered. Indeed, just as discourse would never be coherent if it couldn’t assign its place to all discourse, so man would not have uncovered himself as the source of the project

in Being if he didn't uncover the (more or less forgetful) expression of possibility in all discourse. The category then looks at all the prior categories as interpretations of the being-in-the-world (of the project) that remain determined through the concretion of the world. The task of philosophy according to the category is thus liberating man for possibility through the destruction of the set forms of thought, through the reduction of traditional questions to their origin in the possibility of open discourse.

After the grasping of poetry, the history of philosophy that takes shape in this way forms the true work of the category that thus experiences human reality. This reality is indeed entirely constituted by reprises of the finite (here again, the analogy with the Absolute is evident). Man is possibility in the world and, as such, an insufficient project; in other words, he is not always speaking about the project, he projects himself, and for the category it is a matter of rediscovering in the *project*, sclerosed by the forgetfulness of finiteness and the desire for coherence, the *projecting*, which nonetheless merely *is* in the way that everything *is*, as finite in the world, as a realized project and which, by its very realization, betrays itself, always pertaining to discourse and ceasing to be a spring by becoming a river. Possibility cannot be grasped as possibility, other than by the reduction of man's history to his historicity, and the possibility discovers itself only in the reality that is not possibility: at this level, the category is the reduction of the reprises.

Therefore, we don't need to insist on the reprises. The category takes care of it, and to the extent that the reprises could lend to confusion and where, consequently, they matter to us here, we have spoken about them<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>89</sup> What this chapter's analyses owe to the works of Messrs. Heidegger and Jaspers is so visible that we don't feel obliged to insist on this debt at length. Perhaps it is more important to note what we have in no way had the intention of reducing the thought of these authors to their 'simplest expression': on the contrary, both of their philosophies are too complex to be able to be exhausted by a single isolated category (just as any philosophical system or even any human discourse is). If they have attained the pure category, if they have surpassed it or if they merely present it with the help of certain reprises (the one's ontological *ideal*, the other's ideal of a complete but impossible science), it is a question that falls under philosophical criticism and must not stop us here. However, even in the case where one would note that they (or one of them) had attained the pure category, it would be necessary to not forget that this category, like every category, is present in all philosophy: an analysis of the role of poetry (of myth) in Plato's work, an interpretation of the myth of Er in the *Republic* would show its active presence.

## CHAPTER XVI ACTION

**Revealing the human condition, finiteness reveals itself simply as discourse to the man who opposes himself to violence at violence's level: this man *acts* on reality in its totality, to subject it to his discourse.**

1. *The problem of the individual's real satisfaction. — Action and the condition. — Reason and violence.* — It is clear that the attitude and the category of the finite cannot be refuted. But it is a fact that they can be understood authentically without being reprised under a prior category; that is, they can be surpassed. This implies that the man who surpasses the category of finiteness does not simply return to coherent discourse. It is true that no return is easier: this discourse, through the concept of particularity existing for itself, indicates well-determined places and functions to both *finiteness* and *work*. However, if the man in the attitude of the Absolute can console himself about the revolt of the particular against the universal, he nonetheless forgets that this revolt against the Absolute was made by refusal and not through ignorance, in life and not in doctrine. It is true that man, if he wants to consciously be satisfied, in other words, if he is asking discourse for satisfaction, ends up necessarily at the *Absolute*, at the attitude that aspires to the category. But if he not only renounces that satisfaction, if he rejects it, if he even opposes himself to any definitive satisfaction, coherent discourse and its category no longer have any hold on him, and absolute science, while being right, is merely right versus the man who no longer seeks satisfaction in discourse and facing the one who no longer seeks it at all.

One must ask then how the category of the *finite* can be surpassed. Is there something other than conscious satisfaction and the conscious refusal of satisfaction? One sees that it is a matter of simply begging of the question: once we give ourselves the right to proceed by theoretical questions and thus once discourse is assumed at the start, we can be sure to find it at the end. 'If man is essentially discourse, it is clear that only discourse's completion can bring him peace; if he's not, he will perhaps find peace, but he cannot search it out', the man of discourse will respond, forgetting, neglecting rather, the possibility of the non-theoretical search. For the problem is not that of *achieved* satisfaction and [394] *achieved* peace, but of

the satisfaction *to be achieved*. In the *Absolute*, the *work* [*œuvre*] is the particular sentiment's revolt, *finiteness* is the rebellious particularity's despair before the universal, and salvation is within their reach: man need only submit himself to understand that this is not a submission to another, but the return to the Absolute that, when it is a matter of questions and answers, is even more man than all that he 'feels' to be himself. The fact is nonetheless that the thesis can be true and can be satisfying, and that it can still not procure satisfaction. "Very well," will be the retort, "nothing impossible about this; you don't want to understand, the case is anticipated. You don't want to be satisfied; well fine! As you like! Your obstinacy doesn't bother us. You will not keep yourself from being understood; you have always been granted your particularity."

This is any prior category's way of arguing when faced with any later category. But here it is pushed to the extreme limit, because the Absolute is the coherent discourse, because outside of the Absolute there are no possibilities other than the mute act and non-coherent discourse, and because we, in this search, inevitably remain at the level of discourse: even if the character of this discourse was not elucidated, the simple fact is clear that we seek in the medium of language. Therefore, discourse's arguments carry the day on one point: as soon as man is *spoken* about, one cannot escape from the dialectic of the universal and the particular, from the conjunction of speaking and what reveals itself in speech. Only, coherent discourse, which has thus established its formal omnipotence, does not see that this power is non-existent in what the man of the work and the one of finiteness call reality. Speech (or, if one prefers, thought) reveals, but it never completely reveals the situation, because the act that reveals it also changes it: discourse on one side, the situation on the other do not oppose each other nor do they ever coincide, for all discourse is discourse in a situation, and the situation is never determined, because discourse is part of it and forms it instead of describing it. The work [*œuvre*] shows, finiteness demonstrates that man is not essentially knowledge (which is how both categories, being philosophical despite their content, split from the entire western philosophical tradition) and that satisfaction through discourse is merely a possibility that man can refuse.

If man then does not want to return to the Absolute of coherent discourse, if, on the other hand, he is not content, in the work [*œuvre*] and in finiteness, wielding or accepting violence, if, moreover — and otherwise there would be no question for us — he bears in mind the attitudes that he refused to take, he finds himself precisely in front of the problem of language and situation. The Absolute is the attitude that aspires to be a category; what man is now looking for — and he knows that he is looking for it —, is the category that is an attitude, the *work* [*œuvre*] that allows a coherent *discourse* in *finiteness*, or, said more plainly, a reasonable action. The Absolute has ruled out violence, in the sense that discourse

is completed and that the meaningless has a meaning as meaningless, but it has not ruled it out of life: there is nothing that gives content to life, no [395] *reasonable* goal (this is the condition that makes the difference between action and the work [*œuvre*]) for which man can live and, if need be, die.

Yet, the answer seems pat: does not the category of the condition offer what man is asking for here, and does not the difficulty stem from a simple distraction of mind, that has turned away from the active life in order to follow the will-o'-the-wisps of coherent discourse? And what are the *work* [*œuvre*] and *finiteness*, if not the refusal to admit disappointment and defeat? Does not falling back in line suffice, mustn't one fall back? Man's life gets its meaning from work and organization, its goal, from the progress in the direction of mastery over nature; his situation is determined, his language has found its function: he can live and die for something<sup>90</sup>.

Indeed, the condition offers all this, and since it offers it, it is the most widespread attitude and, in this sense, the most natural, the attitude of the man who speaks merely 'to say something.' Man's return to this attitude is always possible; to be honest, except in some entirely exceptional cases, it is never abandoned, to such a point that, again apart from the exceptional, the following attitudes refer — unconsciously and almost instinctively — to the condition by detaching themselves from it as from the 'common,' while relying on it like on what is 'self-evident' and by leaving 'current affairs' to it. Man can always carry out the return to this reality and declare that any development that originates in the *conscience* is not 'serious': philosophy that claims to be something other than a methodological reflection leads nowhere and keeps man from living. A position that is not only, like any fundamental attitude, impregnable, but that, as an heir to the tradition (which it completes and replaces at the same time) possesses the force of the living reality that opposes itself to the proclamations and the pretensions of those who shout their faith in one of the later categories without however living in the attitudes that correspond to them, this force of reality that refutes and ridicules all the 'progressive' and 'independent' professions of faith the moment the preacher is not the saint, the hero, or the sage of his category. Therefore, it is not surprising that, in each category, ordinary existence is recognized, under the title of unconscious life, life of the people, the mass, particularity, etc..., that the *condition*, as attitude, is seen throughout as the floor from which the new attitude blossoms, just as the new category grasps itself in the opposition to the one that immediately precedes it.

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<sup>90</sup> To be fair to coherent discourse, it would be necessary to say that it attributes this meaning to the life of the particular itself; but since it concludes from it that there is no absolute satisfaction for the particular as such, the particular's revolt remains possible.

But this force, equal to that of the tradition in the attitudes of antiquity, does not suffice to make the return to the condition possible at the level of the categories: there, it is merely a reprise. The existence of a single saint, a single hero, a single sage, or even the simple possibility of their existence blocks the return to the *category* of the condition for philosophy. For if man in his life can [396] renounce thoughts that don't seem to him to be consistent with his existence, philosophy cannot annul these acts of freedom that are the passages from one category to the other. However, it's one thing to return to a category (which is merely the honest avowal of an attitude and is thus only of, as respectable — and rare — as it is, a biographical, or at most historical, interest), whereas the conscious attempt which seeks to master and to assimilate a reality that is always recognized, but never dominated, is something else. Since the *conscience* — only the *Absolute* reveals this —, man is not only for himself, but, what's more, he knows that he is being-for-itself. This self-consciousness is total only because it is formal and, consequently, empty: it is what shows the following categories (it must be fully understood that these predicates are meaningless for the conscience itself); yet, what pushes man is the search for an action in the world, which nonetheless he doesn't find. The Absolute that shows him satisfaction in discourse's coherence only forms discourse and not life and proves to him, on the whole, that he cannot *reasonably* ask more; his life has meaning, but, to the extent that it has meaning, it is not his own: from there, the categories of the revolt that, from the present point of view, resolve nothing; if they ask the question of man's life, they do so by negating the possibility of an answer to the question in terms of the question, giving, as a solution to the problem (distinct from the question), the act that does not explain or the explanation for which the act in its content is an accident. Life refusing reason opposes itself to reason separated from life.

Here again, it goes without saying that this 'critique' does not touch the prior categories and attitudes in their being, whether this being be understood logically or in its anthropological sense: nothing would be more dangerous than to project the relations of the categories between themselves, through the flattest of reprises, onto the plane of the *discussion*. It only indicates that man has passed from *finiteness* to another attitude that demands precisely what is impossible even from the point of view of finiteness as well as from that of the Absolute: neither an act nor a reason, but action, a life that is coherent, a total reason that can guide life.

It is therefore necessary to expect that the new attitude seek to unite *coherent discourse* with the *condition* in a satisfying *work* [*œuvre*] for the *finite being*, in the risk of its finiteness, that it seek to exclude violence through the force of reason at the very level of violence, that, to repeat, it knows itself to be a category and it aspires to be an attitude. The problem for the new attitude is developing a discourse that is coherent without closing itself



off and that promises to make reality coherent, defined by the *condition* with regard to the situation, through the revolt with regard to the individual.

2. *Goals and action's goal. — Man's discontent. — The philosopher and the dehumanized man. — The realization of philosophy. — Life in action.* — As a first approximation, one will be tempted to say that the man of action seeks a goal in reality. But this formulation appears insufficient as soon as one asks [397] the question about the nature of this goal. For it then appears that, for the man in the present attitude, the terms *goal* and *reality* cannot be easily squared: what is called a goal in reality, a goal that man pursues or chooses or establishes, is nowhere lacking, and all the attitudes such goals. Deciding on one or the other of these fundamental goals would be the fact of the *personality* that would be interpreting itself under the category of *interest*. The discourse of the *Absolute* has reduced all these goals to their particular role in the totality of the understood real, and its judgment is without appeal for anyone who has passed through that category. If the goal is conceived of in this way, as a goal of the particular and as a particular goal, then action seeks no goal, just as it could not be content with the never definitive goals that activity, in the *condition*, knows: activity is, on the contrary, the absence of any goal in the action's sense.

What does action want? The rebellious man's satisfaction, that is, the realization of a world such that revolt is not only unreasonable — it has been since discourse made itself coherent in the *Absolute* —, but such that it becomes impossible, humanly impossible, or, which comes down to the same thing, such that the revolt, which is the individual's being, is an integral part of the reality in which the individual lives, or even, such that coherence ceases to be the individual's *other*. It is not a matter of finding a goal *in* reality but of finding a goal *for* reality, in other words, since reality is conceived under the category (but not in the attitude!) of the *condition*, of finding the end of progress. If the *Absolute* has led to revolt, it is not because it required coherence, but because it maintained that coherence was achieved in and through the single discourse. It is *in* the condition that this coherence must be realized; but it will not be realized *by* the condition.

For the condition constitutes the very reality that it is question of dominating. The struggle with nature that it had undertaken is, of course, necessary, just as it is true that this struggle is led, by means of science, by the community of organized labor. But the mastery of nature, despite being necessary, is not sufficient: in this struggle with nature man makes himself nature, a thing, an object to transform. What he finds there in lieu of satisfaction is the renouncement of satisfaction, the loss of self, an unbearable loss ever since the *conscience* revealed it as a loss. The revolt is nothing other than the protest of the man who does not *want* to be consoled about this loss, but wants his rights restored: dominating nature does

not suffice, the very world of the condition must be dominated; it's not enough that man serves progress, progress still has to serve man.

So, action wants reality to be at man's service? A handy formula, a dangerous formula as well. For action *wants* nothing, and it is absurd to speak of its will: in the absolutely coherent discourse, such an expression not only made sense, but was even inevitable, there where discourse was its own subject, where the particular revealed itself in its truth only in light of totality and therefore wanted something without knowing that it wanted it. But here, where revolt has made the meaning of the [398] world out of man's project, where the *work* [*œuvre*] needed to create, where *finiteness* has resigned itself to the impossibility of the inevitable undertaking, how can one still speak about action's will? It's man that wants, man in everyday reality, in the reality of the society of labor and of the struggle with nature, in this society of the *condition* that has acquired a certain mastery over nature and that is sure that it is going to completely dominate all the exterior conditions that still enchain man: it is man that wants reality to be at his service.

