

Negative Dialectics

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Part III. Models. World-spirit and Natural History. Excursus on Hegel

Tendency and Facts 295-297

What the human understanding, ailing from its own soundness, reacts most sensitively against, the primacy of something objective beyond individual human beings, in their coexistence as much as in their consciousness, can be crassly experienced every single day. One represses that primacy as a groundless speculation, so that the individuals, as if their meanwhile standardized conceptions were in a double sense the unconditional truth, can preserve their self-flattering delusion from the suspicion, that it would not be so and that they live under a doom. In an epoch which shakes off the system of objective idealism as easily as the objective value-theory of economics, theorems are now becoming current, with which it is asserted the Spirit has no use for, which seeks its own security and that of cognition in what is extant as the well-organized sums of immediate individual facts of social institutions or the subjective constitution of their members. The Hegelian objective and ultimately absolute Spirit, the Marxist law of value which realizes itself without the consciousness of humanity, is more evident to the unleashed experience than the prepared facts of the positivistic scientific bustle, which today prolongs itself deep into the naïve pre-scientific consciousness; only this latter breaks humanity of the habit, for the greater glory of the objectivity of cognition, of the experience of real objectivity, to which they are also subjected in themselves. If thinkers were prepared for and capable of such an experience, it would shake the foundation of their faith in facticity; it would compel them to go so far beyond the facts, that these latter would lose their unreflective preponderance before the universals, which are to triumphant nominalism a nothingness, the subtractable addition of the compartmentalizing researcher. That sentence from the initial considerations of the Hegelian Logic, that there would be nothing in the world, which is not just as much mediated as immediate, is preserved nowhere more precisely than in the facts, by which historiography swears. No doubt it would be foolish to try to dispute away with epistemological finesse, that when a dissident is roused at six in the morning by the Gestapo under Hitler's Fascism, this is more immediate to the individual [Individuum], who experiences it, than the previously transpiring machinations of power and the installation of the party apparatus in all branches of the administration; or indeed than the historical tendency, which for its part blasted apart the continuity of the Weimar Republic, and which does not otherwise reveal itself than in the conceptual context, committal solely in developed theory. Nevertheless the factum brutum [Latin: brute fact] of the official onslaught, by which Fascism strikes at the bodies of individuals, depends on all those moments which are at a distance from and momentarily indifferent to the victim. Only the most miserable nitpicking could blind itself, under the title of scientific acribia, to the fact that the French Revolution, however abruptly many of its acts occurred, meshed with the total trend of the emancipation of the bourgeoisie. It would have been neither possible nor successful, had the key positions of economic production not been already occupied by 1789, outstripping feudalism and its absolutist heads, which from time to time coalesced with the interests of the bourgeoisie.

Nietzsche's shocking imperative, "What is falling, ought to be pushed" retrospectively codifies an Ur-bourgeois maxim. Probably all bourgeois revolutions were already decided by the historical expansion of the class and had an admixture of ostentation, externalized in art as classicist décor. Nevertheless that tendency would hardly have realized itself in the historical moment of rupture without the acute absolutist mismanagement and the financial crisis, on which the physiocratic reformers of Louis XVI failed. The specific privation at least of the Parisian masses might have ignited the movement, while in other countries, where it was not so acute, the bourgeois process of emancipation succeeded without a revolution and at first did not touch the more or less absolutist form of domination. The infantile distinction between the fundamental cause and proximate occasion has in its favor, that it at least crudely indicates the dualism of immediacy and mediation: the occasions are what is immediate, the so-called fundamental causes are what mediates, what overwhelms, what incorporates the details. The primacy of the tendency over the facts can be read even in the most recent history. Specific military acts such as the bombing raids on Germany functioned as "slum clearing" [in English], retrospectively integrated with that transformation of the cities, which could long be observed not only in North America, but all across the earth. Or: the strengthening of the family in the emergency situation of refugees temporarily held the anti-familial developmental tendency in check, but scarcely the trend; the number of divorces and of split families increased afterwards even in Germany. Even the assaults of the conquistadors on ancient Mexico and Peru, which must have been experienced therein like invasions from another planet, murderously advanced the expansion of rational bourgeois society – irrationally for the Aztecs and Incas – all the way to the conception of "one world" [in English] teleologically inherent in the principle of that society. Such a preponderance of the trend in the facts, which the former always still needs, ultimately condemns the old-fashioned distinction between cause and occasion to silliness; the whole distinction, not only the occasion, is superficial, because the cause is concrete in the occasion. If royal mismanagement was a lever of the Parisian uprisings, then this mismanagement was still a function of the total, of the backwardness of the absolutistic "consumption economy" behind the capitalistic income economy. Moments contrary to the historical whole, which thereby, as in the French Revolution, only promote such, garner their positional value only in this latter. Even the backwardness of the productive forces of one class is not absolute but merely relative to the progressiveness of another. Construction in the philosophy of history requires knowledge of all of these things. This is not the least reason why the philosophy of history approaches, as already in Hegel and Marx, historiography just as much as this latter, as the insight into the essence which, although veiled by facticity, yet conditions such, is still possible only as philosophy.

On the Construction of the World-spirit 297-300

Even under this aspect, dialectics is no variety of a world-view, no philosophical position, to be selected from a sample chart among others. Just as the critique of allegedly first philosophical concepts drives towards dialectics, so too is it demanded from below. Only the experience which is violently tailored by a narrow-minded concept of itself, excludes the emphatic concept as an independent, although mediating moment, from itself. If it could be objected against Hegel, that absolute idealism would recoil as the deification of

that which is, into exactly that positivism which it attacked as reflection-philosophy, then conversely the dialectics due today would not only be the indictment of the prevailing consciousness but also capable of matching it, a positivism which is brought to itself, and thereby indeed negated. The philosophical demand to immerse oneself in the detail, which does not allow itself to be directed by any philosophy from above, nor by any of its infiltrated intentions, was already the one side of Hegel. Only its carrying-out in him was caught tautologically: his manner of immersion in the detail demands that that Spirit show up, as if by appointment, which was posited as the total and absolute from the very beginning. The intent of the metaphysician Benjamin was to oppose this tautology, to rescue the induction, something developed in the prologue to the Origin of the German Tragedy-Play. His sentence, the smallest cell of intuited reality would outweigh the rest of the remaining world, attests early on to the self-consciousness of the contemporary state of experience; all the more authentically, because it formed itself extraterritorially to the so-called great questions of philosophy, which it befits a transformed concept of dialectics to distrust. The preponderance [Vorrang] of the total over the appearance is to be grasped in the appearance, over which dominates, what counts for tradition as the world-spirit; not to be taken from this tradition, which is in the widest sense Platonic, as sacred. The world-spirit is, yet is not, is not the Spirit, but precisely the negative, which Hegel shuffles off from it onto those who must counter it and whose downfall renders the verdict, that its difference from objectivity would be what is untrue and bad, double-sided. The world-spirit becomes something autonomous in contrast to the individual actions, out of which the real total movement of society as well as so-called intellectual developments are synthesized, and in contrast to the living subjects of these actions. It is realized over their heads and through these and to this extent antagonistic in advance. The reflection-concept of the world-spirit does not interest itself in living creatures, which the whole, whose primacy it expresses, needs just as much as these latter can exist only by virtue of that whole. Such a hypostasis, robustly nominalistic, was what the Marxist terminus of “mystified” meant. According to that theory, the demolished mystification would not however be merely ideology. It would be just as much the distorted consciousness of the real primacy of the whole. It appropriates in thought the impenetrable and irresistible one of the universal, the perpetuated mythos. Even the philosophic hypostasis has its experience-content in the heteronomous relationships, in which human beings became invisible as such. What is irrational in the concept of the world-spirit, it borrowed from the irrationality of the course of the world. In spite of this it remains fetishistic. History has to this day no total subject, however construable. Its substrate is the functional context of real individual subjects: “History does nothing, it ‘possesses no gigantic wealth’, it ‘fights no battles’! It is rather the human being, the real, living human being, which does everything, possesses and fights; it is not some sort of ‘history’, which needs human being as a means, in order to work through its ends – as if this were a person apart – but rather this latter is nothing but the activity of human beings pursuing their ends.”¹ Those qualities are conferred upon history, however, because the law of motion of society abstracted from its individual subjects over millennia. It has degraded them just as really to mere executors, to mere partakers of social wealth and social struggle, as the fact that, no less really, nothing would be without them and their spontaneities. Marx emphasized this anti-nominalistic aspect over and over again, without indeed granting philosophical consistency to it: “Only to the extent that the

capitalist is personified capital, does he have a historical value and that historical right to existence... Only as the personification of capital is the capitalist respectable. As such he shares with the treasure-hunter the absolute drive to enrichment. What however appears in the latter as individual mania, is in the capitalist the effect of the social mechanism, in which he is merely a cog. Besides, the development of capitalist production makes the continuous increase of the capital invested in an industrial enterprise a necessity, and competition imposes the immanent laws of capitalist mode of production on each individual capitalist as external compulsory laws. It compels him to continually extend his capital, in order to preserve it, and he can extend it only by means of progressive accumulation.”²

“To be with the World-spirit” 300-301

In the concept of the world-spirit the principle of divine omnipotence was secularized into that which posited unity, the world-plan into the pitilessness of what occurs. The world-spirit is worshipped like a deity; it is divested of its personality and all its attributes of providence and grace. Therein a piece of the dialectic of enlightenment fulfills itself: the disenchanted and conserved Spirit takes the form of mythos or regresses into the shudder before something simultaneously overpowering and devoid of qualities. The essence of such is the feeling of being touched by the world-spirit or of hearing its roar [Rausch]. It becomes the state of thralldom [Verfallensein] in fate. Just like its immanence, the world-spirit is saturated with suffering and fallibility. By the inflation of total immanence into what is essential, its negativity is reduced to an accidental trifle. However to experience the world-spirit as a whole means to experience its negativity. Schopenhauer’s critique of official optimism registered this. It remained meanwhile as obsessive as the Hegelian theodicy of what exists in this world. That humanity lives only in the total imbrication, perhaps only surviving by virtue of it, would not refute Schopenhauer’s doubts over whether to affirm the will to life. In all likelihood however there rested, on that which was with the world-spirit, at times also the reflection of a happiness far beyond the individual unhappiness: as in the relationship of the intellectual individual talent to the historical situation. If the individual Spirit is not, as would please the vulgar division into the individuated and the general, “influenced” by the general, but mediated in itself through objectivity, then this latter cannot always be entirely hostile to the subject; the constellation changes in the historical dynamic. In phases when the world-spirit and indeed the totality itself is shrouded in gloom, it is impossible for even the most gifted to become, what they are; in favorable ones, such as the period during and immediately after the French Revolution, the average were borne up far beyond themselves. Even the individual downfall of the individuated, which is with the world-spirit, precisely because it is ahead of its time, evokes at times the awareness of what is not in vain. The expression of the possibility, that all could yet be well, is irresistible in the music of the young Beethoven. The reconciliation with objectivity, be it ever so fragile, transcends the monotonous. The moments in which something particular frees itself, without confining others in turn through its own particularity, are anticipations of the unconfined itself; such consolation shines from the early period of the bourgeoisie well into its late phase. The Hegelian philosophy of history was scarcely independent of this, in the sense that in it, already distancing itself, the striking of the hour of an epoch reverberated, in which the realization of bourgeois freedom blew with such a breath, that

it overshot itself and opened up the perspective of a reconciliation of the whole, in which its violence would melt away.

On the Unleashing of the Productive Forces 301-303

It is tempting to associate periods of being with the world-spirit, of a more substantial happiness than the individual one, with the unleashing of the productive forces, while the burden of the world-spirit threatens to crush humanity, as soon as the conflict between the social forms, under which they exist, and their forces becomes flagrant. But even this schemata is too simple: the talk of the rising bourgeoisie hollow. The development and unleashing of the productive forces are not opposites of the sort which could be ordained as alternating phases, but are truly dialectical. The unleashing of the productive forces, the deed of the Spirit which controls nature, has an affinity to the violent domination of nature. Though it may conceal itself from time to time, it is not to be thought away from the concept of the productive force and least of all from that which is unleashed; the very word resonates with a threat. In Capital there is a passage which goes: “As a fanatic of the valorization of value, it” – exchange-value – “ruthlessly compels humanity towards production for production’s sake.”³³ In its place and time this turns against the fetishization of the process of production in exchange-society, beyond this however it violates the nowadays universal taboo on doubting production as an end in itself. At times the technical forces of production are hardly restrained socially, but work in fixed relations of production without much influence on these latter. As soon as the unleashing of the forces separates itself from the constituting relationships between human beings, it becomes no less fetishized than the social castes [Ordnungen]; it, too, is only a moment of the dialectic, not its magic formula. In such phases the world-spirit, the totality of the particular, can pass over into that which it buries underneath it. If appearances do not completely deceive, then this is the signature of the contemporary epoch. In periods by contrast when living beings require the progress of the productive forces or at least are not visibly endangered by them, the feeling of concordance with the world-spirit likely prevails, although with the apprehensive undercurrent, that this is only a ceasefire; also with the temptation of the subjective Spirit, to overzealously run over to the objective one under the pressure of business, like Hegel. In all of this the subjective Spirit remains a historical category, too, something originated, self-transforming, virtually transient. The popular spirit [Volksggeist] of primitive societies, not yet individualized, which reproduces itself in the latter under the pressure of the civilized ones, is planned by post-individual collectivism and released; the objective Spirit is then as overwhelming as much as a naked swindle.

