

Negative Dialectics

By Theodor Adorno

Suhrkamp Verlag © 1970 Frankfurt am Main

Original text is copyright © 1997 by Suhrkamp Verlag. The text of this translation is copyright © 2001 Dennis Redmond

Prologue

The formulation “negative dialectics” transgresses against tradition. Already in Plato dialectics intended to establish something positive through the thought-means of the negation; the figure of a negation of the negation named this precisely. The book would like to emancipate dialectics from these types of affirmative essence, without relinquishing anything in terms of determinacy. The development of its paradoxical title is one of its intentions.

What in accordance with the conception of philosophy would be the foundation, the author develops only after a great deal of explication of what that conception presumes would be raised on a foundation. This implies the critique of the concept of the foundation, as well as of the primacy of substantive thought. Its self-consciousness achieves its movement solely in its consummation. It requires what, according to the ground rules of the Spirit which always remain in effect, is secondary.

What is given herein is not solely a methodology of material labor of the author; according to the theory of negative dialectics, no continuum exists between the former and the latter. However such a discontinuity, and what instructions may be read out of it for thinking, will indeed be dealt with. The procedure is not grounded, but justified. The author lays, so far as he can, his cards on the table; this is by no means the same thing as the game.

When Benjamin in 1937 read the part of the Metacritique of Epistemology which the author had finished at that time – the last chapter of the published work – he commented, one had to journey through the icy wasteland of abstraction in order to definitively arrive at concrete philosophizing. Negative dialectics now indicates such a path, retrospectively. Concretion was for the most part smuggled into contemporary philosophy. By contrast the largely abstract text wishes to vouch for its authenticity no less than for the explanation of the author’s concrete mode of procedure. If one speaks in the newest aesthetic debates of anti-drama and anti-heroes, then Negative Dialectics, which holds itself distant from all aesthetic themes, could be called an anti-system. With logically consistent means, it attempts to put, in place of the principle of unity and of the hegemony of the supra-ordinated concept, that which would be outside of the bane of such unity. Since the author has trusted himself to follow his own intellectual impulses, he felt it to be his task to break through the delusion of constitutive subjectivity by means of the power of the subject; he no longer wished to put off this task. To reach stringently across the official division of pure philosophy and what is relevant to the matter [Sachhaltigem] or what is formally scientific, was one of the determining motives therein.

The introduction expounds the concept of philosophical experience. The first section starts out from the state of the ontology which dominates today in Germany. It is not judged from above, but is comprehended out of its need, which is no less problematic for its part, and criticized immanently. The second section proceeds from the results to the idea of a negative dialectics and its position in relation to several categories, which it preserves as well as qualitatively transforms. The third section then carries out models of negative dialectics. They are not examples; they do not simply illuminate general considerations. By leading towards what is relevant to the matter, they would like to simultaneously do justice to the substantive intention of what is at first dealt with generally, out of necessity, in contrast to the usage of examples as something indifferent in themselves, which Plato introduced and which philosophy has ever since merely repeated. While the models are supposed to clarify what negative dialectics would be, and to drive this latter, according to its own concept, into the realm of reality, they elucidate, not dissimilar to the so-called exemplary models, key concepts of philosophical disciplines, in order to centrally intervene in these. A dialectics of freedom will do this for the philosophy of ethics; “World-Spirit and Natural History” for that of history; the last chapter circles, feeling its way, around metaphysical questions, in the sense of the axial revolution of the Copernican turn, by means of critical self-reflection.

Ulrich Sonneman is working on a book which is supposed to be entitled Negative Anthropology. Neither he nor the author knew beforehand about the coincidence. It refers to a compulsion in the thing itself.

The author is prepared for the resistance, which Negative Dialectics will provoke. Without rancor, he does not begrudge the joy of all those, both hither and yonder [i.e. on both sides of the Berlin Wall], who will proclaim that they had always said it and now the author would be confessing it.

Frankfurt, Summer 1966

Introduction

On the Possibility of Philosophy 15-16

Philosophy, which once seemed outmoded, remains alive because the moment of its realization was missed. The summary judgement that it had merely interpreted the world is itself crippled by resignation before reality, and becomes a defeatism of reason after the transformation of the world failed. It guarantees no place from which theory as such could be concretely convicted of the anachronism, which then as now it is suspected of. Perhaps the interpretation which promised the transition did not suffice. The moment on which the critique of theory depended is not to be prolonged theoretically. Praxis, delayed for the foreseeable future, is no longer the court of appeals against self-satisfied speculation, but for the most part the pretext under which executives strangulate that critical thought as idle which a transforming praxis most needs. After philosophy broke with the promise that it would be one with reality or at least struck just before the hour of its production, it has been compelled to ruthlessly criticize itself. What once, against the appearance [Schein] of the senses and every outwards-oriented experience, felt itself to be that which is purely unnaive, has for its part become as naive as those miserable candidates Goethe received a hundred and fifty years ago, who nourished themselves on speculation. The introverted thought-architect lives behind the moon which extroverted technicians have confiscated. In the face of an immeasurably expanded society and the progress of positive cognition of nature, the conceptual structures in which, according to philosophic mores, the totality is supposed to be housed, resemble remnants of simple commodity society amidst industrial late capitalism. The meanwhile completely mismatched relationship (since degraded to a mere topos) between each Spirit and power, strikes the attempt to comprehend this hegemony by those inspired with their own concept of the Spirit with futility. The very will to do so betokens a power-claim which countermands what is to be understood. The retrogression of philosophy to a narrow scientific field, rendered necessary by the rise of specific scientific fields, is the single most eye-opening expression of its historical fate. Had Kant, in his words, freed himself from the scholastic concept of philosophy into its world-concept,¹ then this has regressed under compulsion to its scholastic concept. Where it confuses this latter with the world-concept, its pretensions degenerate into sheer ludicrousness. Hegel knew this, in spite of the teaching of the absolute Spirit to which he assigned philosophy, as a mere moment of reality, as an activity in the division of labor, and thereby restricted it. Since then, its own narrowness and discrepancy to reality has emerged out of this, and all the more so, the more thoroughly it forgot this delimitation and expunged it from itself as something alien, in order to justify its own position in a totality which it monopolizes as its object, instead of recognizing how very much its immanent truth depends on such, down to its innermost composition. Only the philosophy which dispenses with such naivete is the slightest bit worth thinking further. Its critical self-reflection may not stop however before the highest achievements of its history. It needs to be asked if and whether, following the collapse of the Hegelian one, it would even be possible anymore, just as Kant investigated the possibility of metaphysics after the critique of rationalism. If the Hegelian doctrine of the dialectic represented the impossible goal of showing, with philosophical concepts, that it

was equal to the task of what was ultimately heterogenous to such, an account is long overdue of its relationship to dialectics, and why precisely his attempt failed.

Dialectics Not a Standpoint 16-18

No theory escapes the market anymore: each one is offered as a possibility among competing opinions, all are made available, all snapped up. Thought need no more put blinders on itself, in the self-justifying conviction that one's own theory is exempt from this fate, which degenerates into narcissistic self-promotion, than dialectics need fall silent before such a reproach and the one linked to it, concerning its superfluity and randomness as a slapdash method. Its name says to begin with nothing more than that objects do not vanish into their concept, that these end up in contradiction with the received norm of the *adaequatio*. The contradiction is not what Hegel's absolute idealism unavoidably transfigured it into: no Heraclitean essence. It is the index of the untruth of identity, of the vanishing of the conceptual into the concept. The appearance [Schein] of identity dwells however in thinking itself as a pure form from within. To think means to identify. Conceptual schematas self-contentedly push aside what thinking wants to comprehend. Its appearance [Schein] and its truth delimit themselves. The former is not to be summarily removed, for example by vouchsafing some existent-in-itself outside of the totality of thought-determinations. There is a moment in Kant, and this was mobilized against him by Hegel, which secretly regards the in-itself beyond the concept as something wholly indeterminable, as null and void. To the consciousness of the phenomenal appearance [Scheinhaftigkeit] of the conceptual totality there remains nothing left but to break through the appearance [Schein] of total identity: in keeping with its own measure. Since however this totality is formed according to logic, whose core is constructed from the proposition of the excluded third, everything which does not conform to such, everything qualitatively divergent assumes the signature of the contradiction. The contradiction is the non-identical under the aspect of identity; the primacy of the principle of contradiction in dialectics measures what is heterogenous in unitary thinking. By colliding against its own borders, it reaches beyond itself. Dialectics is the consistent consciousness of non-identity. It is not related in advance to a standpoint. Thought is driven, out of its unavoidable insufficiency, its guilt for what it thinks, towards it. If one objected, as has been repeated ever since by the Aristotelian critics of Hegel,² that dialectics for its part grinds everything indiscriminately in its mill down into the mere logical form of the contradiction, overlooking – even Croce argued this³ – the true polyvalence of that which is not contradictory, of the simply different, one is only displacing the blame for the thing onto the method. That which is differentiated appears as divergent, dissonant, negative, so long as consciousness must push towards unity according to its own formation: so long as it measures that which is not identical with itself, with its claim to the totality. This is what dialectics holds up to the consciousness as the contradiction. Thanks to the immanent nature of consciousness, that which is in contradiction has itself the character of inescapable and catastrophic nomothetism [Gesetzmaessigkeit: law-abiding character]. Identity and contradiction in thinking are welded to one another. The totality of the contradiction is nothing other than the untruth of the total identification, as it is manifested in the latter. Contradiction is non-identity under the ban [Bann] of the law, which also influences the non-identical.

Reality and Dialectics 18-19

This law is however not one of thinking, but real. Whoever submits to dialectical discipline, must unquestionably pay with the bitter sacrifice of the qualitative polyvalence of experience. The impoverishment of experience through dialectics, which infuriates mainstream opinion, proves itself however to be entirely appropriate to the abstract monotony of the administered world. What is painful about it is the pain of such, raised to a concept. Cognition must bow to it, if it does not wish to once again degrade the concretion to the ideology, which it really begins to become. Another version of dialectics satisfied itself with its lackluster renaissance: with its derivation in the history of ideas from the Kantian aporias and that which was programmed into the systems of his successors, but not achieved. It is to be achieved only negatively. Dialectics develops the difference of the particular from the generality, which is dictated by the generality. While it is inescapable to the subject, as the break between subject and object drilled into the consciousness, furrowing everything which it thinks, even that which is objective, it would have an end in reconciliation. This would release the non-identical, relieving it even of its intellectualized compulsion, opening up for the first time the multiplicity of the divergent, over which dialectics would have no more power. Reconciliation would be the meditation on the no-longer-hostile multiplicity, something which is subjective anathema to reason. Dialectics serves reconciliation. It dismantles the logical character of compulsion, which it follows; that is why it is denounced as pan-logism. In its idealistic form it was bracketed by the primacy of the absolute subject as the power, which negatively realized every single movement of the concept and the course of such in its entirety. Such a primacy of the subject has been condemned by history, even in the Hegelian conception, that of the particular human consciousness, which overshadowed the transcendental ones of Kant and Fichte. Not only was it suppressed by the lack of power of the waning thought, which failed to construe the hegemony of the course of the world before this latter. None of the reconciliations, however, from the logical one to the political-historical one, which absolute idealism maintained – every other remained inconsequential – was binding. That consistent idealism could simply not otherwise constitute itself than as the epitome of the contradiction, is as much its logically consistent truth as the punishment, which its logicity incurs as logicity; appearance [Schein], as much as necessary. Reopening the case of dialectics, whose non-idealistic form degenerated in the meantime to dogma just as the idealistic ones degenerated into educational baggage, does not solely determine the contemporary relevance of a historically established mode of philosophizing or of the philosophical structure of the objects of cognition. Hegel reconstituted the right and capacity of philosophy to think substantively, instead of settling for the analysis of empty and in the emphatic sense null and void forms of cognition. Its contemporary version falls back, wherever anything at all substantive is dealt with, either into whatever mundane world-view is handy or into that formalism, that “indifference”, against which Hegel rebelled. The development of phenomenology, which was once animated by the need for content, into one which dismissed any sort of content as polluting the invocation of being, is historical evidence for this. Hegel’s substantive philosophizing had as its fundament and result the primacy of the subject or, in the famous formulation from the introduction to the Logic, the identity of identity and non-identity.⁴ To him, the determinate particular was determinable by the Spirit, because its immanent determination was supposed to be

nothing other than the Spirit. Without this supposition, philosophy would, according to Hegel, be incapable of cognizing that which is substantive and essential. If the idealistically-achieved concept of dialectics did not hide experiences which, contrary to Hegel's own emphasis, are independent from the idealistic apparatus, then nothing would remain of philosophy than the unavoidable renunciation which rejects the substantive insight, restricts itself to the methodology of science, declares this latter to be philosophy and thereby virtually cancels itself out.

