CONSTANTIN NOICA

BECOMING WITHIN BEING

BECOMING WITHIN BEING

CONSTANTIN NOICA

BECOMING WITHIN BEING

TRANSLATED BY

ALISTAIR IAN BLYTH

(Devenirea întru ființă. Bucharest: Humanitas 1998, first edition:
Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1981)

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Under the title *Becoming within Being*, two essays are brought together: one dating from around 1950, the other from 1980. What the two works have in common is indeed the idea of becoming within Being, firstly as it results from the history of philosophy, secondly as an attempt to reconstruct the science of Being, ontology.

During the thirty years between these works, the author has brought into play the same idea at many different levels: in research into Goethe, in whose case a lived becoming within Being seemed to be decipherable, in opposition to his declared becoming within becoming; in the interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*; in research into a number of Romanian words and expressions; and in the analysis of the Romanian sentiment of being.

It is to be understood that volume 2, "Treatise of Ontology", may be read separately.

The Author
Bucharest, 1980

VOLUME I

ESSAY ON TRADITIONAL PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTION

Whoever says "becoming within Being" admits more than that Being does not contradict becoming. Moreover, he will have to admit that becoming can contradict Being, when it is not within it, and thereby a unilateral contradiction is created.

Modern consciousness ought long ago to have become accustomed to this new modality of contradiction. That from two contradictory situations it is possible that only one might contradict the other was proven decades ago by the scientific revolution connected to relativity: only Newtonian mechanics contradicts relativity, but not the latter the former. Here, there was a striking example of unilateral contradiction. However, was it necessary to wait for the scientific revolution of our century in order to detect such a logic of unilateral contradiction operating behind the classic, bilateral logic?

One of the most suggestive disciplines for philosophical thought – a discipline that was not sufficiently employed by classical philosophy and which not even Hegel made the subject of any of his famous *Lectures* – namely the history of mathematics, shows that this new logic could be detected long ago. While in the history of other exact sciences, new knowledge contradicts the old (take "phlogiston" in the history of chemistry, for example), the new does not contradict the old in the history of mathematics: it integrates it. In particular, in the theory of numbers, the rational number does not contradict the integer; the real number does not contradict the rational; nor do complex (and imaginary) numbers contradict real numbers. On each occasion, the new set of numbers integrates the old one as a particular case, while the latter, from its position, contradicts the new one.

However, to return to the history of philosophy, one ascertains with surprise that this lesson was surmised, and that, before conceiving the

principle of contradiction in itself in a rigid logical fashion, the Greeks intuited this integrative contradiction in dialectical fashion. They did not know how to "integrate", either literally or figuratively, but from their unique instinct for reason, they gave a hint of integration on the basis of unilateral contradiction. Even if not always explicitly, for them, the curve does not, for example, contradict the straight line, and the latter alone contradicts the curve, when it is not understood as a particular case of it. More broadly, it may be said that the plane is a particular case of the sphere (within these limits a surface is a plane) and only the plane can contradict the sphere, not the latter the former. In general, for the ancients, form does not contradict matter, but "actualises" it. In its turn, rest does not contradict motion, but perfects it. Only evil contradicts good, but not the other way around. Only the possible contradicts the real; only non-being contradicts Being. If the ancients had truly possessed the modern idea of infinity, they would not so easily have fallen into the *aporia* of finite/infinite, but would have perhaps suggested that the finite contradicts the infinite, but not the other way around. Just as the manifold contradicts the one, but not the latter the former.

However, as soon as the logical was theorised, with Aristotle, the ancients themselves, in spite of their inborn dialecticality, were to be caught – like the moderns, upon whom the spirit of Aristotelianism weighs heavily, beyond scholasticism – in the net of irreducible logicality. They too ended up with a contradiction of the disjunctive type: either/or, the excluded middle. But is it not possible to exit from this irreducibility? For, while the *tertium non datur*, there still might be found a third modality even within the terms. Either virtual or actual; either *posse* or *esse*, says Aristotelianism. But there is also *fieri* – recognised, although degraded into "genesis" by the ancients – which, with the *posse* it contains, might be an opening towards *esse*.

In becoming, the modern world has appropriated *fieri*, positively not just negatively, as in antiquity. But once again, it has fallen into the disjunction of contradiction: either becoming or Being. And on this occasion, it has opted for becoming (historicism, relativism, linear dialecticality), leaving it to swing too much to the side of the possible. But just as there are two kinds of *posse*, so there are two kinds of *fieri*. The same as there is a *posse* that denies itself to *esse*, but also one that refers to it as virtuality, so too there is a *fieri* that denies itself to *esse*, but also one that is implicated in it: becoming within Being. The main thing is

to exit from the rigidly simple opposition of merely logical contradiction. The logic itself is in a unilateral contradiction with something: with the dialectics. From the very moment dialectics was conceived (thus, since Hegel, in the modern world, but since Plato, in the ancient world), it could become clear that a new modality of contradiction was apparent, the logic/dialectics opposition, in which logic contradicts dialectics but the latter in no way contradicts logic.

The theme of becoming within Being is unitary with dialectics, inasmuch as through it reason is redefined. Indeed, we shall ultimately name reason the *consciousness* of becoming within Being. This is why the core of the present work will be dedicated to examining and redefining reason. And because unilateral contradiction leads to a circle – the contradictory term is diverted away from the term it contradicts, but is absorbed by the latter – the dialectical movement we obtain is one that is circular.