Yet, didn't he already want this in the attitude of the *condition* and didn't he clearly state this in the category of that attitude? What does he have to do that he had not required of himself at this moment? The following categories had answered: man will be master of nature, but a natural master, a dominant factor, but a free and content factor, to express this in the language of the *Absolute* (and it is not a coincidence if the man of the *conscience* has gone all the way up to the *Absolute*), in itself, but not for itself. And the categories of revolt had continued by saying, more correctly: by showing that it is not enough to say to man that he is content in himself in order for him to be so for himself. Without a doubt, man, this or that man, can be content in this or that attitude, formulating his discourse — a discourse that suffices for him — in this or that category. But, and it is the great *but* of the man who thinks action through — *the* men don't do it and they refuse any thought rather than declaring themselves content if they don't *feel* content. Of course, *some* men have been content, and this proves that the world is such that certain men can be content; but it is a question at present of man's revolt, of all the men who do not feel like masters of the world.

This has been known for a while: only the master is content, because he alone is free, in this freedom that counts, that of enjoying his existence. The others can be kept from understanding that they are discontent, they can be prohibited from making a dash for the goods that they covet, they can be made to understand that brutal revolt, the stranglehold on the existing social fortune will be of no use to them, since only organized and reasonable labor can produce and upkeep that fortune: they will nonetheless know, with that certainty of sentiment that is the deepest certainty, that they are unsatisfied. Therefore nobody can *truly* be

satisfied: even the masters for the time being, those that have the fruit of social labor at their disposal, who dominate this or that historic group, who regulate the other's labor as they see fit, even they are not content, because they are only partial masters, masters of men, masters of consciences and of sentiments that can rise up, that are continually in revolt, even though this revolt is continually suppressed, and they don't live as veritable masters, but struggle and work. What distinguishes them is that their enemy is neither nature nor need, but the rest of humanity. If they have an advantage, it is constituted by the fact that sheltered from need and from immediate danger they have the time to think and to form discourses, that they can console themselves then about what they lack, that they can, in a word, dedicate themselves to philosophy.

But their philosophy thus reveals itself to the man of action precisely [399] like the thought of unsatisfied men: they would be wise men, not seekers of wisdom, if their world were truly their own. They form discourses because they are unable to live in the present, because they don't dare to feel, because they can't dare that. But while being the thought of unsatisfied men, their discourse is still thought; it is even the only thought, and therefore it is only starting from this thought that action is possible. The *condition's* thought constitutes the discourse of the men who direct the labor of others for their own profit (in it, they alone find the freedom to think about their conscious non-freedom, which is freedom as thought); but isn't it also this discourse that allows all men to lift the yoke of immediate need? What do the *intelligence*, the *Absolute*, do other than prohibit men from transforming the world to be happy in it? But do they not at the same time constitute the only path by which man can think the world through, and is not thinking the world through necessary to pull away sufficiently from it, to judge it? The *work* [*œuvre*], admittedly, demands satisfaction for a single man, and *finiteness* tries to impose the renunciation on each and every person; however, do their discourses or their pseudo-discourses not express the simple revolt of sentiment against a reason that negates sentiment?

The man of action's force is to see this: it is not for him a question of abandoning discourse, the discourse of men who, partial masters, were partially satisfied. It is not a question of renouncing what they created, what they have forced others to create; it is, on the contrary, a question of perfecting what they have undertaken without knowing how, without being able to successfully complete it, to bring it to its natural completion in everybody's contentment.

The world must be transformed: which world? And which transformation? Nothing would be more ludicrous than inventing a perfect world; an invented world would be a world thought, not a real world, another consolation, yet another imaginary satisfaction. No, the

world is what it is, what it is in the life of those who do not think it through because they don't have the time to think it through, because they are caught in the organization of this world like cogs in a machine: that is, the world of the condition. And now this world must be thought, thought through in the discourses of those who have produced discourses, of those, in other terms, who had managed to partially escaped from this world, who had constructed this world and who had said (if not for themselves, at least for the man of action) that this world contained no contentment for man.

We will have to ask ourselves what results from this splitting into discourse and into the requirement of the unification of discourse through action and in action, what this fact entails, the fact that discontent without mixture, without partial satisfaction, is on the side of those who don't even think through their discontent, who ordinarily don't even dare to feel it, caught as they are in their masters' discourse, and the fact that contentment can be thought through only in the discourse of those who claim to be content without being so or claim that there is no contentment for man, the fact then that action is realizable only by those who don't conceive it and is not [400] conceived universally by those who are guided by the idea of contentment. What is initially holding us back is the result at which the man of action winds up, this man of action who is heir to discourse and to all the discourses, who want to think, but who want to universally realize sentiment's presence by thinking, who wants, in order to speak with him, the world to be for man and not man for the world.

He then remarks — he remarks it because he refuses both partial contentment and the sacrifice of discourse, immediate violence and formally universal thought — that the world in which men live is the world of the *condition*, that man, having overcome nature, at least in principle, works and that the only use of all the categories that follow the condition was to make him forget this place, this function that he occupies. Without a doubt, these categories were not for this reason illegitimate, on the contrary, they had allowed discontent to express itself in the construction of a coherence, of coherences, of the coherence, in revolt, in resignation. But they differ from the category of the condition in that they don't allow, nor even claim to allow man to change the world. They had re-interpreted the reality of the condition, but they had left the world to the attitude of the condition, an attitude which had gone so far as to refuse the problem of contentment. The man of action, armed with that observation, wants to think this world through in relation to man, enlightened by the coherent thought of contentment in a coherent world such as the Absolute had elaborated it, guided by the protest of sentiment such as it has expressed itself in the ambition of the work [*œuvre*] and the resignation of finiteness.

This world appears then, as far as man is concerned, as organization: man has a place in the society of work and he is merely of value for that society to the extent that he

contributes to common activity. More precisely, the more he directs the common labor, the more he *commands* (the more he is the partial master, to reprise the terms employed above), the more value he has in society. However, he merely distinguishes himself from the others according to the degree of his power, not according to the nature of this power: he is never absolutely powerful. There are differences between men, but precisely because there are differences between them, none of them is man, not those that defend society against the violence of nature, nor the others that defend their posts of command against the former, nor those that desire everything, nor those that possess a partial satisfaction and that must fear losing it. Man has a place in society, he *is* a place in society and is only that, and this society is thus the battleground between men for satisfactions first, for contentment afterwards: society steps in between man and nature, but for each man it is another nature, an exterior against which and in which he must fight in order to be man and which keeps him from becoming that, a pseudo-nature as hostile and as menacing as nature itself.

The *condition* had recognized this and had stopped itself there. The man of action, having passed through the discourses of the unhappy man and knowing that the man in the condition is always unhappy, does not revolt: he has understood that the individual's revolt, [401] even if it were to succeed (and after the discourse of finiteness, he no longer believes that), would not liberate man, but would only make him forget the idea of contentment in presence: whether I manage to free myself from all nostalgia of happiness, how would humanity have progressed? If I declare work and organization negligible, do I not see thanks to that work and that organization? Would I think the work [*œuvre*], would I even think finiteness if I were not sheltered from natural need, if I did not have the time to think? But if he does not rebel, the man of action is not appeased either, in the world such as it is, in the pseudo-nature where what man has created through his work opposes itself to him as though the result of his activity and the form in which this activity is organized were things. The problem, what lies before him like an obstacle to overcome, is precisely for the man of action to make it so that man, having overcome nature, overcomes the nature of society.

For, since society presents itself to the individual like a nature, a nature conceived according to the discourse of the *condition*, no man is himself for himself in it, no more than for any other; he is what he does, what he produces, what he transforms. The rest is the struggle between men, in order to obtain the places furthest away from the contact with brute nature, those that give the greatest power over the greatest number of men, the disposal of the greatest number of "consumable" resources, of goods produced and immediately appropriable in and for enjoyment. Humanity has lifted itself above animal nature and, rid of need, can pursue the satisfaction of its desires. But humanity has only attained that freedom in itself, for the discourse of the *Absolute*, it has not realized it for itself, that is to say for all

men. All men have human desires, and only a part of humanity attains the satisfaction of these desires, and this part does not itself attain this satisfaction humanly, but in fear and through domination. The reality has remained that of the condition; the revolt must understand itself as conditioned in the absolutely coherent discourse in order to transform, in order to subject the pseudo-nature of human society to man.

We don't have to ask ourselves here how this fundamental requirement will be translated into a political practice (we will come back to that in what follows). It is nonetheless clear that action can only present itself "at the end of time", at the moment where man's mastery over nature is in sight and where, according to the discourse of the *Absolute*, man is in historic reality what he is in himself, where he understands himself as freedom in contentment. Up to this point, action can be thought, but cannot be conceived of as universal: it is a revolution, but a revolution undertaken through and for reasonable men against the domination of men devoid of reason<sup>91</sup>. At present, where the *condition* has organized the struggle [402] with nature and where absolutely coherent discourse has revealed the goal of this struggle, the revolution will be universal.

Yet, to be universal, it must be thought universally and it must be undertaken universally. The world is inhuman, society is a pseudo-nature because it is not the same man that thinks reality and that constitutes it: it is thought by he who makes the others work, it is maintained by those who work and who don't think. For society to serve man, labor must be thought and unsatisfied thought — precisely as unsatisfied and conscious of its discontent — must be embodied in the world of work and of organization. Action can be instituted only by the man who thinks, it can only be conducted by the mass of men, unsatisfied and without thought. It is not that the former has a gospel to preach to the others: he can only show them what is; but therefore, it suffices that he shows it to them. They need only become aware of their discontent to be able to actively grasp the truth of absolute discourse and to realize what the revolt was seeking with the help of a red herring. And the more de-humanized they will be, the more completely they will have lost all contact with the tradition, the more brutally they will have been stripped of any partial satisfaction, the more they will become aware of their discontent: the more they will be the animals of the pseudo-nature, and the more profoundly will they feel and will they think contentment in freedom, the less they will be

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<sup>91</sup> The term revolution does not here exclusively indicate "popular" revolution. It designates the stranglehold of "theory" over "reality" and thus just as much covers the Platonic "revolution" of the philosophers who must make themselves kings, as that of the civil servants of the Hegelian *Philosophy of Right* that must organize society in the State to the reasonable satisfaction of all citizens, as, finally, the revolution of Marx, in which the most "alienated" part of society, by becoming aware of its inhuman situation, realizes reason through violence for the purpose of a fully flourished life. The differences are characterized, in logic's terms, as those of reprises (or as that between reprises and the pure category).

tempted to imitate the partial masters in the search for partial satisfactions. By freeing themselves, they will free man, all men. Their unconscious aspirations need only be dragged to the light of discourse in order to reveal themselves as those of man as man.

They will however reveal themselves as such only to the man of action, to the thinker of action: it is not the de-humanized man who will give birth to action, but the thinker unsatisfied by abstract thought, not the social animal, but the philosopher who wants to be content in the social reality and that knows that he will be content only by making all men content. The social animal will not come to revolution on his own, he will not go beyond revolt, and even revolt will be impossible for him in a suitably organized society where the masters have not gone to sleep. Even if the “natural” laws of society were such that the organization would destroy itself if man didn’t seize that second nature in order to transform it as well, this destruction would happen rather than the world of the condition transforming itself all alone; it is true that philosophy can only self-realize in the world such as it is, but it is not this world that will realize philosophy, that would realize what it itself [403] is deep down (that is, for philosophy); philosophy must make a decision to realize itself, by making what the truth of this world is since man has freed himself from exterior nature appear to the world and in the world.

The man of action thus reconciles the major contradiction that the Absolute had let persist, that between the man satisfied in himself and the man who thinks satisfaction, between the hero who closes history by pushing it to objective and total reason and the thinker in whom the world thus built understands itself. For the Absolute, this reconciliation had not even been a problem; it sufficed for the Absolute that the thinker who asked the questions and who alone asked them had found answers, the answer to that question, that it has remarked that in truth, in itself, the world was organized reasonably, a unified organization, a unified labor, a unified community, at least in principle: every individual being recognized as indispensable in their place, every personal sentiment being freed as devoid of importance for the march of the defined and, in principle, finite progress, every “moral” and “aesthetic” need being satisfied through the organization that understands the religious and artistic tradition as the image of its own perfect and final understanding and that organizes these needs and their satisfactions according to this clear and just understanding, what more can the individual ask for? But the individual asks to be precisely he who understands and to cease being he who is understood, as long as there are still things to understand, in other words, as long as total reason has not provided what it claimed to have given to man, to all men, contentment, a contentment that has become immediate again because the mediation has been completely realized between man and his *other*, with every other, whether this other be the other man or the organization of men in society. Such as it is, the world cannot make coincide

in the same individual the satisfaction of the philosopher and the satisfaction of the man who is recognized, but who is only recognized in his place in the human world, and it can even less make both sides of contentment coincide in all men: revolt and despair, what else have they announced? Yet, as much for absolutely coherent discourse as for the revolt, it is this coincidence that matters: they don't see it and thus they let the world slip away and deliver it to violence, affirming that the violence *in itself* is eliminated or that it alone matters or that it is the ultimate fact, the only fact. But what they don't see, they announce to the ears of he who knows how to listen, as the reality of the world of the condition shows it to the eyes of he who knows how to see, while negating its essential role (for this reality, it is merely a lack of people's understanding).

This awakened man, this ear of the deaf, this eye of the blind, knows what the world wants and what thought wants and where the revolt is heading, and he knows that it is not a personal or privileged knowledge that allows him to be content in *theoria*: the circle is not closed, humanity has not run the race, and he does not convince himself that he alone can, as a spectator, witness the struggle of the men who want to be free in contentment, content in freedom, he knows that he cannot struggle in their place either, nor give them the infallible recipe that leads them to victory. But [404] he can be their conscience, he can formulate their revolt, he can call them to the decision, he can tell them what they want, what they have always wanted and what they have never obtained. In him, action, engaged in since the birth of man, thinks itself, and thinks itself as action. What men have created, they will understand in him as their creation; what had become a prison for them, through him, they will seize to make their dwelling in, to live freely in it. In him, the past of anguish and need, of labor and of desire close; this past is not yet dead, because it is not yet finished, because nature is not yet completely overcome, because the pseudo-nature of organization continues to present itself to men as *other* and as exterior; but man now knows what must be completed, and knowing his power, he will make himself master of this past, in order to live in the presence, him and his past, which will only truly be his the moment he ceases being past and where, from a condition, he will have become a lived form of sentiment.

Up to this point, it's necessary to act, it's necessary to avoid any distraction, any sentiment that can only be illegitimate as long as the world is not transformed for sentiment; it is necessary to think, because only thought, and the most abstract thought, will grasp the truth of the world of abstraction; it is necessary to not be oneself in a reality that negates, and efficiently negates, the individual, negates it all the more dangerously because it offers him more loopholes and false satisfactions: it is necessary to think the *condition* in the *revolt* in view of the presence of the *Absolute*; then, the truly free, truly satisfied man will be able



to renounce discourse; then, he will not even need to renounce discourse, because he will live in the presence.