Interest of Philosophy 19-21

Philosophy has, at this historical moment, its true interest in what Hegel, in accordance with tradition, proclaimed his disinterest: in the non-conceptual, the individual and the particular; in what, ever since Plato, has been dismissed as transient and inconsequential and which Hegel stamped with the label of lazy existence. Its theme would be the qualities which it has degraded to the merely contingent, to *quantité négligeable* [French: negligible quantity]. What is urgent for the concept is what it does not encompass, what its abstraction-mechanism eliminates, what is not already an exemplar of the concept. Bergson as well as Husserl, the standard-bearers of philosophical modernity, innervated this, but shrank away from it back into traditional metaphysics. Bergson created, by fiat, a different type of cognition for the sake of the non-conceptual. The dialectical salt was washed away in the undifferentiated flow of life; that which was materially solidified was dismissed as subaltern, instead of being understood along with its subalternity. Hatred of the rigid general concept produced a cult of irrational immediacy, of sovereign freedom amidst unfreedom. He designed both of his cognitive modes as dualistically against one another as the doctrines of Descartes and Kant, which he repudiated, had ever been; the causal-mechanical one remained, as pragmatic knowledge, as little illuminated by the intuitive one as the bourgeois establishment from the relaxed, easy-going attitude of those who owe their privileges to that establishment. The celebrated intuitions themselves appear as something rather abstract in Bergson's philosophy, hardly moving beyond the phenomenal consciousness of time, which already underwrote Kant's chronological-physical one; in Bergson's insight, spatialized time. In fact, the intuitive mode of conduct of the Spirit, although somewhat difficult to develop, does continue to exist as the archaic rudiments of mimetic reactions. What transpired before its past promises something beyond the hardened present. Intuitions succeed, however, only desultorily. Every cognition, even Bergson's own, requires the rationality which he so despised, precisely if they are ever to be concretized. Duration raised to an absolute, pure becoming, the *actus purus* [Latin: pure act], recoils into the same timelessness which Bergson chastises in metaphysics since Plato and Aristoteles. It did not occur to him that what he gropes for, if it is not to remain a *Fata Morgana*, could only be viewed through the instrumentarium of cognition, through the reflection upon its own means, and degenerates into sheer caprice in a procedure which is, from the very beginning, unmediated to that of the cognition. – The logician Husserl, on the other hand, sharply contrasted the mode by which one becomes aware of the essence against the generalizing abstraction. He had a specific intellectual experience in mind, which was supposed to be able to descry the essence in the particular. The essence, however, to which this referred, did not differentiate itself in the slightest from that of the then-current general concept. A crass discrepancy reigns between the functional organization of the apperception [*Wesensschau*] and its terminus

ad quem [Latin: end-point]. Neither break-out attempt succeeded in moving beyond idealism: Bergson oriented himself, just like his positivistic arch-enemies, towards the *données immédiates de la conscience* [French: immediate facts of the consciousness], Husserl likewise towards the phenomena of the stream of consciousness. The former as well as the latter remained frozen in the demesne of subjective immanence.⁵ What is to be insisted on against both is what each tries to conjure up in vain; *pace* Wittgenstein, to say what cannot be said. The simple contradiction of this demand is that of philosophy itself: it qualifies the latter as dialectics, before it embroils itself in its specific contradictions. The work of philosophical self-reflection consists of working out this paradox. Everything else is signification, post-construction, today as in Hegel's time pre-philosophical. A faith, as always subject to question, that philosophy would still be possible; that the concept could leapfrog the concept, the preparatory stages and the final touches, and thereby reach the non-conceptual, is indispensable to philosophy and therein lies something of the naivete, which ails it. Otherwise it would have to capitulate and with it everything to do with the Spirit. Not even the simplest operation could be thought through, there would be no truth, everything would be emphatically nothing. Whatever of the truth can be gleaned through concepts beyond their abstract circumference, can have no other staging-grounds than that which is suppressed, disparaged and thrown away by concepts. The utopia of cognition would be to open up the non-conceptual with concepts, without making it the same as them.

The Antagonistic Whole 21-22

Such a concept of dialectics casts doubt on its possibility. The anticipation of universal movement in contradictions seems, however varied, to teach the totality of the Spirit, precisely the identity-thesis just nullified. The Spirit, which would unceasingly reflect on the contradiction in things, ought to be this itself, if it is to be organized according to the form of the contradiction. The truth, which in the idealistic dialectic drives past every particularity as something false in its one-sidedness, would be that of the whole; if it were not already thought out, then the dialectical steps would lose their motivation and direction. Against this one must counter that the object of intellectual experience would itself be the antagonistic system, something utterly real, and not just by virtue of its mediation to the cognizing subject which rediscovers itself therein. The compulsory constitution of reality which idealism projected into the regions of the subject and Spirit is to be retranslated back out of these. What remains of idealism is that society, the objective determinant of the Spirit, is just as much the epitome of subjects as their negation. In it they are unknowable and disempowered; that is why it is so desperately objective and a concept, which idealism mistakes as something positive. The system is not that of the absolute Spirit, but of the most conditioned of those who have it at their disposal, and cannot even know how much it is their own. The subjective pre-formation of the material social production-process, entirely separate from its theoretical constitution, is that which is unresolved, irreconcilable to subjects. Their own reason which produces identity through exchange, as unconsciously as the transcendental subject, remains incommensurable to the subjects which it reduces to the same common denominator: the subject as the enemy of the subject. The preceding generality is true so much as untrue: true, because it forms that "ether", which Hegel called the Spirit; untrue, because its reason is nothing of the sort, its generality the product of particular interests.

That is why the philosophical critique of identity steps beyond philosophy. That it requires, nonetheless, what is not subsumed under identity – in Marxian terminology, use-value – so that life can continue to exist even under the ruling relations of production, is what is ineffable in utopia. It reaches deep into that which secretly forswears its realization. In view of the concrete possibility of utopia, dialectics is the ontology of the false condition. A true one would be emancipated from it, as little system as contradiction.

Disenchantment of the Concept 23-24

Philosophy, Hegel's included, invites the general objection that insofar as it would have compulsory concepts as its material, it already characterizes itself in advance as idealistic. As a matter of fact none of them, not even extreme empiricism, can haul off the *facta bruta* [Latin: brute facts] and present them like anatomical cases or physics experiments; none, as so many paintings tempt one to believe, glue specific things onto the text. But the argument in its formal generality grasps the concept as fetishistically as the manner in which it naively explicates itself within its domain, as a self-sufficient totality, which philosophical thinking cannot do anything about. In truth all concepts, even philosophical ones, move towards what is non-conceptual, because they are for their part moments of the reality, which necessitated – primarily for the purpose of controlling nature – their formation. That which appears as the conceptual mediation from the inside, the preeminence of its sphere, without which nothing could be known, may not be confused with what it is in itself. Such an appearance [Schein] of the existent-in-itself lends it the movement which exempts it from the reality, within which it is for its part harnessed. The requirement that philosophy must operate with concepts is no more to be made into a virtue of this priority than, conversely, the critique of this virtue is to be the summary verdict over philosophy. Meanwhile, the insight that its conceptual essence would not be its absolute in spite of its inseparability is again mediated through the constitution of the concept; it is no dogmatic or even naively realistic thesis. Concepts such as that of being in the beginning of Hegel's *Logic* indicate first of all that which is emphatically non-conceptual; they signify, as per Lask's expression, beyond themselves. It is in their nature not to be satisfied by their own conceptuality, although to the extent that they include the non-conceptual in their meaning, they tend to make this identical to itself and thereby remain entangled in themselves. Their content is as immanent in the intellectual sense as transcendent in the ontical sense to such. By means of the self-consciousness of this they have the capacity of discarding their fetishism. Philosophical self-reflection assures itself of the non-conceptual in the concept. Otherwise this latter would be, after Kant's dictum, null, ultimately no longer the concept of something and thereby void. The philosophy which recognizes this, which cancels out the autarky of the concept, strikes the blinders from the eyes. That the concept is a concept even when it deals with the existent, hardly changes the fact that it is for its part enmeshed in a non-conceptual whole against which it seals itself off solely through its reification, which indeed created it as a concept. The concept is a moment like any other in dialectical logic. Its mediated nature through the non-conceptual survives in it by means of its significance, which for its part finds its conceptual nature. It is characterized as much by its relation to the nonconceptual – as in keeping with traditional epistemology, where every definition of concepts ultimately requires non-conceptual, deictic moments – as the contrary, that the abstract unity of the

onta subsumed under it are to be separated from the ontical. To change this direction of conceptuality, to turn it towards the non-identical, is the hinge of negative dialectics. Before the insight into the constitutive character of the non-conceptual in the concept, the compulsion of identity, which carries along the concept without the delay of such a reflection, dissolves. Its self-determination leads away from the appearance [Schein] of the concept's being-in-itself as a unity of meaning, out towards its own meaning.

“Infinity” 24-27

The disenchantment of the concept is the antidote of philosophy. It prevents its overgrowth: that of becoming the absolute itself. An idea is to be refunctioned which was bequeathed by idealism and, more than any other, corrupted by it, that of the infinite. It is not for philosophy to reduce the phenomenon to a minimum set of axioms, exhausting things according to scientific usage; Hegel's polemic against Fichte, that the latter started out from a “dictum”, registers this. On the contrary it wishes to literally immerse itself into that which is heterogenous to it, without reducing it to prefabricated categories. It would like to adhere as closely to this as the program of phenomenology and of Simmel vainly wished for: it aims at undiminished realization [Entausserung: realization, relinquishment]. Philosophical content is to be grasped solely where philosophy does not mandate it. The illusion that it could captivate the essence in the finitude of its determinations must be given up. Perhaps the word infinite dropped so quickly from the tongues of the idealistic philosophers because they wished to hush up gnawing doubts about the threadbare finitude of their conceptual apparatus, even Hegel's, in spite of his intent. Traditional philosophy believes it possesses its object infinitely, and thereby becomes as philosophy finite, conclusive. A different one ought to cashier that claim, no longer trying to convince itself and others that it has the infinite at its disposal. Instead of this it would become, put delicately, infinite to the extent that it refuses to define itself as a corpus of enumerable theorems. It would have its content in the polyvalence of objects not organized into a scheme, which impinge on it or which it seeks out; it would truly deliver itself over to them, would not employ them as a mirror, out of which it rereads itself, confusing its mirror-image with the concretion. It would be nothing other than the full, unreduced experience in the medium of conceptual reflection; even the “science of the experience of consciousness” would degrade the content of such experiences to examples of categories. What spurs philosophy to the risky exertion of its own infinity is the unwarranted expectation that every individual and particular which it decodes would represent, as in Leibniz's monad, that whole in itself, which as such always and again eludes it; to be sure, in the manner of a prestabilized disharmony rather than harmony. The metacritical turn against *prima philosophia* [Latin: originary philosophy] is at the same time one against the finitude of a philosophy, which blusters about infinity and pays no heed to it. Cognition holds none of its objects completely. It is not supposed to prepare the fantasm of a whole. Thus it cannot be the task of a philosophical interpretation of works of art to establish their identity with the concept, to gobble them up in this; the work however develops itself through this in its truth. What may be glimpsed in this, be it the formal process of abstraction, be it the application of concepts to what is grasped under their definitions, may be of use as technics in the broadest sense: for philosophy, which refuses to suborn itself, it is irrelevant. In principle it can always go astray; solely for that reason, achieve something. Skepticism and pragmatism, latest of all Dewey's

strikingly humane version of the latter, recognized this; this is however to be added in to the ferment of an emphatic philosophy, not renounced in advance for the sake of its test of validity. Against the total domination of method, philosophy retains, correctively, the moment of play, which the tradition of its scientification would like to drive out of it. Even for Hegel this was a sore point, he reproached "...types and distinctions, which are determined by pure accident and by play, not by reason."⁶ The non-naïve thought knows how little it encompasses what is thought, and yet must always hold forth as if it had such completely in hand. It thereby approximates clowning. It may not deny its traces, not the least because they alone open up the hope of that which is forbidden to it. Philosophy is the most serious of all things, but not all that serious, after all. What aims for what is not already a priori and what it would have no statutory power over, belongs, according to its own concept, simultaneously to a sphere of the unconstrained, which was rendered taboo by the conceptual essence. The concept cannot otherwise represent the thing which it repressed, namely mimesis, than by appropriating something of this latter in its own mode of conduct, without losing itself to it. To this extent the aesthetic moment is, albeit for totally different reasons than in Schelling, not accidental to philosophy. Not the least of its tasks is to sublimate this in the committalness [Verbindlichkeit] of its insights into what is real. This latter and play are its poles. The affinity of philosophy to art does not justify the borrowing of this by the former, least of all by virtue of the intuitions which barbarians consider the prerogative of art. Even in aesthetic labor they hardly ever strike in isolation, as lightning-bolts from above. They grow out of the formal law of the construction; if one wished to titrate them out, they would melt away. Thinking by no means protects sources, whose freshness would emancipate it from thought; no type of cognition is at our disposal, which would be absolutely divergent from that which disposes over things, before which intuitionism flees panic-stricken and in vain. The philosophy which imitated art, which wanted to become a work of art, would cancel itself out. It would postulate the identity-claim: that its objects vanish into it, indeed that they grant their mode of procedure a supremacy which disposes over the heterogenous as a priori material, while the relationship of philosophy to the heterogenous is virtually thematic. What art and philosophy have in common is not form or patterning procedures, but a mode of conduct which forbids pseudomorphosis. Both keep faith with their own content through their opposition; art, by making itself obdurate against its meaning; philosophy, by not clinging to anything immediate. The philosophical concept does not dispense with the longing which animates art as something non-conceptual and whose fulfillment flees from its immediacy as appearance [Schein]. The concept, the organon of thought and nevertheless the wall [Mauer: external wall] between this and what is to be thought through, negates that longing. Philosophy can neither circumvent such negation nor submit itself to it. What is incumbent on it, is the effort to go beyond the concept, by means of the concept.