Group Spirit [Gruppengeist] and Domination 302-303

If philosophy were, what Hegel’s Phenomenology proclaimed it to be, the science of the experience of consciousness, then it could not, as Hegel does to an increasing extent, sovereignly dismiss the individual experience of the general, which pushes its way through, as something irreconcilably bad, and acceding to the apologetics of power from a presumably higher standpoint. The embarrassing recollection of how in committees, what is inferior ends up prevailing, in spite of the subjectively good will of the members, renders the primacy of the general evident, for whose disgrace no appeal to the world-spirit compensates. Group opinion dominates; through adjustment to the majority of the

group, or its most influential members, more often by virtue of the more encompassing and authoritative opinion beyond the group, especially one approved by the members of the committee. The objective Spirit of the class reaches deep into the participants far beyond their individual intelligence. Their voice is its echo, although they themselves, subjectively where possible the defenders of freedom, feel nothing of it; intrigues appear only at critical points, as open criminality. The committee is the microcosm of the group of its members, finally of the total; this preforms the decisions. These sorts of contemporary observations ironically resemble those of the formal sociology in the mold of Simmel. However they do not have their content in socialization pure and simple, in empty categories like that of the group. Rather they are what formal sociology, in keeping with its definition, only grudgingly reflects on, the imprint of social content; their invariance is solely a memento of how little the power of the generality has changed in history, how much it still is always only prehistory. The formal group spirit is the reflex-movement of material domination. Formal sociology has its right to exist in the formalization of social mechanisms, the equivalent of domination, progressing through the ratio. In agreement with this, is the fact that the decisions of those committees, however substantive they would like to be according to their essence, are rendered manifest for the most part under formal-juridical points of view. Formalization is not anything more neutral in contrast to the class-relationship. It reproduces itself through abstraction, the logical hierarchy of the stages of universality, and indeed also there, where the relationships of domination are caused to mask themselves behind democratic procedures.

The Juridical Sphere 303-305

Following the Phenomenology and the Logic, Hegel drove the cult of the course of the world the furthest in the Philosophy of Law. The medium, in which what is bad is preserved for the sake of its objectivity and lends itself the appearance [Schein] of what is good, is to a large extent that of legality, which indeed positively protects the reproduction of life, however in its existing forms, due to the destructive principle of violence, what is destructive in it returns undiminished. While society without law, as in the Third Reich, became the prey of purely caprice, the law conserves terror in society, ready to go back to it at any moment with the help of quotable statutes. Hegel delivered the ideology of positive law, because in an already visibly antagonistic society, this latter most urgently required it. Law is the Ur-phenomenon of irrational rationality. In it the formal principle of equivalence becomes the norm, everyone is measured by same standard. Such equality, in which differences perish, gives a secret impetus to inequality; persisting mythos in the midst of an only apparently demythologized humanity. The norms of the law cut short what is not covered, every experience of the specific which is not preformed, for the sake of the seamless systematic, and then raises instrumental rationality to a second reality sui generis [Latin: general in itself]. The entire juridical realm is one of definitions. Its systematic commands, that nothing shall pass into it, which could escape from its closed circle, quod non est in actis [Latin: which is not in the deed]. This enclosure, ideological in itself, exerts real violence through the sanctions of law as the socially controlling authority, particularly in the administered world. In the dictatorships it turns into the latter immediately, mediately [mittelbar] it always stood behind them. That the individual feels so easily wronged, when the antagonism of interest

drives it into the juridical sphere, is not, as Hegel would like to argue, its own fault, such that it would be too deluded to recognize its own interest in the objective legal norm and its guarantee; rather it is that of the constituents of the legal sphere itself. Meanwhile the description remains objectively true, which Hegel sketched as one of a presumably subjective bias: “That legality [Recht] and morality, and the real world of the law and of the moral are grasped through thought, that through thought the form of rationality, namely universality and determinacy, is given, this, the law, is what that feeling which reserves itself at will, that conscience which places legality in the subjective conviction, looks at with grounds as what is most hostile to itself. It perceives the form of legality, as one of duty and one of law, as a dead, cold letter and as a fetter; for it does not cognize itself in it, hence is not free in it, because the law is the rationality of the thing, and this latter does not permit the feelings to warm to its own particularity.”⁷⁴ That the subjective conscience would view objective morality “with grounds” as what is most hostile to itself, Hegel sets down as if by a philosophical Freudian slip. He blurts out, what in the same breath he disputes. If in fact the individual conscience saw the “real world of the law and the moral” as hostile, because it does not recognize itself in it, then one cannot simply gloss over this in disavowal. For the Hegelian dialectic holds, that it cannot conduct itself any other way, indeed cannot recognize itself therein. He thereby concedes that the reconciliation, whose demonstration is the content of his philosophy, did not take place. If the legal order were not objectively alien and external to the subject, then the antagonism which is inescapable for Hegel might be settled by the better insight; Hegel however experienced its intractability much too thoroughly, for him to have faith in this. Thus the paradox, that he both teaches the reconciliation of conscience and the legal norm and disavows it, as one.

Law and Fairness 305-306

If every substantively explicated, positive doctrine of natural law leads to antinomies, then its idea nevertheless critically preserves the untruth of positive law. Today it is the reified consciousness, translated back into reality, which multiplies domination therein. Even according to its very form, before class-content and class-justice, it expresses domination, the yawning difference of individual interests from the whole, in which they are abstractly conglomerated. The system of self-made concepts, which slides a full-fledged jurisprudence over the life-process of society, decides in advance, by means of the subsumption of everything individual under the category, in favor of the social order which the classificatory system is formed in the image of. To his imperishable honor, Aristoteles registered this in the doctrine of the *epieikeia* [Greek: fairness, equity], of fairness against the abstract legal norm. The more consistently however the legal system is constructed throughout, the more incapable it is of absorbing that which has its essence in refusing absorption. The rational system of law allows the claim of fairness, which meant the corrective of the injustice in justice, to be regularly stricken down as a species of patronage, as unfair privilege. The tendency to do so is universal, of one mind with the economic process, which reduces individual interests to the common denominator of a totality, which remains negative, because it distances itself by means of its constitutive abstraction from the individual interests, out of which it is nevertheless simultaneously composed. The universality, which reproduces the preservation of life, simultaneously endangers it, on constantly more threatening levels. The violence of the self-realizing

universal is not, as Hegel thought, identical to the essence of individuals, but always also contrary. They are not merely character-masks, agents of value, in some presumed special sphere of the economy. Even where they think they have escaped the primacy of the economy, all the way down to their psychology, the *maison tolérée* [French: universal home] of what is unknowably individual, they react under the compulsion of the generality; the more identical they are with it, the more un-identical they are with it in turn as defenseless followers. What is expressed in the individuals themselves, is that the whole preserves itself along with them only by and through the antagonism. There are countless times when human beings, though conscious and capable of the critique of the universality, are compelled by inescapable motives of self-preservation, to acts and attitudes which help the universal to blindly maintain itself, even though they consciously oppose it. Solely because they must make what is alien to them into their own affair, in order to survive, does the appearance [Schein] of that reconciliation originate, which Hegelian philosophy, which incorruptibly cognized the primacy of the universal, transfigures corruptibly into an idea. What radiates, as if it were beyond the antagonisms, is as one with the universal entanglement. The universal ensures that what is subjected to it as particular would be no better than itself. This is the core of all hitherto established identity.

Individualistic Veil 306-307

To look the primacy of the universal in the eye, is psychologically damaging to the narcissism of all individuals and the democratically organized society to an unbearable extent. To see through selfness as nonexistent, as an illusion, would easily drive the objective despair of all into the subjective one and would rob them of the faith that individualistic society implants in them: that they, the individuals, would be what is substantial. For the functionally determined individual interest under existing forms to somehow be satisfied, it must itself become what is primary; the individual must be confused with what is immediate for it, with the *prôtê ousia* [Greek: primary substance]. Such subjective illusion is objectively caused: only by means of the principle of individual self-preservation, with all its narrowness, does the whole function. It compels each individual to gaze solely at themselves, interfering with their insight into the objectivity, and thus objectively works for ill. Nominalistic consciousness reflects a whole, which lives on by means of the particularity and its obstinacy; literally ideology, socially necessary appearance [Schein]. The general principle is that of isolation. It appears to be the indubitable certainty, bewitched by the fact that, at the price of its existence, it may not become aware of how much it would be something mediated. Thus the popular spread of philosophical nominalism. Each individual existence is supposed to have preeminence over its own concept; the Spirit, the consciousness of individuals, is only supposed to be in individuals and not just as much in the supra-individual, which is synthesized in them and solely through which they think. The monads stubbornly block their real species-dependency from themselves just as much as the collective aspect of all the forms and contents of their consciousness: of forms, which themselves are that generality which nominalism denies, of contents, even though no experience, not even the so-called material of experience, would fall to the individual, which is not already predigested and delivered by the generality.

Dynamic of General and Particular 307-309

In contrast to the epistemological reflection on the generality in individual consciousness, it is right not to allow itself to be consoled about ill, sin and death through the appeal to the generality. In Hegel this is recalled, in contrast to the doctrine of the universal mediation, by the apparently paradox one, that this latter comports itself magnificently with what is universally restored as immediate. But the nominalism, disseminated as prescientific consciousness, and today once more commanding science from there, which makes a profession out of its naivete – the positivistic instrumentarium seldom lacks the pride in being naïve, and the category of “everyday language” is its echo – does not bother with the historical coefficient in the relationship of the general and the particular. The true preponderance [Vorrang] of the particular could only be obtained by means of the transformation of the general. To simply install it as something existent, is a complementary ideology. It conceals how much the specific has become the function of the general, which, according to its logical form, it was all along. What nominalism clings to as its most prized possession is utopia; thus its hatred of utopian thinking, that of the difference from what exists. The scientific bustle creates the illusion that the objective Spirit, produced by utterly real mechanisms of domination, which meanwhile also plans the contents of the consciousness of its reserve-army, would result merely from the sum of this last’s subjective reactions. These however have long since been only the afterbirths of that universality, which solicitously fêtes human beings, in order to be able to better hide behind them, to better curb them. The world-spirit itself turned on the subjectivistically obstinate conception of science, which aims at its autarkic, empirical-rational system, instead of comprehending the objective society which dictates from above. The formerly critically enlightening rebellion against the thing in itself has become the sabotage of cognition, although even in the most crippled scientific concept-formation traces of the for its part no less crippled thing survive. The refusal of the Kantian amphiboly chapter to cognize the interior of the thing, is the ultima ratio [Latin: ultimate meaning] of the Baconian program. It had the historical index of its truth in the rebellion against scholastic dogmatism. The motive capsizes itself, however, where that which is forbidden to the cognition is part of the latter’s epistemological and real condition; where the cognizing subject must reflect on itself as a moment of the generality to be cognized, without however becoming entirely the same as this. It is absurd to prevent it from cognizing from within, what it dwells in and what it has all too much of in its own interior; to this extent Hegelian idealism was more realistic than Kant. Where scientific concept-formation ends up in conflict with its ideal of facticity no less than with that of simple reason, whose anti-speculative executor it pretends to be, its apparatus turned into unreason. The method high-handedly represses what would be incumbent on it to cognize. The positivistic cognitive ideal of unanimous and non-contradictory, logically objection-free models is untenable, due to the immanent contradiction of what is to be cognized, to the antagonisms of the object. They are those of the general and the particular of society, and they are denied all content by the method.

Spirit as Social Totality 309-311

The experience of that objectivity, which is preordained to the individuated and its consciousness, is that of the unity of the totally socialized society. It is the closest kin of the philosophical idea of absolute identity, in that it tolerates nothing outside of itself.