3. *Action and the essential reprise of the condition.* — *The ambiguity of active discourse, its determinism, its materialism* — “Inner” and “outer” reprises. — *Action in Plato.* — The man that we are dealing with in the category of the action is the one who passes from thought to action, in other words, he is, in terms of history, the heir of the philosophy that, with him, ceases looking to understand the world: it is now a matter of transforming it. Since he is the heir of coherent discourse and since he has passed through the revolt, he does not oppose himself to absolute knowledge, but to the attitude of the man who is satisfied in this knowledge: he is not the adversary of philosophy (he knows that it is thanks to philosophy that he can surpass it in action), he is the adversary of philosophers. He therefore passes to action, but as the heir of philosophy: his action is scientific. He acts, because action is objectively possible, historically necessary if man wants to be man.

To the extent that he understands himself as an individual — he can't keep from doing so, since the universal is not realized — he will grasp himself under the category of the *work* [*œuvre*] and of *finiteness*. But he forbids himself this kind of understanding; what matters is action, and the essential of action is precisely to not be his nor that of anybody; action is that of universal negativity (or if one prefers, of the universal negating its negation). He therefore starts to elaborate the concrete theory of revolution: an analytical science [405] that shows the contradictions of society and the pseudo-natural organization's own self-destruction, a synthetic science that indicates the technical conditions of the revolutionary's action on the masses, of the revolutionary action of the masses on society. The result is the demonstration of the necessity of the revolution — *if* man wants to be free —, not a philosophical, but a scientific demonstration, since it looks for and finds the contradiction in the observation of the material factors of human labor (among which man is included as the provider of labor).

It would be superfluous to insist on the special character of this science, if it did not make difficult the understanding of the category by its very success, by the fact that it ends up at action; in action, which is an action on the masses and an action of the masses, the category hides itself (wanting to be an attitude) and adapts its discourse to the world that it is dealing with. The reprises are not accidental, but technically necessary.

Action begins with the fact that partial mastery does not realize the universal (as an aside: if it did so in its way — through a single individual's domination — the human world would become an animal cosmos, since the master, being alone, would not possess any language and would not *know* that he is free, whereas the rest of the species *homo* would only

be technically “thinking” tools, with neither understanding nor an attitude for themselves), and that the others, the mass, are only universal in negation. The science of action, the revolutionary science must therefore be addressed to those who do not understand it and struggle against those who partially understand it. To the extent that it spreads through the masses, that it educates the masses, it then becomes impoverished from a philosophical point of view (reprises of the *Absolute* and, more often, of the *personality*, of the *intelligence*, of the *conscience*, etc.): an impoverishment that is an enrichment of the poor reality and that can reveal itself as such only after the revolution.

What precedes explains that action always uses, no matter which other reprises are added to it and are superimposed on it, the same reprise, that of the condition. The categorial consciousness belongs to the active minority, and that minority, because it is conscious, acts on the mass by translating what it thinks into the language of the world of the condition. For it is this language that binds men, being common to all: the human-tool has lost any personal discourse, but, participating in organized labor and, through it, in the State (if only passively), he is not a slave, but a citizen; he has not lost freedom in the State, but in life. The minority can speak to him. It uses then fundamental concepts of the science of the condition, not only in order to transform this world — which is an evident necessity, since there is no other technical theory of transformation, whether it be on the side of things (labor and the organization of labor) or of that of men (education, propaganda, politics) —, but also to formulate itself and express itself: to realize a universal society without particular discourse, it must shape the mass, the unconscious universal, into a class opposed to the class of the masters, that is, giving it a particular discourse and a particular interest. To realize [406] the freedom of the individual, to create a world of the presence, it teaches concrete necessity and the renunciation of the individuality of sentiment; to put the organization at man’s service, it requires the subordination to the organization and a boundless discipline; for a world where any conflict is a conflict of sentiment, it allows no other analysis of the motives than the one according to the concept of material interest. The science of action, which is knowledge of the Absolute, speaks — but for this science speaking is acting — in the concepts of the condition, since reality to transform thinks itself in these concepts.

A great difficulty results from this fact for he who does not see action from the interior, in its relationship with the Absolute, and who tries to work his way back up from the expressions of action to the category. His undertaking is as difficult as reconstructing the *philosophy* of Plato starting from observable reality of a city constituted according to the precepts of the *Republic* or the *Laws* would be.

For he who has moved through the stages leading to the category of action, the result, action in and through the condition, is not at all shocking or surprising. But the situation is completely different for he who passes directly from life in the condition to the *idea* of action. He is at the stage of the *conscience* and he finds himself before a group of men who affirm that they aim for freedom, of an activity that claims to be action, of a politics that affirms that it aims to abolish all particular interest, of a “materialist” theory of history that proclaims to realize coherence and to give the individual a personal language in sentiment. He can see only lies and betrayals in this contradiction between the goal and the means, because for him, goal and means are absolutely separated, like the intelligible from the sensible; and yet, he notes that the adherents of the doctrine are ready to provide proof of their “sincerity” and their “idealism”.

Must he then see a *work* [*œuvre*] and recognize believers in these men? Must he escape into the attitude of the *intelligence* and interpret the phenomenon as a new concrete interest? All the prior categories are at his disposition (since they are present in the consciousness of the age) and offer him some possibilities of critique, some reasons of refusal. Yet, these reprises don’t give him any satisfaction if he listens to the theory of action, which therein discerns discourses destined to justify, to defend, to sustain the particular interests of partial masters. Therefore, he who demands the possibility of action — and it is a matter of him — does not stop there. But he can’t help seeing that there is an ongoing action that claims to freely and reasonably realize freedom and that this *action* declares itself to be *materialist* and *determinist*, in other words, that it can’t be thought and that, consequently, it can’t be reasonable.

The solution has been given in what preceded. But since it brings nothing to he who has not appropriated the preceding categories, since action, once it has realized the passage from the category to the attitude, contents itself with struggle, with work, with organizing without explaining itself about its categorial becoming, since, moreover, and as a legitimate consequence of this limitation, the representatives of action renounce explaining the meaning of action even for themselves, since finally there where [407] they find themselves caught in the discussion about principles, for them, protesting in the language of the adversary against this language suffices — we can neglect the possibility that they end up believing in it, for this *psychological* danger, as great as its practical consequences can be, doesn’t interest us here —, a terminological explanation can be useful in the present situation.

Action has a materialist and a dialectical theory. We will not stop at non-dialectical interpretations (which are easily recognizable in the use that they make of concepts of cause and effect — a reprise of the *condition* under the *object*), desirous to determine from the outside veritable *being* opposed to *appearances*: the real dialectic has rid the science of the

condition of such interpretations, by ridding itself of the concept of substance. The historical delay of this sort of materialism is too great to be dangerous. If it survives, it's that its usefulness is in the destruction of concepts that are older still, such as substantialist spiritualism (a reprise of *God* under the *object* through the intermediary of the *self*). It's more useful to seek the meaning of this materialism in the opposition that it itself establishes between itself and idealism.

For traditional metaphysics, this opposition is absurd: it is realism and not materialism that opposes itself to idealism. This remark alone, as elementary as it is, suffices to show that the difficulty is not of an ontological order and, to use another language, that it has nothing to do with a "theory of knowledge". Therefore, one arrives at misconceptions as soon as one attacks — or defends — the theory of action at this level. If one wants at all costs to "file" the category in one of the drawers of the history of metaphysics, if one cares about the game of reprises (a game that is hardly innocent), action is clearly idealist when it comes to reason's "role": nothing, for action, is outside of reason, nothing is inaccessible to knowledge, and speaking of substances that do not exist *for* reason is, for action, speaking without saying anything. But the question itself is poorly posed; the theoretical philosophy of action is that of the *Absolute* (what distinguishes the two is not a theoretical difference, but that between theory and realization), and in the category of the Absolute, the "subject" and the "object" coincide: there is no place for a theory of knowledge as part of philosophy (even though it can be necessary in a general methodology of the sciences).

This posited, the question receives a precise meaning at the only level where it can still posit itself, at the political, that is, historical level. Precisely because action knows itself to be and aspires to be the heir of coherent discourse (which is often called, in a term that in itself is contradictory, absolute idealism), history is, for action, the history of man in the world, the history in which man transforms himself by transforming the world. Discourse does nothing other than reveal what is, but the revelation is already a transformation of the world and is authentic only to the extent that it is a transformation of reality (material and pseudo-natural = social). Man can be unaware of this, in other words, he can stop before arriving at coherent discourse; he can believe then that his particular and partial discourse is sufficient to bring him contentment, that good intentions and [408] the right convictions suffice: to the extent that he is merely going about his own business, he is irrefutable. But his solution neither realizes the mastery of man over nature, a necessary condition for freedom, nor the contentment through coherent discourse for each and every individual, which would be its sufficient condition. The insoluble problem, the scandal for this moral idealism applied to history and to politics is the existence of violence and of men of ill will, and since the problem remains insoluble for man, since the scandal persists, all his discourse remains

abstract: as he does not negate the world, but his own active negativity, he himself continually creates the scandal and afterwards declares it to be inevitable in this nasty reality that he then turns his back on to try to have peace in his particular conscience. But for action, man can free himself as an individual only by freeing man and all men. Yet, this liberation can only happen through the victory of the universal over the partial and the particular. Violence can only be overcome at its own level, and it can be, because truth and the good *are* not ideals outside of the world and history, but *happen* in man's struggle with nature and pseudo-nature: in this struggle, man reveals truth and creates himself by creating his conditions. History is the history of the condition, but understood, the history of human labor in its development from partiality to universality, and action is only looking to consciously continue what man has undertaken in the condition without understanding it: action concerns itself with the material (natural and social) conditions, simply because there are no other conditions. Any discourse that negates, neglects or hides this *material* fact, is a particular discourse and, as such, whatever it says about it, a partial action against the universal action that is reasonable because liberating, liberating because reasonable.

In short, the difficulty stems from the fact that he who sees action from the outside only sees it and transposes the materialism inherent to any action and to any activity onto the plane of morality (of the *conscience*). He must not count on clarifications of the same nature as those that have just been given from the representatives of action; they don't discuss, but struggle, labor, organize, enlighten: it is in the condition, wanting to be men of the condition, that they attempt to eliminate the condition by completing it. Their language is not addressed to him who possesses a particular language, but to those that don't have any at their disposal because they do not live *for themselves*, but in the mode of alienated freedom, and who can recognize the truth of their life only in a "materialist" discourse because they are caught in the pseudo-nature of society: the moral sermon, whatever it be, makes no sense for them, but only for him who is partially free, which means (for the man of action), for the partial master, who is the adversary as long as he doesn't rid himself of his particularity and his partiality. It is only by participating in action that man acts, not by trying to "understand" [409] it: it is freedom that neither is nor becomes but makes happen, ἡ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἢ τοῦτο ἐντελέχεια, man's actuality which is inasmuch as he is *potential*.

It is therefore not an avoidable misunderstanding that thus wedges itself between the man of action and he who wants to understand action. Of course, action can justify itself and make itself understood in what it truly is; but this is precisely what least interests it. Action would have no difficulty going back to its truth from the reprise of the condition under which

it presents itself: but it cares about this reprise by which it acts. It could enlighten its critic; but why would it do so, given that the question that the critic asks shows action that he has not made a decision, that he doesn't even wish to act? Otherwise, he would not ask if acting is necessary, but how one must act. And on the other hand, this man who wants an answer *hic et nunc* cannot find the answer that the man of action could give him and doesn't; if he wants an answer right away, this indicates sufficiently that he doesn't want it deep down, otherwise he would know that any answer given at this moment of history is a false answer, because reality is still false and inhuman and the *other* of freedom, and he would not ask the category that aspires to be an attitude to be a category without attitude and in search of an attitude — otherwise he would speak to action at the level of action, that is, at the level of the condition understood in terms of the freedom to realize, — otherwise he would understand both that the reprise is a reprise and that it is inevitable for real action<sup>92</sup>.

On the reprises in general, few things remain to be said after the preceding explanations. The category is the last that man has reached. This does not signify that it is more easily grasped than the others. On the contrary, the fact alone of its “youth” would suffice to explain that it provokes the interpretations and the critiques of prior categories. Added to this, as has just been said, is the fact that action opposes itself by its nature to theoretical expression; it only discovers itself for an instant to immediately enter into realization and into activity, and rendering its re-discovery difficult is a necessity for the category. Therefore, its most authentic representatives in the political reality are the least inclined, and often the least apt, to achieve it. The reprises are therefore particularly numerous and complicated; moreover, they are of an uneasy analysis, because moral, political, religious, aesthetic preferences express themselves in them, but don't allow these reprises to establish themselves as theories.

Nonetheless, however large the obstacles appear, once the role of the condition is clarified, being in possession of the [410] category suffices in order to recognize the reprises: a necessary effort for the historian of political thought as for the theorist of action, but which we don't need pursue any further than has already been done.

Plato's name alone suffices to recall the existence of reprises of the category where action is thought in view of action, but under another category. In this sense, action is not the newest category: it is the oldest category of philosophy then, the foundation of all great

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<sup>92</sup> It does not fall within logic's domain to decide if, in this or that historic case, it is a matter of this reprise of action through action itself or of a reprise of action through another attitude-category, for example, the *work* [*œuvre*] that, then, uses the discourse of *action* to construct a myth. But it is the logic, and the logic alone, that makes the answer to this question possible.

philosophy like all great political thought. But it is thus only the foundation, and action presents itself as derivative of the category under which it is reprised. That it is nonetheless a matter of reprises, in other words, that the succession of categories is indeed the one that appeared to us, becomes evident here in the same way as everywhere else: action is capable of understanding as necessary the categories that precede it (those that precede the *Absolute*, with the help of the *Absolute*), whereas for the reprises action seems to be an irreducible fact, in itself incomprehensible, but which must be adapted to, because, to be very precise, this expression of human *nature* interferes with philosophy. Therefore, it is natural that philosophy is scorned by politics; the action of the unconscious universal, that of the State as well as that of those who struggle for mastery of the State, is too certain of its right to let itself be worried or thrown off by discourses that claim to give it a meaning that it would have lacked beforehand.

The unity of philosophy and of politics is only attained here, and it is only here that politics thinks itself. It is not that, until now, it has only had a technical concept: the simple fact of disagreement between politics and philosophy proves this, a disagreement where the one recognizes a thought in the *other*, although this thought seems false to the one and pernicious to the other; but before the unity of discourse was established by the Absolute, that is, (seen from politics), before all men are brought into a single human society (although with different statuses), politics and philosophy cannot coincide, and politics cannot be the realization of philosophy, philosophy cannot know itself to be politics. The reconciliation of revolt and discourse cannot be undertaken before both have reach their utmost form.