Speculative Moment 27-29

Even after renouncing idealism, it [philosophy] cannot dispense with speculation, albeit in a wider sense than Hegel's all too positive one,*1* which idealism exalted and which fell into disrepute along with it. Positivists are quick to write off Marxist materialism, which is one of objective laws of essence, which by no means proceed from immediate data or sets of axioms, as speculation. In order to purify oneself from the suspicion of

ideology, it has recently become more advantageous to call Marx a metaphysician than a class enemy. But the safe ground is a fantasm, where the truth-claim demands that one rise above it. Philosophy is not to be fobbed off with theorems which would like to talk it out of its essential interests instead of satisfying these, even if it were only by saying no. The counter-movements against Kant since the 19th century have felt this, although over and over again compromising this through obscurantism. The resistance of philosophy requires however development. Even music, and probably every art, does not instantly satisfy the impulse which animates the opening bar, but only in its articulated course. To this extent it practices, however much it is itself appearance [Schein] as a totality, a critique of appearance [Schein] through this, of the presence of content in the here and now. Such mediation befits philosophy no less. If it presumes to speak too quickly, then it is stricken with the Hegelian verdict of empty profundity. Whoever recites profundities, is no more profound than a novel is metaphysical, just because it reports on the metaphysical views of its characters. To demand of philosophy that it direct itself to the question of existence or other keynote themes of Western metaphysics is a crude fetishism of the materials. Though it is not to be separated from the objective dignity of those themes, there is however no guarantee that its treatment would correspond to the great objects in question. It has so much to fear from the well-worn paths of philosophical reflection, that its emphatic interest seeks refuge in ephemeral objects, not yet overdetermined by intentions. The traditional philosophical problematic is certainly to be negated, fettered as this is to such questions. The world which is objectively knotted into a totality does not release the consciousness. It unceasingly pins the latter down, from whence it wishes to escape; the thinking, however, which starts happy-go-lucky from the beginning, unencumbered by the historical form of its problems, falls prey to these that much more. Philosophy partakes of the idea of profundity only by virtue of its thinking breath. The model for this is, in modern times, the Kantian deduction of the pure concept of understanding, whose author, with abysmally apologetic irony, described as “somewhat profoundly put”.⁷ Profundity, too, is a moment of dialectics, no isolated quality, as Hegel did not fail to notice. According to a dreadful German tradition, thoughts which swear allegiance to the theodicy of Evil and Death figure as profound. What is silenced and swept under the rug is a theological terminus ad quem [Latin: end-point], as if its result, the confirmation of transcendence, would decide the dignity of thought, or else the mere being-for-itself, similarly for the immersion into interiority; as if the withdrawal from the world were unproblematically as one with the consciousness of the grounds of the world. By contrast, resistance to fantasms of profundity, which throughout the history of the Spirit were always well-disposed to the existing state of affairs, which they found too dull, would be its true measure. The power of the existent constructs the facades into which the consciousness crashes. It must try to break through them. This alone would snatch away the postulate from the profundity of ideology. The speculative moment survives in such resistance: what does not allow itself to be governed by the given facts, transcends them even in the closest contact with objects and in the renunciation of sacrosanct transcendence. What in thought goes beyond that to which it is bound in its resistance is its freedom. It follows the expressive urge of the subject. The need to give voice to suffering is the condition of all truth. For suffering is the objectivity which weighs on the subject; what it experiences as most subjective, its expression, is objectively mediated.

Portrayal [Darstellung] 29-31

This may help to explain why portrayal [Darstellung] is not a matter of indifference or external to philosophy, but immanent to its idea. Its integral moment of expression, non-conceptually-mimetic, becomes objectified only through portrayal – language. The freedom of philosophy is nothing other than the capacity of giving voice to this unfreedom. If the moment of expression tries to be anything more, it degenerates into a point of view; were it to relinquish the moment of expression and the obligation of portrayal, it would converge with science. Expression and stringency are not dichotomous possibilities for it. They need each other, neither is without the other. The expression is relieved of its contingency by thought, on which it works just as thought works on it. Thinking becomes, as something which is expressed, conclusive only through linguistic portrayal; what is laxly said, is badly thought. Through expression, stringency is compelled from what is expressed. It is not an end in itself at the latter's expense, but carries it off out of the thingly bad state of affairs, for its part an object of philosophical critique. Speculative philosophy without idealistic substruction demands fidelity to stringency, in order to break the latter's authoritarian power-claim. Benjamin, whose original sketch of the Arcades project combined incomparable speculative power with micrological proximity to the substance of the matter [Sachgehalten], remarked later in a correspondence concerning the first, authentically metaphysical layer of that work, that it could only be realized as something "impermissibly 'poetic'".⁸ This declaration of capitulation designates the difficulty of philosophy which does not wish to go astray, as much as the point where its concept is to be pushed further. It was probably due to the wholesale adoption of dialectical materialism as a world-view, as it were, with closed eyes. That Benjamin did not however decide on a definitive outline of the Arcades project is a reminder that philosophy is more than just bustle, only where it exposes itself to total failure, as the response to the absolute security which is traditionally smuggled in secretly. Benjamin's defeatism towards his own thought was conditioned by a remainder of undialectical positivity, which he secretly carried along from his theological phase, its form unchanged, into his dialectical one. In contrast, Hegel's equating of negativity with the thought, which philosophy shielded from the positivity of the sciences as much as from amateurish contingency, has its experience-content. To think is, already in itself and above all particular content, negation, resistance against what is imposed on it; this is what thinking inherited from the relationship of labor to its raw material, its Ur-image. If ideology encourages thought more than ever to wax in positivity, then it slyly registers the fact that precisely this would be contrary to thinking and that it requires the friendly word of advice from social authority, in order to accustom it to positivity. The effort which is implied in the concept of thinking itself, as the counterpart to the passive intuition, is already negative, the rejection of the overweening demand of bowing to everything immediate. The judgement and the conclusion, the thought-forms whose critique thought cannot dispense with either, contain critical sprouts in themselves; their determination is at most simultaneously the exclusion of what they have not achieved, and the truth which they wish to organize, repudiating, though with doubtful justification, what is not already molded by them. The judgement that something would be so, is the potential rejection that the relation of its subject and its predicate would be expressed otherwise than in the judgement. Thought-forms want to go beyond what is merely

extant, “given”. The point which thinking directs against its material is not solely the domination of nature turned spiritual. While thinking does violence upon that which it exerts its syntheses, it follows at the same time a potential which waits in what it faces, and unconsciously obeys the idea of restituting to the pieces what it itself has done; in philosophy this unconsciousness becomes conscious. The hope of reconciliation is conjoined to irreconcilable thinking, because the resistance of thinking against the merely existent, the domineering freedom of the subject, also intends in the object what, through its preparation to the object, was lost to this latter.

Relation to System 31-33

Traditional speculation has developed the synthesis of what, on Kantian grounds, was thought of as a chaotic polyvalence, ultimately attempting to shake off any sort of content. In contrast the telos of philosophy, that which is open and unveiled, is as anti-systematic as its freedom to relay the phenomena, with which it non-violently [unbewehrt] absorbs. It continues to pay heed to the system, to the extent that what is heterogenous to it faces it as a system. The administered world moves in this direction. The system is the negative objectivity, not the positive subject. In a historical phase where the systems, insofar as they take content seriously, have been relegated to the ominous realm of thought-poetry and have left only the pale outline of organizational schematas behind, it is difficult to really imagine what once drove the philosophical Spirit towards the system. The virtue of partisanship ought not to hinder the consideration of the history of philosophy from recognizing how superior this latter was to its opponents, for over two hundred years, rationalistic or idealistic; they appear, in comparison, trivial. The systems carry it out, interpret the world; the others actually insist only: that won't do; they resign, refraining [Versagen: to refrain, to fail] in both senses of the term. If they had had more truth in the end, this would have bespoken the transience of philosophy. It is incumbent on it, in any case, to wrest such truth from subalternity and to use it to combat those philosophies which not only puff themselves up as something higher; even materialism bears the marks, to this day, that it was invented in Abdera. According to Nietzsche's critique, the system documents only the narrow-mindedness of the educated, who compensated for their political powerlessness by means of the conceptual construction of an administrative right-of-domain, as it were, over the existent. But the systematic need – that which prefers not to disport itself with the membra disiecta [Latin: dissected members] of knowledge, but achieves it absolutely, whose claim is already involuntarily raised in the conclusiveness of every specific judgement – was at times more than the pseudomorphosis of the Spirit into irresistibly successful mathematical, natural-scientific methods. In the history of philosophy the systems of the seventeenth century had an especially compensatory purpose. The same ratio which, in unison with the interests of the bourgeois class, smashed the feudal order of society and its intellectual reflection, scholastic ontology, into rubble, promptly felt the fear of chaos while facing the ruins, their own handiwork. They trembled before what ominously continued under their realm of domination and which waxed in proportion to their own power. This fear shaped the earliest beginnings of the mode of conduct entirely constitutive of bourgeois thought, of hurriedly neutralizing every step towards emancipation through the strengthening of the social order. In the shadows of the incompleteness of its emancipation, the bourgeois consciousness had to fear being

cashiered by a more progressive class; it suspected that because it was not the entire freedom, it only produced the travesty of such; that is why it expanded its autonomy theoretically into the system, which at the same time took on the likeness of its compulsory mechanisms. The bourgeois ratio undertook to produce the social order out of itself which it had already negated outside. Once produced, however, this latter is already nothing of the sort any more; therefore insatiable. The system was just such a nonsensically-rationally produced social order: a set-up [Gesetztes] which appears as a being-in-itself. Its origins had to be relocated into a formal thinking which was split off from its content; it could not otherwise exert its mastery over the material. The philosophical system was from the very beginning antinomical. Its very first signs were delimited by its own impossibility; exactly this had condemned, in the earlier history of the modern systems, each to annihilation by the next. The ratio which, in order to push itself through as a system, rooted out virtually all qualitative determinations which it referred to, ended up in irreconcilable contradiction with the objectivity to which it did violence, by pretending to comprehend it. It became all the more removed from this, the more completely it subjugated this to its axioms, finally to the one of identity. The pedantry of all systems, all the way to the architectonic ponderousness of Kant and, in spite of his program, even Hegel, are marks of an a priori conditional failure, documented with incomparable honesty by the rifts of the Kantian system; in Moliere pedantry is already the centerpiece of the ontology of the bourgeois Spirit. What shrinks back from the identity of the concept in what is to be comprehended, compels this to outrichten [French: excessive] organization, so that no doubts are raised as to the unimpeachable seamlessness, closure and acrimony of the thought-product. Great philosophy was always accompanied by the paranoid zeal to tolerate nothing but itself, and to pursue this with all the ruses of its reason, while this constantly withdraws further and further from the pursuit. The slightest remainder of non-identity would suffice, totally according to its concept, to deny identity. The excrescences of the systems since the Cartesian pineal gland and the axioms and definitions of Spinoza, already filled to the brim with the entire rationalism which he then deductively extracts, proclaim by their untruth that of the systems themselves, their madness.