Except that it will not be the case of a static, geometrical circle, one with a centre, nor of a limitless circularity, but rather a circle that neither rests around a centre, nor endlessly unfolds in blind and vicious circularity. It is rather a circle of a "vectorial" type, in which there is movement, since the act of negation and diversion takes place, but there is also cessation, insofar as the movement takes place in itself.

The consistent encounter with such a circle, in philosophical reflection, will thus provide the point of departure for the present work. It will move from the circle, which is simultaneously a schema for thinking and for reality, to reason, which is at the beginning only a principle for thought, and through man, in whom the consciousness of becoming within Being is *conscious* becoming within Being, it will arrive once more at reality and at that which might be named Being.

Cîmpulung-Muscel, 1950

CHAPTER I

THE CIRCLE IN PHILOSOPHICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Philosophy concerns itself neither with Being pure and simple, as the ancients appeared to say, nor with becoming, as the moderns appear to say. It concerns itself with becoming within Being.

Not even the Greeks could have done without the idea of becoming, however alien to their object of contemplation it might have appeared to them; they too had to set the world in motion, that is, in imperfection and temporality. But they knew how to distinguish between different kinds of motion and to find one of perfection, thereby salvaging what they seemed to be compromising.

In the rotation of the stars, they saw an ideal motion, which was at the same time motion and rest. On the other hand, any motion was, for them, a form of imperfection; circular motion alone was perfect and as such might be fitting to the stars, which seemed to them incorruptible. Ultimately, any motion is a form of temporality. But it is motion in a circle alone, the return to the same point, that expresses something of the atemporal, since it is at the same time a measure – cosmic, in the rotation of the stars, later mechanical, with the clock mechanism – for time. In this way, for them the circle became the symbol, whether acknowledged or not, of the possible solution to the *aporiai* of philosophy: the reconciliation of motion with rest, perfect in imperfection, atemporal in temporality. In circular motion, with its returning back upon itself, the Greeks ended up seeing a "reflection" that might recall the nobility of intellectual reflection, that might be an imitation of it, that might have the character of *sophia*. It was something that was at the same time sensible and intellectual; something that might represent the "schema" (intermediation) dreamt of by Kant.

Thus, in the symbol of the circle we have the perspective opened by ancient thought for the problem of becoming within Being. For the Greek world, however, the circle is merely a schema of physics. *Might not the circle be made into a schema for thinking itself?* And might not

the circle of becoming within Being be viewed as an authentic origi-
nary category, which might ground the categories of the spirit? Like
the categories in the Kantian sense, becoming within Being may be
directly represented through a schema, and if its modus were made
the primal category of the spirit, the Kantian chapter on the "sche-
matism of pure concepts" might be rethought and unified. *Time*, in
particular, now replaced by the circle, would lose the role it there plays,
thereby reducing the difficulties that it raises, difficulties which have,
in modern thinking, become much more complicated, with the revival
of Augustinian time and the emergence of Heideggerian time, not to
speak of the historicist time that dominates contemporary thought.

But modern philosophy is far from thinking about categories
whose schema might be the circle. It is caught up in the schema of
a linear and evolutionist causality or of an as yet linear (if not spiral)
becoming. When occasionally it attempts to escape from the bonds
of causal determinism or from the flux of uninterrupted becoming,
modern thought encounters a schema other than the circle: pendula-
tion between two poles, dependent on the category of polarity. It is
with this category that Vico wished to fix the diversity of history; the
same schema will dominate German philosophical romanticism; and
it is significant that it will be the principal schema for Goethe. For the
latter, polarity is the only means of capturing in any way natural or
human diversity (darkness and light, systole and diastole, attraction
and repulsion, *hüben und drüben*, feminine and masculine etc.). Natu-
rally, leading modern philosophers will rediscover or will seek unity.
But for the modern spirit, it is Goethe, the non-philosopher, who sets
the tone: if there is an order, it depends above all on the pendulation
between two extreme terms. When it does not lose itself in limitless
becoming, modern thinking accepts polarity.

However, as soon as the problem of Being is posited anew, modern
schemata prove to be inadequate. And if becoming within Being is
possible, then no other schema than the circle can be fitting to it. Be-
ing is that which enters into becoming and also its terminus. It is pos-
sible for something to become only insofar as it is and cannot become
anything except what it is. *Werde was du bist.* If becoming is a search,
for self or anything else, then a search within a framework of this type
is not possible except inasmuch as that, in some way, one possesses in
advance what one seeks. "You would not seek me if you had not found
me" must then dominate all that is engaged in such a becoming. But is

it really thus in the case of human consciousness and of the real? And can the circle be elevated to the rank of fundamental schema for them?

Consequently, the subject of becoming within Being leads us here: to the need to find its circle everywhere. Becoming within Being will indeed reveal itself to us as a principle of order: through it, the real acquires the character of real, inasmuch as it is removed from blind becoming and restored to Being. This transposition, however, can be made only through *humans*, without whom becoming would remain becoming, flux, cosmic transience, non-fulfilment. Humans, in their turn, acquire this virtue through *culture*. We are not of ourselves endowed with the meaning of culture, we do not order things in their places and nor do we bear them to fulfilment, as a rule. Only through culture do we, humans, acquire the investiture to discern at the heart of reality and to order what we have seen. And just as Adam was made to give a name to each living creature and the name he gave to each remained, as it meant a removal from chaos and a qualification within Being, so in this case too the ordering that reveals itself in things through humans belongs also to things, not just to humans. However, nor does culture have this virtue unless it is sustained by a *philosophical consciousness*. In the same way as humans, without the support of culture, lose themselves in the procession of nature or in the blind becoming of historical existence, so culture also loses itself in the diversity of its matter or meanings if it does not acquire, through philosophical consciousness, the investiture to elevate things to their own prototypes or Being. History loses itself, if it is not sustained by a philosophical consciousness. Likewise, without philosophy, entire fields within the content of culture might "lose" themselves. (Is it not this that is risked by some of the sciences, which might then end up by remaining mere technologies?) The whole of culture might similarly lose itself, in some way, becoming mere civilisation, as has been said.