Until this point, even their opposition isn't pure: philosophy wants to direct politics, all the while remaining what it is; politics, whether it grounds itself in the *tradition*, in the *condition*, or in the *work* [*œuvre*], wants to relegate philosophy to the individual's private life and is for itself content to pursue what the good is for it with an obviousness such that any question seems to it to be a hostile act, a crime, treason. From both sides, it is a matter of reprises that can live on long after the era where their categories express and create human reality, to provide arguments of propaganda. In their time — and this is what the pure category reveals — these reprises were not “errors of judgement” or proofs of the laziness of the mind.

To take an example, in a society of partial and traditional [411] labor, where man defends himself against nature without seeking to dominate it, labor is not everyone's business, and the man-tool is not a man at all, whereas the “veritable” man is completely separated from the condition-nature there. Politics merely aims in this state (or in this State) at the domination that liberates the individual from violence by individual violence, political philosophy only targets the agreement of free men in the discourse of the *object* that puts an

end to *discussion*: Callicles is no less (nor more) right than Socrates, and the “realism” of the one is as justified as the “myth” of the other; but in (and for) Plato, the limitation of the Greek State splinters at the sight of this opposition; it is not by chance or by personal taste that he sought a real role in the history of his time and that his last work is a code of “applicable” laws (in the discussion of these roles neither Callicles nor Socrates play any role): it is a matter of shaping reality, of transforming the world, because it is through the transformation of the world that man is transformed. Action in the category’s sense is thus grasped. But it is not the category of action that grasps it, it is that of the object, for it is this category that is the truth of a world where discourse is cut off from labor and where labor happens not in view of progress, but in view of the continuation, where the worker does not have a discourse of his own nor (Aristotle sees this, when he says that the barbarian has no State) has ever had one. Therefore, action remains reserved for the philosopher who must become their king and master, because men could not be free and happy, but only free or happy. This difference must disappear, all must, losing the State, be obliged to turn towards labor in nature, in order for those that have thus lost their discourse (without losing *the* discourse) to seek satisfaction in the liberation from natural violence, in order for man to pass through the *self* and *God* to the *condition* and the *conscience*.

We can content ourselves with this example. Elaborating a complete analysis of these reprises is the task of the historian of the philosophy and the historian full-stop: the job of the one can no longer be separated from that of the other. For the category is encountered in all political thought —more accurately, in the political man’s thought, since thoughts that are called political are highly widespread because they reflect on the form of society, on the State, on the laws, etc., but do so in order to liberate their authors from any obligation towards the realities of which it is a question. The political man is a man of action; this old chestnut has a very precise meaning here. Whereas, in current acceptance, action is the opposite of thought, the active life the contrary of the contemplative life, for the political man, not only are they not separate, they are unified and the same thing. That the condition of his era compels him to separate the two is for him precisely the proof that this condition must be transformed in its totality; if he thinks the ideal separated from history, as a goal revealed or invented or constructed, this only shows that he has not reached the category in its purity, but interprets it and interprets himself with the help of a prior category. But these reprises notwithstanding, what is subsumed therein, [412] if it is a matter of the political man, is always the category, and its presence is what distinguishes, because he accepts action, albeit by “understanding” it, the political man from the politician, from the intellectual, from the civil servant, from those who live in a tradition and who are there to maintain it, to perfect it, correct it, defend it, critique it — indispensable men in any tradition, perhaps necessary



after every action (clergy, administration, directors — even and above all — of thought), men who will serve, where necessary, action, but who neither present it nor represent it. Their reprises grasp action, but as a “human fact” which is not their own, as a subject that we speak of as we speak of any other subject that matters — in the certainty of the tradition: their problems and risks are partial or particular, and the universal is unconscious in them; they participate in action, so to speak, by interposed thought.

## CHAPTER XVII MEANING

**Man finds the unity of life and discourse in action. Yet, as action insomuch as universal negates man's discourse as his own through and in his own action, language breaks away from discourse, and *meaning* from the meaning of life.**

1. *Action as the last category of discourse.* — *The problem of human existence outside of discourse.* — *The fact of this existence.* — The attitude/category of action is the highest man can reach in his discourse: discourse not only knows itself to be real in it, but realizes itself; it does not only justify reality here, but makes it just. Therefore, it cannot be surpassed; man does not assign himself any goal higher than his freedom in the reality of his life, than a life in view of a free reality, in view of the unity between coherent discourse and coherent reality, than a conscious and reasonable action, free and non-arbitrary, in view of a future that is presence in the freedom of sentiment. It is a matter, in fact, of realizing man, and this task is fixed *for* and *by* man himself, who knows that he is not yet human, that is, existing freedom. All the categories, from the moment man seeks himself, targeted this alone; but it is only in action that man knows himself to be on this path: before, he was seeking his salvation, his reality, his personality, his work, his being; now he knows that in everything he merely pursued (or lost hope of reaching) the reality of his freedom.

This is how all the categories of reflection meet, as in their completion, with those of the Absolute and the absolute revolt in action. The *personality* grasping itself as sentiment facing the *Absolute* which is *God*, but a God revealed absolutely as the coherence to realize, has found its *work* [*œuvre*] in its *finiteness*: it is the *free conscience* that imposes itself on the *condition* in order to transform it according to its *interest* that it now knows to be unique and essential and in virtue of which it can *interpret* what is. Philosophy has gone full circle and has thus brought itself to a close and lets man move on to his goal; he has discovered what he can live and die for in the *certainty* that no thought can belittle his end, before this end is achieved. After? After does not concern him; if he wanted to predict what man in freedom would be, he would contradict himself; for if a concrete prediction were possible,

man would not be [414] free, but determined in advance. He only knows one thing: this future will be the plenitude of sentiment, this future will be a presence without future.

It is essential that this end of philosophy in action be taken seriously and retained in this seriousness. The reprises are dangerous here precisely because, in the forms that they impose on the attitude/category, the two split and because the action no longer *thinks itself*, but *is thought* as a free attitude in the vague sense of this term, something like the concrete interests of the interpretation. Reasonably, man can therefore choose to refuse action, reasonably, in the acceptance as understood in *discussion*, that is, without contradiction. The representatives of action are often the first to use such reprises: they *act* and for their action, which takes place in the condition, it doesn't matter if it is understood, provided that it is effective; moreover, they address themselves to those that have no discourse in the master's sense, but speak a language formed from fragments of traditions (rather than the language of one tradition) and from pieces of technical speech from the science of the condition: what is needed is to make them act, so that freedom, which in them is *in-itself*, becomes conscious of its realization, in action, but not in a discourse on the freedom of the individual, which would be wanting to give them the master's thought without the reality of his mastery and his partial freedom. These reprises are therefore *useful*: in the struggle, they can indicate goals or obstacles to conquer, can serve the education of the masses in view of revolutionary effectiveness, can propose "ideals" that speak to traditional forms of sentiment, can make seen "ideologies" to knock down, lies to unveil, all this at the level of the reprises that dominate the language of this world and characterize the condition just as well for those that have imprisoned themselves in it as for those that want to bring it to an end and repeal it. Instead of always coming back to their beginning, the latter are perfectly right to attend to the condition in the condition; but from philosophy's point of view, which here is our own, their speech is no more sufficient than that of their adversary's. They have the right to take this remark lightly, since they struggle and labor against struggle and labor. But discourse, both with them and their adversaries, seems to always start over and to never come to an end.

Yet, the fact is that, *reasonably*, man has no choice, for reason has ceased being the reason of discussion. It is not that all men necessarily live in the category/attitude of the action — far from it, action itself confirms and assumes the contrary —, but all men aren't philosophers either. Any attitude can think itself in its own category, any category can be lived in its attitude, and just as the category can't be refuted, the attitude can't be depreciated; for the man who takes a stance there and who refuses to pass to a new category and to another attitude, man's freedom is total, in this sense that he can refuse everything, provided that he accept the real consequences of his attitude in a world that is still that of the condition, and

where his attitude and the acts that follow from it [415] expose themselves as natural or pseudo-natural factors to all the other factors, lastly to violent death. If he wants to run this risk, there is no lack of attitudes that justify it in their categories, and this risk will appear unimportant to him despite its reality or because it is merely real. But this here is not the question for philosophy. If it can't or just doesn't want to prevent anyone from living and dying as they see fit, if, on the contrary, it strives to understand what men "see as fit", it can and must protest if the term "reasonable" is taken in a sense that is surpassed *for philosophy*. It has not thought history, it has not seen coherent discourse and the absolute revolt join together, it has not suffered the hopelessness of finiteness to see as fit the repeating of concepts that it itself has led to this categorial clarity, that these so-called critiques have not even guessed the possibility of in the courageous sincerity of their "taking of a stance". For philosophy has taken possession of history not as an exterior and resistant object, but as its own essence, which thus ceases being only an essence, of being the ungraspable and always fleeting ground: history is philosophy in evolution, philosophy expresses man's reality to be realized in history. *Reasonably*, for philosophy, means *universally*; the man who does not lift himself to the unity of attitude and category can be great, heroic, pure, admirable, even in the opinion of he who has surpassed this man in his thought, since in fact (that is to say in itself, for he who judges this man from the subsequent category) he sacrifices his concrete individuality to his universal; but he doesn't know that he thus negates himself in order to posit his own universal: only his sacrifice is universal, but the universal to which he sacrifices himself is particular, and his act is not action, because he wants *a* universal and *a* freedom, and because thus the universal and the freedom of his act do not appear to him in his discourse.

Yet, if all attitudes still exist at the time of action, philosophy, which wants to understand everything, everything, including itself, therefore finds itself before an extremely serious difficulty. The man who wants to understand either asks for satisfaction from a coherent discourse; in this case, the *Absolute* brings him the solution; or he tells himself that man seeks to understand, *because* he is not satisfied, he need therefore merely find satisfaction or renounce it once and for all in order to be rid of the specter of it; so, the *work* [*œuvre*] and *finiteness* answers him; finally, however, action unites both, the coherent discourse and the revolt. As we have said above, *reasonably*, man no longer has the choice; action reached, it is merely for the *intelligence* that he chooses between understanding, revolt, and action: action precisely *is* the reasonable choice; and for philosophy, persisting in the surpassed attitudes is a refusal of reason: an existence without reason. Yet, men's existence, does it not happen outside of reason, do not reason and discourse appear only by way of exception? Do

not the attitudes, and the unconscious attitudes with no category lead, ordinarily, to life? But this [416] existence without reason is a fact, and philosophy, if it wants to be itself, must understand it.

But what does it mean to understand this existence? To give it a place in one of the categories or to grasp it — which would come down to the same thing — in the absolutely coherent discourse? This is obviously possible, too obviously for that to be the solution that we are seeking: we would have a particular discourse that would speak of its *other* and, instead of having understood an ultimate possibility, we would simply have come backwards. In the most favorable hypothesis, philosophy would have understood everything, but it would be impossible to verify this hypothesis as long as philosophy has not understood itself: if there is a life without reason, without coherent discourse, without discourse refusing or seeking coherence, philosophy is only one of man's possibilities, in the most primitive forms as in the most complete forms; yet, inasmuch as coherence, it has not understood itself as *possibility*<sup>93</sup>.

One can say that the problem doesn't make sense. Indeed, is it still human, a life without discourse, consequently, without judgement, without justification of the attitude, without understanding, without revolt, without action, or even without future and without past, without then consciousness of all that, for philosophy, appears to be life's ground? All the weight of all the history of western philosophy presses this objection. Man has always *essentially* been considered a philosopher therein, and, since Socrates, the problem has been to explain how there happens to be individuals, and even a great number of them, who are not philosophers, individuals who do not participate in philosophy, see philosophy so little that they don't even spurn it. The solutions don't matter to us, particularly since each category has uttered its own; they don't even posit the problem behind this problem of the tradition: if a life without discourse is human, how can philosophy, itself discourse, grasp it? What is the source of discourse, deeper than any discourse? For philosophy, everything depends on the answer to the first question. But if life without discourse is human, the first question will be resolved only by the answer to the second which *must* then exist.

Yet, in the same tradition that defines man through discourse, life without reason is known under two forms, that of the animal and that of God (not the God of the pure category, but his reprise through the *object* and the *conscience*: the God of Greco-Christian theology). The same tradition, which condemns an existence without reason, sees such an existence as the apex of Being and of thought and as their basis; man is not God, because he lives in discourse, and the animal is not man, because it has no discourse. In the language of the

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<sup>93</sup> Philosophy is understood as a possibility by *finiteness*, but as an unachievable possibility in coherence.

*Absolute*, God is for himself, a pure self-consciousness and, as such, original and originating consciousness (let us neglect the reprises: the Kantian *intellectus archetypus*, Aristotle's [417] νόσις νοήσεως), the pure form that reveals itself, not *in*, but *as* all of history; the animal is in itself; only man is the movement of the in-itself towards the for-itself: it is not by accident that the category of the Absolute has been condemned or admired, because it puts human thought (in its totality and at its end) in the place of God.

The revolt of the *work* [*œuvre*] and of *finiteness* is a protest against this deification, but not a refutation; it asserts that man does not cease being an animal just because he knows himself to be one (= in itself) and that satisfaction, possible or excluded, is not in the *possession* of absolute knowledge; but man would nonetheless be satisfied for the revolt if he could be, either absolute knowledge, or absolute potentiality. One can thus say that the final categories have broken with the tradition, which is completed by the Absolute, but that this rupture is incomplete. Against reason, it is true that the *work* [*œuvre*] condemns and rejects reason and that *finiteness* understands itself as the end of reason. However, in both categories, it is necessary to be a philosopher (or to have been one) in order to not be a philosopher, and their awareness of the rupture is less deep than the rupture itself.

Therefore, the philosophy of the philosopher-man comes to its end with action alone. The categories that precede it proclaim that man's being is not defined and limited by discourse: in action, discourse ends. The man who knows what he is in himself now undertakes his own creation and, having discovered the future, he sets off towards the presence that will be the end of the worry about what will come, end as goal, end as the term of the *no longer* and the *not yet*: man (not the individual) acts reasonably in order to no longer act, and in order to no longer reason; man is not a God-animal, but he will make it so that he is.