Idealism as Rage 33-35

The system by which the sovereign Spirit thought to transfigure itself has its Ur-history in that which is pre-intellectual, in the animal life of the species. Predators are hungry; the pounce onto the prey is difficult, often dangerous. The animal needs, as it were, additional impulses in order to dare this. These fuse with the displeasure [Unlust] of hunger into rage at the victim, whose expression is designed to terrify and weaken the latter. During the progression to humanity this is rationalized through projection. The animal rationale [French: rational animal] which is hungry for its opponent, already the fortunate owner of a super-ego, must have a reason. The more completely that what it does follows the law of self-preservation, the less it may confess the primacy of this to itself and others; otherwise its laboriously achieved status as a *zoon politikon* [Greek: political animal] loses, as modern German puts it, credibility. The life-form to be devoured must be evil. This anthropological schemata has been sublimated all the way into epistemology. In idealism – most obviously in Fichte – the ideology unconsciously rules that the non-Ego, l'autrui [French: the others], finally everything reminiscent of

nature, is inferior, so that the unity of the thought bent on preserving itself may gobble it up, thus consoled. This justifies its principle as much as it increases the desire. The system is the Spirit turned belly, rage the signature of each and every idealism; it distorts even Kant's humanity, dispelling the nimbus of that which is higher and more noble in which this knew how to clothe itself. The opinion of the person in the middle is the sibling of contempt for human beings: to let nothing go undisputed. The sublime inexorability of moral law was of a piece with such rationalized rage at the non-identical, and even the liberal Hegel was no better, when he walled off the superiority of the bad conscience, from those who demurred from the speculative concept, the hypostasis of the Spirit.*2* What was emancipatory in Nietzsche, a true turning-point of Western thinking, which later versions merely usurped, was that he expressed such mysteries. The Spirit, which throws off its rationalization – its bane – ceases by virtue of its own self-reflection to be that which is radically evil, which irritates it in the Other. – The process, however, wherein the systems decomposed by means of their own insufficiency, counterpoints a social one. As the exchange-principle the bourgeois ratio came to resemble that which it made commensurable – wished to identify – with itself, the real one of the systems, with increasing albeit potentially murderous success, leaving less and less outside. What proved to be idle in theory was ironically confirmed by praxis. This is why the talk of the crisis of the system has become so popular as an ideology, even among those types who previously could not issue forth enough rancorous bombast against the aperçu, according to the system's own already obsolete ideal. Reality is not supposed to be construed anymore, because it would be all too thoroughly construed. Its irrationality, which strengthens itself under the pressure of particular rationalities – disintegration through integration – provides pretexts for this. If society could be seen through as a closed and hence irreconcilable system to its subjects, it would become all too embarrassing to those subjects, as long as they were anything of the sort. The alleged existential angst is the claustrophobia of the system become society. Its system-character, yesterday still the shibboleth of scholastic philosophy, is strenuously denied by its adepts; they shamelessly pass themselves off as spokespersons for free, primordial, where possible non-academic thinking. Such misuse does not annul the critique of the system. All emphatic philosophy had, in contrast to the skeptical kind, which renounced emphasis, one thing in common, that it would be possible only as a system. This has crippled philosophy scarcely less than its empirical currents. Whatever it might be able to appropriately judge is postulated before it arises. System, the form of portrayal of a totality in which nothing remains external, sets the thought in absolute opposition to each of its contents and dissolves the content in thought: idealistically, before any argumentation for idealism.

Double Character of the System 35-36

Critique does not simply liquidate the system. At the height of the Enlightenment, D'Alembert had reason to differentiate between *esprit de système* [French: spirit of the system] and *esprit systématique* [French: systemic spirit], and the method of the Encyclopedia took this into account. Not only the trivial motive of an attachment which instead crystallizes out in what is unattached speaks for the *esprit systématique*; it is not only that it satisfies the bureaucratic ambition to stuff everything into its categories. The form of the system is adequate to the world in which the content eludes the hegemony of thought; unity and unanimity are however at the same time the oblique projections of a

contented, no longer antagonistic condition on the coordinates of dominating, repressive thinking. The double meaning of philosophical systematics leaves no choice but to transpose the energy of thought once unbound from the philosophical systems into the open determination of particular moments. This was not exactly foreign to Hegelian logic. The micro-analysis of the individual categories, appearing simultaneously as their objective self-reflection, was supposed to allow each and every concept to pass over into others, regardless of anything laid out from above. The totality of this movement meant the system to him. Between this concept, as the one which concludes and thereby brings to a halt, and the one of the dynamic, which creates out of the subject by pure autarkic production, which constitutes all philosophic systematics, prevails contradiction as well as affinity. Hegel could balance the tension between the static and the dynamic only by means of the construction of the principle of unity, that of the Spirit, as something at the same time existent in itself and pure becoming, under the recuperation of the Aristotelean-scholastic *actus purus* [Latin: pure act]. The inadequacy of this construction – subjective production and ontology, nominalism and realism, syncopated to the Archimedean point – also hinders system-immanently the dissolution of that tension. Nevertheless such a philosophical system-concept towers over the merely scientific systematic which demands ordered and well-organized representations from thought, the consistent construction of disciplinary fields, without however strictly insisting on the inner unity of the moments, from the object's point of view. As prejudiced as this postulate is in the presupposition of the identity of everything existent with the cognizing principle, so too does that postulate, once burdened as in the manner of the idealistic speculation, legitimately recall the affinity of objects to each another, which is rendered taboo by the scientific need for order in order to yield to the surrogate of its schemata. What the objects communicate in, instead of each being the atom to which classificatory logic reduces it, is the trace of the determination of objects in themselves, which Kant denied and which Hegel wished to reestablish against Kant through the subject. To comprehend a thing itself, not to merely fit it in, to register it in a system of relationships, is nothing other than to become aware of the particular moment in its immanent context with others. Such anti-subjectivism stirs beneath the crackling shell of absolute idealism, in the impulse to open up the thing in question, by recourse to how they became. The concept of a system recalls, in inverted form, the coherence of the non-identical, which is exactly what is damaged by deductive systematics. Critique of the system and asystematic thinking are superficial, so long as they do not make it possible to unbind the power of coherence, which the idealistic systems signed over to the transcendental subject.

System Antinomial 36-39

The system-producing ego principle, the prescribed method purified of every sort of content, was from time immemorial the ratio. It is not delimited by anything outside of it, nor through so-called intellectual orders. If idealism attested to its principle of positive infinity at all of its stages, then it made the constitutive nature of thinking, its historical autonomization, into metaphysics. It eliminated everything heterogenous in the existent. This defined the system as pure becoming, pure process, ultimately as that absolute creation which Fichte, to this extent the authentic systematizer of philosophy, declared philosophy as being. Already in Kant the emancipated ratio, the *progressus ad infinitum*,

was held together solely through the at least formal recognition of the non-identical. The antinomy of totality and infinity – for the restless *Ad infinitum* explodes the self-contained system, which nevertheless exists solely thanks to the infinite – is that of idealistic essence. It mimics a central feature of bourgeois society. This too must, in order to preserve itself, to stay the same, to “be”, constantly expand, go further, push the borders ever further, respect no limits, not stay the same.⁹ It has been demonstrated to it that as soon as it reached a level where it could no longer dispose over non-capitalist realms outside of itself, then according to its own concept it would have to sublimate itself. This makes it clear why, Aristoteles notwithstanding, the modern concept of dynamics was as inappropriate to antiquity as the system. Even in Plato, who chose the aporetic form for so many of his dialogues, both could be imputed only retrospectively. The censure which Kant consequently applied to the old man is not simply logical, as he held, but historical: modern through and through. On the other hand systematics is so ingrown into the modern consciousness that even the anti-systematic efforts of Husserl, which took the field under the name of ontology, and from which fundamental ontology later branched off, irresistibly reverted back into the system, at the price of its formalization. Thus delimited by each other, the static and dynamic essence of the system are always in conflict. If the system really was in fact closed, and tolerated nothing outside of its magic circle, then it becomes, be it ever so dynamically conceived, finite as a positive infinity, static. That it sustains itself as such, as Hegel praised his own for doing, brings it to a halt. Closed systems have to be, put crudely, done. The drolleries for which Hegel is always taken to task, that world-history was consummated in the Prussian state, are neither mere aberrations for ideological purposes nor irrelevant in regards to the whole. In their necessary absurdity, the emphatic unity of system and dynamic falls apart. This latter, by negating the concept of the limit and assuring itself, in the realm of theory, that something would always still be outside, also has the tendency to disavow the system, its product. It would not be unfruitful to examine the history of recent philosophy under this aspect, namely how it managed to deal with the antagonism between the static and dynamic in the system. The Hegelian one was not truly in itself one of becoming, but was already implicitly preconceived in each particular determination. Such assurance condemned it to untruth. Consciousness must immerse itself unconsciously, as it were, into the phenomena on which it takes a position. Therein indeed dialectics transforms itself qualitatively. Systematic unanimity would fall apart. The phenomenon would no longer remain what it nevertheless remains in Hegel, in spite of all declarations to the contrary, namely an example of its concept. The thought would be burdened with more labor and effort than in Hegel’s definition, because to him thought always only extracted out of its objects what was already thought. In spite of the program of realization [Entaeussung], it satisfies itself in itself, whirring right along as often as it demands the contrary. If the thought truly realized itself [entaeussern] in the thing, if this counted for something and not its category, then the object itself would begin to speak under the thought’s leisurely glance. Hegel had objected to epistemology, that one becomes a smith only by smithing, in the consummation of the cognition of what resists this, the atheoretical, as it were. In this he is to be taken at his word; this alone would return to philosophy what Hegel called the freedom towards the object [Freiheit zum Objekt], which this latter lost under the bane of the concept of freedom, the sense-positing autonomy of the subject. However the speculative power to blast open that which is

irresolvable is that of the negation. Solely in it does the systematic movement live on. The categories of the critique of the system are at the same time those which comprehend the particular. What has once legitimately stepped beyond the particularity in the system has its place outside of the system. The gaze which becomes aware, by interpreting the phenomenon, of more than what it merely is, and solely thereby, what it is, secularizes metaphysics. Only a philosophy in fragment form would give the illusionary monads sketched by idealism what is their due. They would be representations [Vorstellungen] of the totality, which is inconceivable as such, in the particular.

Argument and Experience 39-42

The thought which may positively hypostasize nothing outside of the dialectical consummation overshoots the object with which it no longer has the illusion of being one with; it becomes more independent than in the conception of its absoluteness, in which the sovereign and the provisional shade into one another, each dependent on the other. Perhaps the Kantian exemption of the intelligible sphere from every immanence aimed for this. Immersion into the particular, dialectical immanence raised to an extreme, requires as one of its moments the freedom to also step out of the object, the freedom which the claim of identity cuts off. Hegel would have abjured this; he relied upon the complete mediation in objects. In the praxis of cognition, the resolution of the irresolvable, the moment of such transcendence of thought comes to light in that solely as a micrology does it employ macrological means. The demand for committalness [Verbindlichkeit] without system is that for thought-models. These are not of a merely monadological sort. The model strikes the specific and more than the specific, without dissolving it into its more general master-concept. To think philosophically is so much as to think in models; negative dialectics is an ensemble of model-analyses. Philosophy debases itself into apologetic affirmation the moment it deceives itself and others over the fact that whatever sets its objects into motion must also influence these from outside. What awaits within these, requires a foothold in order to speak, with the perspective that the forces mobilized from outside, and in the end every theory applied to the phenomena, would come to rest in those. To this extent, too, philosophical theory means its own end: through its realization. There is no lack of related intentions throughout history. The French Enlightenment was endowed by its highest concept, that of reason, with something systematic under the formal aspect; however the constitutive entanglement of its idea of reason with that of an objectively reasonable arrangement of society deprives the system of the pathos, which it only regained when reason renounced the idea of its realization and absolutized itself into the Spirit. Thinking akin to the encyclopedia, as something rationally organized and nevertheless discontinuous, unsystematic and spontaneous, expressed the self-critical Spirit of reason. It represented what was erased from philosophy, as much through its increasing distance from praxis as through its incorporation into the academic bustle: worldly experience, that eye for reality, whose moment is also that of thought. The freedom of the Spirit is nothing else. Thought can no more do without the element of the homme de lettres [French: person of education] which the petit bourgeois scientific ethos maligns, than without what the scientific philosophies misuse, the meditative drawing-together, the argument, which earned so much skepticism. Whenever philosophy was truly substantial, both moments appeared together. From a distance, dialectics could be characterized as the effort raised to self-