Becoming within Being, with the circle it brings about, thus implies human reality, which in its turn presupposes the act of culture, while the latter presupposes philosophical consciousness, *sophia*. This means that human reality, culture and *sophia* metaphysically sustain the world: it is not merely a question of *knowledge* of Being, but rather humans, culture, *sophia* remove the world from the state of simple becoming, they perfect it by elevating it to the level of Being. Philosophical consciousness does not come to add itself to the world or to be *about* the world, but rather it is humans that ought to be the world,

in its final disposition, and philosophical consciousness, respectively reason, that ought to be the fulfilment of the becoming of this world. For humans are not mere humans, mere self. From the outset, their consciousness is within something outside self.

But if things stand thus, this would also mean that at every level – humans, culture, *sophia* – there is reflected the condition for possibility of becoming within Being: the circle. Human existence, as well as the cultural fact and the philosophical act would have to occur in a circle. If philosophy, in the last instance, gives expression to the Being of the world, then the circle of Being will everywhere be reflected in philosophy. But is it so? Specifically: do the logical act, the cognitive act, the ethical act, the aesthetic act, together with the entire culture they make possible, unfold in a circle?

The first guarantor that becoming within Being has meaning is that these acts do indeed unfold in a circle. In its subject matter, philosophy rediscovers that which was its condition in principle: the circle.

<div align="center">❦</div>

Indeed, any philosophical consciousness is *reflexive*, in the proper sense, one in which doubling back, reflexivity is decisive. Things can be put very simply from the outset, with the distinction between *thought* and *idea*. All humans have thoughts, and perhaps other living things have them too, but only the one who doubles back thought upon itself has ideas. As was said long ago, philosophical consciousness is a consciousness in which the spirit doubles back upon the spirit. Hence the knowing that you know, of which Plato spoke, love for the sake of love, of which Socrates is given to speak in *Lysis*, the memory of memory (and even of forgetting) which Augustine mentions in the *Confessions*, as well as so many other forms of reflexivity that will be invoked by philosophy. It might even seem that it is a characteristic of the spirit – and thus of its science, which is philosophy – to be reflexive; in other domains, there is no room for reflexivity, for you cannot speak of the gravity of gravity or of the triangle of a triangle.

Nevertheless, from the point of view of mathematics and even physics (and probably biology too) there have arisen a few strange examples of possible or even effective reflexivity. Thus, in mathematics – beyond the somewhat mechanical use of the idea of "reflexivity" – there have occurred functions of functions, as conceived by mathematicians, and

there even arise forms of reflexivity left in the shadow by them, such as that of number. For prior to number operations being carried out, number is in itself an operation (even a higher operation), a raising to the nth power, as any number is determined on the basis of a radix, let us say the radix *10* or *6*. The entire science of arithmetic and algebra would therefore consist of operations based on operations. But the strangest example of such an implicit reflexivity is provided by physics itself, if not by nature itself, with *waves*, which represent "a movement of movement", since any wave is the expansion of an initial vibration. Something of the order of spirit would also reveal itself beyond its domain, as far as that ultimate domain of reality that might be the spectrum of electromagnetic waves.

If we leave to one side such thoughts, which are perhaps set to become genuine "ideas" of our time, the fact remains that, through philosophical consciousness, reflexivity makes its definite entry into human culture. This can be seen not only from the way in which a philosophical consciousness tackles any fact of culture, but also from its own exercise: all its endeavours, as a whole but also as constituted in separate disciplines, unfold in a circle, we shall now say.

What is most striking of all, and as such deserves to be insisted upon the least, is the *circle of logic*. It is true that traditional logic and still less so the new logic, which intends merely to be operative ("logical calculus"), do not commence with a bringing to light of the circle that makes them possible, namely with reflection upon thinking (upon "reasoning" in old logic), or, in the modern period, with *the rational operation upon rational operativity*. But logic is no less the very self-consciousness of the circle, in all its speculative purity. More unexpected will be the presence of the circle in the other disciplines.

Let us then take the act of knowing. Beyond the aforementioned "knowledge of knowledge", the act of knowing, viewed in itself, unfolds in a circle.

To know – for itself at least – does indeed mean to think the not-yet-thought. Knowledge has to be "progress" and all achieved knowledge brings about, from one point of view or another, the unexpected, to such an extent that it has been possible to say that the philosophy of antiquity – knowledge itself, in the larger sense, including contemplation – begins with wonderment. Except here we risk confusing two things: the not-yet-thought fact, not yet encountered by thinking, and the not-yet-thought act, not yet consummated by thinking. The

wonderment which is usually spoken of is that wonderment in face of the new, of the surprising fact. If, however, the theory of knowledge will end by wondering: "how is anything new possible", it will not, of course, be a question of a novelty in the order of facts, nor even of a novelty in the order of thought, or the production of new thoughts (inventive logic). Rather, what will follow is only the circumstance that the interior of any thought that leads to knowledge is an unexpected connection, a synthetic rather than analytic process. "How is anything new possible" expresses how it is possible to know through thinking, how it is possible to rescue thinking from tautology.