However deceptively the raising of the One [Einheit] into philosophy at the expense of the Many may have been raised; its preeminence, which counted for the summum bonum [Latin: highest good] of the victorious philosophical tradition since the Eleatics, is indeed not this, but an ens realissimum [Latin: most real being]. It really does appropriate a touch of the transcendence, which the philosophers praised in the unity as an idea. While developed bourgeois society – and indeed the earliest unity-thinking was already urban, rudimentarily bourgeois – was composed [komponiert: to compose musically] from countless individual spontaneities of self-preserving individuals, dependent in their self-preservation on each other, by no means did that equilibrium between unity and the individuals prevail, which theorems of justification proclaim as existent. The non-identity of the One and the Many meanwhile has the form of the precedence of the One, as the identity of the system, which lets nothing go. Without the individual spontaneities the One would not have become, and was as its synthesis something secondary; nominalism recalled this. However by weaving itself ever tighter, through the necessities of self-preservation of the Many or merely through irrational relationships of domination, which misused this as a pretext, it ensnared all individuals, on the pain of their downfall, integrated them, to use Spencer's terminus, absorbed them with its lawfulness even against their reasonable individual interests. This then gradually brought the advancing differentiation to an end, which Spencer may still have believed would necessarily accompany integration. While the unchanged whole and the One form only by means of the particularities it covers, it forms ruthlessly over them. What is realized through the individual and the Many is, and yet is not, the Many's own affair [Sache]: they can do less and less about it. Its epitome is simultaneously its Other: this dialectic was studiously ignored by the Hegelian one. To the extent individuals somehow become aware of the preponderance of the One over them, it is reflected back onto them as the being-in-itself of the generality, which they in fact run into: even into their innermost core, it is inflicted on them, even where they inflict it on themselves. The sentence *ethos anthrôpos daimôn* [Greek: custom which humanity is under the power of]: that the character of humanity, always modeled as such by the generality, would be their fate, has more truth than that of a characterological determinism; the generality, through which every individual is determined as the unit [Einheit] of its particularity, is borrowed from what is external to it and hence also as heteronomous to the individual, as anything which demons were once said to afflict them with. The ideology of the being-in-itself of the idea is so powerful, because it is the truth, but it is the negative one; it becomes ideology through its affirmative reversal. If human beings once learn the primacy of the generality, then it is almost unavoidable for them to transfigure it into the Spirit, as what is higher, which they must propitiate. Compulsion becomes sensible [zum Sinn: meaningful] to them. Not entirely without reason: for the abstract generality of the whole, which exerts the compulsion, is entwined with the universality of thinking, with the Spirit. This permits it to project this latter once more back onto its bearer, on that universality, as if it were realized in this and had its own reality for itself. In the Spirit the unanimity of the generality has become a subject, and the universality maintains itself in society only through the medium of the Spirit, the abstracting operation, which it really and truly performs. Both converge in exchange, something at the same time subjectively thought and objectively valid, wherein however the objectivity of the generality and the concrete determination of the individual subjects, precisely by becoming commensurable,

irreconcilably oppose each other. In the name of the world-spirit the Spirit is merely affirmed and hypostasized, as what it always already was; in it, as Durkheim recognized, who for that reason was accused of metaphysics, society worships itself, its compulsion as omnipotence. Society may find itself confirmed by the world-spirit, because it in fact possesses all the attributes, which it subsequently worships in the Spirit. Its mythical veneration is no pure conceptual mythology: it extends thanks for the fact that in more developed historical phases all individuals have lived only by means of that social unity, which is not exhausted in them and which approaches their doom the longer it goes on. If their existence today, without them realizing it, is literally granted as something revocable by the great monopolies and powers, then what comes to itself, is what the emphatic concept of society teleologically had in itself all along. The ideology renders the world-spirit independent, because it had already potentially grown independent. The cult of its categories however, for instance the utterly formal one of greatness, something which even Nietzsche accepted, merely reinforces in the consciousness its difference from everything individual, as if this difference were ontological; and with that the antagonism and the foreseeable disaster.

Antagonistic Reason of History 311-313

It is not only today that the reason of the world-spirit is, in contrast to the potential one, to the entire interest of the united individual subjects from which it differs, unreason. Hegel, like all the others who learned from him, was reproved for the equation of logical categories here, with social ones and the ones from the philosophy of history there, as *metabasis eis allo genos* [Greek: change into another genus]: they would be that peak of speculative idealism, which had to break off in view of the unconstruability of what is empirical. Precisely that construction however did justice to the reality. The tit for tat of history just as much as the equivalence-principle of the social relationships between the individual subjects, which advances towards the totality, is tantamount to the logicity which Hegel is presumed to have interpreted into it. Only this logicity, the primacy of the general in the dialectic of the general and the particular, is an *index falsi* [Latin: index of falsity]. There is no more that identity than freedom, individuality, and whatever else Hegel posits with the general in identity. The total of the generality expresses its own failure. What cannot bear any particular, betrays itself thereby as particularly dominating. The general reason, which ends up prevailing, is already the restricted kind. It is not the mere unity inside of the multiplicity, but rather stamped as a position to reality, the unity over something. Thereby however, according to the pure form, antagonistic in itself. The division is unity. The irrationality of the particularly realized ratio inside of what is socially total is not extraneous to the ratio, not solely the fault of its usage. Rather immanent to it. Measured by complete reason, the currently prevailing one reveals itself, according to its principle, as polarized and to this extent irrational. Enlightenment truly succumbs to the dialectic: this latter takes place in its own concept. Ratio is no more to be hypostasized than any other sort of category. The transfer of the self-preserving interest of individuals into the species is intellectually congealed in its simultaneously general and antagonistic form. It obeys a logic, which great bourgeois philosophy comprehended at historic corners like Hobbes and Kant: without the ceding of the self-preserving interest to that species, which bourgeois thinking represented for the most part by the state, what is individuated would not be able to preserve itself in more developed social

relationships. However by means of this transfer, necessary for individuals, the general rationality unavoidably appears practically in opposition to the particular human beings, who it must negate, in order to become general, and who it pretends to serve, and not only pretends. In the universality of the ratio, which ratifies the neediness of everything particular, its dependence on the whole, its contradiction to the particular develops by virtue of the process of abstraction, on which that rests. All-prevailing reason, which instaurates itself over another one, also necessarily delimits itself. The principle of absolute identity is contradictory in itself. It perpetuates non-identity as something suppressed and damaged. A trace of this entered into Hegel's effort, to absorb non-identity through identity-philosophy, indeed to determine identity through non-identity. He distorts however the matter-at-hand, by affirming what is identical, conceding what is non-identical as indeed necessarily negative, and misconceiving the negativity of the generality. He lacks sympathy for the utopia of the particular, buried underneath the general, for that non-identity, which would only be, when realized reason had left the particular one of the generality behind. The consciousness of the injustice which the concept of the general implies, which he upbraids, would deserve his respect due to the universality of the injustice itself. When at the very dawn of the modern era the mortally wounded condottieri [Italian: mercenary] Franz von Sickingen found the words, "Nothing without cause" for his fate, then he expressed two things with the power of the epoch: the necessity of the social course of the world, which condemned him to perish, and the negativity of the principle of a course of the world, which proceeds according to necessity. It is simply incompatible with happiness, even of the whole. The experience-content of the dictum is more than the platitude of the general validity of the causal proposition. What glimmers in the consciousness of the individual person is what they experience, the universal interdependence. Its apparently isolated fate reflects the whole. What the mythological name of fate once stood for, is as what is demythologized no less mythical than the secular "logic of the things". It is burnt into individuals, the figure of their particularization. This objectively motivated Hegel's construction of the world-spirit. On the one hand it gives an accounting of the emancipation of the subject. It must first have withdrawn from the universality, in order to perceive it in and for itself. On the other hand the context of the social individual actions must be tied together into a seamless totality, predetermining for the individual, as never was the case in the feudal epoch.

Universal History 313-315

The concept of universal history, which the Hegelian philosophy took inspiration from very much as the Kantian one did from that of the mathematical natural sciences, became all the more problematic, the more the unified world approaches a total process. For one thing, positivistically progressing historical science took apart the conception of the total and of unbroken continuity. The philosophical construction had the dubious advantage over it of a less detailed knowledge, which it easily enough booked in the ledger as a sovereign distance for itself; to be sure also less fear, of saying what is essential, which is outlined solely from a distance. On the other hand advanced philosophy had to be aware of the understanding between universal history and ideology⁵ and the despoiled life as discontinuous. Hegel himself had conceived of universal history as uniform merely by virtue of its contradictions. With the materialistic reversal of dialectics, the heaviest

accent fell on the insight into the discontinuity of what is not consolingly held together by any unity of the Spirit and concept. Discontinuity however and universal history are to be thought together. To cancel out this latter as a remainder of metaphysical superstition, would intellectually consolidate mere facticity as the only thing to be cognized and therefore accepted, in the same fashion that sovereignty once marshaled the facts into the total forwards march of the One Spirit, confirming them as its utterances. Universal history is to be construed and denied. The assertion that an all-encompassing world-plan for the better manifests itself in history would be, after past catastrophes and in view of future ones, cynical. This however is not a reason to deny the unity which welds together the discontinuous, chaotically fragmented moments and phases of history, that of the control of nature, progressing into domination over human beings and ultimately over internalized nature. No universal history leads from savagery to humanity, but one indeed from the slingshot to the H-bomb. It culminates in the total threat of organized humanity against organized human beings, in the epitome of discontinuity. Hegel is thereby verified by the horror and stood on his head. If he transfigured the totality of historical suffering into the positivity of the self-realizing absolute, then the One and the whole, which to this day, with breathing-spells, keep rolling on, would teleologically be absolute suffering. History is the unity of continuity and discontinuity. Society preserves itself not in spite of its antagonism but through it; the profit-motive, and thereby the class relationship, are objectively the motor of the process of production on which everyone's life depends and whose primacy has its vanishing-point in the death of all. This implies also what is reconciling in the irreconcilable; because it alone allows human beings to live, without it there would not even be the possibility of a different life. What historically created that possibility, can destroy it just as easily. The world-spirit, a worthy object of definition, could be defined as permanent catastrophe. Under the identity principle which yokes everyone, what does not pass over into identity and which escapes from the grasp of planned rationality in the realm of the means, turns into that which provokes fear, retribution for that woe, which the non-identical experiences through identity. History could scarcely be philosophically interpreted otherwise, without enchanting it into an idea.

Antagonism Contingent? 315-317

Speculations as to whether the antagonism was inherited from the origins of human society, as the principle *homo homini lupus* [Latin: humanity is wolf to humanity], a piece of prolonged natural history, or indeed came into being *thesei* [Greek: thesis]; and as to whether, if it had already germinated, it followed from the necessities of the survival of the species and not contingently, as it were, out of archaic arbitrary acts of power-seizure, are not idle. With that of course the construction of the world-spirit would fall asunder. The historical generality, the logic of things, which is compacted in the necessity of the overall tendency, would be grounded on what is accidental, what is external to it; the latter need not have been. Not just Hegel but also Marx and Engels, hardly anywhere so idealistic as in the relationship to the totality, would have rejected the doubt in its inescapability, which nonetheless rises up in the intention to transform the world, like a deadly attack on their own system instead of the prevailing one. Indeed Marx refrains, mistrustful of all anthropology, from relocating antagonism into the essence of humanity or into primeval times, which are drawn up instead according to the *topos* of the golden

age, yet insists all the more tenaciously on its historical necessity. The economy would have primacy over domination, which may not be otherwise deduced than economically. The controversy is hardly to be settled with facts; they lose themselves in the mists of prehistory. But the interest in it was in all likelihood no more one of historical facts than the one in the social contract, which even Hobbes and Locke would scarcely have considered to be really fulfilled.*1* It was a question of the deification of history, even in the atheistic Hegelians Marx and Engels. The primacy of the economy is supposed to ground the happy end with historical stringency as immanent to it; the economic process would produce the political relationships of domination and would overturn them until the mandatory emancipation from the coercion of the economy. However the intransigence of the doctrine, especially in Engels, was for its part precisely political. He and Marx wished for the revolution as one of the economic relationships in society as a whole, in the fundament of its self-preservation, not as the changing of the ground-rules of domination, its political form. The point was directed at the anarchists. What motivated Marx and Engels to translate even humanity's prehistory, its fall from grace, as it were, into political economy, although its very concept, chained to the totality of the exchange-relationship, is itself something late, was the expectation of immediately impending revolution. Because they wished for this right away, it was of the utmost importance to them to strike down tendencies, which they feared would be similarly defeated just as Spartacus formerly, or the rebellious peasants. They were enemies of utopia for the sake of its realization. Their imago of revolution stamped that of the primal world; the overwhelming weight of the economic contradictions in capitalism seemed to demand its derivation from the accumulated objectivity of what, since inconceivably distant times, was historically stronger. They could not have suspected what appeared later, in the failure of the revolution, even where it succeeded: that domination is capable of outlasting the planned economy, which neither of them to be sure would have confused with state-capitalism; a potential, which the antagonistic tendency explicated by Marx and Engels of the economic, sharpened against mere politics, prolongs beyond its specific phase. The tenacity of domination after the fall of what the critique of political economy had as its main object, confers upon ideology the cheap triumph, which deduces domination, be it out of presumably inalienable forms of social organization, for instance those of centralization, be it out of those of the consciousness abstracted from the real process – the ratio – and subsequently prophesizes an infinite future for domination, with open understanding or under crocodile-tears, for as long as any sort of organized society exists. By contrast the critique of the politics fetishized as an existent-in-itself, or that of the Spirit, inflated into its particularity, retains its power. The idea of the historical totality is touched upon however by the events of the twentieth century, as one of calculable economic necessity. Only if things could have been different; only if the totality, socially necessary appearance [Schein] as the hypostasis of the generality, which is squeezed out of individual human beings, is broken of the claim of its absoluteness, does critical social consciousness preserve the freedom of thought, that one day things might be different. Theory is capable of moving the immeasurable weight of historical necessity solely by cognizing this as appearance [Schein] turned into reality, the historical determination as metaphysically accidental. Such cognition is thwarted by the metaphysics of history. The looming catastrophe corresponds rather to the presumption of

an irrational catastrophe in the beginnings. Today the disdained possibility of the Other has shrunk into that which, despite everything, wards off catastrophe.