consciousness of letting itself be permeated by such. Otherwise the specialized argument degenerates into the technics of non-conceptual experts in the midst of the concept, just as nowadays so-called analytic philosophy, memorizable and copyable by robots, is disseminated academically. What is immanently argumentative is legitimate where it registers the integrated reality become system, in order to oppose it with its own strength. What is on the other hand free in thought represents the authority which is already aware of what is emphatically untrue of that context. Without this knowledge it would not have come to the breakout, without the appropriation of the power of the system it would have failed. That both moments do not seamlessly meld into one another is due to the real power of the system, which includes that which also potentially surpasses it. However the untruth of the context of immanence discloses itself in the overwhelming experience that the world, which is as systematically organized as if it were truly that realized reason Hegel so glorified, simultaneously perpetuates the powerlessness of the Spirit, apparently so all-powerful, in its old unreason. The immanent critique of idealism defends idealism, to the extent it shows how far it is defrauded by itself; how much that which is first, which is according to such always the Spirit, stands in complicity with the blind primacy of the merely existent [Seiendes]. The doctrine of the absolute Spirit immediately promotes this latter. – The scientific consensus would probably concede that even experience would imply theory. It is however a “standpoint”, at best hypothetical. Conciliatory representatives of scientivism demand what they call proper or clean science, which is supposed to account for these sorts of presuppositions. Exactly this demand is incompatible with intellectual experience. If a standpoint is demanded of the latter, then it would be that of the diner to the roast. It lives by ingesting such; only when the latter disappears into the former, would there be philosophy. Until this point theory embodies that discipline in intellectual experience which already embarrassed Goethe in relation to Kant. If experience relied solely on its dynamic and good fortune, there would be no stopping. Ideology lurks in the Spirit which, dazzled with itself like Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, irresistibly becomes well-nigh absolute. Theory prevents this. It corrects the naivete of its self-confidence, without forcing it to sacrifice the spontaneity which theory for its part wishes to get at. By no means does the difference between the so-called subjective share of intellectual experience and its object vanish; the necessary and painful exertion of the cognizing subject testifies to it. In the unreconciled condition, non-identity is experienced as that which is negative. The subject shrinks away from this, back onto itself and the fullness of its modes of reaction. Only critical self-reflection protects it from the limitations of its fullness and from building a wall [Wand: interior wall] between itself and the object, indeed from presupposing its being-for-itself as the in-itself and for-itself. The less the identity between the subject and object can be ascertained, the more contradictory what is presumed to cognize such, the unfettered strength and open-minded self-consciousness. Theory and intellectual experience require their reciprocal effect. The former does not contain answers for everything, but reacts to a world which is false to its innermost core. Theory would have no jurisdiction over what would be free of the bane of such. The ability to move is essential to consciousness, not an accidental characteristic. It signifies a double procedure: that of the inside out, the immanent process, the authentically dialectical, and a free one, something unfettered which steps out of dialectics, as it were. Neither of them are however disparate. The unregimented thought has an elective affinity to dialectics, which as critique of the system recalls to

mind what would be outside of the system; and the energy which dialectical movement in cognition unleashes is that which rebels against the system. Both positions of consciousness are connected to one another through each other's critique, not through compromise.

The Vertiginous 42-43

A dialectics which is no longer "pinned"¹⁰ to identity provokes, if not the objection of bottomlessness, which is to be recognized by its fascist fruits, then that of the vertiginous. This feeling has been central to great modern poetry since Baudelaire; philosophy, runs the anachronistic suggestion, ought not to participate in any such thing. You're supposed to say what you want; Karl Kraus had to learn that the more exactly each of his sentences was expressed, the more the reified consciousness bemoaned just such precision, as making their heads swim. The meaning of such complaints is to be grasped in a usage of the dominant opinion. This refers to present alternatives in such a way that one would have to choose between one or the other. Administrations frequently reduce decisions over plans submitted to it to a simple yes or no; administrative thinking has secretly become the longed-for model of one which pretends to be free of such. But it is up to philosophical thought, in its essential situations, not to play along. The given alternative is already a piece of heteronomy. Only that consciousness whose decision is moralistically presumed in advance would be able to judge the legitimacy of alternative demands. The insistence on professing to a standpoint is the extended coercion of the conscience into theory. It corresponds to a coarsening. Not even the truth of the great theorems can survive the uprooting of their scaffolding; Marx and Engels for example objected mightily to the dilution of their dynamic class-theory and its sharpened economic expression by the simpler opposition of rich and poor. The essence is falsified by the resume of that which is essential. A philosophy which reduces itself to what Hegel already mocked – accommodating its readers by declarations, of what one would now have to think – conjoins itself to the onrushing regression, without even keeping pace with such. Behind the anxiety of where things need to be taken on stands, for the most part, only aggression, the desire to take things on, just as the schools historically devoured each another. The equivalent of guilt and penance has transposed itself onto the sequence of thought. Exactly this assimilation of the Spirit into the dominating principle is what philosophical reflection must see through. Traditional thinking and the platitudes of the sound human understanding which it left behind, after perishing philosophically, demand a coordinate-system, a "frame of reference" [in English], in which everything finds its place. Not too much value is attached to the intelligibility of the coordinate-system – it may even be expressed in dogmatic axioms – insofar as every reflection is localizable and unaffiliated [ungedekte] thoughts are kept at a distance. In contrast to this, the cognition throws itself à fond perdu [French: into the depths] at objects, so as to be fruitful. The vertigo which this creates is an index veri [Latin: index of truth]; the shock of the revelation, the negativity, or what it necessarily seems to be amidst what is hidden and monotonous, untruth only for the untrue.

Fragility of the Truth 43-45

The demolition of the systems and of the system is no formal-epistemological act. What in any case the system wished to supply in the details is to be sought out solely in these.

Neither whether it is still there, nor what it might be, is granted to thought in advance. Therein the thoroughly misused talk of the truth as something concrete would at last come into its own. It compels thinking to linger before the smallest of all things. Not about the concrete, but on the contrary out from this, is what needs to be philosophized. The dedication to the specific object becomes suspect however due to a lack of an unequivocal position. What is different from the existent is regarded by such as witchcraft, while in the false world nearness, homeland and security are for their part figures of the bane. With these human beings fear they will lose everything, because they have no other happiness, also none within thought, than what you can hold on to yourself, perennial unfreedom. What is demanded is at the very least a piece of ontology in the midst of its critique; as if not even the smallest unaffiliated [ungedekte] insight could better express what is wished for, than a “declaration of intention” [in English] which stays at that. This confirms an experience in philosophy which Schoenberg noted in traditional musical theory: you only really learn from this how a passage begins and ends, but nothing about it itself, its trajectory. Analogous to this, philosophy ought not to reduce itself to categories but in a certain sense should compose itself [komponieren: to compose musically]. It must continually renew itself in its course, out of its own power just as much as out of the friction with that which it measures itself by; what it bears within itself is decisive, not the thesis or position; the web, not the inductive or deductive, one-track course of thought. That is why philosophy is essentially not reportable. Otherwise it would be superfluous; that it for the most part allows itself to be reported, speaks against it. But a mode of conduct which protects nothing as the first or the secure, and yet, solely by power of the determination of its portrayal, makes so few concessions to relativism, the brother of absolutism, that it approaches a doctrine, causes offence. It drives past Hegel, whose dialectic must have everything, and yet also wished to be prima philosophia (and in the identity-principle, the absolute subject, was indeed this), to the breaking-point. The jettisoning of that which is first and solidified from thought does not absolutize it as something free-floating. Exactly this jettisoning attaches it all the more to what it itself is not, and removes the illusion of its autarky. The falsity of the jettisoned rationality which runs away from itself, the recoil of Enlightenment into mythology, is itself rationally determinable. Thinking is according to its own meaning the thinking of something. Even in the logical abstraction-form of the Something, as something which is meant or judged, which for its part does not claim to constitute anything existent, indelibly survives that which thinking would like to cancel out, whose non-identity is that which is not thinking. The ratio becomes irrational where it forgets this, hypostasizing its own creations, the abstractions, contrary to the meaning of thinking. The commandment of its autarky condemns it to nullity, in the end to stupidity and primitivity. The objection of bottomlessness needs to be turned against the intellectual principle which preserves itself as the sphere of absolute origins; there however, where ontology, Heidegger first and foremost, hits bottomlessness, is the place of truth. It sways gently, fragile due to its temporal content; Benjamin penetratingly criticized Gottfried Keller’s Ur-bourgeois maxim that the truth cannot run away from us. Philosophy must dispense with the consolation that the truth cannot be lost. One which cannot fall into the abyss, of which the fundamentalists of metaphysics prattle – it is not that of agile sophistics but that of insanity – turns, under the commandment of its principle of security, analytical, potentially into tautology. Only those thoughts which go to extremes can face up to the

all-powerful powerlessness of certain agreement; only mental acrobatics relate to the thing, which according to the fable *convenu* [French: agreed-upon fiction] it holds in contempt for the sake of its self-satisfaction. No unreflective banality can, as the imprint of the false life, still be true. Every attempt today to hold back thought, for the sake of its utility, by talk of its smug overwroughtness and non-committal aspect [Unverbindlichkeit], is reactionary. The argument can be summarized in its vulgar form: if you want, I can give you any number of such analyses. Therein each becomes devalued by every other. Peter Altenberg gave the answer to someone who in a similar fashion was suspicious of his compressed forms: but I don't want to. The open thought is unprotected against the risk of going astray into what is popular; nothing notifies it that it has adequately satisfied itself in the thing, in order to withstand that risk. The consistency of its execution, however, the density of the web, enables it to hit what it should. The function of the concept of certainty in philosophy has utterly recoiled. What once wished to overtake dogma and tutelage through self-certainty became the social insurance policy of a cognition which does allow anything to happen. Nothing in fact happens to anything which is completely unobjectionable.

Against Relativism 45-48

In the history of philosophy, epistemological categories have repeatedly been transformed into moral ones; Fichte's interpretation of Kant is the most striking example, though far from the only one. Something similar occurred with logical-phenomenological absolutism. For fundamental ontologists the offence of bottomless thought is relativism. Dialectics opposes this as sharply as it does absolutism; not by seeking a middle position between the two, but through the extremes, which convict them of untruth according to their own ideas. To proceed in this manner against relativism is long overdue, because its critique was for the most part so formally applied, that it permitted the fiber of relativistic thinking to remain more or less untouched. The popular argument against Spengler since Leonard Nelson, that relativism presupposes an absolute, namely its own validity and thus contradicts itself, is wretched. It confuses the general negation of a principle with its own ascent to an affirmation, without consideration of the specific difference of the positional value of both. It would be more fruitful to cognize relativism as a delimited form of consciousness. At first it was that of bourgeois individualism, which for its part took the mediated individual consciousness through the generality for the ultimate and thus accorded the opinions of every single individual the same right, as if there were no criterion of their truth. The abstract thesis of the conditionality of every thought is to be most concretely reminded of that of its own, the blindness towards the supra-individual moment, through which individual consciousness alone becomes thought. Behind this thesis stands a contempt of the Spirit which prefers the primacy of material relationships, as the only thing which should count. The father's reply to the uncomfortable and decided views of his son is, everything is relative, that money, as in the Greek saying, maketh the man. Relativism is vulgar materialism, thought disturbs the business. Utterly hostile towards the Spirit, such an attitude remains necessarily abstract. The relativity of all cognition can only be maintained from without, for so long as no conclusive cognition is achieved. As soon as consciousness enters into a determinate thing and poses its immanent claim to truth or falsehood, the presumably subjective contingency of the thought falls away. Relativism is null and void simply because, what it on the one hand

considers popular and contingent, and on the other hand holds to be irreducible, originates out of objectivity – precisely that of an individualistic society – and is to be deduced as socially necessary appearance [Schein]. The modes of reaction which according to relativistic doctrine are unique to each individual, are preformed, always practically the bleating of sheep; especially the stereotype of relativity. Individualistic appearance [Schein] is then extended by the cannier relativists such as Pareto to group interests. But the strata-specific bounds of objectivity laid down by the sociology of knowledge are for their part only deducible from the whole of the society, from that which is objective. If Mannheim's late version of sociological relativism imagined it could distill scientific objectivity out of the various perspectives of social strata with "free-floating" intelligence, then it inverts that which conditions into the conditioned. In truth divergent perspectives have their law in the structure of the social process, as one of a preestablished whole. Through its cognition they lose their non-committal aspect. An entrepreneur who does not wish to be crushed by the competition must calculate so that the unpaid part of the yield of alienated labor falls to him as a profit, and must think that like for like – labor-power versus its cost of reproduction – is thereby exchanged; it can just as stringently be shown, however, why this objectively necessary consciousness is objectively false. This dialectical relationship sublates its particular moments in itself. The presumed social relativity of the intuitions obeys the objective law of social production under private ownership of the means of production. Bourgeois skepticism, which embodies relativism as a doctrine, is narrow-minded. Yet the perennial hostility to the Spirit is more than a feature of subjective bourgeois anthropology. It is due to the fact that the concept of reason inside of the existing relations of production, once emancipated, must fear that its own trajectory will explode this. This is why reason delimits itself; during the entire bourgeois epoch, the idea of the autonomy of the Spirit was accompanied by its reactive self-loathing. It cannot forgive itself for the fact that the constitution of the existence it controls forbids that development into freedom, which lies in its own concept. Relativism is the philosophical expression of this; no dogmatic absolutism need be summoned against it, the proof of its own narrowness crushes it. Relativism was always well-disposed towards reaction, no matter how progressive its bearing, already displaying its availability for the stronger interest in antiquity. The critique of relativism which intervenes is the paradigm of determinate negation.