In its final form, the problem is, as is known, the enlargement of the Kantian "synthesis", and it is undoubtedly central to the theory of knowledge. "How are synthetic a priori judgements possible" represents for Kant much more, the key to all philosophy. Nevertheless, it seems to us that the Kantian terms still particularise and that the deeper subject is precisely this "how is anything new possible", which translates "how is it that the spirit is not infinitely tautological". That is, it is interested in the *spirit*, in its productivity, and not in the *products* of the spirit, its synthetic judgements. Here, in the restricted case, the problem is for us to attain the act of knowing; not external novelty, but rather that which causes the act of thinking to be progress, that is, knowledge and not stasis. In this sense, the mental progress of cognitive consciousness ought also to reveal itself as linear becoming, a progression to a something else that is never concluded.

And for all that, the *act of knowing does not unfold linearly*; its dynamism is not without doubling back. From the beginning, knowledge betrays its resistance, and nor does the theory of knowledge – unlike logic – seem to arise except together with the consciousness of this resistance before linear progress. Indeed, what does it signify to know something, as the Sophists asked? And it is with the Sophists that the theory of knowledge acquires its first expression in history. How can you know something you do not know? *Either* you know the thing in advance, in which case it cannot be a question of the unknown; *or* you do not know it at all, in which case there is no room for knowledge. This is how the two Sophists in *Euthydemus* represent things; but beyond any sophistic intention, no thinker at any time since then has been able to formulate the problem otherwise. Herein, for example, lies the impasse of Plato in the *Meno*. Seeking to see whether virtue can be taught or not, he makes Socrates and Meno ascertain that they

do not know what virtue is, and one of them, urged by the other to find out, replies: how can one seek something one does not know? According to what signs will you recognise the thing? (*Meno*, 80 d). Plato is aware, as he says, that the problem is really a sophistic subject; but that does not prevent him from taking it so seriously that he finds himself obliged, here in the *Meno*, to outline the theory of anamnesis (or recollection). Only thus, with the recourse to a previously gained knowledge, can he elucidate the act of present knowledge. But this clearly means to double thinking back towards what is known in advance, out of its movement towards something else. Knowledge is possible only because there is *pre-knowledge*; in other words, the movement towards something else is simultaneously interrupted and made possible by pre-knowledge. Plato categorically proclaims the active character of reminiscence, saying that it alone provides a release from the Sophistic thesis, which forbids any seeking, any activity of the spirit. Here then is from the beginning the paradox into which the knowing consciousness falls: thinking must be progress, but *in order to be progress* it must be able to *regress* at any point during its unfolding.

The position of the *Meno* is conclusive in this respect, without being isolated in Platonic thinking. Even if the theory of reminiscence only occurs, at least in developed form, in the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus*, its paradox accompanies the whole of Platonic philosophy. It might be shown how often Plato resorts to a certain "prophetic anticipation", or *manteia*, whenever the discussion in a given dialogue leads to an impasse. On each occasion, the Platonic Socrates, who conducts the dialogue, is made to invoke and proclaim this *manteia*, which commands, predetermines and definitively makes possible the future solution. Socrates, in spite of appearances, *knows* whither he is going, and his dialogue is always *oriented*. Socrates' excuse, that it would be a mere question of inspiration, which remains to be verified, undoubtedly relates to the sought-after literary effect. Philosophically, *manteia* is the expression, albeit more pallid than the reminiscence, of the same pre-knowledge by which the process of knowing becomes possible but at the same time restricted.

If we now leave the boundaries of Platonism, we shall rediscover the same paradoxical problematic of knowledge whenever a theory of the latter is attempted. Knowledge has to be living thought, thinking in act; without the dynamic of consciousness, knowledge is not possible. But at the same time, it has to accomplish a process of *doubling back*.

Even in Aristotle, where dynamism is replaced by a simple mechanism (the play of form/matter), the central problem of knowledge – how can one know what one does not know – has to be posited, at least incidentally, while his solution indicates the same circle signalled by the Sophists. Indeed, after Aristotle, with his theory of actuality and virtuality, the spirit knows something new in an actual way through the fact that it *possesses* virtual knowledge. – How striking, on the other hand, is the dynamism of consciousness for Augustine, where everything is perplexity and seeking. This time, what is all the more striking is also the fact that the doubling back of the spirit is towards a "found", precisely in order that seeking might take place. Augustine entirely adheres to the Pascalian "you would not seek me if you had not found me". The short dialogue *De Magistro* comes to demonstrate that the solution to this problem of knowledge – which for Augustine has become: how can one *learn* something one does not yet know, how is it possible to learn in general – is: it is not possible to learn except through the inner teacher. Novelty of thought is possible through the ceaseless discovery of an inner Christ, who is alien to novelty in that he is permanence itself.