But if this is the case, the category of action has already answered: man is so far from being reason and discourse that both have no other meaning than to suppress themselves. What is properly human is that this elimination of reason happens through reason itself, that the negativity that negates every given cannot negate itself before having *actually* negated everything, that the positivity can only be the *result* of the negativity, that reason neither perpetuates itself, nor abolish itself, but completes and surpasses itself. The tradition got that right; and nonetheless, it is wrong, because it lacked courage: man is between the animal and God, but he is there, because, *actually*, he makes himself an animal-God. Man is reason in its rightful place in the reality of the condition; he never is so too much, if even he is so enough. And nevertheless, reason is not him, nor he reason. On the contrary, action establishes that he is something else and that those who limit him to reason are therefore also those that imagine that they have arrived at presence (in the enjoyment of their partial mastery) and who oppose themselves to man's realization, for the others in their thought (if it is

sincere), for themselves in fact and without them knowing it. Philosophy deals with something other than a discourse, even coherent, something other than reason, even in action, something other, but which is human, if it wants to understand itself. What this fact means in philosophy and for philosophy, here is the problem that we need to face. But as of now, it has appeared that life [418] outside of discursive reason is not only an observable fact: it constitutes, and for philosophy itself, the limit of discourse.

2. *Language and poetry. — Poetry and presence. — Philosophy as the science of meaning. — The individual and presence, discourse and poetry.* — It has been said above, and it is worth bringing back up here, that the category of action cannot be surpassed; the entire difficulty of the present problem is reduced to this. Philosophy is discourse, discourse has led to action, action is action in view of the end of discourse: what is left to do, other than act? The answer is: nothing. Said differently, there is no attitude beyond action. The importance of this result cannot be exaggerated; for it cuts short any consolation by the dream of a gentler, more peaceful, more idyllic life in contemplation; it cuts this short at least for the reasonable man (in philosophy's sense). But the impossibility of this consolation is not *finiteness's* "impossible possibility"; it is actually an impossibility, conceived as such, precisely because presence constitutes the real possibility for man: thought (discourse), in *action*, has grasped the universal as realizable, and thus it has conceived the concrete hereafter of any attitude.

Action thus appears once again in analogy with the *condition*. A double analogy: it reveals itself as a *not-yet*, as movement, and it understands itself as reasonable activity by the reduction of reality to possibility. It is clear how it differs from the condition: on the one hand, the *not-yet* now has an end, whereas the mastery of nature in the category of the condition must never be realized because the goal achieved would have left man without content; on the other hand, the possibility that it is a question of here is that of the condition in its totality, not that inside of the condition: what is in question is not nature, but man negating nature through his historical action, man abolishing the condition as such through the real completion of the condition. Yet, the analogy and the difference between the two categories can provide some positive and negative analogical indications for our problem. Indeed, the *conscience* is what responds to the *condition*, and it responds through man's return to the present, that it grasps in the reason that transcends both the condition and the conditioned man. For action, such a transcendence is excluded; it already is by the *Absolute* and the *revolt*: man is not content *thinking himself* outside of the condition; he wants to actually free himself; he does not limit himself to the thought of the unthinkable, he knows that thought is not understandable by the individual, but that, on the contrary, the individual can merely

be thought in the coherent discourse in which the absolute is present as a totality. Philosophy realizes itself and brings itself to an end in action; what then remains can't lead to a new *inner* freedom that abandons the concrete man to the transcended world. All flight is prohibited. If then, there is a category beyond that of action — and action requires it, to the extent that it is *not yet* finished, that it speaks of negativity, of a goal and of a future —, it can only [419] be the category of philosophy, a category that does not serve understanding everything, but that grounds philosophy for itself, a category without any attitude, an empty category that always fills itself, a category essentially coming forth as a non-attitude and that *is* the category of presence. It will not surpass action; nonetheless, it will not indicate philosophy's goal; it will be philosophy's completion as it will be its source. It will not transcend the world, it will be transcendence in the world. It will therefore be the source of discourse in which discourse will grasp itself.

We must however make what precedes explicit: otherwise it would merely be an analogical and “poetic” program. In logical language, it is a matter of the category of a discourse that does not only deal with reason/discourse and that, nevertheless, is human in the precise sense of the *for-itself*, better: of an absolute for-itself, without an in-itself — let us insist: this absolute for-itself is what the category grasps, it is not the category, for this category remains philosophy and therefore knows the other of the for-itself, even recognizes it to the point of seeing action as the ultimate *attitude*. If one wants to play with words (and it's an amusing game), one can say that it is necessary to translate the in-itself of the for-itself into the for-itself, that a philosophical awareness of philosophy is needed.

What action aims to realize as man's fundamental being is contentment in freedom, or, as it has been called, presence. Action puts an end to philosophy, because the philosophy concludes in action; action recognizes itself as the attitude of the man who needs discourse in order to free himself from the pseudo-nature inside of the pseudo-nature, just as he had needed the science of labor in order to free himself from nature inside of nature: the free man will not need philosophy, because he will live neither in need nor in servitude. Yet, if action is not a moralizing program and a utopia, what it targets already *is* and always *is*; the man who realizes his freedom *is* free, but he is *still* negative freedom because *negated* freedom (and negated by itself — there is no problem of the freedom of the animal); it is why man can speak of freedom.

But this “transcendental deduction” of freedom's “reality” as concrete self-creation is insufficient on its own. If it shows action's condition of possibility, negating the philosophical reality of this suffices — and all the prior categories negate it —, in order for this deduction to no longer deduce anything; what's more, one thus falls back into all the difficulties of the philosophy of reflection, which, with its conditions and its possibility, assumes



reason and a real that it is nonetheless obliged to place outside of its own reach. Freedom must appear, concrete and concretely, as the real ground of discourse.

Language is this concrete appearance. It is freedom, because it is for itself, because it grounds the in-itself and, with it, the effort of returning to itself, because it is the universal and because in it alone can the particular turn towards the individual and individual go towards the universal, because it is the possibility (*potestas*) that expresses itself through negation, because philosophy understands itself in language as a [420] human possibility, because it is language that gives the thirst of presence and that slakes it.

These traits, which are far from constituting an analysis of language (if that term has a philosophical meaning, it coincides with that of philosophical logic), as a whole indicate a fact, namely that language, vaster and more profound than discourse is also older than all that discourse produces. It is essential that this formal character of the term language be retained during the entire course of this chapter. Language is what meaning constitutes itself in: this is merely a definition and one that must not be taken for anything else. Language *is* not, it creates itself; it is not mine or yours, nor even ours: me, you, and us, all of this is (logically) posterior to language; language is not the “counterpart” of reality: reality and the discourse that corresponds to it only split in language. It is, in a word, spontaneity.

But this is precisely what makes it the poorest and emptiest “fact”, and nothing would be more absurd than wanting to see one last means of escape in it. Language, such as it appears here, is not a paradise lost by the fall into labor, interest and all the concrete categories: “All theory is grey dear friend and life’s golden tree buds green”, the same Mephistophiles who says this, counsels contempt for “reason and science, man’s greatest strength”<sup>94</sup>. Language as the ultimate fact dispenses so little of the effort of thought that on the contrary it appears in its veritable character only at the end of this effort and on the condition that philosophy has chosen to understand itself starting from man: only in this case and only in this perspective, man’s being reveals itself as language. There *is* not *the* language: any “there is” for man is born in language. There *is* only *some* language, this one or that, and the passage from one to the other happens in the reality of life: one cannot jump into *the* language in order get, like by a magical act, to the universal or to presence; jumping over one’s own shadow would be easier.

But this “fact”, which has no value in life, is of the highest importance for philosophy. There, the word “fact” is only a metaphor; language does not exist, but only men who speak and think, or are poets, or who keep silent; speaking of an attitude of language would

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<sup>94</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, I.

be a misconception. Here, language is, on the other hand, the fundamental fact and the one that reveals to philosophy to what its own category is, *meaning*. For language is not a category (no more than Being is for Aristotle or freedom for Kant), since it determines no concrete language, but determines itself and becomes concrete in concrete languages: the formal determination of language is *meaning*, and it is under the category of meaning that philosophy understands itself.

Philosophy thus defines itself as the science of meaning. It is science, not because it explores a limited and “objectively” [421] unified domain, for such a limitation and such an objectivity must beforehand legitimize their *meaning* before its tribunal —, but because it constitutes meaning as the coherence of all real attitudes, and because thus it constitutes itself in meaning. It is science because it is essentially the system, into which *all* concrete meaning enters (there is no madman for philosophy) and which is never closed, because the philosophical system, in its logical form, is merely the formal meaning of concrete meaning: philosophy, which constitutes itself as freedom in the *form* of meaning, does not stop the freedom of concrete creation of meaning (philosophy does not teach a way of life, it defines the reasonable life, but it has neither the possibility nor the pretension of imposing it). It is the quintessential science, the science of absolute meaning (in the sense of the Absolute), from which all sciences hold their right to this title, the science that does not get its model elsewhere (philosophy has no method that opposes itself to its content or to its matter), because it creates the model by creating itself.

Yet, philosophy does not possess *the* meaning, but must develop it, and spontaneity grasps itself only in the creations in which it crystallizes. Philosophy is therefore the science of meaning according to the two acceptations: aiming for meaning (concrete) and constituted by meaning (formal). It is the one and the same man (in the unity of language) that creates concrete meanings and the formal science of meaning, who, said differently, wants presence and who speaks of it in function of its absence. Man is a philosopher because he is not in presence, but the absence that brings him to understand is also the mode in which he holds presence.

It is from this point that language reveals itself: it is the plane of meaning on which everything appears, discourse and its other, reason and violence, the given and freedom. Language is beyond all that is: it is spontaneity, creation, it essentially *is* what is not (*being* in the sense of any of the categories of reflection whatsoever, from *God* to the personality) because it is first and foremost what reveals. In a word, man is a *poet* before being a philosopher, and after having been one.

The poetry that it is a question of here is not the art of rhymes, of meters, of the well-chosen and well-placed verb. It is not this art, because we are dealing with something incomparably more ancient than any distinction between art and life, art and truth, and all the oppositions that fill the professions of faith of artists and indictments of their critics. The preceding categories have shown or have permitted seeing the value of these definitions. Here, the term poetry designates this spontaneity itself in which art is rooted — art and its other, the art that detaches itself from another and this other from which it detaches itself and which detaches itself from art. If we employ this term, it is because it continues to keep a sense of spontaneous creation and because it is alone in doing so. With good reason: the poorest, the most abstract, the most reflectively aware poetry, is a creator of language, that is, a creator of concrete meaning. Where there is not this creation (which can be, and at certain moments of history, can only be, a creation *against* an existing [422] meaning, a destructive creation), there is no poetry, and it exists everywhere meaning appears, whatever its “form” be.

Nothing is therefore more natural than the truly extraordinary place that humanity has always assigned poets. Whether poetry is considered like a language reserved for tradition and faith, whether the poet is a prophet (*vates*), possessed (ἐνθουσιασμός) or a genius, poetry is bound to the sacred; more than that, it is the site of the sacred, which itself becomes “sacred” only once poetry becomes an art in the world where it is limited by the profane. For poetry reveals. It would be better to say that it is revelation: discourse also reveals, and even essentially reveals, but it is not revelation, and the everyday language is not mistaken here when it calls the revelation of discourse the object of discourse and not discourse itself: “It’s a revelation” is the cry of admiration before a new “object” (in whatever category it be), not before a new discourse. Poetry does not make such revelations. It is why it is spoken of in curious terms that change from age to age: in it, the heart expresses itself, a world is born, springs surge forth, the personality appears in the truth of its essence, freedom breaches the surface, the absolute appears in the form of images, the Good in aspects of the Beautiful — to reprise them all would be to write one of the histories of humanity, and not the least important one either; to analyze them would be to remake, but in an application, the logic of philosophy with all its categories, and above all with the considerable number of reprises, which all indicate the same thing: that it is a question of what is both the most familiar and the most incomprehensible.

For in this widest and deepest acceptance that is given to poetry here, poetry is not the business of gifted and talented people: it is man himself. And at the same time, it is, thereby, what is the most foreign and strange for man, because in it he looks at himself and happens to be beside himself (in ecstasy, rapturous — in “poetic” terms). Poetry is presence,

but the indistinct presence that opposes itself, or rather — for it knows no opposition — is radically distinct from all presence of something (that it only creates). It is immediate Unity, and the poet doesn't know — if one wakes him and asks him the question — if he has spoken of himself or of the world, or even if it is truly him that has spoken, such as he “knows” himself. Poetry understands, but it knows neither what nor how.

What in fundamental poetry concerns logic is the phenomenon of presence. In this presence, what is present is meaning. Yet, it should be noticed that this formula makes no “sense” in presence itself, but only in the discourse of philosophy. Meaning in presence is precisely present, and the understood is indistinguishable from understanding; but this identity is immediate, and, consequently, does not see itself; it only becomes visible to discourse, at the end of discourse and as the end of reasonable action — it only becomes visible as the first source and the final end.

So this is how philosophy ends up seeing why [423] *the true and the false* marks its beginning and its ground in *meaninglessness* and in *Truth*. All is true, all is absurd, here are the two attitudes out of which discourse comes once, through a free act, that is, non-necessary and understandable only after it has been accomplished, man no longer stands in presence. But what at the start is an attitude without a category, the category existing only for us, has become a category without an attitude, the category of categories, the understanding of understanding, the formal presence of the presence (in the mode of real absence). There is no return to fundamental poetry by discourse, other than by its real completion, and the poetic revelation, which is creative understanding, must always be understood anew by discourse.

For in the world of contradiction and action, to designate it by these extreme terms, there is no (concrete) meaning in (formal) meaning — and this world is that of philosophy and of the philosopher in their concrete existence: the man who lives in sentiment and in presence, man when he *is* in it rather than when he *lives* in it, has no need for philosophy, because he has no need. As soon as he *is* no longer in it, he speaks of a “poetic moment”, of a “mystical illumination”, of a “flash”, of an “eruption”, of an “upheaval” and when he remembers his “inspired” language, his “*tat twam asi*”, his cry in which the *One* reveals itself, the symbols in which the unity of all life and all death appears, the love so piercing that it is the light that devours, he knows that he had understood, that there *had been* understanding, a disappearance of any exteriority, of any strangeness, but he only *knows*, and he no longer *understands* that he has understood.

When philosophy turns towards poetry (religion — not theology or dogma! — is poetry in this fundamental sense), which it is compelled to do at the end of its path, it finds itself inheriting the empty form of meaning. But the value of this heritage is immense, and rejecting it under the pretext that only immediate presence has any value would be madness. Poets, it's true, do not ask discourse what they find in sentiment. But philosophy has no conflict with them and does not find itself depreciated by them: it accepts them as they are, because in them it discovers its origins. It is in the world of history and it knows that this world is its place: it is born with this world, and with this world it will draw to a close. But philosophy and this world are born of a spontaneity that is prior to any rift and to any difference between world and subject. It is the science of meaning: the discourse that grasps what grounds it; in it, and thanks to its formal category, discourse is bound to poetry, and the man of *no-longer* and of *not-yet* rediscovers the *idea* of presence.