Dialectics and The Solidified 48-50

Unfettered dialectics does not dispense with anything solid any more than Hegel. Rather it no longer accords it primacy. Hegel did not emphasize it so much in the origins of his metaphysics: it was supposed to emerge at the end, as the thoroughly illuminated whole. That is why his logical categories have their own peculiar double character. They are emergent, self-sublating and at the same time a priori, invariant structures. They are brought into harmony with the dynamic through the doctrine of an immediacy which reproduces itself anew at every dialectical level. Hegel's already critically tinged theory of a second nature is not lost to negative dialectics. It takes the unmediated immediacy, the formations, which society and its development present to thought, *tel quel* [French: as such], in order to reveal their mediations through analysis, according to the measure of the immanent difference of the phenomena to what they claim, for their own part, to be. That which holds itself together as solid, the "positive" of the young Hegel, is the

negative of such analyses, just like his. Thought, archenemy of that positivity, is still characterized as the negative principle in the preface to the Phenomenology.^{*3*} Even the simplest reflection leads to this: what does not think, but yields itself to the intuition, tends towards the bad positive by virtue of that passive constitution, which in the critique of reason indicated the sensory source of the right of knowledge. To perceive something so, simply as it offers itself, while renouncing reflection, is always potentially tantamount to recognizing it, as it is; by contrast, virtually every thought causes a negative movement. In Hegel to be sure the primacy of the subject over the object remains, despite all assertions to the contrary, undisputed. It is merely hidden in the semi-theological word Spirit [Geist: mind, spirit], in which the memory of individual subjectivity cannot be erased. The Hegelian Logic foots the bill for this in its thoroughly formal character. While it must according to its own concept be substantive, it excises, in its effort to be everything at the same time, metaphysics and a doctrine of categories, the determinate existent out of itself, in which its beginnings could have legitimated itself; therein not so far away from Kant and Fichte, who Hegel never tired of denouncing as the spokespersons for abstract subjectivity. The Science of Logic is for its part abstract in the simplest sense; the reduction of general concepts already uproots in advance the counterforce [Widerspiel] to such, that which is concrete, which idealistic dialectics boasts of harboring in itself and developing. The Spirit wins the battle against the non-existent enemy. Hegel's slighting remark on contingent existence, the Krugian feather which philosophy scorns to deduce out of itself and yet must, is a "stop thief". Since Hegelian logic always had to do with the medium of the concept and only generally reflected on the relationship of the concept to its content, the non-conceptual, it is already assured in advance of the absoluteness of the concept, which it was bent on proving. The more the autonomy of subjectivity is seen through critically, the more it becomes aware of itself as something mediated for its part, the more conclusive the obligation of thought to take up what solidity has brought to it, which it does not have in itself. Otherwise there could not even be that dynamic, by which dialectics moved the burden of that which is solid. Not every experience which appears to be primary is to be denied point-blank. If the experience of consciousness wholly lacked what Kierkegaard defended as naivete, then thinking would do that which is expected of it by what is established, would go astray in itself, and would become quite naïve. Even termini such as Ur-experience, compromised through phenomenology and neo-ontology, designate something true, while they haughtily damage it. If they did not spontaneously create resistance against the façade, heedless of their own dependencies, then thought and activity would only be dim copies. What in the object goes beyond the determinations laid upon it by thinking, returns firstly to the subject as something immediate; where the subject feels itself to be quite certain of itself, in the primary experience, it is once again least of all a subject. That which is most subjective of all, the immediately given, eludes its grasp. Yet such immediate consciousness is neither continuously held fast nor positive pure and simple. For consciousness is at the same time the universal mediation and cannot leap, even in the *données immédiates* [French: given facts] which are its own, over its shadow. They are not the truth. The confidence that the whole seamlessly emerges out of that which is immediate, solid and simply primary, is idealistic appearance [Schein]. To dialectics immediacy does not remain what it immediately expresses. It becomes a moment instead of the grounds. At the opposite pole, the same thing happens to the invariants of pure

thought. Solely a childlike relativism would dispute the validity of formal logic or mathematics and denounce them, because they have come to be, as ephemeral. However the invariants whose own invariance is something produced are not to be peeled out of what varies, as if one had all truth in one's hands. This grew together with that which is substantive to the matter [Sachhaltigen], which changes, and its immutability is the deception of prima philosophia [Latin: originary philosophy]. While invariants do not melt away into the historical dynamic in quite the same way as in consciousness, they are moments in it; they pass over into ideology, as soon as they are solidified as transcendence. Explicitly idealistic philosophy is by no means always ideology. It hides in the substruction of something primary, almost indifferent as to which content, in the implicit identity of concept and thing, which the world then justifies, even when the dependence of consciousness on being is summarily taught.

Privilege of Experience 50-53

In sharp contrast to the usual scientific ideal, the objectivity of dialectical cognition needs more subject, not less. Otherwise philosophical experience shrivels. But the positivistic spirit of the epoch is allergic to this. Not everyone is supposed to be capable of such experience. It is held to be the prerogative of individuals, determined through their natural talents and life-history; to demand this as the condition of cognition, so runs the argument, would be elitist and undemocratic. It is to be conceded that not everyone in fact is capable of the same sort of philosophical experiences, in the way that all human beings of comparable intelligence ought to be able to reproduce experiments in the natural sciences or mathematical proofs, although according to current opinion quite specific talents are necessary for this. In any case the subjective quotient of philosophy, compared with the virtually subjectless rationality of a scientific ideal which posits the substitutability of everyone with everyone else, retains an irrational adjunct. It is no natural quality. While the argument pretends to be democratic, it ignores what the administered world makes of its compulsory members. Only those who are not completely modeled after it can intellectually undertake something against it. The critique of privilege becomes a privilege: so dialectical is the course of the world. It would be fictitious to presume that everyone could understand or even be aware of all things, under historical conditions, especially those of education, which bind, spoon-feed and cripple the intellectual forces of production many times over; under the prevailing image-poverty; and under those pathological processes of early childhood diagnosed but by no means changed by psychoanalysis. If this was expected, then one would arrange cognition according to the pathic features of a humanity, for whom the possibility of experience is driven out through the law of monotony, insofar as they possessed it in the first place. The construction of the truth according to the analogy of the *volonté de tous* [French: popular will] – the most extreme consequence of the subjective concept of reason – would betray everyone of everything which they need, in everyone's name. To those who have had the undeserved good fortune to not be completely adjusted in their inner intellectual composition to the prevailing norms – a stroke of luck, which they often enough have to pay for in terms of their relationship to the immediate environment – it is incumbent to make the moralistic and, as it were, representative effort to express what the majority, for whom they say it, are not capable of seeing or, to do justice to reality, will not allow themselves to see. The criterion of truth is not its immediate communicability

to everyone. The almost universal compulsion to confuse the communication of that which is cognized with this former, all too often ranking the latter as higher, is to be resisted; while at present, every step towards communication sells truth out and falsifies it. In the meantime, everything to do with language labors under this paradox. Truth is objective and not plausible. So little as it immediately falls into anyone's lap, and so much as it requires subjective mediation, what counts for its imbrication is what Spinoza all too enthusiastically proclaimed for the specific truth: that it would be the index of itself. It loses its privileged character, which rancor holds against it, by not allowing itself to be talked out of the experiences to which it owes itself, but rather allows itself to enter into configurations and explanatory contexts which help make it evident or convict it of its inadequacies. Elitist arrogance has not the least place in philosophical experience. It must give an account of how much, according to its own possibility in the existent, it is contaminated with the existent, with the class relationship. In it, the chances which the universal desultorily affords to individuals turn against that universal, which sabotages the universality of such experience. If this universality were established, the experience of all particulars would thus be transformed and would cast aside much of the contingency which distorted them until that point, even where it continues to stir. Hegel's doctrine, that the object would reflect itself in itself, survives its idealistic version, because in a changed dialectics the subject, disrobed of its sovereignty, virtually becomes thereby the reflection-form of objectivity. The less that theory comes across as something definitive and all-encompassing, the less it concretizes itself, even with regard to thinking. It permits the dissolution of the systemic compulsion, relying more frankly on its own consciousness and its own experience, than the pathetic conception of a subjectivity which pays for its abstract triumph with the renunciation of its specific content would permit. This is congruent with that emancipation of individuality borne out of the period between the great idealisms and the present, and whose achievements, in spite of and because of the contemporary pressure of collective regression, are so little to be remanded in theory as the impulses of the dialectic in 1800. The individualism of the nineteenth century no doubt weakened the objectifying power of the Spirit – that of the insight into objectivity and into its construction – but also endowed it with a sophistication, which strengthens the experience of the object.

Qualitative Moment of Rationality 53-54

To yield to the object is so much as to do justice to its qualitative moments. The scientific objectification tends, in unity with the quantifying tendency of all science since Descartes, to flatten out qualities, to transform them into measurable determinations. Rationality itself is to an increasing extent equated more mathematico [Latin: in mathematical terms] with the capability of quantification. As much as this took into account the primacy of the triumphant natural sciences, so little does it lie in the concept of the ratio in itself. It is blinded not the least because it blocks itself off from qualitative moments as something which is for its part to be rationally thought. Ratio is not a mere *sunâgôgê* [Greek: gathering, assembly], the ascent from disparate phenomena [Erscheinungen] to the concept of its species.¹¹ It demands just as much the capacity of distinction. Without it the synthetic function of thinking, abstractive unification, would not be possible: to aggregate what is the same means necessarily to separate it from what is different. This however is the qualitative; the thought which does not think this, is

already cut off and at odds with itself. Plato, the first to inaugurate mathematics as a methodological model, still gave powerful expression to the qualitative moment of the ratio at the beginning of the European philosophy of reason, by endowing *sunâgôgê* [Greek: gathering, assembly] next to *diairesis* [Greek: a dividing] with equal rights. They follow the commandment, that consciousness ought, in keeping with the Socratic and Sophistic separation of *physei* [Greek: by nature] and *thesei* [Greek: thesis], snuggle up to the nature of things, instead of proceeding with them arbitrarily. The qualitative distinction is thereby not only absorbed by the Platonic dialectic, into its doctrine of thinking, but interpreted as a corrective to the violence of quantification run amok. A parable from the Phaedros is unambiguous on this score. In it, the thought which arranges and non-violence are balanced. One should, so runs the argument, in the reversal of the conceptual movement of the synthesis, “have the capacity, to divide into species corresponding to its nature, to carry out the cut according to the joints, and not attempt, after the manner of a bad cook, to shatter every member”.¹² That qualitative moment is preserved as a substrate of what is quantified in all quantification, which as Plato cautions should not be smashed to pieces, lest the ratio, by damaging the object which it was supposed to obtain, recoil into unreason. In the second reflection, the rational operation accompanies the quality as the moment of the antidote, as it were, which the limited first reflection of science withheld from philosophy, as suborned to this latter as it is estranged from it. There is no quantifiable insight which does not first receive its meaning, its terminus ad quem [Latin: end-point], in the retranslation into the qualitative. Even the cognitive goal of statistics is qualitative, quantification solely the means. The absolutization of the quantifying tendency of the ratio tallies with its lack of self-consciousness. Insistence on the qualitative serves this, rather than conjuring up irrationality. Later Hegel alone showed an awareness of this, without any retrospective-romantic inclinations, at a time to be sure when the supremacy of quantification was not yet so widespread as today. For him, in accordance with the scientific formulation, “the truth of quality [is] itself quantity”.¹³ But he cognized it in the System of Philosophy as a “determination indifferent to being, extraneous to it”. It retains its relevance in the quantitative; and the quantum returns back to the quality.¹⁵