Otherworldliness of the Hegelian World-spirit 317-320

In Hegel however, especially in the philosophies of history and law, historical objectivity, as it once became, is exalted into transcendence: “This general substance is not the worldly; the worldly strives powerlessly against it. Nothing individuated [Individuum] can go beyond this substance; it can indeed distinguish itself from other particular individuals, but not from the popular spirit [Volksgeist].”⁶ The opposite of “worldly”, that of the identity, which is unidentically imposed over the particular existent, is accordingly otherworldly. Even such an ideology has its grain of truth: the critic of his own popular spirit is also chained to what is commensurable to him, so long as humanity is split into nations. The constellation between Karl Kraus and Vienna is the greatest model of this in the recent past, although for the most part garbed disparagingly. But things are not so dialectical for Hegel, as ever where he meets something disturbing. The individuated, he continues, “can be more intellectually keen [geistreicher] than many others, but cannot surpass the popular spirit. The intellectually keen are only those, who know the spirit of the people and know how to direct themselves accordingly.”⁷ With rancor – it cannot fail to be overheard in the usage of the term “intellectually keen” – Hegel describes the relationship far beneath the level of his own conception. “To direct oneself accordingly” would be literally mere adjustment. As if by the compulsion to confess he decodes the identity he teaches as the continuing break and postulates the subordination of the weaker under the mightier. Euphemisms such as that of the philosophy of history, that in the course of world history “particular individuals have suffered”,⁸ unwittingly come very close indeed to the consciousness of irreconcilment, and the fanfare “in duty the individuated emancipates itself towards substantial freedom”,⁹ incidentally a theme endemic to the entirety of idealistic German thought, is already indistinguishable from its parody in the doctor-scene in Buechner’s *Woyzeck*. Hegel puts into philosophy’s mouth, “that no power goes beyond the power of the good, of God, which prevents Him, from reigning, that God delivers justice, that world-history represents nothing other than the plan of providence. God governs the world; the content of His government, the fulfillment of His plan, is world-history, to grasp this latter is the philosophy of world-history, and its prerequisite is, that the ideal be realized, that only what is in accordance with the idea has reality.”¹⁰ The world-spirit seems to have been at work with especial cunning, when Hegel, as if to crown his edifying sermon, to borrow a word from Arnold Schoenberg, apes Heidegger in advance: “For reason is the perception of the divine work.”¹¹ The omnipotent thought must abdicate and make itself available to experience as mere perception. Hegel mobilizes Greek conceptions this side of the experience of individuality, in order to gild the heteronomy of the substantial generality. In such passages he leaps over the entire historical dialectic and unhesitatingly proclaims the antique form of morality, which was itself first that of the official Greek philosophy and then that of the German high schools, as the true one: “For the morality of the state is not the moralistic, reflected one, wherein one’s own conviction prevails; this is more accessible to the modern world, while the true and antique one has its roots therein, that everyone does their duty.”¹² The objective Spirit takes its revenge on Hegel. As the guest-speaker of the Spartan one he anticipates the jargon of authenticity by a hundred years

with the expression “does their duty”. He debases himself by offering decorative remarks to the victims, without touching on the substantiality of the condition, whose victims they are. What haunts his superior declarations like a ghost, was already petty cash in the bourgeois treasure-box of Schiller. In the “Song of the Bell”, this latter has the family father, his worldly goods burned to cinders, not only reach for the walking-stick, which is merely the beggar’s stick, but compels him moreover to do so joyfully; on behalf of the nation, which would otherwise be unworthy, he imposes the joyous dedication of its utmost to its honor. The terror of good cheer innervates the *contrainte sociale* [French: social duress]. Such exaggeration is no poetic luxury; the idealistic social pedagogue must do something extra, because without the additional and irrational accomplishment of identification, the fact that the generality robs the particular of what it promises it would become all too flagrant. Hegel associates the power of the generality with the aesthetic-formal concept of greatness: “The great ones of a people are those, who direct the people according to the general Spirit. Individualities thus disappear for us and count only as those, who carry through that which the popular spirit wills.”¹³ The disappearance of individualities, decreed off-the-cuff, something negative which philosophy gives itself to know as something positive, without really changing it, is the equivalent of the continuing break. The power of the world-spirit sabotages what Hegel in a later passage celebrates in the individuated: “that it is in line with its substance, it is thus through itself”.¹⁴ Nevertheless the dismissive formulation touches upon something serious. The world-spirit would be “the Spirit of the world, as it is explicated in human consciousness; human beings conduct themselves towards this latter as individuals towards the whole, which is their substance.”¹⁵ This is telling the score to the bourgeois intuition of the individuated, of vulgar nominalism. What constrains itself to what is immediately certain and substantial, thereby becomes precisely the agent of the generality; individuality, into a deceptive conception. Therein Hegel chimes with Schopenhauer; what he had over the latter was the insight that the dialectic of individuation and the general is not exhausted by the abstract negation of what is individual. The objection remains, however, not only against Schopenhauer but against Hegel himself, that the individuated, necessary appearance of the essence, of the objective tendency, is justified in once more turning against this, to the extent it confronts such with its externality and fallibility. This is implied in Hegel’s doctrine of the substantiality of the individuated “through itself”. But instead of developing it, he remains frozen in an abstract opposition of the generality and particular, which ought to be unbearable according to his own method.*2*

Hegel’s Partisanship for the Universal 320-322

What stands against such a division of what is substantive and individuality no less than against the biased immediate consciousness, is the insight of Hegelian logic into the unity of the particular and the general, which at times counts for him as identity: “The particularity however is as universality in and for itself, not such an immanent relation by transition; it is the totality in itself, and simple determinacy, essentially principle. It has no other determinacy than that which is posited by means of the generality itself, and results in the following fashion out of the same. The particular is the generality itself, but it is its difference from or relation to an other, its outwards appearance [*Scheinen*]; it is however not extant as anything other, from which the particular would be differentiated, than the generality itself. – The generality determines itself, thus it is itself the particular;

the determinacy is a distinction; it is only distinct from itself.”¹⁶ The particular would accordingly be immediately the generality, because it finds each and every determination of its speciality [Sonderheit] solely through the generality; without this, concludes Hegel, according to an always recurring mode, the particular would be nothing. The modern history of the Spirit, and not only it, was the apologetic labor of Sisyphus, to think away the negative of the generality out of existence. In Kant the Spirit still recalls it in opposition to necessity: he sought to delimit this latter to nature. In Hegel the critique of what is necessary is spirited away. “The consciousness of the Spirit must form in the world; the material of this realization, its soil [Boden] is nothing other than the general consciousness, the consciousness of a people. This consciousness contains and by means of it directs all ends and interests of the people; this consciousness makes up the laws of the people, morals, religion, etc. It is what is substantial of the Spirit of a people, even when the individuals do not know it, but ascertain it as a prerequisite. It is like a necessity; the individuated is raised in this atmosphere, knowing nothing else. Yet however it is not mere education and the consequence of education; but rather this consciousness is itself developed out of the individuated itself, not taught to it: the individuated is in this substance.”¹⁷ The Hegelian formulation “it is like a necessity” is quite fitting to the primacy of the generality; the “like”, by hinting at the merely metaphorical essence of such a necessity, fleetingly highlights what is merely apparent [Scheinhafte] in what is realest of all. Any doubts as to whether necessity is good are promptly stricken down by the assertion, repeated over hill and dale, that exactly necessity would be freedom. The individuated, as Hegel puts it, “is in this substance”, that universality, which to him still coincided with the popular spirits. But its positivity is itself negative and becomes all the more so, the more positive it ends up becoming; the One so much the worse, the stronger its grip over the Many. Its praise is offered by the victor, who even as one of the Spirit cannot dispense with the victory procession, with the ostentation, that what is incessantly inflicted on the many would be the meaning of the world. “It is the particular, which struggles mightily against each other, and a part of which goes to pieces. But precisely in the struggle, in the downfall of the particular, the generality results. This is not disturbed.”¹⁸ To this day it has not been disturbed. Nevertheless, following Hegel, the generality too would not be without that particular, which it determines; as something detached. Hegel’s logic, also for him an a priori doctrine of general structures, is capable of definitively identifying the general and the not determined particular, of equating the mediatedness of both poles of cognition, only by not dealing at all with the particular as what is particular, but merely with the particularity, itself already something conceptual.¹⁹ The primacy of the generality thus established, delivers the fundament to the Hegelian option for the social one and political one. This much is to be conceded to Hegel, that to think not merely the particularity but the particular itself would be impossible without the moment of the generality, which distinguishes the particular, stamps it, in a certain sense only thereby makes the particular. But the fact that one moment dialectically requires the other, contradictory one opposed to it, reduces, as Hegel well knew but occasionally prefers to forget, neither the former nor the latter to *mêou* [Greek: what is not the case]. Otherwise the absolute, ontological validity of the logic of pure non-contradictoriness is stipulated, which the dialectical demonstration of “moments” had broken through; ultimately the position of an absolute first – of the concept – to which the factum is supposed to be secondary, because

according to idealistic tradition it “follows” from the concept. While nothing about the particular can be predicated without determinacy and thereby without the universality, the moment of something particular, something opaque, which that predication refers to and is based on, does not perish therein. It preserves itself in the midst of the constellation, otherwise the dialectic would be tantamount to the hypostasis of the mediation, without preserving the moments of the immediacy, as Hegel judiciously wished elsewhere.

Relapse into Platonism 322-324

The immanent critique of dialectics explodes Hegelian idealism. Cognition aims at the particular, not the generality. It seeks its true object in the possible determination of the difference of that particular, even from that generality, which it critiques as something nonetheless inalienable. If however the mediation of the general through the particular and of the particular through the general is simply reduced to the abstract normal form of mediation pure and simple, then the particular has to pay for this, all the way to its authoritarian dismissal in the material parts of the Hegelian system: “What the human being ought to do, what its duties are, which it has to fulfill, in order to be virtuous, is easy to say in a moral community – it is to do nothing else, than what is indicated, expressed and known by its relationships. The uprightness is the generality, which can be demanded of it part by law, partly morally. It can easily appear however for the moral standpoint as something subordinate, beyond which one ought to demand yet more of oneself and others; for the urge to be something particular, is not satisfied with that which is existent in and for itself and general; only in an exception does it find the consciousness of the peculiarity.”²⁰ If Hegel had driven the doctrine of the identity of the general and the particular further to a dialectic in the particular itself, then the particular, which indeed according to him is the mediating generality, would be given the same rights as the former. That he denigrates this right to a mere urge, like a father, who chastises the son, “You probably think you’re something special”, and psychologically blackens the human right as narcissism, is no deplorable lapse by the individual philosopher. The dialectic of the particular he envisions is not to be carried out idealistically. Because, contrary to the Kantian chorismos, philosophy does not arrange itself as a doctrine of forms in the generality, but is supposed to penetrate the content itself, philosophy sets up the reality in a magnificently catastrophic *petitio principii* [Latin: begging the question], in such a manner that the latter fits the repressive identity with the former. What is most true in Hegel, the consciousness of the particular, without whose weight the concept of reality degenerates into farce, gives rise to that which is most false, abolishes the particular, which Hegel’s philosophy gropes for. The more insistently its concept strives for the reality, the more delusively does he contaminate this latter, the *hic et nunc* [Latin: here and now] to be cracked open like the golden nuts at a children’s party, with the concept under which it is subsumed. “It is precisely this position of philosophy to reality, which concerns the misunderstandings, and I return herewith to what I previously noted, that philosophy, because it is the fathoming of what is rational, is exactly thereby the comprehension of what is present and real, not the raising up of something beyond, which is supposed to be God knows where – or of which one knows in fact quite enough to say where it is, namely in the error of a one-sided, empty reasonalizing [Raisonnirens]... If the reflection, the feeling or whatever form the subjective consciousness would have, sees the present as something in vain, is beyond it

and knows better, then it ends up as what is in vain, and because it has its reality only in the present, it is itself only vanity. If conversely what counts for the idea, which is only an idea, a conception in an opinion, then philosophy preserves the insight against this, that nothing is real except the idea. It is a question of recognizing the substance, which is immanent, and the eternal, which is present, in the appearance [Scheine] of what is temporal and transitional.”²¹*3* So Platonically is the dialectician forced to speak. He does not wish to acknowledge that logically as well as in the philosophy of history the generality contracts into the particular, until this tears itself free from the abstract generality, which has become external to it, while correlative to this, the generality which he vindicates as the higher objectivity sinks down to what is badly subjective, to the average value of the particularities. He who had intended the transition of logic into time, is resigned to timeless logic.