There is no need for us to search further in history in order to en-counter the same circle of knowledge, as soon as the problem of its possibility is decisively posited: it is the great dispute of the inneity of ideas, a dispute as yet latent in the ancient period but emerging with empiricism and modern rationalism. We cannot know except through inborn ideas, the rationalists will say, along the Platonic line which, where consciously or not, they situate themselves. We cannot know except through that which we already possess. But thereby, the empiri-cists retort, with Locke at their head, the activity of thinking is sup-pressed; idleness of the spirit is encouraged. On the contrary, retort the rationalists, it is only thus that the activity of thinking is preserved. And so, on the subject of the need to animate thinking, two orienta-tions that seemed at all points opposed thus become unitary. How-ever, the rationalist orientation, in its own way, takes account of the fact of knowing, although it ends up leading to genuine dogmatism, or else the mathematisation of knowing; whereas empiricism – precisely because it lacks awareness of the circle, while at the same time fully possessing dynamism – does not take sufficient account of knowledge, so that it cannot avoid, ultimately, falling into scepticism (Hume). Only along other lines will empiricism be rescued from scepticism,

for example along the lines of French "sensualism", with Condillac. But here too, inasmuch as the theory of knowledge justifies the results of positive thinking, the circle will appear once more. According to Condillac, there is no need for anything but memory in order, setting out from a single sensorial impression, to attain the entire world of knowledge; and there follows the example of the statue that possesses only olfactory sense. But what does memory provide, if not the persistence of the *same* in the world of something else, which is cognitive thinking? What is knowledge here except the rotation of a something else around the same?

With Kant, in the end, this "same", the identical factor in knowledge, is openly specified. It is a question of the "originary synthetic unity of apperception", from which is detached and to which returns the entire transcendental field, destined to make possible the order of knowledge. This time, the element of novelty will be provided exclusively by intuition (whether empirical or pure), otherwise to think may also be to think emptily, without knowledge, if there is no diversity of intuition. It is true that, through Fichte and Hegel, the synthetic unity of apperception, now in the form of the pure 'I' or of the absolute spirit, will be able to enter into an unfolding destined to multiply also itself, as well as to animate itself. But this pure dynamism will not for a moment be a linear unfolding, a submersion in the endless novelty of its own becoming. Even when it will be superimposed by the becoming of the real or historical reality, as it will in Hegel, this dynamism will be steadfastly doubled back upon its life principle. The circle of knowledge, now included in the circle of the knowledge that the "absolute" gains about itself, will expand, projecting itself upon the whole of reality as well as the whole of human history – but circle it will remain. More strikingly than anywhere else, it will remain circle.

What then is this vast motion of doubling back that is described by the process of knowing? Why is it that we find here also the paradoxical coincidence between motion and rest? Just as, in the logical act, thought betrays a solidarity between law and individual case (strikingly so the case of the "syllogism"), in knowledge, thinking manifests a solidarity between permanence and actuality. As it is knowledge, that is, progress of consciousness, it ceaselessly tends towards something new, systematically refusing anything ready-made. But it is knowledge only because it cannot be contemplation, just as Plato in the *Sophist* only attained the dynamism of consciousness because he could not

remain at the level of the Eleatics. In its origin, knowledge *is* contemplation, that is, the striving towards such a thing.

Or rather, in the act of knowing, a double tendency is everywhere manifest: towards seeking and towards truth. No living thought would accept the truth if it led to "idleness of the spirit", if it made seeking impossible; but nor would any awareness be able to conceive of a seeking that had no chances of coming to rest within a truth. Even if understood as infinite, like the indeterminate X of Natorp, the object of seeking still tends, at the limit, to be transformed into truth. For this reason, it seems to us that there is also a double instability in the spirit: when knowing it wants to contemplate, when contemplating it tends to fall back into knowing. Nowhere more so than in the Platonic Idea can there be encountered the double tendency to know and to contemplate at the same time. This is why it has also been possible to give it the double role of being both transcendental and transcendent.

All that represents, in the process of knowing, a doubling back from its linear progress relates to the same need for fixation and rest, which in its turn makes possible seeking and the restlessness of knowledge. Seeking only exists for the traveller, for the one who, from the outset, has a path. The progress of knowledge is not so much a going towards the unknown, the unrecognised, as much as towards the non-recognised. In its entirety, the process of knowing, understood as a becoming towards something else, finally turns out to be becoming as self and as within self. The act of knowing thus possesses something of the myth of Narcissus, with the opposite emphasis: it is an action that cannot sufficiently be contemplation, whereas for Narcissus it was a contemplation that could not sufficiently be action. But knowledge occurs as a reflex of becoming, while contemplation is nostalgia for Being, in a consciousness destined to re-make the circle whenever it becomes manifest.

ᔥ

We have seen two of these manifestations: the act of thinking (in logic) and the act of knowing. Philosophical consciousness also tallies other acts, which, likewise, ought to unfold beneath the sign of the circle. Is this the case for the *ethical* act?

There is undoubtedly symmetry between the act of knowing and the ethical act. For a long time, beneath the sign of "logic and eth-

ics", the modes of these acts covered almost the entire domain of philosophy, which was thus divided into a theoretical and a practical half. Whereas the act of knowing is an act of thinking (without any given act of thinking also being an act of knowing), the ethical act is behavioural act, and what happens from the point of view of thinking will also take place here. Just as knowing is thinking the not-yet-thought, a going towards the non-recognised, ethical behaviour is an engagement in a not-yet-lived situation, a going towards the not-yet-lived. Nor can ethical consciousness be the consciousness of self-identity. A consciousness that only experienced *one* attitude, that made a single spiritual gesture throughout an entire existence, would be a purely practical tautology. "How is something new possible" will thus have to be at stake here too, in the same, enlarged sense of Kantian synthesis. However, this time it is a question of action, not speculation, so the synthesis will be between two behaviours, not between two moments of thinking. How to reconcile one behaviour with another, *how to introduce unity into the diversity of our behaviours*: this is (apparently only formally) the problem of ethical consciousness. Before providing active spiritual life with a content (for example, the orientation towards the good), the ethical provides a *consistency*, a style, in the profound sense of the word. A life lived ethically has unity, self-identity.