Quality and The Individuated [Individuum] 54-57

The quantifying tendency corresponded on the subjective side to the reduction of that which was cognized to something universal, devoid of qualities, to that which was purely logical. Qualities would no doubt first be truly free in an objective condition which was no longer limited to quantification and which no longer drilled quantification into those forced to intellectually adapt to such. But this is not the timeless essence which mathematics, its instrument, makes it appear as. Just like its claim to exclusivity, it became transient. The qualitative subject awaits the potential of its qualities in the thing, not its transcendental residue, although the subject is strengthened solely thereto by means of restrictions based on the division of labor. The more meanwhile its own reactions are denounced as presumably merely subjective, the more the qualitative determinations in things escape cognition. The ideal of the distinction [Differenzierten] and the nuanced, which cognition never completely forgot down to the latest developments in spite of all “science is measurement” [in English], does not solely refer to an individual capacity, which objectivity can dispense with. It receives its impulse

from the thing. Distinction means, that someone is capable of discerning in this and in its concept even that which is smallest and which escapes the concept; solely distinction encompasses the smallest. In its postulate, that of the capability to experience the object – and distinction is the subjective reaction-form of this become experience – the mimetic moment of cognition finds refuge, that of the elective affinity of the cognizer and that which is to be cognized. In the entire process of the Enlightenment this moment gradually crumbled. But it does not completely remove it, lest it annul itself. Even in the concept of rational cognition, devoid of all affinity, the grasping for this concordance lives on, which was once kept free of doubt by the magical illusion. Were this moment wholly extirpated, the possibility of the subject cognizing the object would be utterly incomprehensible, the jettisoned rationality thereby irrational. The mimetic moment for its part however blends in with the rational in the course of its secularization. This process summarizes itself in the distinction. It contains the mimetic capability of reaction in itself as well as the logical organ for the relationship of genus, species and differentia specifica [Latin: specific difference]. Therein the capability of distinction retains as much contingency as every undiminished individuality does in regards to the universal one of its reason. This contingency meanwhile is not so radical as the criteria of scientivism would wish. Hegel was peculiarly inconsistent when he arraigned the individual consciousness, the staging-grounds of intellectual experience, which animated his work, as the contingent and that which is limited. This is comprehensible only out of the desire to disempower the critical moment which is tied to the individual Spirit. In its particularization he felt the contradictions between the concept and the particular. Individual consciousness is always, and with reason, the unhappy one. Hegel's aversion towards this denies the very state of affairs [Sachverhalt] which he underlined, where it suited him: how much the universal dwells within that which is individual. According to strategic necessity he denounces the individuated as if it were the immediate, whose appearance [Schein] he himself is destroying. With this however the absolute contingency of individual experience disappears, too. It would have no continuity without concepts. Through its participation in the discursive medium it is, according to its own determination, always at the same time more than only individual. The individuated becomes the subject, insofar as it objectifies itself by means of its individual consciousness, in the unity of itself as well as in its own experiences: animals are presumably bereft of both. Because it is universal in itself, and as far as it is, individual experience also reaches into that which is universal. Even in epistemological reflection the logical generality and the unity of individual consciousness reciprocally condition one another. This affects however not only the subjective-formal side of individuality. Every content of the individual consciousness is brought to it by its bearer, for the sake of its self-preservation, and reproduces itself with the latter. Through self-awareness it is possible for the individual consciousness to emancipate itself, to expand itself. What drives it to this is the misery, that this universality tends to exert its hegemony in individual experience. As a “reality check” experience does not simply mirror the impulses and wishes of the individual, but also negates them, so that it would survive. That which is general in the subject is simply not to be grasped any other way than in the movement of particular human consciousness. If the individuated were simply abolished by fiat, no higher subject purified of the dross of contingency would emerge, but solely one which unconsciously follows orders. In the East the theoretical short-circuit in the view of the individuated has

served as the pretext for collective repression. The Party is supposed to have a cognitive power a priori superior to that of every individual solely due to the number of its members, even if it is terrorized or blinded. The isolated individual [Individuum] however, unencumbered by the ukase, may at times perceive the objectivity more clearly than a collective, which in any case is only the ideology of its committees. Brecht's sentence, the Party has a thousand eyes, the individual only two, is as false as any bromide. The exact imagination of a dissenter can see more than a thousand eyes wearing the same red-tinted glasses, who then mistake what they see with the universality of the truth and regress. The individuation of cognition resists this. The perception of the object depends not only on this, on the distinction: it is itself constituted from the object, which demands its restitutio in integrum [Latin: restitution in whole] in it, as it were. Nevertheless the subjective modes of reaction which the object needs require for their part the unceasing corrective in the object. This occurs in the self-reflection, the ferment of intellectual experience. The process of philosophical objectification would be, put metaphorically, vertical, intra-temporal, as opposed to the horizontal, abstract quantifying one of science; so much is true of Bergson's metaphysics of time.

Substantiality [Inhaltlichkeit] and Method 57-58

That generation, also Simmel, Husserl, and Scheler, sought in vain for a philosophy which, receptive to the objects, would render itself substantive. What tradition dismissed is what tradition desired. This does not obviate the methodological consideration, of how substantive particular analysis stands in relation to the theory of dialectics. The idealistic-identity-philosophical avowal that the latter dissolves itself in the former is unconvincing. Objectively, however, the whole which is expressed by theory is contained within the particular to be analyzed, not first through the cognizing subject. The mediation of both is itself substantive, that through the social totality. It is however also formal due to the abstract nomothetism [Gesetzmaessigkeit] of the totality itself, that of exchange. Idealism, which distilled its absolute Spirit out of this, encrypted something true at the same time, that this mediation encounters phenomena as a compulsory mechanism; this lurks behind the so-called constitution-problem. Philosophical experience does not have this universal immediately, as appearance, but as abstractly as it objectively is. It is constrained towards the exit of the particular, without forgetting what it does not have, but knows. Its path is doubled, similar to the Heraclitean one, the upwards and the downwards. While it assures itself of the real determination of the phenomena through its concept, it cannot profess this ontologically, as what is true in itself. It is fused with what is untrue, with the repressive principle, and this lessens even its epistemological dignity. It forms no positive telos in which cognition would halt. The negativity of the universal solidifies for its part the cognition into the particular as that which is to be rescued. "The only thoughts which are true are those which do not understand themselves." [Adorno quotes himself, from Minima Moralia] In their inalienably general elements, all philosophy, even those with the intention of freedom, carries along the unfreedom in which that of society is prolonged. It has the compulsion in itself; however this latter alone protects it from regression into caprice. Thinking is capable of critically cognizing the compulsory character immanent to it; its own inner compulsion is the medium of its emancipation. The freedom towards the object, which in Hegel resulted in the disempowerment of the subject, is first of all to be established. Until then, dialectics

diverges as method and as one of the thing. Concept and reality are of the same contradictory essence. What tears society apart antagonistically, the dominating principle, is the same thing which, intellectualized, causes the difference between the concept and that which is subordinated under it. The logical form of the contradiction however achieves that difference, because every one which does not suborn itself to the unity of the dominating principle, according to the measure of the principle, does not appear as a polyvalence which is indifferent to this, but as an infraction against logic. On the other hand the remainder of the divergence between philosophic conception and follow-through also testifies to something of the non-identity, which neither permits the method to wholly absorb the contents, in which alone they are supposed to be, nor intellectualizes the contents. The preeminence of content reveals itself as the necessary insufficiency of the method. What as such, in the form of general reflection, must be said, in order not to be defenseless against the philosophy of the philosophers, legitimates itself solely in the follow-through, and is negated therein in turn as method. Its surplus is with respect to its content abstract, false; Hegel already had to accept this discrepancy in the preface to the Phenomenology. The philosophical ideal would be to render the accounting one would give for what one does superfluous, by doing it.

Existentialism 58-61

The most recent attempt to break out of conceptual fetishism – out of academic philosophy, without letting go of the claim of committalness [Verbindlichkeit] – went under the name of existentialism. Like fundamental ontology, from which it separated itself through political engagement, it remained idealistically biased; it retained by the way something accidental in relation to philosophical structure, replaceable through a contrary politics, so long as this satisfied the *Characteristica formalis* [Latin: formal characteristic] of existentialism. There are partisans both here and there [hueben und drueben: reference to East and West Germany]. No theoretical borderline on decisionism is drawn. Nevertheless the idealistic component of existentialism is for its part a function of politics. Sartre and his friends, critics of society and unwilling to limit themselves to theoretical critique, did not fail to see that Communism, wherever it came to power, entrenched itself as a system of administration. The institution of the centralized state-party is a mockery of everything which was once thought concerning the relationship to the power of the state. That is why Sartre staked everything on the moment which was not permitted by the ruling praxis; spontaneity, in the language of philosophy. The less that social power-distribution gave it an objective chance, the more exclusively did he extol the Kierkegaardian category of the decision. The latter received its meaning from its *terminus ad quem* [Latin: end-point], from Christology; in Sartre it becomes the absolute which it was once supposed to serve. In spite of his extreme nominalism*4* Sartre's philosophy organized itself in its most effective phase according to the old idealistic category of the subject's freely-conceived act [Tatbehandlung]. Similar to Fichte, existentialism is indifferent towards every objectivity. Social relationships and conditions consistently became tacked-on albeit timely additions in Sartre's plays, structurally however hardly more than an occasion for the action. This was condemned by Sartre's philosophical objectlessness to an irrationality which the tireless Enlightener intended least of all. The conception of absolute freedom of decision is as illusionary as that of the absolute I, which was to derive the world out of itself. The most modest political

experience would suffice to make the situations constructed as foils for the decisions of heroes start wobbling like stage backdrops. Not even theatrically could sovereign decisions of this sort be postulated in concrete historical imbrication. A field general who decided to cease committing acts of cruelty just as irrationally as he used to carry these out, who broke off the siege of a city already betrayed to him in advance and founded a utopian community, would be, if not killed by mutinous soldiers, then surely dismissed by his superiors, even in the wildest times of the farcical, romanticized era of the German renaissance. It is only too true that Goetz, bragging like Nestroy's Holofernes, who learned the lesson of the freely-conceived act in the massacre of the City of Light, put himself at the disposal of an organized popular movement, the transparent likeness of those against which Sartre played absolute spontaneity. The man in the window [Butzenscheibemann] thus once again commits the atrocities – only now openly with the blessing of philosophy – which he had forsworn out of freedom. The absolute subject does not escape from its entanglement: the fetters which it would like to tear apart, those of domination, are as one with the principle of absolute subjectivity. It is to Sartre's honor that this manifests itself in his plays, against his philosophical masterwork; his plays disavow the philosophy whose theses they deal with. The follies of political existentialism however, like the phraseology of the depoliticized German kind, have their philosophic basis. Existentialism raised that which was unavoidable, the mere existence of human beings, to a way of thinking which the individual is supposed to choose without determinable reasons for the choice, and also without having any other sort of choice. Where existentialism teaches more than such tautologies, it joins in common with the subjectivity existent for itself, as that which is alone substantial. The schools which take derivatives of the Latin *existere* [Latin: to exist] as their device, would like to summon up the reality of corporeal experience against the alienated particular science. Out of fear of reification they shrink back from what has substantive content. It turns unwittingly into an example. What they subsume under *epochê* [Greek: suspension] revenges itself by exerting its power behind the back of philosophy, in what this latter would consider irrational decisions. The non-conceptual particular science is not superior to thinking purged of its substantive content; all its versions end up, a second time, in precisely the formalism which it wished to combat for the sake of the essential interest of philosophy. It is retroactively filled up with contingent borrowings, especially from psychology. The intention of existentialism at least in its radical French form would not be realizable at a distance from substantive content, but in its threatening nearness to this. The separation of subject and object is not to be sublated through the reduction to human nature, were it even the absolute particularization. The currently popular question of humanity, all the way into the Marxism of Lukacsian provenance, is ideological because it dictates the pure form of the invariant as the only possible answer, and were this latter historicity itself. What human beings are supposed to be, is always only, what they were: they are chained to the cliff of their past. They are not only what they were and are, but just as much what they could be; no determination reaches far enough to anticipate that. How little the schools grouped around existence, even the extreme nominalistic ones, are capable of that realization [Entaeusserung], which they long for in the recourse to the particular human existence, is confessed by the fact that they universally-conceptually philosophize that which does not vanish into its concept, that which is contrary to it, instead of thinking it through. They illustrate existence [Existenz] in the existing [Existierenden].