Detemporalization of Time 324-328

The simple dichotomy of the temporal and the eternal amidst and in spite of the conception of the dialectic in Hegel conforms to the primacy of the generality in the philosophy of history. Just as the universal concept, the fruit of abstraction, seems to be beyond time, and the loss suffered by what is subsumed through the process of abstraction is booked in the ledger as a net gain and as a promissory note on eternity, so do the allegedly supratemporal moments of history become *positiva* [Latin: positive things]. But what is hidden in them is the same old ill. The agreement, that it would always remain so, discredits the thought which protests against this as ephemeral. Such a recoil into timelessness is not extraneous to the Hegelian dialectic and the philosophy of history. By extending itself over time, his version of dialectics becomes ontologized, turning from a subjective form into a structure of being pure and simple, itself something eternal. Hegel’s speculations, which equate the absolute idea of the totality to the transience of everything finite, are founded on such. His attempt to deduce time, as it were, and to eternalize it as something which does not tolerate anything outside itself, is appropriate to this conception just as much as to absolute idealism, which can so little resign itself to the separation of time and logic than Kant could to that of the intuition and understanding. In this Hegel, the critic of Kant, was incidentally also his executor. If the latter prioritized time, as a pure form of intuition and the condition of everything temporal, this is for its part raised above time.*4* Subjective and objective idealism thereby come to accord. For the fundament of both is the subject as concept, excluding its temporal content. Once more the *actus purus* [Latin: pure act], as in Aristoteles, becomes what does not move. The social partisanship of the idealists reaches all the way into the constituents of their systems. They glorify time as non-temporal, history as eternal out of the fear, that it would begin. The dialectic of time and the temporal consequently turns for Hegel into one of an essence of time in itself.*5* It offers positivism a favorite point of attack. In fact it would be badly scholastic, if dialectics were ascribed to the formal concept of time, purged of every temporal content. The critical reflection on this however dialecticizes time as the unity of form and content, mediated in itself. The transcendental aesthetic of Kant would have nothing to counter the objection, that the purely formal character of time as a “form of intuition”, its “emptiness”, would itself correspond to no intuition, however stylized. Kantian time rejects every possible conception and imagination: in order to conceive it, something temporal must always be co-conceived

along with it, on which it can be read, a something, on which its course or its so-called flow becomes experienceable. The conception of pure time requires precisely the conceptual mediation – the abstraction from all thinkable conceptions of time – which Kant, for the sake of the systematic, of the disjunction of sensuality and understanding, wished and had to dispense from the forms of intuition. Absolute time as such, divested of its lattermost factual substrate, which is in it and proceeds in it, would no longer be what according to Kant time must inalienably be: dynamic. No dynamics without what it takes place in. Conversely however no facticity is to be conceived, which would not possess its positional value in the continuum of time. Dialectics carries this reciprocity into even the most formal realm: none of the moments essential therein, and opposed to each other, is without the other. It is motivated meanwhile not by the pure form in itself, in which it unveils itself. A relationship of form and content has itself become form. It is the inalienable form of content; the uttermost sublimation of the form-content dualism in the severed and absolutized subjectivity. The moment of truth in Hegel's theory of time could still be extracted, insofar as one does not permit the logic of time to produce itself out of itself, as he does, but rather preserves it in the logic of congealed time-relations, as it was indicated variously in the Critique of Pure Reason, especially in the schematism chapter, though cryptically enough. The discursive Logic similarly preserves moments of time – unmistakably in the conclusions – as detemporalized, rendered illusory, by means of their objectification into pure nomothetism, performed by subjective thinking. Without such detemporalization of time these latter would in turn never have been objectified. As the cognition of a moment, the interpretation of the context between logic and time through the recourse to what, according to the current, positivistic doctrine of science, is pre-logical in logic, would be compatible with Hegel. For what he calls the synthesis, is not simply the utterly new quality, which leaps out from the determinate negation, but rather the return of what is negated; dialectical progress constantly also the recourse to what fell victim to the progressing concept: its advancing concretion, its self-correction. The transition of logic into time would like, insofar as the consciousness is able, to render compensation to this latter, for what logic has done to it, without which however time would not be. Under this aspect the Bergsonian doubling of the concept of time is a piece of its own unconscious dialectic. He sought to theoretically reconstruct the living experience of time in the concept of the *temps durée* [French: lived duration], of the lived duration, and thereby its substantive moment, which had fallen victim to the abstraction of philosophy and to the causal-mechanical natural sciences. Nevertheless he did not reach the dialectical concept any more than this latter, more positivistically than his polemic knew; he absolutized the dynamic moment, out of *dégoût* [French: disgust] for the dawning reification of consciousness, made it for its part into a form of consciousness, as it were, into a particular and privileged mode of cognition, reifying it, if you will, into a branch. Isolated, the subjective experience of time along with its content becomes as accidental and mediated as its subject, and for that reason, in view of the chronometric one, always at the same time “wrong”. To explain this, the triviality suffices that the subjective experiences of time, measured by the clock, are subject to illusion, although no clock-time would be without the subjective experience of time, which is concretized by this. The crass dichotomy of both times in Bergson registers however the historical one between the living experience and the concretized and repetitive labor-processes: his fragile doctrine of time is an early precipitation of the

objective social crisis of temporal consciousness. The irreconcilability of *temps durée* [French: lived duration] and *temps espace* [French: chronometric time] is the wound of that split consciousness, which is any sort of unity only through division. This can no more be mastered by the naturalistic interpretation of the *temps espace* than by the hypostasis of the *temps durée*, in which the subject, shrinking away from reification, hopes in vain to conserve itself by simply being alive. In fact the laughter, in which life is supposed to reestablish itself according to Bergson in contrast to its conventional hardening, has long since become the weapon of convention against the uncomprehended life, against the traces of something natural which is not completely domesticated.

Interruption of the Dialectic in Hegel 328-331

The Hegelian transposition of the particular into the particularity follows the praxis of a society, which tolerates the particular merely as a category, as the form of the supremacy of the general. Marx designated this state of affairs [Sachverhalt] in a manner which Hegel could not foresee: “The dissolution of all products and activities into exchange-values presupposes the dissolution of all solidified personal (historical) relationships of dependency in production, as much as the all-round dependency of the producers on each other. The production of every individual is dependent on the production of all others; as much as (also) the transformation of one’s products into food has become dependent on the consumption of all others... This reciprocal dependency is expressed in the constant necessity of exchange and in exchange-value as an all-round mediator. The economists express this as follows: each pursues their private interest; and serves thereby, without willing or knowing it, the private interests of all others, the general interest. The joke is not that insofar as each pursues their private interests, the entirety of the private interests, hence the general interest is achieved. Rather it could also be concluded from this abstract phrase, that each reciprocally stymies the enforcement of the interest of the others, and that instead of a general affirmation, rather a general negation results from this *bellum omnium contra omnes* [Latin: war of all against all]. The point however lies therein, that the private interest is itself already a socially determined interest and can be accomplished only under the conditions posited by the society and the means given by it; hence is tied to the reproduction of these conditions and means. It is the interest of the private; but its content, like its form and means of realization, are given by means of social conditions independent of all.”²² Such negative primacy of the concept sheds light on why Hegel, its apologist, and Marx, its critic, converge in the conception that what the former named the world-spirit, possesses a preponderance of being-in-itself and would not merely, as to Hegel alone would be fitting, have its objective substance in individuals: “The individuals are subsumed under social production, which exists as a doom outside of them; but social production is not subsumed under individuals, who operate it as their capacity in common.”²³ The real *chorismos* compels Hegel, against his will, to remodel the thesis of the reality of the idea. Without the theory conceding such, the philosophy of law contains unmistakable sentences about this: “In the idea of the state one must not look to specific states, nor particular institutions, one must rather consider the idea, this real God, for itself. Every state, even though one may find it bad according to the principles which one has, cognizing this or that defect in it, always has the essential moments of its existence in itself, when it namely belongs to the developed ones of its time. Because however it is easier to find faults, that to comprehend the affirmative, one

falls easily into the mistake, of forgetting particular sides of the internal organism of the state.”²⁴ If one must “consider the idea for itself”, and not “particular states”, and indeed in principle, obeying an extensive structure, then the contradiction between the idea and reality rises up once more, which the tenor of the entire work is to dispute away. The ominous sentence, that it would be easier to find faults than to comprehend the affirmative, is in line with this; today this has turned into the cry for constructive (read: self-abasing) critique. Because the identity of the idea and reality is denied by this, it requires a devotional special effort of reason, as it were, in order to nevertheless reassure itself of that identity; the “affirmative”, the demonstration of positively achieved reconciliation, is postulated, praised as the superior achievement of the consciousness, because the Hegelian pure onlooker does not suffice for such an affirmation. The pressure exerted by the affirmation on what strives against it, what is real, untiringly reinforces that real one, which the universality perpetrates on the subject as its negation. Both yawn all the more visibly from each other, the more concretely the subject is confronted with the thesis of the objective substantiality of what is moral. In Hegel’s later conception of education this is still described as something merely hostile to the subject: “Education is thus in its absolute determination the emancipation and the labor of higher emancipation, namely the absolute point of passage to infinite subjective substantiality of morality, which is no longer immediate, natural but intellectual, equally raised to the form of universality. – This emancipation is the hard labor in the subject against the mere subjectivity of conduct, against the immediacy of the desires, as well as against the subjective vanity of sensation and the random caprice. That it is this hard labor, comprises part of the disfavor, which falls upon it. It is through this labor of education however, that the subjective will itself wins the objectivity, by which alone it for its part is solely worthy and capable of being the reality of the idea.”²⁵ This glosses over the Greek school-wisdom *o mê dareis* [Greek: *o mê dareis anthropos ou paideutai*, “the person who does not get thrashed does not get educated”, a line from Menander], which Goethe, to whom it did not fit at all, did not disdain as the Hegelian-minded motto of his autobiography. However by trumpeting the truth over identity, which it would like to first introduce, the classicist maxim confesses its own untruth, that of the pedagogy of beatings in the most literal sense and in the metaphorical one that of the unimpeachable command, to stay in line. As immanently untrue it is of no use to the end, which is entrusted to it; psychology, trivialized by great philosophy, knows more about this than the latter. Brutality against human beings reproduces itself in them; those who are maltreated are not educated but blocked up, rebarbarized. The insight of psychoanalysis, that the civilized mechanisms of the repression transform the libido into anti-civilized aggression, is not to be extinguished. Those who are raised with violence canalize their own aggression, by identifying with violence, in order to carry it further and be released of it; thus are the subject and object really identified according to the ideal of education of Hegel’s philosophy of law. Culture, which is nothing of the sort, does not wish for its own part that those who end up in its mill be cultivated. Hegel appeals, in one of the most famous passages of the Philosophy of Law, to the line attributed to Pythagoras, that the best way to morally educate a son, would be to make him a citizen of a state of good laws.²⁶ This demands a judgement, as to whether the state itself and its laws are in fact good. In Hegel however the social order is just that a priori, without having to take responsibility for those who live under it. His subsequent reminiscence of Aristoteles

ironically bears out, that the “substantial unity is the absolute, motionless end in itself”;²⁷ motionless, it stands in the dialectic, which is supposed to produce it. The comment that in the state “freedom comes to its highest right”²⁸ is thereby devalued into empty assertion; Hegel degenerates into that washed-out sublimity, which he still detested in the Phenomenology. He repeats a topos of the thinking of antiquity, from the stage when the victorious, Platonic-Aristotelian mainstream of philosophy solidarized with the institutions against their ground in the social process; by and large humanity discovered society later than the state, which, mediated in itself, appeared as given and immediate to the dominated. Hegel’s sentence, “Everything, which the human being is, it owes to the state”,²⁹ the most striking exaggeration, smuggles the ancient confusion along with it. What impelled him to the thesis, is that it would be impossible to predicate that “motionlessness” which he ascribes to the general end, indeed of the institution which has once hardened, out of the essentially dynamic society. The dialectician strengthens the prerogative of the state, of being exempt from dialectics, because, something over which he did not deceive himself, this latter drives beyond bourgeois society.³⁰ He did not entrust to the dialectic the power to heal itself, and disavows his assurance of the dialectically self-producing identity.

Role of the Popular Spirit 331-333

That the metaphysics of the reconciliation of the general and particular failed in the construction of reality, as the philosophies of law and history, could not have remained hidden from Hegel’s systematic need. He labored mightily for the sake of the mediation. His category of mediation, the popular spirit, reaches into empirical history. To the individual subjects it would be the concrete form of the generality, but the “determinate popular spirit” would be for its part “merely something individuated [ein Individuum] in the course of world-history”,³¹ an individuation of a higher degree, yet independent as such. Precisely the thesis of this independence of the popular spirits legalizes the violent domination over individual human beings in Hegel, similar to the collective norms in Durkheim and the soul of each culture in Spengler, later on. The more splendidly a generality is outfitted with the insignia of the collective subject, the more completely the subjects disappear therein without a trace. That category of mediation meanwhile, which by the way is not explicitly called the mediation, but only fulfills its function, remains behind Hegel’s own concept of mediation. It does not prevail in the thing itself, certainly not immanently in its Other, but functions as a bridge-concept, a hypostasized average between the world-spirit and the individuals. Hegel interprets the transience of the popular spirits, analogous to that of the individuals, as the true life of the generality. In truth however the categories of the people and of the popular spirit are themselves transient, not just their specific manifestations. Even to the extent that today’s newly appearing popular spirits are supposed to carry further the burning torches of the Hegelian world-spirit, they threaten to reproduce the life of the human species at a lower level. In view of the Kantian generality of his period, of visible humanity, Hegel’s doctrine of the popular spirit was already reactionary, cultivated something already seen through as particular. Without hesitation he participates with the emphatic category of the popular spirit in the same nationalism, whose funestes [Latin: fatal, sinister] overtones he diagnosed in the young frat-house [burschenschaftlichen: traditional German fraternities] agitators. His concept of the nation, the bearer of the world-spirit in monotonous

variation, reveals itself to be one of invariants, with which the dialectical work, paradoxically and yet in accordance with its one aspect, overflows. In the undialectical constants in Hegel, which punish the dialectic as a lie and yet without which no dialectics would be, there is so much truth, as history takes its course as monotony, as the bad infinity of guilt and atonement, which Hegel's star witness Heraclitus already cognized and ontologically exalted in archaic times. But the nation – the terminus as much as the thing – is of a recent date. After the fall of feudalism, a precariously centralized organizational form was supposed to restrain the diffuse natural associations for the protection of the bourgeois interest. It had to become a fetish, because it could not have otherwise integrated human beings, who economically needed that form of organization, just as much as it does them incessant violence. Where the unification of the nation, the precondition of a self-emancipated bourgeois society, failed, in Germany, its concept became overvalued and destructive. In order to seize the *gentes* [Latin: country], it mobilizes additional regressive recollections of the archaic tribe. As an evil ferment, they are suited to hold down the individuated, equally something late-developed and fragile, where its conflict with the universality is about to recoil into its rational critique: the irrationality of the ends of bourgeois society could scarcely otherwise have been stabilized than with effectively irrational means. The specific German situation of the immediate post-Napoleonic era may have deceived Hegel about how anachronistic the doctrine of the popular spirit was compared with his own concept of the Spirit, out of whose progress the progressive sublimation, the emancipation from rudimentary natural-rootedness is not to be expelled. In him the doctrine of the popular spirit was already false consciousness; ideology, though provoked by the need of the administrative unity of Germany. Masked, coupled as the particularity with what is now existent, the popular spirits are proof against that reason, whose memory is nevertheless preserved in the universality of the Spirit. After the tract on eternal peace the Hegelian eulogy of war can no longer hide behind the naivete of insufficient historical experience. What he praised as substantial in the popular spirits, the mores, were even then already hopelessly depraved into those archaic customs, which were dug up in the epoch of the dictatorships, in order to officially propagate the disempowerment of the individuals by the historical trend. The mere fact that Hegel must speak of the popular spirits in the plural, already betrays the obsolescence of their alleged substantiality. It is negated, as soon as a plurality of popular spirits is spoken of, or an internationale of the nations is envisioned. After Fascism it resurfaced.