For the form of meaning is the infinite of philosophy, which is discourse, and absolutely coherent discourse, but absolutely coherent discourse in the freedom of the progress of its realization. It thinks, that is, it discourses, but in the form of unity. It only speaks of what is, but it speaks of it as man's realized possibility (from *posse*: to be able) [424]. It is poetry, but a poetry which has created its other and which has created itself in this other and which must take itself back [reprise] from this reality where it has made itself an other for itself. Having created, it no longer creates, it works in the environment of acting thought, but its effort is the greatest force, because, through the *form* of meaning, it knows itself to be the master of all *concrete* meanings: what man creates in spontaneity, the "expressions" of his "sentiments", this creative existence which is the most universal because it resides entirely in language, this understanding that does not understand itself and doesn't need to understand itself, it draws them from the contradiction in which man has fallen with them, while, still through them, but already no longer in them, he has said for the first time: "This *is not*". Philosophy, as science of meaning, is the history of the reconquest of spontaneity.

3. *Situation and discourse as concepts of the science of meaning. — The formal philosophy of meaning and the concrete history of action.* — The category of meaning unfolds in the concept of the "science of philosophy", which is the science of meaning, in the two interpretations that this formula allows: a science building on meaning, formed by meaning, and a science dealing with meaning — a distinction that echoes that of formal meaning and concrete meaning. Therefore one can just as well call it the science of the formal unity of concrete meanings: *the* meaning of existence is to have *a* meaning.

We have said that this result is worthless in isolation, that one cannot escape into philosophy as into a world outside of the world of everyone, as long as one wants to be

reasonable; individuals can position themselves in an attitude and think in a category that is surpassed, the attitude through the active history of the community, the category through the awareness of this action in thought, without their critiques necessarily refuting them, if they are ready for the absolute revolt of individuality, that is, death. In a word, discourse itself leads to something else, namely to its realization in action, which aims for the completion of discourse and the activity in presence — we have said this often enough to no longer fear confusion between the category of meaning and the concrete meanings that it reveals and which it is not, and we can therefore say that philosophy is *the* discourse in *the* situation, finding its origin and its end in *the* meaning.

It is evident, after the preceding remark, that the concepts of discourse and situation are as formal — or, if one prefers, as specifically philosophical and logical — as the category that begets them. If one can say that *man* exists through *the* discourse in *the* situation and through *the* situation in *the* discourse, one can say this of no man, of no situation, of no discourse: the definite *the* must be replaced by indefinite *a*. Nonetheless, the formal function of the formal concepts is, itself, real.

The discourse that reveals the situation and the situation that reveals itself in discourse are the two formal concepts by which man defines himself reasonably, as a reasonable being. Man is not only reasonable: reason is his essential [425] possibility, but not his essentially (necessarily and always) realized possibility. This possibility (ability, δύναμις, *potentia*, *Vermögen*), that *must* be realized for there to be man and on which discourse grounds itself, is language, and it is from language that freedom determines itself. Said differently, at any moment man can be unreasonable, since he can refuse, at any moment, to continue his discourse under the guidance of meaning. Reason is discourse in situation, philosophy is the science of these two concepts, guided by the category of meaning.

In the situation, man speaks of the situation. He does so, because he is not satisfied, because he does not feel that he is in agreement with it. If this is not his case, he falls silent or he expresses his satisfaction, but he does not need to understand, that is, to *stand* the contradictions *under* the unity of the same meaning, in a discourse that reconciles him with what is as its other and which becomes a world only in discourse. *Finiteness*, for example, describes the philosophical phenomenon under the name project, as *personality* grasps it in the form of contradiction; they thus put at the center something that is found in all the attitudes, man's negativity and transcendence, but they grasp it in the environment of reflection, and thus they come to take — at different levels according to the difference of this *other* in which they are reflected and which they don't determine — what is formal for a concrete

phenomenon and they don't understand themselves as philosophy: man is not essentially unhappy, that is, unsatisfied, and he is therefore not "naturally" a philosopher.

Man speaks in the situation of the situation: this is therefore true for discourse, but only for discourse. The man in the situation attends to concrete situations that, for philosophy, are only the products of *the* situation. For concrete meaning is always present, but it is only exceptionally *given*. Ordinarily, the *attitude* for and in which the situation constitutes itself does not conceive of itself as a coherent discourse under the *category* that corresponds to it, and the rule is what we have called the reprise: the concrete meaning that philosophy discovers has changed, whereas man still speaks of it with the help of a discourse that had founded another attitude. Man is always in in a world, because he is always in an attitude, because he always has, as the *intelligence* says, a concrete interest, unless (and it is this *unless* that surpasses the intelligence), unless he reaches coherent discourse, unless he grasps the category that is truly (= for philosophy) his own. At each step, the march of discourse can thus stop for the man in the situation, and indeed has stopped often. And inversely, what allows man to stop is a *step* for philosophy, because he has succeeded in imprisoning himself in the coherence of a *concrete* meaning: the sentiment has expressed itself in an elaborated "project", the situation is grasped, and man, *this* man, has satisfied himself. For him, discourse is henceforth finished; his speaking, if he continues to speak, will be, according to his category, poetry (from a poet), annunciation, sermon, [426] activity, science, but he will no longer need to understand himself, because he has satisfied himself, albeit by the recognition that there is no satisfaction in the world; a single thing decides, the fact that there is a world and that everything has a meaning in this world.

*This* man has satisfied himself, but *man* is not satisfied, and the result for reason is simply that, at each of the moments that it reveals in the totality of its historical consciousness, philosopher *can* be content. Yet, it also notes that, in each case, the subsequent attitude declares that the preceding category has indeed expressed the truth, but not the meaning of this truth; the world has been described in what it is, and this world makes no sense; man has grasped it, but at a price that the new attitude refuses to pay: by grasping it, he has let himself be grasped by it. At each new step, this description is true, for this is merely the one that he who is not satisfied gives of contentment in presence. Here again, the *intelligence* is right, and man is always caught in a concrete interest; but the intelligence forgets that the passage from one category to another attitude and, from there, to a new category is an act of freedom, without however being an arbitrary act, that what it can qualify, in a reprise of the *Absolute* or of *action*, as a dialectical method, is not a method of organization brought, from who knows where and in who knows what capacity, to a so-called raw material, but the real process of thought in reality and of reality in thought. For man actually lives and acts in this

concrete world that he abandons, and he abandons it for *reasons*: his *free* act is for him a *necessary* act in the real interest of freedom. He could have stayed in this world (it's the possibility that the intelligence has in mind), but as soon as he abandons it, the first task that he imposes on himself is proving that he *couldn't* stay there.

The attitude of the *action* cannot be surpassed, precisely because it has put the interest in the realization of a world without interest, in a *non-world* of meaning and presence, after the *Absolute* and the categories of *revolt*. Its category is the last of the concrete categories, because it does not open a path to contentment *in* discourse, but only *through* discourse, because in this category man does not accept violence as the ultimate reality, but as the means to the realization of reason. Therefore it creates no world; what it wants is to reach a world that is no longer a project for the man who lives in it, but is presence and the immediacy of sentiment. Its own truth for itself is to reveal the insufficiency of the world in which it stands and of the discourse that it holds in it, because this world is a world of need and violence. What it opposes to the world is therefore not another world nor another particular contradiction, but the contradiction of individual sentiments: man will be able to be unhappy in his sentiment, but the unhappiness will still be presence and therefore satisfaction. Violence (of nature, of the other) will be able to strike him, as long as he is not the absolute master of the nature in and outside of him (including death); this will not however be *the* unhappiness, *the* violence, but *his* unhappiness and *his* suffering.

Yet, the situation grasped is no longer the situation that it was a matter of [427] grasping, because man has changed through his act of grasping and because his action is no longer the same. Meaning can thus reveal itself in its formal role for philosophy: the *Absolute* has discovered the coherence of discourse, the *work* the absolute revolt of sentiment, *finiteness*, the formal meaning of the world, and *action* the reconciliation of all three, not in discourse or in revolt or in understanding, but in reasonable action in view of presence: the meaning of philosophy understood itself as being related to ποιησις.

Philosophy therefore understands itself as the emerging unity of discourse and the situation, of the attitude and the category, at the moment that it reaches its end, that man understands himself through discourse as the non-discursive source of discourse, as language. Philosophy understands itself as the expression of freedom in a non-freedom that man has freely created, and that he has actually created, since his freedom is in no way transcendental. This is why philosophy always and everywhere presupposes that man is reasonable, in other words, that he wants to understand the situation and to understand himself in the situation, in a discourse that has a meaning and gives a meaning to all that reveals itself in the situation. It is also why man is not naturally or necessarily a philosopher and reasonable and why he can always stop, as he can always take another step. As long as man



lives in need, he will need, if he is reasonable, to make explicit, in a coherent discourse, what he would have created as the meaning of the world and of his life in his sentiment.

Philosophy doesn't have to wonder if and when action will attain its goal, when man will no longer live in need. Action itself, as we have seen, accepts and, as freedom wanting to realize itself, even postulates the possibility of failure. Philosophy only has to ask itself one question, namely if new attitudes and, in their discursive explanations, new categories can emerge. The answer, however, has implicitly been given; philosophy has understood itself in the category of meaning, and the fundamental concepts of situation and discourse, of attitude and category, have put it in a position to understand any meaning and any concrete world. It is unthinkable that other logical categories think of more than all the thinkable. However the logic of philosophy no more exhausts its subject matter than the logic of discussion exhausts its own, and what is not new in the sense of philosophical science, what brings it nothing *for itself*, can be new for the logician as a concrete man in a historic situation. More simply put, the philosophical analysis of a real attitude is never done when one has declared, *a priori* and correctly, that it can merely be a matter of a reprise: the reprises are the living reality of the man in the world, whereas the pure category is the stop, not of history, but of the history of *this* man or of *this* community; *man* only concretely understands himself in this concrete effort of analysis.

4. *The logical succession and historic succession of the attitudes and categories. — the coexistence of the categories in unified discourse.* — [428] *A note on the meaning of philosophy.* A corollary follows, for the history of philosophy understood as the emergence of the categories, that is of a sizeable importance in that it can anticipate a very common confusion, that between logical succession and historic succession. The attitudes, one will indeed say, follow one another in time, and the one that is prior according to its category is so also in the evolution of humanity, simply because the subsequent attitude is responding to it. But does not the coexistence of the attitudes refute this assertion? It indeed does, if one sticks to the attitude of the individual in his (poetic) language, which reveals its meaning to philosophy alone, but neither is nor wants an answer. But if it forms a discourse, the dominant attitude instead appropriates the older ones; the newer ones, if it encounters them in its present, are considered dangerous deviations. The difference between these two manners is essential; for the attitude understands the past as insufficient, but legitimate, whereas what follows it is not seen in its positive signification: in the first case, the opposition — if it exists — will express itself in its attempts to convert and to educate, in the other case, through a violent or desperate resistance, because the new attitude can appear to the old only under the

form of arbitrariness, thus of violence, and because the passage only becomes possible through the real defeat of the old attitude.

But this difference, essential when it is a matter of the coexistence of different attitudes, refers, since it only declares itself at the level of discourse, to the problem of the order of the categories, which is by far more complicated. For on the one hand, it is clear that the category cannot be thought before the attitude that thinks itself in it exists: the category does not drop out of the blue and it is not the product of a “logical imagination” either nor the work of a “genius” (these are metaphors without any precise signification with regard to philosophy), and so the category must have a date of birth. On the other hand, if the categories must be defined, they are principles that unite discourse and situation in (or for) a discourse; yet, discourse is one, since there is always the possibility of understanding: the categories and their discourses are merely “moments” of *the* discourse; in other words, they can only be understood as a whole, they cannot exist in isolation and must be found together in all discourse. How then must the historic emergence of the categories in their historic coexistence be conceived?

The answer is that philosophy is born at a determined moment, in determined circumstances (regardless of whether it is a question of a single event or whether the streams flowing from diverse headwaters wind up meeting), and that it is thus born as complete philosophy, therefore at a moment where all the attitudes are present. But this in no way implies that all the categories are by the same token thought *as such*; on the contrary, their formal function and their relative autonomy, their irreducible nature, will only be clearly seen at the end of a long and complicated evolution, which is that of the self-understanding of philosophy. All the categories are [429] present, but it is only later that the presence of all of them is understood. For, at every step of history, a single category is at the center, and the others are rejected into the background by this category, as real, it’s true, but as non-essential: it is this contemporaneity that makes the reprises possible, reprises that, in history, more often grasp the categories embodied in the attitudes than the pure categories. The “reasons” for this rejection vary; at times it is what is “self-evident”, at others it is the “too ordinary”, at others the “matter” or the “impersonal”, etc. according to the whole range of categories (and reprises). But as soon as the category reaches its pure expression, its analysis rediscovers (or can discover) all the preceding categories, and possesses them all as such, without however possessing itself; to reprise the formula employed, the category understands everything, except itself, to which must be added: as a category, since it specifically understands itself as reality’s “ground”. Only the completed logic possesses all the categories as such, and rediscovers them all in the system of each category, but as the system’s in-itself.

All philosophy, being the development of a concrete meaning in a *unified* discourse, contains all the categories then, but it is merely in the historical sequence of systems that they appear, one after the other, in their categorial function. Nothing indicates nor requires that this happen in a direct filiation in the doxographical sense. The category can elaborate itself in opposition to the attitude that corresponds to the preceding category without this one having articulated itself in a system; moreover, this even represents the normal case, since the new category will only formulate its discourse late in the history of the attitude and since only the mature consciousness will be able to understand its own emergence. But nothing keeps the different, still unconscious, categories from constituting the different discourses, the “systems of thought”. They play their role of principle of unity of discourse and of situation in historic situations (this word understood as *action* understands it) which will become situations thought in them (rather than *by* them, since it is necessary to be wary of any causal concept there where the whole puts itself into question); in turn, they have their ἀριστεία in the evolution of reason for itself, in turn, they are the protagonists of the history of freedom.

But they are merely protagonists and are not able to make the other actors disappear nor to make it forgotten that only the entire play gives a signification to their roles. For if each category gives a meaning and a center to the situation, by opposing, in the environment of discourse, the attitude in which it lives to the other attitudes, this very environment, which is that of concrete reason (or reasonable action), is not seen — *by* itself *as* itself — before the category of *meaning*. In relation to the category of meaning, all of the other categories are particular, just as it is itself nothing, the void of the unthinkable, without all the others. The other categories reveal their being in this category: they are the articulations [430] of meaning, and, once this is understood, it is according to them that all concrete meaning (any historical system) must be examined by the philosophy that knows itself to be reasonable. From philosophy’s point of view, which is the understanding of itself in the understanding of the situation, they are the chapter headings of concrete analysis.