Thing, Language, History 61-63

How to think otherwise than this has its distant and shadowy Ur-model in languages, in the names which do not categorically overreach the thing, admittedly at the price of their cognitive function. Undiminished cognition wishes that which one has been already drilled to renounce, and what the names which are too close to such obscure; resignation and deception complete one another ideologically. Idiosyncratic exactness in the choice of words, as if they should name the thing, is not the least of the reasons that portrayal [Darstellung] is essential to philosophy. The cognitive grounds for such insistence of expression before *tode ti* [Greek: individual thing, this-here] is its own dialectic, its conceptual mediation in itself; it is the point of attack for comprehending what is nonconceptual in it. For the mediation in the midst of what is non-conceptual is no remainder of a complete subtraction, nor is it something which would refer to the bad infinity of such procedures. On the contrary, the mediation is the *hyle* [Greek: primary matter] of its implicit history. Philosophy creates, wherever it is still legitimate, out of something negative: that in its attitude of things-are-so-and-not-otherwise, the indissolubility before which it capitulates, and from which idealism veers away, is merely a fetish; that of the irrevocability of the existent. This dissolves before the insight that things are not simply so and not otherwise, but came to be under conditions. This becoming disappears and dwells in the thing, and is no more to be brought to a halt in its concept than to be split off from its result and forgotten. Temporal experience resembles it. In the reading of the existent as a text of its becoming, idealistic and materialistic dialectics touch. However, while idealism justifies the inner history of immediacy as a stage of the concept, it becomes materialistically the measure not only of the untruth of concepts, but also that of the existing immediacy. What negative dialectics drives through its hardened objects is the possibility which their reality has betrayed, and yet which gleams from each one of these. Yet even in the most extreme efforts to express the history congealed in the things in language, the words used for this remain concepts. Their precision is a surrogate of the selfness of the thing, never wholly present; a gap yawns between it and what it wants to conjure. Thus the dregs of caprice and relativity in the choice of words as well as in portrayal [Darstellung] generally. Even in Benjamin concepts have a tendency of hiding their conceptuality in an authoritarian manner. Only concepts can fulfill what the concept hinders. Cognition is a *trôsas iasêta* [Greek: wounded healing]. The determinate failure of all concepts necessitates the citation of others; therein originate those constellations, into which alone something of the hope of the Name has passed. The language of philosophy approaches this latter through its negation. What it criticizes in words, its claim to immediate truth, is almost always the ideology of the positive, existing identity of the word and the thing. Even the insistence on the specific word and concept, as the iron gate to be unlocked, is solely a moment of such, though an indispensable one. In order to be cognized, that which is internalized, which the cognition clings to in the expression, always needs something external to it.

Tradition and Cognition 63-65

One can no longer paddle along in the mainstream – even the word sounds dreadful – of modern philosophy. The recent kind, dominant until today, would like to expel the traditional moments of thought, dehistoricizing it according to its own content, assigning

history to a particular branch of an established fact-collecting science. Ever since the fundament of all cognition was sought in the presumed immediacy of the subjectively given, there have been attempts, in thrall to the idol of the pure presence, as it were, to drive out the historical dimension of thought. The fictitious one-dimensional Now becomes the cognitive ground of inner meaning. Under this aspect, even the patriarchs of modernity who are officially viewed as antipodes are in agreement: in the autobiographical explanations of Descartes on the origin of his method and in Bacon's idol-theory. What is historical in thinking, instead of reining in the timelessness of objectivated logic, is equated with superstition, which the citation of institutionalized clerical tradition against the inquiring thought in fact was. The critique of authority was well founded. But what it overlooked was that the tradition of cognition was itself as immanent as the mediating moment of its objects. Cognition distorts these, as soon as it turns them into a tabula rasa by means of objectifications brought to a halt. Even in the concretized form in opposition to its content, it takes part in the tradition as unconscious memory; no question could simply be asked, which would not vouchsafe the knowledge of what is past and push it further. The form of thinking as an intra-temporal, motivated, progressive movement resembles in advance, microcosmically, the macrocosmic, historical one, which was internalized in the structure of thought. Among the highest achievements of the Kantian deduction was that he preserved the memory, the trace of what was historical in the pure form of cognition, in the unity of the thinking I, at the stage of the reproduction of the power of imagination. Because however there is no time without that which is existent in it, what Husserl in his late phase called inner historicity cannot remain internalized, pure form. The inner historicity of thought grew along with its content and thereby with the tradition. The pure, completely sublimated subject would be on the other hand that which is absolutely traditionless. The cognition which experienced only the idol of that purity, total timelessness, coincides with formal logic, would become tautology; it could not grant even a transcendental logic any room. Timelessness, towards which the bourgeois consciousness strives, perhaps as compensation for its own mortality, is the zenith of its delusion. Benjamin innervated this when he strictly forswore the ideal of autonomy and dedicated his thinking to a tradition, albeit to a voluntarily installed, subjectively chosen one which dispenses with the same authority, which it indicts autarkic thought of dispensing with. Although the counter-force [Widerspiel] to the transcendental moment, the traditional one is quasi transcendental, not a point-like subjectivity, but rather that which is actually constitutive, in Kant's words the mechanism hidden in the depths of the soul. Among the variants of the all too narrow concluding questions of the Critique of Pure Reason, one ought not to be excluded, namely how thought, by having to relinquish tradition, might be able to preserve and transform it;¹¹ nothing else is intellectual experience. The philosophy of Bergson, and even more so Proust's novel, abandoned themselves to this, only for their part under the bane of immediacy, out of loathing for that bourgeois timelessness which anticipates the abolition of life in advance of the mechanics of the concept. The methexis of philosophy in tradition would be however solely its determinate repudiation [Verneinung]. It is constructed by the texts which it criticizes. In them, which the tradition brings to it and which the texts themselves embody, its conduct becomes commensurable with tradition. This justifies the transition from philosophy to interpretation, which enshrines neither what is interpreted nor raises the symbol to the

absolute, but seeks what might be really true there, where thought secularizes the irretrievable Ur-model of holy texts.

Rhetoric 65-66

Through the now apparent, now latent delimitation to texts, philosophy confesses to what it vainly denied under the ideal of the method, its linguistic essence. In its modern history, it is, analogous to tradition, denigrated as rhetoric. Tossed aside and degraded into a means of realizing effects, it was the bearer of lies in philosophy. The contempt for rhetoric atoned for the guilt in which this latter, since antiquity, had incurred through that separation from the thing itself which Plato complained about. But the prosecution of the rhetorical moment through which the expression was to be rescued as thought contributed no less to its technification, to its potential abolition, than the cultivation of rhetoric which disdained the object. Rhetoric represents in philosophy, what cannot otherwise be thought except in language. It maintains itself in the postulates of portrayal [Darstellung], by which philosophy differentiates itself from the communication of already cognized and solidified contents. It is in danger, like everything which represents, because it slides easily towards the usurpation of what thought cannot directly obtain from the portrayal. It is incessantly corrupted by convincing purposes, without which however the relation of thinking to praxis would once again disappear from the thought-act. The allergy against expression in the entire official philosophical tradition, from Plato to the semanticists, conforms to the tendency of all Enlightenment, to punish that which is undisciplined in the gesture, even deep into logic, as a defense-mechanism of reified consciousness. If the alliance of philosophy with science tends towards the virtual abolition of language, and therein of philosophy itself, then it cannot survive without its linguistic effort. Instead of splashing about in linguistic falls, it reflects on such. There is a reason why linguistic sloppiness – scientifically put: the inexact – is wont to ally itself with the scientific mien of incorruptibility through language. For the abolition of language in thought is not its demythologization. Thus deluded, philosophy sacrifices with language whatever might have related to its thing otherwise than as mere signification; only as language is that which is similar capable of cognizing the similar. The permanent denunciation of rhetoric by nominalism, for which the name bears not the least similarity to what it says, is not meanwhile to be ignored, nor is an unbroken rhetorical moment to be summoned against such. Dialectics, according to its literal meaning language as the organ of thought, would be the attempt to critically rescue the rhetorical moment: to have the thing and the expression approach one another almost to the point of non-differentiability. It appropriates what historically appeared as the defect of thought, its never-to-be-broken context in language, for the power of thought. This inspired the phenomenologies, when they, naïve as ever, wanted to assure themselves of the truth in the analysis of words. In the rhetorical quality, culture, society, and tradition animate thought; what is point-blank anti-rhetorical is allied with the barbarism in which bourgeois thought ended. The defamation of Cicero, even Hegel's antipathy against Diderot testify to the resentment of those whose attempts to freely raise themselves up were struck down by life-and-death necessity, and to whom the body of language counted as sinful. In dialectics the rhetorical moment takes, contrary to the vulgar viewpoint, the side of content. Dialectics seeks to master the dilemma between the popular opinion and that which is non-essentializingly [wesenslos] correct, mediating this with the formal, logical one. It tends however towards

content as that which is open, not already decided in advance by the scaffolding: as protest against mythos. That which is monotonous is mythic, ultimately diluted into the formal juridicality of thinking [Denkgesetzlichkeit]. The cognition which wishes for content, wishes for utopia. This, the consciousness of the possibility, clings to the concrete as what is undistorted. It is what is possible, never the immediately realized, which obstructs utopia; that is why in the middle of the existent it appears abstract. The inextinguishable color comes from the not-existent. Thinking serves it as a piece of existence, as that which, as always negatively, reaches out to the not-existent. Solely the most extreme distance would be the nearness; philosophy is the prism, in which its colors are caught.

Footnotes

1 [Footnote pg 27]

“If by the way skepticism is often considered even today the irresistible enemy of all positive knowledge at large and thereby also of philosophy, insofar as positive cognition is concerned, then it is to be noted against this that it is in fact merely the finite, abstractly grasped thought, which need fear skepticism and is not capable of countering the same, whereas by contrast philosophy contains the skeptical as a moment in itself, namely as the dialectical. Philosophy does not remain standing however at the merely negative result of dialectics, as is the case with skepticism. This latter mistakes its result, in that it holds fast to such as pure, i.e. as abstract negation. Since the dialectic has the negative as its result, so is this latter, just as a result, at the same time the positive, for it contains the same thing from which it results, as sublated in itself, and is not the same without it. This however is the fundamental determination of the third form of logic, namely the speculative or positive reasoning.” Hegel, WW 8, Pg. 194 ff.

2 [Footnote pg 34]

“The thinking or conception, which only sees a determinate being, existence [Dasein] before it, is to be referred back to the afore-mentioned beginnings of science, which Parmenides made, which his conception and therein also the conception of subsequent eras discussed and raised to that of pure thought, to being as such, and thus created the element of science.” (Hegel, WW 4, Page 96)

3 [Footnote pg 48]

“The activity of distinction is the power and labor of understanding, of the most wonderful and greatest, or rather of the absolute power. The circle in which it remains enclosed and contains its moments as substance, is the immediate and for that reason not wonderful relationship. But that accidental things separated from their own realm, things bound up which are truly real only in their context with others, that these achieve a genuine existence and a particulated [abgesonderte] freedom, is the monstrous power of the negative; it is the energy of thought, of the pure I.” (Hegel, WW 2, page 33)

4 [Footnote pg 59]

Hegel’s restitution of conceptual realism, all the way to the provocative defense of the ontological proof of God, was reactionary according to the ground-rules set by an unreflective Enlightenment. Meantime the course of history has justified his anti-nominalistic intent. In contrast to the crude scheme of Scheler’s sociology of knowledge, nominalism crossed over for its part into ideology, that of the eye-blinking “But that doesn’t exist”, which official science is wont to deploy as soon as embarrassing entities such as class, ideology and nowadays even society are mentioned. The relationship of genuine critical philosophy to nominalism is not invariant, it changes historically with the function of skepticism (see Max Horkheimer, “Montaigne and the Function of Skepticism”, in: Zeitschrift fuer Sozialforschung, VII. 1938, passim). Every fundamentum in re [Latin: fundamental basis] ascribed to the concept of the subject is idealism. Nominalism separated itself from it only there, where idealism raised an

objective claim. The concept of a capitalist society is no flatus vocis [Latin: bowdlerized speech].