Popular Spirit Obsolete 333-335

Through its national particularization the Hegelian Spirit no longer includes the sort of material basis in itself, which it would like to claim all the same as the totality. In the concept of the popular spirit, an epiphenomenon, collective consciousness, a stage of social organization, is opposed to the real process of production and reproduction of the society as something essential. That the spirit of a people is to be realized, that it would be “made into an extant world”, says Hegel, “is felt by every people.”³² Today hardly so, and where peoples are made to feel so, then for ill. The predicates of that “extent world”: “religion, cults, morals, customs, art, constitution, political laws, the entire extent of its institutions, its occurrences and acts”³³ have lost what counted for Hegel as their substantiality, along with their self-evident character. His injunction, that the individuals

would have “to form themselves, to make themselves according to” the “substantial being” of their people,³⁴ is despotic; it was already in his day incompatible with the meanwhile equally obsolete Shakespearian hypothesis, as it were, that the historical generality would realize itself through the sufferings and interests of the individuals, while it is merely drilled into them, as the healthy popular sentiment of those who are caught in its machinery. Hegel’s thesis, that no one could “leap beyond the spirit of [their] people, any more than one could leap beyond the earth”,³⁵ is in the epoch of telluric conflicts and the potential of a telluric arrangement of the world utterly provincial. In few other places does Hegel pay so dear a toll to history, as where he thinks history. Nevertheless he also thought to the point, where the popular spirits he hypostasized were for their part so relativized in the philosophy of history, that he might have considered it possible for the world-spirit to one day escape from the popular spirits, and clear a space for cosmopolitanism. “Every single new popular spirit is a new stage in the conquest of the world-spirit, towards the winning of its consciousness, its freedom. The death of a popular spirit is the transition into life, and indeed not as in nature, where the death of one calls a similar one into existence. Rather the world-spirit strides forwards from the humble determination to higher principles, concepts of itself, to more developed portrayals [Darstellungen] of its idea.”³⁶ Accordingly the idea of a world-spirit to be “conquered”, realized through the downfall of the self-realizing popular spirits and transcending them, would in any case be open. Only no progress of world-history by virtue of its transition from nation to nation is to be trusted anymore in a phase, in which the victor no longer ends up at that higher stage, which was probably only attested to it, because it was the victor. Thereby however the consolation of the downfall of peoples comes to resemble the cyclical theories down to Spengler. The philosophical decree concerning the germination [Werden] and extinction [Vergehen] of entire peoples or cultures drowns out the fact that what is irrational and incomprehensible in history became self-evident, because it was never any different; robbing the talk of progress of its content. In spite of the well-known definition of history, Hegel did not work out any sort of theory of progress. The Hegelian migration of the world-spirit from one popular spirit to another is the migration of peoples puffed up into metaphysics; this latter indeed, something which sweeps over human beings, is the prototype of world history itself, whose Augustinian conception fell in the era of the migration of peoples. The unity of world history, which animates philosophy to trace it out as the path of the world-spirit, is the unity of what rolls over, of horror, the immediate antagonism. Concretely Hegel did not go beyond nations except in the name of their unforeseeably repeated annihilation. The Ring of the Schopenhauerian Wagner is more Hegelian, than Wagner ever knew.

Individuality and History 335-337

What Hegel hypertrophically assigned the popular spirits, as collective individualities, is extracted from individuality, from the human individual being. Complementarily, it is placed in Hegel at once both too high and too low. Too high as the ideology of the great men, in whose favor Hegel recites the master’s joke of the servant and the hero. The more impenetrable and alienated the power of the generality, which ends up prevailing, the fiercer the need for consciousness to make it commensurable. That is where the geniuses come in, the military and political ones especially. They are part of the publicity of what is large than life-size, which is derived from precisely that success, which for its part is

supposed to be explained out of individual qualities, which they for the most part lack. Projections of the powerless longing of all, they function as the imago of unleashed freedom, boundless productivity, as if these latter were always and everywhere to be realized. Such ideological excess contrasts in Hegel with a scarcity in the ideal; his philosophy has no interest, that individuality would actually be. Therein the doctrine of the world-spirit harmonizes with its own tendency. Hegel saw through the fiction of the historical being-for-itself of individuality just like that of each unmediated immediacy, and cast the individuated, by means of the ruse of reason, which dates back to the Kantian philosophy of history, as the agent of the generality, something which it had served as for centuries. Therein he thought of the relationship of the world-spirit and the individual along with their mediation as invariant, in keeping with a consistent thought-structure, which his conception of dialectics simultaneously skeletizes and revokes; he too was in thrall to his class, which must eternalize its dynamic categories to ward off the consciousness of the limits of its continued existence. What he followed was the image of the individuated in individualistic society. It is adequate, because the principle of the exchange society realized itself only by means of the individuation of the specific contracting parties; because the principium individuationis [Latin: individuating principle] was thus literally its principle, its generality. It is inadequate, because in the total functional context, which requires the form of individuation, individuals are relegated to mere executive organs of the generality. The functions of the individuated, and thereby its own composition, change historically. In contrast to Hegel and his epoch, it has become irrelevant to a degree which could not have been anticipated: the appearance [Schein] of its being-for-itself has dissolved for everyone, just as much as the speculation of Hegel esoterically demolished it in advance. Exemplary for this is passion, the motor of individuality for Hegel as well as Balzac. To the powerless, for whom what is achievable and not achievable is always more narrowly prescribed, it becomes anachronistic. Already Hitler, who was tailored according to the classic bourgeois model of the great man, so to speak, parodied passion in hysterical fits of tears and carpet-chewing. Even in the private realm passion is becoming a rarity. The well-known transformations of the erotic modes of conduct of the young indicate the decomposition of the individuated, which no longer summons up the power for passion – ego-strength – nor requires it, because the social organization which integrates it, takes care to ensure that the open resistances are removed, which once set passion alight, and thereby relocates the controls into the individuated as one of adjustment at any price. Therein it has by no means lost all functions. Now as before the social process of production conserves the principium individuationis [Latin: individuating principle] in the regnant process of exchange, the private disposition, and thereby all the evil instincts of what is bottled up inside its own ego. The individuated outlives itself. Solely in its remainder, however, that which is historically condemned, is what does not sacrifice itself to false identity. Its function is that which is functionless; of the Spirit, which is not as one with the generality and for that reason powerlessly represents it. Only as that which is exempt from general praxis is the individuated capable of the thought, which transformative praxis requires. Hegel sensed the potential of the generality in the individualized: “The actors have in their activity finite ends, particular interests; but they are also knowers, thinkers.”³⁷ The methexis of each individuated in the generality through thinking consciousness – and it becomes the individuated only as that which thinks – already

surpasses the contingency of the particular in contrast to the generality, on which the Hegelian contempt for what is individual just like the later collectivistic one is based. Through experience and consistency the individuated becomes capable of the truth of the generality, which this latter, as blind self-perpetuating power, conceals from itself and others. According to the prevailing consensus the generality is supposed, due to its mere form as universality, to be in the right. Itself a concept, it thereby becomes non-conceptual, hostile to reflection; the first condition of resistance is that the Spirit sees through this and names it, a modest beginning of praxis.

Bane 337-340

Now as before, human beings, individual subjects, stand under a bane. It is the subjective form of the world-spirit, whose primacy over the externalized life-process is reinforced internally. What they can do nothing about, and which negates them, is what they themselves become. They no longer need to acquire a taste for it as what is higher, which it in fact is in contrast to them, in the hierarchy of degrees of universality. On their own, a priori, as it were, they behave in accordance with what is inescapable. While the nominalistic principle simulates individualization to them, they act collectively. This much is true in the Hegelian insistence on the universality of the particular, that the particular in the inverted form of powerless individualization, sacrificed to the general, is dictated by the principle of the inverted universality. The Hegelian doctrine of the substantiality of the general in what is individual appropriates the subjective bane; what is presented here as metaphysically worthier, owes such an aura chiefly to its impenetrability, irrationality, the opposite of the Spirit, which according to metaphysics it is supposed to be. The fundament of unfreedom, which in the subjects is beyond even their psychology, which prolongs it, serves the antagonistic condition, which today threatens to annihilate the potential of subjects to change this last. Expressionism, spontaneous, collective forms of reaction, jerkily indicated something of that bane. In the meantime this latter became as ubiquitous as the deity, whose place it usurped. It is no longer felt, because scarcely anything and scarcely anyone would have escaped it far enough to realize the difference. Humanity continues to drag itself along as in Barlach's sculpture and Kafka's prose, an endless train of bowed figures chained to each other, who can no longer raise their heads under the burden, of what is.³⁸ The merely existent, the opposite of the world-spirit according to the high-flown doctrine of idealism, is its incarnation, coupled to the accident, the form of freedom under the bane.*6* While it seems as if it is cast over all living beings, it is nonetheless probably not what Schopenhauer would take it for, simply and purely one with the principium individuationis [Latin: individuating principle] and its stubborn self-preservation. The conduct of animals differs from that of humans through something compulsory. It may have inherited it from the animal species called humanity, but becomes something qualitatively different in this latter. And indeed precisely by means of the capacity for reflection, by which the bane might be dispelled and which entered into the bane's service. By such an inversion of itself it reinforces this and makes this radically evil, devoid of the innocence of the merely being-so. In human experience, the bane is the equivalent of the fetish-character of the commodity. What is self-made becomes the In-itself, out of which the self can no longer escape; in the dominating faith in facts as such, in their positive acceptance, the subject worships its mirror-image. The reified

consciousness has become total as the bane. That it is a false one, holds the promise of the possibility of its sublation: that it would not remain such, that false consciousness would inescapably move beyond itself, that it could not have the last word. The more the society is steered by the totality, which reproduces itself in the bane of subjects, the deeper too its tendency towards dissociation. This latter threatens the life of the species, as much as it denies the bane of the whole, the false identity of subject and object. The general, which compresses the particular as if by an instrument of torture, until it splinters, labors against itself, because it has its substance in the life of the particular; without it, it sinks down into the abstract, separate and voidable form. Franz Neumann diagnosed this in the institutional sphere in Behemoth: the disassembly into disconnected and warring power-apparatuses is the secret of the total fascist state. Anthropology corresponds to this, the chemism of human beings. Unresistingly delivered over to the collective bad state of affairs, they lose identity. It is not entirely improbable that the bane is thereby tearing itself apart. What would like to provisionally gloss over the total structure of society under the name of pluralism, receives its truth from such self-announcing disintegration; simultaneously from horror and from a reality, in which the bane explodes. Freud's Civilization and its Discontents has a content, which was scarcely available to him; it is not solely in the psyche of the socialized that the aggressive drives accumulate to the point of openly destructive pressure, but the total socialization objectively breeds its counter-force [Widerspiel], without to this day being able to say, whether it is the catastrophe or the emancipation. The philosophical systems drafted an unwitting schemata of this, which equally, with increasing unity, disqualified what is heterogenous to them, be it named sensation, the not-I or what have you, all the way to that chaos, whose name Kant used for the heterogenous. What some prefer to call angst and ennoble as an existential, is claustrophobia in the world: in the closed system. It perpetuates the bane as the coldness between human beings, without which the woe could not repeat itself. Whoever is not cold, who does not make themselves cold as per the vulgar figure of speech of the murderer who ices the victim, must feel themselves condemned. Along with angst and its grounds, the coldness, too, might pass away. Angst is the necessary form of the curse laid in the universal coldness over those, who suffer from it.

Regression Under the Bane 340-343

Whatever the domination of the identity-principle tolerates of the non-identical, is mediated for its part by the identity-compulsion, the stale remainder, after the identification has cut out its chunk. Under the bane, what is different and whose smallest admixture would indeed be incompatible with the former, is transformed into poison. As accidental, the un-identical remainder becomes on the other hand in turn so abstract, that it fits into the lawfulness of the identification. This is the sad truth of what Hegel expounded positively as the doctrine of the unity of accident and necessity. The substitution of traditional causality through statistical rules ought to confirm that convergence. What is fatally in common however between necessity and accident, which Aristoteles already ascribed to the merely existent, is fate. It has its place in the circle, which the dominating thinking draws around itself, as much as in what falls out and, bereft of reason, acquires an irrationality which converges with the necessity posited by the subject. The process of domination spews out tatters of subjugated nature undigested.