Meaning is thus the category that constitutes philosophy. One could say that it is this living unity in which the immediate of sentiment organizes itself into a unity thought, and that it is the form in which, inversely, the category becomes applicable to the attitude: the *schema* to use the Kantian term. Or one could say that all the other categories are reprises of the category of meaning, if one wanted to define the reprise in a purely formal manner and no longer merely as the understanding of a particular attitude under a prior category. The first formulation would bring out the formal character of the category, the second would show why it only appears at the end, being at the beginning, the veritable λόγος ἐν ἀρχῇ of philosophy.

However, even though these indications can lead to developments susceptible of clarifying what has previously been exposed and of specifying the present research's position in the philosophy (technically speaking) of the period, it seems preferable to ask a question that outwardly seems entirely different but that nonetheless grounds, in reality, these two considerations — namely: what does it mean to philosophize, for the concrete man, finding himself in a concrete situation with a concrete discourse? One must not expect too much of the answer that logic can give to this question. Its domain is that of the formal, of the reflection of philosophy in itself, and its answer is necessarily formal: to philosophize is to seek meaning, and the meaning of philosophy is meaning itself. But behind this empty formula (empty of any concrete meaning, because philosophizing is not an attitude, but a possibility in each attitude) a negative meaning is discovered and, in that way, concrete, in relation to common opinion: logic neither advises for nor against, and it even less prescribes or prohibits this or that in the life of men. Man can make philosophy his guide if he seeks the meaning of his attitude, said differently, if he wants to be reasonable. But philosophy presupposes itself and can only convince he who has chosen philosophy. For this person, however, philosophy is everything, because his life — that he knows to not consist in the immediate of sentiment— receives its *meaning* only in philosophy, in all that it is, in this whole that is the whole of concrete categories: therein lies poetry and the condition, reason and the heart, action and the personality, meaninglessness and duty, and the task that this man has imposed on himself is to think them together in his concrete situation in view of their realization.

This is to say that philosophy is always the same through the identity of its intention and that its productions, whatever be their chronological place, are always understandable as soon as a descendant repeats the questions of the ancestors; in this sense, there is no history of philosophy, because all philosophical thought develops the real (of its time) according to the same categories, to be more precise, because the real of discourse always constitutes itself in the same [431] categories. And the same philosophy *is* history (taken absolutely) and man's historicity, because, in the ever-identical categories, it is the emergence of these categories for themselves in the search and in the evolution of freedom, freedom for the discourse that ends up knowing itself as discourse and wanting to free itself from itself in presence.

The logic, which deals with categories and to which the attitudes matter only in their relationship to the categories, can long forget this second side of philosophy, which reveals itself only in its final chapters. For the logic, the attitude that corresponds to a pure category and that constitutes its reasonable (particular) life outweighs the reprise, in which it sees — understandably — an incoherent and faulty thought, even at the level of this partial rationality; but for the man who chooses philosophy in his concrete situation, it is different: he

starts from a situation that *exists* for him, nothing more, without questions bearing on the logical character of the situation, on the relation between this situation and himself, on freedom; in short, he doesn't ask any question other than the very simple one: what does all this mean? — where "all this" is the equivalent of "what strikes me". The logician may well prove that this very simple question is the most complicated of all, that what is striking is, as it were, the product of the spontaneity of he who asserts that he has been struck — it is of little importance to this man: heir to a language and an attitude, he seeks the meaning of what he has understood without having fully understood it — in other words, he seeks the reconciliation of the contradictions that he notices and that he postulates are reconcilable, without knowing why — simply because, otherwise, life would be meaningless for him, a reasonable being. It is not the category that comes first for him, it is the attitude, and the category that man applies to it initially is the one that appears last in the logic; it is the most abstract, that of meaning, precisely because the attitude's non-developed content seems to only need an ordering principle. And since this need only exists at the historic moments where real contradictions have shattered a tradition, where therefore none of categories possesses that primacy that, at other moments, is their own, the beginning is in the reprise: the categorially pure discourse is an answer without a question, a theory and not philosophy. Philosophical eras are eras of crisis (κρίνειν = to discern) where the questions are as ambiguous as the responses, and it is only in the deepest crises, those of the philosophical tradition and of all of life's concrete meaning, that the logic becomes necessary and thus understandable.

Philosophy is always the same, not because it persists, but because it is always starting. As poetry is the eternal youth of creation, philosophy is the eternal resurgence of the man who has become other for himself. It is not learned, it is done; it is not science, but reason creating all science; it is not historic, but man himself creating his history, all his history, future, present, and past, which come apart and come together in the concretizations of his category, in *the* categories that, together, constitute all concrete meaning and that, each individually, *reprise* meaning in one of the eras that they mark.

## CHAPTER XVIII WISDOM

**Philosophy understood in its formal being, discourse comes to an end: Truth is present in Wisdom, a result of the thought that has thought itself.**

1. *Wisdom as the paradox of philosophy — Presence in poetry and presence in wisdom.* — Nothing is more classic than translating philosophy's name by "the love of wisdom", and nothing is considered with more suspicion, avoided with more prudence than the simple use of the word wisdom, even by the philosophers who don't see it as a meaningless word. But there is also nothing more natural: if there is a wisdom — or the wisdom —, whatever this name can designate, it is certainly situated outside of philosophy. Yet, what for philosophy can be what is outside of philosophy? No matter whether one tries to replace the word wisdom by that of absolute knowledge and to bypass the difficulty by matching this wisdom/knowledge to the totality of philosophical movement: the category/attitudes of the revolt have demonstrated the insufficiency of this undertaking as brutally as Diogenes showed Zeno that there is movement, and *action* thinks this insufficiency in its very undertaking; finally, the formal category of meaning establishes philosophy as what always is and is always to start anew. Even though history in its understood totality might define itself as absolute knowledge, it will not give wisdom to the concrete man, who remains in discursive particularity, in what he must journey through; saying that the totality of the journey is rest justifies itself when one speaks of the journey, but does not stop the movement of the person who can merely go from point to point: wisdom, if it exists, lies outside of philosophy.

Is there then something other than *coherent discourse* and *action*, both formally thought in *meaning*? So be it, absolute knowledge is not wisdom, because it is not *about* the concrete man nor *for* him: does it not simply follow that this wisdom is a lure? Must not one be content with coherence? Action and meaning neither bring nor promise wisdom: the end of discourse is in sentiment. And yet, even if one were to neglect the historic origin of philosophy in the search for wisdom, such a refusal would first of all need justification, since one would declare what has been the mainspring of *philosophizing* to have been entirely on the wrong track, everywhere that it [434] was not merely a matter of pure tradition and of

“general culture”, this mainspring of a movement that has always led to the image of the sage as well as to the image (or, at least, one of the images) of the perfect man. And afterwards the fact would nonetheless remain that *formally* the logic comes to an end in it, and, by coming to an end in it, presupposes, if not wisdom, in any case, the idea of wisdom.

Indeed, if one wants to give a definition of the sage, it is necessary to describe him as the man who, in his concrete existence, possesses meaning, more correctly — for this man must not be opposed to meaning as an *other* who would differ from meaning, in which case he would not be essentially and concretely wise, but merely learned in absolute knowledge —, who, in his concrete existence, *is* meaning. That this reduces wisdom to the wise man, there is no harm in this. On the contrary, if wisdom is the completion and the foundation, it can only be on the other side of the opposition category/attitude (or language/situation) that is the motor of philosophy. Wisdom is what makes the sage, the man of meaning, the man of presence. This reflection suffices to show that wisdom, as an *idea*, as man’s ultimate *possibility*, has been present since the beginning of this search, along with *meaning* and bound to it.

But this difficulty — which is no more arbitrary or accidental than the problem of which it is the difficulty — bursts with the words *reflection, idea, possibility*. What is thought as the most concrete is so in the terms of extreme abstraction and in relation to what has revealed itself as the most formal of philosophy, in relation to *meaning*, for it is philosophy that speaks of wisdom, and he who seeks it is the man who is not the sage. Moreover, wisdom only makes sense for the philosopher, since nothing *has* a meaning except for he who *is* not meaning; because there is no *problem* of meaning for him, the sage is a sage in the opinion of the philosopher. Wisdom only appears in the discourse that finds no place in wisdom, and it follows the fate of meaning, of only concretely existing in one of the non-formal attitude/categories; wisdom, as meaning, is, for philosophy, a formal category that appears, as a category, only to the philosopher, not a philosophical category, but a constitutive category of philosophy.

The entire history of philosophy is dominated by this paradox: from Plato’s *Parmenides*, which breaks up the One in the discourse that reveals and destroys it, and the *instant* of his Seventh Letter, that is ungraspable for dialogue but can only be reached by dialogue, to the coinciding of ends and conditions, unthinkable and the ground of thought, in Kant, the “letting go in freedom” that completes the movement of the Idea, in Hegel, up to the realized freedom of *action*, wisdom is there, end, beginning, totality of discourse, an irrepressible desire of absolute satisfaction, a goal achieved by man in God or a divinity of man to realize — but always as what is beyond discourse and which nonetheless is visible only in the prolongation of this path that leads to it without reaching it, beyond the unfathomable chasm

that no bridge can cross. Philosophy possesses its meaning (or renounces its meaning) in wisdom — and it always remains philosophy.

Therefore, any description of wisdom steps outside of discourse: the call, the evocation, the image are the means of expression that alone [435] seem capable of indicating and of making what it is a matter of felt. Must one conclude that wisdom is nothing other than what has been described under the name of fundamental poetry and that the surpassing of discourse is the advent of language? The solution would not only be convenient; it would also have the advantage of avoiding the unfortunate impression of pseudo-religious mysticism and of supernatural revelation that accompanies the current sermons about wisdom, just as it would rule out, on the other hand, the idea of orderly people who imagine the sage as the model of virtues that they respect in order to not practice them. But if in fact poetry is the coinciding of the situation and language, if, moreover, this coinciding is not a problem for poetry, but for the philosopher inasmuch as he hasn't reach it, poetry is this coinciding under the category of *meaning*, and its concrete reality is that of the individual in a determined attitude and in a moment of history. Poetry is philosophy's *other* that philosophy would not understand itself without; but it is not its completion, even though sentiment is what *action* results in: philosophy in action, aims at presence and sentiment, that is to say poetry; it even knows that man will only concretely be free in this presence that will do nothing but express itself; but this very presence, which is only targeted in action as the natural end of active discourse and of reasonable action, is only present when thought, in other words, presence is absent in it. The category of meaning may well have made explicit what is presence thought in this absence, but it creates the reconciliation at the level of the formal and refers man back to the concrete attitudes: the passage from the formal to the concrete, in everyday language: from philosophy to life, the category of meaning neither presents this, nor, with greater reason, performs it. It leads discourse back to language, philosophy back to life, but it *leads back* to it, it does not *lead* to it, and the man who *comprehends* himself in it finds nothing to *apprehend* there.

Yet, man, by thinking the formal *as formal*, has already detached himself from this formal and finds himself sent back to wisdom: the thought of presence is in itself presence in thought, and the formal thought as formal reveals itself in its purity as the concrete presence that would not be thought if it were not. What must be clarified is the mode in which presence *is*, not at the bottom and in sentiment, but in the end and in wisdom.

2. *Wisdom as a category of philosophy.* — *The presence of wisdom.* — *Wisdom and action.* — *Wisdom as the return to Truth.* — This question arises, as was the case for *meaning*, in relation to *action*, that is, to reasonable history: what is wisdom if it is neither an



immanent goal (= concrete liberty) nor poetry (as an extra-ordinary state in the still historic world)? What is it in short, *hic et nunc*? If action is not, true, to come, but is always in the process of, wisdom is the coinciding of discourse and man's situation such as he lives today. This man does not seek the satisfaction of concrete freedom for himself; being reasonable, he knows that he will not be able to anticipate it in a personal capacity and that he can only contribute to realizing it in its universality. He is not a poet either; he [436] knows that in the world of the *condition*, in the pseudo-nature, poetry is merely a *flicker* and that man does not live in it. Wisdom is therefore, if one does not want to slide into mysticism (a more or less complicated reprise of the category of the *object*), the thought concrete, or — according to what was said about *meaning*, which amounts to the same thing — it is the revelation of meaning. But the revelation of meaning in discourse, not a creation of meaning in poetry; if poetry can be a continual creation in the human world, if action directs itself towards human freedom as a sentiment expressed and recognized as a sentiment, the man who seeks wisdom knows that he is living in a world whose history is that of the condition. He will not be able to — reasonably — renounce action nor forget it; he will not be able to leave discourse. Yet, this discourse is not his own: the language that is personal is poetry for *meaning*, an evasion for *action*, and the reasonable man knows this. The wisdom that he seeks and can't help but seek will therefore not express itself in a poetic creation nor formulate itself in a partial or particular discourse. There can be a discourse on the subject of wisdom, and according to *meaning*, any discourse is, as a reprise of that category, a discourse on its subject; but wisdom has no discourse of its own.

It is therefore an attitude, the most intimate attitude there is, because it lives in the *hic et nunc* and, as reasonable, a *hic et nunc* for all *hic et nunc*: and it is for precisely this reason that it is only graspable as a category, and as a category of philosophy. It concretely exists wherever there is concrete meaning, in all the attitudes; in each, man can live his discourse, realize the meaning of his existence. Whether he “succeeds” in doing so is of no importance; the essential is not that he realize the end of the discourse that is his own (in the case where this discourse sets a goal, which is not necessary), but that he live in view of the meaning that he has given to himself and to which he has given himself. To be wise, in this sense, is to know what matters and holding dearly to it without confusion.

If this description gives the impression of a moralizing platitude, it is because it is currently taken for a rule of concrete life, instead of recognizing in it the definition of a formal and theoretical category. This wisdom exists only as *a* wisdom in *a* meaning; there is no more wisdom itself than there is meaning itself, and just as there is no manual for inventors of meaning, there is none for the seekers of wisdom. Wisdom, formally speaking, is possible at any moment, anywhere, for anyone, provided that man realize his life in

conformity with his discourse, his discourse in conformity with his life. Concretely, man enters, with his decision to wisdom, into the becoming of reason and — which is the same thing, identically — in history. Elaborating a discourse that man can hold on to, working to realize a world where man can hold onto his discourse, this is seeking wisdom.

Yet here, this unity of discourse and of situation (not in the concrete situation, but in all the concretely possible situations, that is, thought in concrete discourses) — or, life as a *totum* of situations, thought as a *totum* — is thought as *thought* (not as an expressed sentiment). Creative meaning creates man and his world; but this meaning makes itself explicit as [437] discourse, and this discourse leads back to the unity of a life. That this can happen in any attitude is a formal thought, but this formal thought is thought by a concrete man. What was refused under the category of meaning, namely *the* life in *the* meaning, is proposed here, proposed as the concrete result of formal thought, and proposed to the man who positions himself in reason, who is discourse and action.