But is there only a formal criterion at stake here? In this fact of "bringing consistency" to an individual or collective life, is it not ethics itself? The Greeks, at least, seemed to believe so, in the great period of their philosophy, that is, until Aristotle. For them, the consistency that is acquired not only by a human spiritual life, but also by any unfolding at the heart of the real, was "the good" proper to that life or thing. The good thus meant "fulfilment", and virtue was originally *virtus*, strength, the capacity to bind together. Thus, if attitudes converge and hold together, if they take on form, then they are good. "Form" is truly the good. Except that form had a fully metaphysical meaning: it was that which gave or augmented the *Being* in things. In this way, ancient ethics was covered by metaphysics, so much so that it was indistinguishable from it. Form is the good (identity with self), which is Being. *Ens et bonum convertuntur.*

At the opposite extreme of philosophy, in Kant, form is still, in itself, productive of the ethical. But this time ethics is mere ethics; it is no longer metaphysical, because its form is mere form, mere possibility, and not a reality as for the Greeks. Specifically, in Kant, the ethical is

obtained through the mere exercise of the imperative, which institutes "must" *beyond* any moral content. It is not the content of the imperative that interests, but rather the fact that it is imperative and universal, that is, its form decides on moral life. The moral act is consummated through mere respect for law, which is the only "moral respect".

On the one hand, with the Greeks, form is the terminus, the goal; here, in Kant, form is the principle of action, the mobile. The ethical act will situate itself between these two extremes; plenitude of content and lack of any content, formalism properly speaking; exterior freedom of attitude and restriction of any exterior freedom, rigourism. Do as you will, on the condition that you obtain a fulfilment, ancient morality seems to say; do as you must, even if it does not fulfil you, says Kantian morality. The ethical act ought to be somewhere between "as you will" and "as you must"!

The opposition between the Greek and the Kantian vision is too theoretical, too full of all kinds of implications of principle. "Do as you will" and "do as you must" are directly incorporated into two types of universal circulation. They allow themselves to be concretised by these two human types, which represent, more than any ethical system, the extremes of the ethical itself: they are the type of the prodigal son and the type of his brother. Separate from the Christian vision, separate even from any religious significance, these types remain valid, through their human substance.

The prodigal son lives his life as he wills, until the hour of "repentance". Through his repentance, the doer doubles back upon his deed and re-does it. The lack of any meaning of the whole creates in the doer the disposition to resume each deed and to re-do it at an ideal level, thus to re-make himself. "This is, perhaps, what I ought to have done", he tells himself. And through repentance, that is, through the doubling back upon the consummated deed, *ethical consciousness* emerges. If the prodigal son now encountered a "must" to oblige him, he would feel that, all of a sudden, he was crossing from the field of freedom into that of necessity. However, he does not encounter a "must" of action, but rather his repentance gives him a "must" of retrospection: "it would have been better to…" He encounters necessity only inasmuch as it does not overshadow his freedom, but rather, on the contrary, provides him for the first time with a possible content. Now he knows that his freedom does not depend on "what he wills", on his own whims, but on an order. However, he knows it only in terms of what he has done,

because he repents. But how can he know what he has to do? What is he to do from now on?

And then he returns home: not because he is unhappy, since he might have had and may yet still have many happy times; nor because he has nothing else to do, since he has found and may yet still find something much better to do than tend the pigs. However, he returns home because he now understands, through repentance, that what he does has to be done in a certain fashion, but he does not know how exactly. It is not enough to act; you must act *well*.

The paradox of knowledge reappears here: like thinking, doing has to be progress, a going towards something else; but in order to be progress, deed, like thought, has to be in possession of itself from the outset. The prodigal son, that errant son, returns home, not in order to remain there in reality but in order to learn the way. He had set off into the world without having any way in advance; he was not a traveller, he was in reality errant. Now he wishes to wander no more, he wants to know, to go rightly. Without this, he can no longer go at all. Thus, he returns home in order to start things over again, in the right way.

At home is his brother, who had lived "in the right way". His life unfolds from obedience to obedience, and, behind him, he leaves nothing to be corrected. This is why he never even turns his gaze backwards, as the other did when he repented; but nor does he direct his gaze forward, as the other did before he repented. His gaze is fixed upon a truth-guide, which makes him go forward unswervingly. There exists what might be called a *somnambulism of the principle*, and the brother of the prodigal son seems to live in this state. This is why his going is known in advance, his life lived in advance. In contemplation of the principle, as he finds himself, the brother is no longer open to action.

Is it that there is an ethical consciousness in him too? But he is *only* ethical consciousness. However, he is an ethical consciousness that functions emptily. He is an ethical consciousness without content, a debate without any concrete development. He does not err, but nor *can* he err. His only error is to place himself in the situation in which he cannot err. Hence, the sin of believing himself wronged on the return of the prodigal. It was the first thing that he had not lived in advance: the encounter with something other than the known-in-advance.