That the particular would not melt away philosophically into the universality, requires that it would also not seal itself off in the contrariness of the accident. What would help the reconciliation of the general and the particular would be the reflection of difference, not its extirpation. This latter is what Hegel's pathos signs itself over to, granting the sole reality to the world-spirit, echo of the laughter of hell in heaven. The mythical bane has secularized itself into what is real, seamlessly compartmentalized. The reality principle, which the clever follow, in order to survive, ensnares them like an evil magic; they are that much less capable and willing of shaking off the burden, which the magic hides from them: they consider it as life itself. Metapsychologically the talk of regression is on the mark. Everything which is nowadays called communication, without exception, is only the noise, which drowns out the silence of those under the bane. The individual human spontaneities, meanwhile to a large extent even the allegedly oppositional ones, are condemned to pseudo-activity, potentially to idiocy. The techniques of brainwashing and its related procedures practice from without an immanent-anthropological tendency, which indeed for its part is motivated from without. The natural-historical norm of adjustment, to which Hegel assented in the beer hall wisdom, that one has to sow one's wild oats, is, entirely like his own, the schemata of the world-spirit as bane. Perhaps the most recent biology projects its experience, taboo among human beings, onto animals, in order to exonerate the human beings who torture them; the ontology of animals imitates the age-old and constantly newly-acquired animality [Vertietheit] of human beings. The world-spirit is to this extent too its own contradiction, contrary to what Hegel wished. The animalized self-preserving reason drives out the Spirit of the species, which worships the latter. That is why the Hegelian metaphysics of the Spirit is already so close, at all of its stages, to the hostility to the Spirit. Just as the mythical power of what is natural reproduces itself on an expanded scale in the unconscious society, so too are the categories of consciousness, which it produces, all the way to the most enlightened, under the bane and turn into delusion. Society and the individuated harmonize therein as nowhere else. With society, ideology has advanced to the point that it no longer develops into socially necessary appearance [Schein] and thereby to independence, however fragile, but only into an adhesive: false identity of subject and object. The individuals, the old substrate of psychology, are themselves by virtue of the principle of individuation, by the monotonous restriction of every individual to particular interests, also equal to each other and accordingly appeal to the dominating abstract universality, as if it were their own affair [Sache]. This is their formal a priori. Conversely the generality, to which they bow, without even feeling it, is tailored to them in such a manner, appeals so little to that which would not be the same as this in them, that they bind themselves freely and easily and joyfully [reference to a line in Schiller]. Contemporary ideology is no less a holding-tank to receive the psychology of the individuals, in every case already mediated by the generality, just as it unceasingly produces the generality in the individuals anew. Bane and ideology are the same. What is fatal about the latter is that it dates back to biology. The Spinozist *sese conservare* [Latin: to preserve oneself], self-preservation, is truly the law of nature of everything living. The tautology of identity is its content: what should be, is what already is anyway, the will turns back onto the willing, as the mere means of itself it turns into an end. This turn is already that of false consciousness; if the lion had one, then its rage at the antelope, which it wants to devour, would be ideology. The concept of the end, which is exalted into reason for the sake of consistent self-

preservation, would have to emancipate itself from the idol of the mirror. The end would be, what is different from the subject as the means. This however is obscured by self-preservation; it fixes the means as ends, which do not legitimate themselves before any sort of reason. The greater the increase of the productive forces, the more the perpetuation of life as an end in itself loses its self-evident character. Enslaved by nature, it becomes dubious in itself, while the potential of something other matures in it. Life prepares itself to become its means, as indeterminate and unknown as this other would be. Its heteronomous arrangement however always again inhibits it. Because self-preservation through the eons was always difficult and precarious, the ego-drives, its instrument, have an almost irresistible power, even after self-preservation became virtually easy through technics; greater even than the object-drives, whose specialist, Freud, mistook it for. The exertion which is superfluous according to the state of the productive forces becomes objectively irrational, hence the bane into really dominating metaphysics. The current stage of the fetishization of means as ends in technology indicates the victory of that tendency all the way to open absurdity: formerly rational, yet obsolete modes of conduct are conjured up by the logic of history unchanged. It is logical no longer.

Subject and The Individuated [Individuum] 343-344

Hegel formulated idealistically: "Subjectivity is itself the absolute form and the existing reality of substance, and the subject's difference from it as its object, end and power is only the vanished difference of the form, which is at the same time just as immediate."³⁹ Subjectivity, which indeed even in Hegel is the general and the total identity, is deified. Thereby however the opposite is achieved as well, the insight into the subject as a self-manifesting objectivity. The construction of the subject-object has an abyssal double character. It not only ideologically falsifies the object in the free act of the absolute subject, but cognizes also in the subject that which represents itself as objective and thereby restricts the subject anti-ideologically. Subjectivity as the existent reality of the substance does indeed lay claim to preeminence, but would be as an "existing", realized [entaussetes] subject just as much objectivity as appearance. This however would also affect the relationship of subjectivity to concrete individuals. If objectivity is immanent to them and at work in them; if it truly appears in them, then the sort of individuality which is related to the essence is far more substantial, than where it is merely subordinated to the essence. Hegel falls silent before such consistency. He who attempted to liquidate Kant's abstract concept of form, drags along nevertheless the Kantian and Fichtean dichotomy of the – transcendental – subject and – empirical – individuated. The lack of concrete determinacy of the concept of subjectivity is exploited to the advantage of the higher objectivity of a subject purified of contingency; this facilitates the identification of the subject and object at the expense of the particular. Therein Hegel follows the usage of the entirety of idealism, at the same time however he undermines his assertion of the identity of freedom and necessity. By means of its hypostasis as Spirit, the substrate of freedom, the subject, is dissociated so far from living existing human beings, that the freedom in necessity does not at all bear fruit for them. Hegel's language brings this to light: "In that the state, the fatherland, comprises a community of existence, in that the subjective will of human beings submits to the law, the opposition between freedom and necessity disappears."⁴⁰ Not even the most artful interpretation could argue the fact away

that the word submission means the opposite of freedom. Its alleged synthesis with necessity bows to the latter and refutes itself.

Dialectics and Psychology 344-347

Hegel's philosophy outlines the perspective of the loss involved in the rise of individuality in the nineteenth century until well into the twentieth: that of committalness [Verbindlichkeit], that power towards the generality, in which individuality would first come to itself. The meanwhile evident decay of individuality is coupled to such a loss; the individuated, which develops and differentiates itself, by separating itself from the generality more and more emphatically, threatens thereby to regress to the contingency, which Hegel reckoned against it. Only the restorative Hegel had himself neglected logic and coercion in the progress of individuation, for the benefit of an ideal modeled on Greek maxims, as if foreshadowing the most dire German reaction of the twentieth century, just as much as the forces, which first come to maturity in the disassembly of individuality.⁴¹ Even therein he does an injustice to his own dialectic. That the generality is not anything merely thrown over individuality but would be its innervated substance, is not to be reduced to the platitude of the encompassing nature of valid human morality, but would need to be traced to the center of the individual mode of conduct, especially in the character; in that psychology, which Hegel, as one with popular bias, accuses of a contingency which Freud meanwhile refuted. Certainly the Hegelian anti-psychologism achieves the cognition of the empirical precedence of the social generality, which Durkheim later expressed sturdily and untouched by any dialectical reflection.⁴² Psychology, seemingly opposed to the general, yields under pressure, all the way to the cells of innervation, to the general, and to this extent is a real constitutum [Latin: what is constituted].⁴³ However the positivistic objectivism, like the dialectical one, is as short-sighted against psychology as superior to it. Because the dominating objectivity is objectively inadequate to individuals, it realizes itself solely through the individuals, psychologically. Freudian psychoanalysis does not so much weave the appearance [Schein] of individuality, as thoroughly destroy it as much as the philosophical and social concept. If the individuated shrinks according to the doctrine of the unconscious down into a scanty number of repetitive constants and conflicts, the former disinterests itself indeed with contempt for humanity in the concretely developed ego, but is reminded by it of the frailness of its determinations in contrast to those of the id and thereby of its thin and ephemeral essence. The theory of the ego as a summation of defense mechanisms and rationalizations is aimed against the same hubris of the self-mastering individuated, against the individuated as ideology, demolished by more radical theories of the primacy of the objective. Whosoever paints the right condition, in order to answer the objection, that they would not know what they want, cannot disregard that primacy, even over themselves. Even if their imagination were capable of representing everything as radically different, then it would still remain chained to them and their contemporary moment as static points of reference, and everything would go wrong. Even the most critical person would in a state of freedom be totally different, just like those they wish to change. Probably every citizen of the wrong world would find the right one intolerable, they would be too damaged for it. This ought to impart a measure of tolerance to the consciousness of intellectuals who do not sympathize with the world-spirit, amidst their resistance. Whoever will not allow themselves to be deflected from difference and

critique is nonetheless not entitled to put themselves in the right. Such a moment of indulgence would of course be denounced as decadent throughout the whole world, under whatever sort of political system. The aporia extends even to the teleological concept of a happiness of humanity, which would be that of individuals; the fixation of one's own needs and one's own longing disfigures the idea of a happiness, which would only arise, when the category of the individual no longer sealed itself off from itself. Happiness is no invariant, solely unhappiness is what has its essence in monotony. Whatever happiness the existent totality intermittently permits or grants, bears the marks in advance of its own particularity.⁴⁴ All happiness to this day promises what never yet was, and the belief in its immediacy gets in the way of its coming to be. This lends the passages of the Hegelian philosophy of history which are hostile to happiness more truth, than was intended in their time and place: "...one names those as happy, who find themselves in harmony with themselves. One can also have happiness as a point of view in the consideration of history; but history is not the soil for happiness. The times of happiness are empty pages in them. Very likely there is in world-history also satisfaction; but this is not what is called happiness: for it is the satisfaction of such ends, which stand over particular interests. Ends, which have significance in world-history, must be held fast by means of abstract willing, with energy. The world-historical individuals, who have pursued such ends, have indeed satisfied themselves, but they have not wished to be happy."⁴⁵ Certainly not, but its renunciation, to which even Zarathustra confesses, expresses the insufficiency of individual happiness in contrast to utopia. Only the resurrection of the particularity as the general principle would be happiness, irreconcilable with individual human happiness here and now. What is repressive in the Hegelian position towards happiness is however not, after his own manner, to be treated from a presumably higher standpoint as a *quantité négligeable* [French: negligible quantity]. As insistently as he corrects his own historical optimism through the sentence, history would not be the soil for happiness, so much does he transgress against it, by attempting to establish that sentence as the idea beyond happiness. Nowhere is the latent aestheticism of someone, to whom reality cannot be real enough, so striking as here.⁴⁶ If the times of happiness are supposed to be the empty pages of history – by the way a dubious assertion in view of somewhat happier periods of humanity, such as those of the European nineteenth century, which nevertheless did not lack for historical dynamics – then the metaphor signifies, as if in a book in which the great deeds would be recorded, an unreflective concept of world history, borrowed from conventional education, as what is grandiose. One who as an observer is intoxicated on battles, the toppling of regimes and catastrophes, is silent as to whether the emancipation, which they advocate in bourgeois fashion, ought to emancipate itself from precisely that category. Marx had this in mind: he designated the sphere of greatness which is set up as an object of consideration, that of politics, as ideology and as transient. The position of thought towards happiness would be the negation of each and every false one. It postulates, in stark contrast to the prevailing intuition, the idea of the objectivity of happiness, as it was negatively conceived in Kierkegaard's doctrine of objective despair.