Proposed as a *result* to the *reasonable* man, the meaning thought *formally* by the *concrete* man: the term wisdom thus takes on a signification in relation to which the concrete significations under the other categories reveal themselves to be reprises, with the precise and special character that the reprises of *meaning* had. Wisdom is a formal category, it is under wisdom that the unity of discourse and life is thought, life as unity in a meaning that it didn't only create — poetry stops there —, but un-folds and makes explicit in the world of each and every person. But as this formal category, it exists concretely, being concrete in the man who thinks it after having thought the others.

A natural, so to speak, objection imposes itself then: this concrete presence could not characterize wisdom, since it occurs in every category, since each possesses, in addition to its logical meaning, a concrete reality in the man who thinks it. This is true, but for this remark to be seen as a valid objection, it is necessary to have forgotten that the splitting does not exist for the man thinking *in* the category and appears only when the concept of the category is thought as such: in the formal category of *meaning*. Likewise, an objection that would claim to introduce this presence in the category of meaning, that indeed thinks itself as a category, would forget that meaning itself refuses and must refuse to be concrete for the man who thinks it; for him, the concrete does, indeed, not have its source in discourse. Up to this point, the present category follows meaning; but category of meaning does nothing other than free one up for poetry's concrete, and asking it to make itself concrete in the present of its formal thought, is precisely to pass from meaning to wisdom and is only understandable, even as a requirement, to wisdom.

Wisdom is thus the last category; the formal and the concrete coincide in it, as both are thought, and they coincide for the man who knows himself to be a man in his historic situation. Said differently, man in his situation, man thinking and acting inside of a concrete meaning, also knows that he thinks this situation and moreover knows that by thinking it in the formal universal of *meaning* he has ceased *thinking himself* in order *to think*; everything has a meaning, and wisdom is living in meaning thought. Socrates' remark is explained (without being justified): to become wise is to die; for what perishes in the becoming of wisdom — the becoming which is the process of philosophy —, is the discourse of the individual, the individual life that wanted to maintain itself as an individual *and* as reasonable. Wisdom has recognized the impossibility of this: individuality can persist as such and then it will be poetic expression or violence; it can also persist as reasonable individuality; then, it will not be reasonable full-stop, but thought that sticks to a particular attitude and makes it explicit; [438] it can, finally, accept, individually and concretely, the movement of freedom that is reason; then, indeed, it renounces individuality and accepts the death of what lived merely in the refusal of active coherence. But this renunciation is death only for what is surpassed in it and is a full and whole life for he who, without renouncing that in which the movement becomes concrete, actually frees himself in it as a man and as reasonable; it is not a matter of being dead to the world, of detaching oneself from it, of withdrawing from it, it is not a matter of being wise outside of the world or alongside it, but of being so in the world. Philosophy knows — and in its discourse it has *made* it so — that some attitudes and some categories, into which this humble or haughty detachment tried to settle, have passed and have revealed themselves as what they are: particular the attitudes, partial the categories. The freedom seeking itself has recognized them in their value and in their limitation, and the movement can no longer set itself into one of the steps travelled through. Wisdom is the death of the individual who wants to conserve themselves in reason, it is the life of the reasonable man.

Yet, by culminating in the life of the reasonable man, have we not gone in circles? Have we not come back to *action*? Is it not action that reconciles freedom with the condition, discourse with the situation? Indeed, this is the content of action, and it is why action can't be surpassed in the life of the reasonable man. But the problem is different here, where, with poetry, the non-reasonable has been reasonably thought in the category of *meaning*. The man who has thought this non-reasonable has discovered presence in poetry; but by understanding the category of meaning as a formal category and presence as a possibility to realize in *action*, he grasps presence as absent for him; presence is only present in the poetic work [*œuvre*], which is the extraordinary and can't give a meaning to ordinary life, unless it is interpreted, that is to say transformed in discourse (a translation that is never adequate,

because that presence has its place in sentiment, which is discourse's other). *Action* then is the life's guide towards the reconciliation of the individual with the universal, and *meaning* was right when it declared that action could only be surpassed formally. Therefore, this is the highest wisdom in the primary meaning of the word: not only does man live in it according to his discourse, but, again and above all, he has led discourse to the point where discourse becomes concrete life and unites reasonable man and his situation. But this coincidence of the formal and the concrete in which the formal (of meaning) becomes concrete in and for he who thinks it is proper to wisdom, and so wisdom is philosophy's result for the philosopher. It is not what he lives *for* (where there is a goal, action is the highest category, and the philosopher, who, as such, is not wise, can't even want to surpass it), but that at which he culminates, having passed through *meaning*. It is the attitude in which man no longer sacrifices himself to the universal, but is reality thought in its universality, — not where he *ceases* being particularity, but where he *has ceased* being so, — where presence is not to come, even though it still needs to be realized, but is present at the bottom of its realization, — where the sentiment is no longer the other of discourse, but where discourse in the totality [439] of its categories is the reasonable *making explicit* of sentiment, where it is the sentiment in the reasonable multiplicity of its attitudes, the concrete existence and the presence of total discourse, where man lives in the *Truth* in which everything reveals itself.

Philosophy as logic, has run its course and has returned to the point that it had chosen as its start: the man who has passed through the path of reflection and has found *Truth* again and, in it, the conscience and the clear conscience of the freedom that, now, he knows himself in truth to be. He is wise, because wisdom is no longer a state of grace, a particular knowledge, but the assurance that reason is the world and that the world is reason, both of which are unfinished for the individual, both are capable of being finished and are to be finished by the man in the world of his situation and of his condition. He is wise, because wisdom is not, for him, the immediate possession of the infinite nor the resignation that sees "Being" in a distance that is impossible to overcome: he knows that reason is his possibility, that it *is* as a possibility and that its possibility is its potentiality. He is wise, because he does not seek wisdom, but he knows that he holds it in the totality of active discourse. He is wise, because he knows that in his freedom, he has chosen discourse and action, that he can refuse discourse and action, but that he cannot seek both immediate presence and active reason, that violence and revolt are the part of the individual that gives them a meaning in the language of his sentiment, but that he himself has chosen the other possibility. He is wise, because he knows that discourse grasps all meaning and that all concrete meanings constitute discourse, that he is open to the world in Truth, as the world is open to him in the

action that is the creation of the meaning of man by man in the concrete completion of meaning, that wisdom is not the satisfaction of the individual — which finds in place in the becoming of discourse —, but presence for man that has left reflection: because him, he has chosen freedom in the world, reason, he knows that he always realizes the universal that always is.

Wisdom then is not the knowing of a content: in no sense does it provide any knowledge; it is the attitude that no longer *wants* to be a category, but *knows* that it is a category, — the category that no longer *wants* to be an attitude, but *knows* that it is one, whose knowledge, in both cases, knows that it is formal knowledge: a formal category that only understands the formal attitude in the formal identity of both. For the individual, wisdom appears as the reality of his life as it is lived in responsibility before the universal, in the always incomplete discourse, always to complete. In itself, that is, for philosophy (or: for the man who aspires to being wise), wisdom is the simple coincidence of violence and meaning in reason, the existing *possibility* of philosophy, present for itself as potentiality and as reality: the possibility of the Truth of man in the freedom of the individual.

3. *A note on the circularity of the logic of philosophy.* — It is customary that, having reached the end of the journey, one looks back at the path that has led to it. In the present case, this must be renounced; there is no [440] overview or panoramic point in philosophy, and the résumé merely creates confusion there where all the effort is merely committed to developing what is enveloped in all that is human. There is no place, either, for “methodological” considerations that ornament, not always without utility, the first or the final pages of scientific manuals and the specialized works in the domain of philosophy; for since philosophy, in its totality, is the judge of all the questions of method, that is, of any particular and partially coherent discourse, it would be absurd to establish a philosophy of philosophy, and so on to infinity: philosophy — this has become clear in the category of meaning — is its own method. Therefore there is no “result”: one can cease philosophizing, but for the philosopher, philosophy doesn’t stop, and even wisdom is not rest and sleep, but the concrete presence of the real world in the man who lives in the completely developed discourse. Philosophy is the effort, sure of itself, in which the individual at every instant understands — and knows that he is capable of understanding — the world in the Truth that now knows itself to be a realization of freedom: for the concrete man in reason, reasonable in reality, wisdom is the most strained effort and the highest task.

What one can ask at the end of a philosophical work — which, because it claims to be philosophical, claims *ipso facto* to be systematic — is something entirely different, namely the justification of its beginning. The philosophical system distinguishes itself,

indeed, from a body of scientific doctrine by the impossibility of starting from an axiom, formulated or not, from a *consensus gentium*, from a fact. Philosophy presupposes a free act by man and must justify itself to itself in each of its steps from this act: *formally* — this is visible in the category of *meaning* — philosophy can merely be coherent discourse that realizes itself. The circularity of the system is thus not an accessory quality that could just as well be avoided; on the contrary, there where it is lacking, thought has not reached maturity, and when all the categories would actually be present in it, a doctrine that does not rediscover its beginning would not have elaborated all these categories in their purity and would have stopped at one of the reprises of the category of *meaning*.

The historian of philosophy would need to show how Hegel, refusing the philosophy of reflection (reflection of thought in a given transcendental, of whatever order it be) and thereby establishing circularity as the criterion of philosophy, has not only been one of these great philosophers whose number probably doesn't even reach ten or so, but marks the end of an era of western thought. It would equally be for him to show the extent to which Hegel succeeded in his undertaking, at what point he has created new problems by creating, through the solution to the old ones, another world, a new reason, a new man. For us, it is his philosophical idea of a system that matters and the conclusion that he has drawn from it, namely that there is no introduction to philosophy. A pedagogical introduction might be possible, a λόγος προτρεπτικός πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν that leads man, in the concrete situation of his historic moment, to the idea of truth. But the ladder that is thus put at the disposal of the [441] man living in his tradition will be of no use to make him climb to the level of philosophy, if he refuses to make the leap into the circle before which he finds himself at the end of his climb: one can make him feel that philosophy *exists* — it would be more correct, but less prudent to say that wisdom exists: this will neither make him a philosopher nor wise.

The only introduction to the system therefore lies at its end and consists in the justification of the choice that has been made from the beginning. It merges with the proof of circularity. This implies that any philosophical book is only truly understandable at the second reading, since the first “idea” is thought, that is, completely developed and thus graspable, only in the last, since only then the appearance of a first and of a last idea vanishes. In principle, philosophy's discourse can start at any point whatsoever (and, apart from the terminological technical difficulty that can result, etc., the same goes for the reading of a philosophical book: in the case of the present book, the risk is that for each reader, the first understanding at first reading starts merely at the category that corresponds to the attitude that is “natural” to him — and stops in the same limits, at the last that seems “possible” to him). But in practice, it is necessary to start at a point that is determined by the situation of the moment of discourse and by the form of the account.

Both conditions seem fulfilled by the category of *Truth*. If philosophy begins in wonder, nothing is more apt than this category to provoke it in an era that, for a very long time, at least since Kant, attends to everything except the truth whose simple name has become suspect. Yet, the fact is that it is impossible to “construct” truth from something else, that is, from error. It is why the clarity of the account (it is not a matter of the easiness of the reading, as far as philosophy is concerned, one excludes the other) equally benefits from it; Truth is the least comprehensible category if it is taken as the beginning, and, for that very reason, the least exposed to flawed understanding. For this reason, there is no contradiction with the principle of circularity: the beginning remains arbitrary; only, any other beginning would require a long labor in view of the demolition of the biases that form our tradition, an effort that, ultimately, would indirectly show, by a highly complicated *reductio ad absurdum* — or if one prefers, by a “transcendental” or “phenomenological” analysis —, that the only valid demonstration (the true word would be *monstration*) must take place such as has been done here directly, under the guarantee of circularity.

The only legitimate question is thus knowing if the return has actually been performed or if there has been a sort of hoax by ambivalence. Is the Truth where discourse started the one where it comes to an end, or does the later differ radically from the former, as the most perfect consciousness that man can reach differs from the most absolute unconsciousness? It seems that the con is evident and that a simple play on words covers a fundamental failure. However, one must be wary of hasty [442] judgment. For this difference is counterbalanced by an analogy that is just as striking, given that, in both of these *Truths*, the universal alone is present in the individual (we employ the language of the *Absolute*, the most manageable when it comes to speaking, not in philosophy, but of philosophy and at the level of the tradition): man, there as here, let’s say instead of *thinks*, since one should reserve this term for other categories: *is open*, without being occupied by himself, without being caught, filled, closed. Which of the two carries the day, common universality or the opposition between the self-consciousness of thought and the unconscious?

It suffices to formulate the question in this way to see that it is flawed. To compare benefits, to separate the essential from what is not so would be an undertaking in the kind of a philosophy of philosophy, a groundless reflection without end. Therefore the question is the result of a misunderstanding: *wisdom* is not *Truth* (otherwise *wisdom* would not be the last category — *meaning* would be), it leads back to it. In other words, the sage, in the certainty of understanding and of reasonable action — we should say: of the “reasonability” of action or more simply of its possibility — is open; knowing that he has moved through the circle of discourse in the attitudes, that of situations in the reality of discourse, he accepts

everything in its truth and is no longer worried about knowing if the *it* of *its truth* refers to him or to the thing. Knowing it, he is in the category of wisdom; but since he doesn't only know it, but now knows that this knowing has meaning, he knows himself to be and makes himself, through wisdom, free for the life in the world that is the world in the security of reason.

This is how the dilemma that we just considered receives, with a signification, its solution. The universal exists and is *unified*, but appears to the category in the attitude, to the discourse in the situation (and, *as soon as one interprets it*, to the poetry in the world) under two aspects: as Freedom and as Truth. This is discourse's deepest duality, a duality that is always being reconciled, but that never is, except in silence. It can lead to this silence at each of its steps, if through a free act, it limits its discourse to its attitude, its attitude to its discourse; all is said, and the rest is silence (in regards to the essential: if the attitude-category is such, technical discourse can continue, but it no longer concerns man nor truth). All over, this free abandoning of freedom is one of man's possibilities; all over, man can *shut* himself off. But he is spared the sacrifice of his freedom only if he follows the route of active thought until the end, until, reconquering Truth, he realizes his freedom in which he knows himself to be *open* to the world, in which he knows himself to be open to the world's reason, reasonable to become reason. Grasping presence as the end of violence, he frees himself for Truth, and the complete self-consciousness lets him into the universal of the consciousness that, after having *not* known any *self*, *no longer* does.



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