From what ethical consciousness does the ethical act spring? From both of them, combined. The ethical act is possible only as a deed that constantly doubles back upon the principle and as a principle that

requires deed. There is – as in knowledge – a double instability in an ethical subject: when it acts, it wishes to possess justification, and when it has meaning, it wishes to bring it to fulfilment. Kantian formalism, perhaps, expresses only one half of the truth: the instability of the ethical meaning as meaning, the obligatory transition from meaning to act. But this instability must be combined with the other, which leads from deed to meaning, recreating the circle of the ethical act.

The act of knowing at the same time implies becoming, out of the process of knowing properly speaking, and the fixative meaning of the moment of contemplation; the ethical act likewise implies the exit from the horizon of the made-in-advance and nevertheless preservation within a horizon of the known. On both the one side and the other, the process of a becoming within Being is thus *reflected*. The prodigal son reveals himself as an incorporation of becoming, whereas his brother is an incorporation of Being. Naturally, one is a mere irony of becoming, the other a caricature of Being. But in a deforming mirror, things can sometimes be seen more clearly.

<div align="center">❦</div>

What is common to the philosophical acts examined up to now is not only the fact that they unfold within a circle, but also that, by unfolding within a circle, they each time represent an entry into order. In the logical act, the individual universal (Socrates in his socraticity) tends towards the general universal (mortal man), comes to rest in it; in the act of knowing, knowledge proper tends towards contemplation; in the ethical act, freedom tends towards subjugation. Everywhere it is like a re-encounter with an order from which had emerged, as it is, at the metaphysical level, the return of becoming to a Being that it had abolished. It has appeared to us, however, that philosophy represents precisely this: the conversion of reason, under threat from the irrational, into steadfast reason; the entry into order. With each of its acts, philosophy rearranges the world into what it ought to be. The logical act, the act of knowing, the ethical act place things in order.

The reflection of this order at the sensible level constitutes the *aesthetic act* and, with it, we encounter the final act of autonomous (traditional) philosophy. Whereas the other philosophical acts elevate to the ideal sense of order, the aesthetic act is destined to render its sensible image. Hence the solidarity of the aesthetic act with each of the other

three disciplines, in such a way that aesthetics has, in the course of the history of philosophy, been able to seem to depend *now* on the logical-rational orientation, then on the cognitive orientation, then on the ethical orientation.

It has thus been possible to conceive of a *logical* aesthetics, one *based on epistemology*, and one with *ethical* foundations. The aesthetic act, in the first case, appeared as closely bound to logicality and mathematicality (proportion). There is not only a Pythagorean inspiration to this perspective on the beautiful (an inspiration which reoccurs in the aesthetics of our own day, with the theoreticians of the "golden number", for example), but also an understanding in general of the beautiful as measure, mathematical harmony, equilibrium, just proportion. The rational aesthetics of the eighteenth century or the neo-classicism of our own times understand how to make this emphasis, thus detaching the logical element in aesthetic matter and making of it the key to aesthetics itself.

But at other times, it has been the *epistemological* character of the aesthetic act that has been emphasised. In it has been seen the type and the model of the "intellectual intuition" (Schelling) so steadfastly pursued at the level of philosophical knowledge. Or else in it has been revealed a contemplative character, which seemed to respond to knowledge's need to end in contemplation. Both in one case and the other, the aesthetic act seemed like a superior type of knowledge. From other perspectives, however, it depended rather on a "confused" knowledge (Leibnizianism), knowledge of an inferior type, but knowledge nonetheless. Even for Kant, aesthetics is, in spite of its "autonomy", contiguous to the modes of knowing, since it represents a play of the faculties of the spirit. But whatever type of "knowledge" aesthetics might be, it reveals itself as a way of placing a material in order; of imposing order on sensible material, in the case of the inferior mode, or of suggesting how imposition of an ideal order is possible, in the case of intellectual intuition. The same as logic at the formal level, the epistemological tends on level of content, in the aesthetic field, to bring into relief that which aesthetics possesses from the start: the reflex of order.

The *ethical* orientation of aesthetics, in the end, steadfastly appears throughout the history of aesthetics, and not only under Platonic inspiration. The beautiful is destined to ennoble, and the artistic cult of the beautiful educates humans and enhances their dignity. At the inferior level, the beautiful has the gift of taming and disciplining human

beings. From the music of Orpheus, who tamed even the beasts, to the rhythm and song of Greek education, to the elementary aesthetic sense of gymnastics or dance (and jazz) today, everything expresses this elementary virtue of the beautiful. Human being is pulled from the chaos and disorder that dominate it – when it emerges from the rigorous but inferior order of the biological – and acquires equilibrium of self. However, we thus find ourselves at the first level of the ethical, while the aesthetic seems destined to attain much more. The "purification" brought by Greek tragedy fully expresses this 'much more'. The "disinterested" character of the artistic exercise, the detachment of human being from egoism, its elevation to a world of harmonies, correspondences and fusion, raises the human spirit to the level of its perfection, which is a superior form of submission. As in the other two modalities, the ethical renders to the spirit the meaning of an order.

The logical, epistemological and ethical meaning of the aesthetic thus each time express, with a different nuance, the dependence of the aesthetic upon order. But only through the partial reflection of this order have the three types of the aesthetic that occur throughout history been possible. Although each of them has its justification, none of them can – as has been proven in fact – take account of the aesthetic itself. It is profoundly significant that the aesthetic act has been understood in the light of the other three, but no more than significant. Its specificity will have to be sought in the way in which it directly reflects order, not in the way in which it has realised the order of another plane. Like the other philosophical acts, it obtains reason in the form *proper* to itself.