“Natural History” 347-351

The objectivity of historical life is that of natural history. Marx recognized that against Hegel, and indeed strictly in the context of the generality which realizes itself over the

heads of subjects: “Even though society is becoming aware of the natural law of its motion – and it is the ultimate end-goal of this work, to reveal the economic law of motion of modern society – it can neither leap over naturally-proceeding [naturgemaesse] developmental phases nor decree them away... I by no means show the form of capitalist and landlord in a rosy light. But it is a question here of persons only insofar as they are the personification of economic categories, carriers of determinate class-relationships and interests. My standpoint, which treats the development of the economic social formation as a natural-historical process, can less than any other make individuals responsible for relationships, whose creature they socially remain, however much they may subjectively rise above them.”⁴⁷ What is meant is certainly not the anthropological concept of nature of Feuerbach, against which Marx aimed dialectical materialism, in the sense of a reprise of Hegel against the Left Hegelians.⁴⁸ The so-called law of nature, which nevertheless would only be one of capitalist society, is therefore termed mystification by Marx: “The law of capitalist accumulation, mystified into a law of nature, expresses therefore in fact only that its nature excludes every such decrease in the degree of exploitation of labor or every such increase of the price of labor, which could seriously endanger the continual reproduction of the relationships of capital and its reproduction on a constantly expanded level. It cannot be otherwise in a mode of production, wherein the laborer is there for the necessity of valorization of extant values, instead conversely of the objective wealth for the developmental needs of the laborer.”⁴⁹ That law is nature-like due to the character of its inescapability under the dominating relationships of production. Ideology does not eclipse social being like a detachable layer, but is inherent in the latter. It is grounded in the abstraction, which counts as essential for the process of exchange. There would be no exchange without disregarding living human beings. This implies the necessarily social appearance [Schein] in the real process of life to this day. Its core is value as a thing in itself, as “nature”. The natural-rootedness of capitalist society is real and at the same time that appearance [Schein]. That the assumption of natural laws is not to be taken à la lettre [French: literally], least of all to be ontologized in the sense of a however stylized draft of so-called humanity, is confirmed by the strongest motive of Marxist theory of all, that of the potential abolition of those laws. Where the realm of freedom had begun, they would no longer apply. The Kantian distinction of a realm of freedom from one of necessity is transposed, by means of the mobilization of the Hegelian mediating philosophy of history, onto the sequence of phases. Only such an inversion of the Marxist motives as that of Diamat [Eastern bloc acronym for the state-approved version of “dialectical materialism”], which prolongs the realm of necessity with the assertion that it would be that of freedom, could degenerate into falsifying the polemical Marxist concept of natural lawfulness from a construction of natural history into a scientific doctrine of invariants. In the meantime the Marxist talk of natural history loses nothing of its truth-content, namely that of its critical one. Hegel still made do with a personified transcendental subject, which indeed already fell short of the subject. Marx denounces not only the Hegelian transfiguration, but the matter-at-hand which it experienced. Human history, progressive natural domination, continues the unconscious one of nature, of devouring and being devoured. Marx was ironically a social Darwinist: what the Social Darwinists praised and wished to act according to, is for him the negativity, in which the possibility of its sublation awakens. A passage from the Outline of Political Economy leaves no doubt as to the critical essence of his insight into natural

history: “Now as much as the whole of this movement appears as a social process, and as much as the individual moments of this movement proceed from the conscious will and particular ends of individuals, so much does the totality of the process appear as an objective context, which originates naturally [naturwuechsig]; indeed proceeds out of the reciprocal effect of conscious individuals, but neither lies in their consciousness, nor is subsumed under them as a whole.”⁵⁰ Such a social concept of nature has its own dialectic. The natural lawfulness of society is ideology, to the extent it is hypostasized as an immutable given fact of nature. Natural lawfulness is real however as a law of motion of unconscious society, as it is pursued in Capital from the analysis of the commodity form down to the theory of economic crisis in a phenomenology of the anti-Spirit. The changes in each constitutive economic form took place like those of animal species, which arise and go extinct over millions of years. The “theological quirks [Mucken] of the commodity” in the fetishism chapter scorn the false consciousness, which the social relationship of exchange value reflects in itself as the characteristic of things in themselves to the contracting parties. But they are also as true, as formerly the praxis of bloody idolatry was in fact practiced. For the constitutive forms of socialization, of which that mystification is one, maintain their unconditional supremacy over human beings, as if they were divine providence. The sentence about the theories which would become a real force if they seized the masses, is already applicable to all the structures, which precede the false consciousness of all, which assure the social hegemony of its irrational nimbus, of the character of the continuing taboos, of the archaic bane, to this day. Something of this flashed in Hegel: “Above all however it is simply essential, that the constitution, although produced in time, is not seen as something artificially made; for it is rather the simply existent in and for itself, which for that reason is to be considered as the divine and enduring, and as beyond the sphere of that which is made.”⁵¹ Hegel thereby extends the concept of what would be the *physei* [Greek: by nature], onto that which formerly defined the counter-concept of the *thesei* [Greek: thesis]. The “constitution”, the name of the historical world, which mediates all immediacy of nature, determines conversely the sphere of mediation, precisely the historical one, as nature. The Hegelian phrase is based on Montesquieu’s polemic against the old-fashioned theories of the time, alien to history, of the social contract: the state-judicial institutions were not created by any conscious act of will of the subjects. The Spirit as second nature however is the negation of the Spirit, and indeed all the more thoroughly, the more its self-consciousness deceives itself about its natural-rootedness. This fulfills itself in Hegel. His world-spirit is the ideology of natural history. He names it the world-spirit by virtue of its power. Domination becomes absolute, projected onto being itself, which would there be the Spirit. History however, the explication of something, which it is always supposed to have been, acquires the quality of what is devoid of history. In the midst of history Hegel takes the side of what is unchanging, of monotony, of the identity of the process, whose totality would be healthy. He is thus to be charged unmetaphorically with historical mythology. He garbs the asphyxiating mythos with the words Spirit and reconciliation: “What by nature is accidental, is what experiences the accidental, and just this fate is thus the necessity, just as the concept and the philosophy cause the point of view of the mere contingency to disappear and cognizes in it, as the appearance [Schein], its essence, necessity. It is necessary, that what is finite, the possession and life be posited as accidental, because this is the concept of the finite. This

necessity has on the one hand the form of a force of nature and everything finite is mortal and transient.”⁵² Nothing else has been taught to humanity by the Western myths of nature. Hegel cites nature and the force of nature as models of history, according to an automatism, which the philosophy of the Spirit can do nothing about. They assert themselves however in philosophy, because the identity-positing Spirit, by denying the bane of blind nature, is identical with the latter. Gazing into the abyss, Hegel became aware of the world-historical main event and affair of the state as second nature, but glorified therein the first, in ghastly complicity with it. “The soil of law is above all that which is of the Spirit, and its closer location and point of departure is the will, which is free, so that freedom comprises its substance and determination, and the system of law is the realm of realized freedom, which the world of the Spirit produced out of itself, as a second nature.”⁵³ Second nature, first philosophically taken up once again in Lukacs’ theory of the novel,⁵⁴ remains however the negative of that which could somehow be thought of as the first. What is truly *thesei* [Greek: thesis], something which, if it is not produced by individuals, then surely by their functional context, usurps the insignia of what counts to bourgeois consciousness as nature and natural. To that consciousness, nothing which would be outside appears any more; in a certain sense there is in fact nothing more outside, nothing unaffected by the total mediation. That is why what is ensnared therein turns into its own otherness: the Ur-phenomenon of idealism. The more relentlessly socialization masters all moments of human and interhuman immediacy, the more impossible it is to recall the historically-become being of the web; the more irresistible the appearance [Schein] of nature. The distancing of the history of humanity from the latter reinforces it: nature turns into an irresistible allegory of imprisonment. The young Marx expressed the unceasingly interpenetration of both moments with a power of extremity, which must irritate the dogmatic materialists: “We know only one science, the science of history. History can be considered from two sides, divided into the history of nature and the history of humanity. Both sides are meanwhile not to be separated; so long as human beings exist, the history of nature and the history of human beings condition each other reciprocally.”⁵⁵ The traditional antithesis of nature and history is true and false; true, insofar as it expresses what the moment of nature experienced; false, insofar as it apologetically repeats, by virtue of its conceptual post-construction, the concealment of the natural-rootedness of history by this latter itself.

History and Metaphysics 351-353

The separation of nature and history unreflectively expresses at the same time that division of labor, which the inescapable one of scientific methods heedlessly projects onto the objects. The unhistorical concept of history, which the falsely resurrected metaphysics harbors in what it calls historicity, would demonstrate the understanding of ontological thinking with the naturalistic one, which the former so eagerly delimits itself from. If history turns into the ontological basic structure of the existent, or indeed into the *qualitas occulta* [Latin: secret quality] of being itself, then it is mutability as immutability, copied from inexorable natural religion. This then permits the transposition of what is historically determined at will into invariance and philosophically cloaks the vulgar insight which in modern times presents historical relationships, formerly God-given, as natural ones: one of the temptations of the essentialization of the existent. The ontological claim, to be beyond the divergence of nature and history, is smuggled back

in. Historicity, abstracted from the historically existent, glides past the pain of the antithesis of nature and history, which for its part is just as little to be ontologized. There too modern ontology is crypto-idealistic, constraining what is unidentical over and over again to identity, removing whatever strives against the concept by means of the supposition of the concept of historicity as one which bears history in its place. Ontology is motivated to the ideological procedure however, the reconciliation in the Spirit, because the real one failed. Historical contingency and the concept of history contradict one another all the more mercilessly, the more seamlessly they are interwoven. The accident is the historical fate of the individual, meaningless, because the historical process itself remained what usurped meaning. No less deceptive is the question of nature as an absolute first, as simply and purely immediate in contrast to its mediations. It sets up what it hunts after, in the hierarchical form of the analytic judgement, whose premises command everything which follows, and thereby repeats the delusion, which it would like to escape. The distinction between *thesei* [Greek: thesis] and *physei* [Greek: by nature], once posited, can be evaporated by the reflection, not sublated. Unreflected, to be sure, that dual division would render the essential historical process harmless as a mere addition and would even help, for its part, to enthrone what has not become as essence. Instead, it would be up to thought to see all nature, and whatever installs itself as such, as history and all history as nature, “to comprehend the historical being in its uttermost historical determinacy, there, where it is most historical, as itself a nature-like being, or to comprehend nature, there, where it is apparently most profoundly rooted as nature, as a historical being.”⁵⁶ The moment however, in which history and nature become commensurable, is that of transience; Benjamin centrally cognized this in the Origin of the German Tragedy-Play. Nature hovers before the Baroque poets, runs the text, “as eternal transience, in which the Saturnine glance of that generation alone recognized history.”⁵⁷ Not only of theirs; natural history was ever in the canon of the interpretation of the philosophy of history: “When history made its entrance onto the stage in the tragedy-play, it did so as script. On the countenance of Nature stood ‘History’ as the signifying text of transience. The allegorical physiognomy of Natural History, which was introduced to the stage through the tragedy-play, is truly present as ruin.”⁵⁸ This is the transmutation of metaphysics into history. It secularizes metaphysics into the secular category pure and simple, that of decay. Philosophy points to that signifying text, the always new Menetekel, in that which is smallest, the fragments struck loose by decay and which bear objective meanings. No meditation on transcendence is possible any more except by virtue of transience; eternity appears not as such but as shot through with what is most transient. Where Hegelian metaphysics equates, by transfiguring it, the life of the absolute with the totality of the transience of everything finite, it gazes at the same time just the slightest bit beyond the mythical bane, which it captures and reinforces.

Footnotes

1 [Footnote pg 315] The imaginary social contract was so welcome to the early bourgeois thinkers, because it grounded bourgeois rationality, the exchange-relationship, as a formal-juridical a priori; it was however just as imaginary, as the bourgeois ratio was itself in the impenetrable real society.

2 [Footnote pg 320]

Among the positivists Emile Durkheim held fast to the Hegelian decision in favor of the generality in the doctrine of the collective spirit and if possible even trumped this, insofar as his schemata did not grant any room to a dialectic of the general and particular, not even in abstracto [Latin: in the abstract]. In the sociology of primitive religions he had substantively cognized, that what the particular laid claim to, the characteristic, was inflicted on it by the generality. He designated the deception of the particular as mere mimesis to the generality just as much as the power, which makes the particular into one in the first place: "The veil (which is used in the course of certain ceremonies) is not a natural movement of private sensibility, injured by a cruel loss; it is a duty imposed by the group. One mourns, not simply because one is sad, but because one is expected to mourn. It is a ritual attitude which one is obliged to adopt by respect for the usage, but which is, to a large extent, independent of the effective state of the individual. This obligation is moreover sanctioned by mythical punishments as well as social ones." (Emile Durkheim, The elementary forms of religious life: The totemic system in Australia, Paris 1912, Travaux de l'Annee Sociologique, pg. 568.)

3 [Footnote pg 324]

Kant already criticized the cliché "only an idea". "The Platonic republic has become proverbial as a presumably striking example of a dreamt-of perfection, which can have its seat only the brain of the idle thinker... Yet one would do better, to approach this thought more closely, and (where the excellent man permits us without assistance) to shed light on it by means of a new effort, rather than setting it aside as useless under the quite wretched and harmful pretext of its unfeasibility." (Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, WW III, Academy Edition, pg. 247)

4 [Footnote pg 325]

"Time does not proceed in itself, but the existence of what is changeable proceeds in it. Time, which is itself unchangeable and lasting, therefore corresponds in the appearance to what is unchangeable in existence, i.e. the substance, and only in it can the sequence and the simultaneity of the appearances of time be determined." (Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, ibid. pg 137)

5 [Footnote pg 325]

"More closely now, the real I belongs itself to time, with which it, if we abstract from the concrete content of the consciousness and self-consciousness, coincides, insofar as it is nothing but this empty movement of positing itself as another and sublating this transformation, i.e. preserving itself, the I and only the I as such therein. The I is in time, and the time is the being of the subject itself." (Hegel, WW 14, ibid., pg 151)

6 [Footnote pg 338]

Hegel's doctrine of the identity of the accidental and the necessary (see text, pg. 350) retains its truth-content beyond his construction. Under the aspect of freedom, necessity remains heteronomous, however designated by the autonomous subject. The Kantian empirical world, which the subjective category of causality is supposed to underwrite, is precisely thereby outside of subjective autonomy: what is causally determined for the individual subject is at the same time absolutely accidental. Insofar as the fate of human beings proceeds in the realm of necessity, it is blind to them, "over their heads", contingent. Exactly the strict deterministic character of the economic laws of motion of society condemns its members, if their own determination were truly respected as a criterion, to the accidental. The law of value and the anarchy of commodity production are as one. Contingency is thus not only the form of the non-identical, ruined by causality; it also coincides itself with the identity-principle. For its part this latter hides, as the merely posited, as what is imposed on experience, which does not arise from what is non-identical, the accidental in its innermost core.