How then does the aesthetic act in itself appear? And what, for example, does the beautiful, the privileged (at least in the past) value of this act, express?

At an initial moment, the beautiful expresses the *normal*. Whether scientifically or not, there has always been an attempt to canonise the beautiful and, although there are no rigorous canons for any form of the beautiful, this tendency has never ceased to become manifest. The beautiful hero of today's literature or cinema is also, in his or her being and gestures, the provider of the measure, the norm. Each of us rediscovers ourselves in him or her, inasmuch as the self is referred further, as far as a form of perfection. And how curious is this elemen-

tary beauty: it is a normality that always appears different, as if every real image had its *own* form of perfection!

But the normal affirms too little of the stringency of the beautiful; it seems a mere "averageness", a not-too-much-not-too-little, like Aristotelian virtue. In fact, however, the normal is not a provider of norms unless it depends on a genuine *prototype*. Hence derives its obligatory character, but also its seduction. At the moment the *Eros* appears as a thirst for equilibrium and an entry into order, as the striving of what is towards what should be, then it fully displays the attraction towards the beautiful, which is precisely the expression of what should be. The Greeks experienced the beautiful in this way, in its character of prototype towards which things aspire, as towards the "prime friend" in *Lysis*.

The normal still preserves adherence to the immediate real, which it merely seems to correct; the prototype, on the other hand, no longer sets out from this but has its own subsistence. The normal is an attribute; the prototype can be a genuine subject. But it is no longer a subject from the immediately real order; and thus there appears a third hypostasis of the beautiful, according to norm and prototype, that of being *the ideal*. The beautiful restores the thing to a world "beyond"; it transfigures it. Through beauty, things become translucent. It is the subtle paradox of beauty – which seems destined precisely to give consistency, weight, intrinsic value to the real – to make the real essentially transparent. It is precisely the beautiful thing, at which one is tempted to linger, that refers one further on. A real whose consistency means opacity, a real that lingers upon itself and does not refer any further, cannot be beautiful. It is not, of course, a question of a mystical or symbolic meaning of the real; what is at stake is only its potential to be or not to be a stage, to allow itself to be translucent or not. No one more so than Plato has shown this character of the beautiful thing *not* to retain, precisely because it is beautiful, to be a stage towards the "ideal" beauty.

This ideal, however, cannot be a loss of the real, but rather it is its intensification, or its rediscovery at a superior level. The normal, the prototype, the ideal cannot be characters of the beautiful except to the extent that the latter engages the real within a deeper equilibrium. And indeed, beauty is like a rearrangement in Being, a return of the real to its *essence*, and the real reveals itself to us the ultimate hypostasis of the beautiful. Through beauty, any reality becomes, in one sense,

an *ens realissimum*. That is why the ideal character of the beautiful ought not to deceive: it is an intensification and not a loss of reality. It occurs thus in the case of natural beauty, where the accomplished example becomes the concretisation of the respective species; likewise in the case of artistic beauty. With some degree of surprise, Pascal observes somewhere that one admires in painting that which one would never trouble to look at in reality. But thus it is in literature also: situations that one avoids, that repulse one at the level of reality, are now pursued insatiably at the artistic level. Why? What is this prestige that things suddenly acquire? It is that of being essentialised, as has been said. Each thing at the heart of the real, even the ugly, has a mode of beauty and its own nobility. One must merely have the daring to raise it hence – just as at the dialectical level, the Platonic Parmenides urges the still young Socrates to have the courage to attain the *Idea* of mud, the Idea of the strand of hair. It is this transposition from one level of reality to another deepened level that the aesthetic act accomplishes in its way. If the latter is oriented, then it can only be towards the order of essences, which are a facet of Being.

What then does the beautiful express? It expresses, or at least approximates, that order which we have discovered in each philosophic act. And it expresses it directly. Aesthetics, the science of the beautiful, does not thus need to subordinate itself to the logical, the epistemological or the ethical perspective in order to constitute itself as such. Through its object, which is (or was) artistic beauty – if not also natural beauty – through this character of representing the normal, the prototype, the ideal and the essential, aesthetics engages itself directly in the order which it discovers or which artists incorporate in their sensible material.

But this time, with the aesthetic act, precisely because sensible material is at stake, the *circle* will appear more clearly than anywhere else. In aesthetics, this circle is spoken of openly. In order to defend the beautiful, its specific value – as one aesthetician says[1] – against denial, aesthetics needs previously to have penetrated to the essence of the beautiful, which must, however, be extracted precisely from *beautiful* things. This is the tragedy of any *Wertwissenschaft*, the same author declares, that of falling into a circle. – One cannot extract the beautiful from sensible matter unless one possesses it beforehand. "You would not seek me if you had not found me" is the very aesthetic act. It has

---

[1]   M. Geiger, in *Systematische Philosophie*, chapter "Ästhetik".

been observed that in order truly to savour a melody one must know it
beforehand. In general, music is characteristic of this way of perceiving
the beautiful, since more than any other art it implies re-listening, re-
discovery. But above all the aesthetic act describes the same circle. The
order that is reflected in sensible matter is inscribed in the awareness
that seeks, in the sensible world, its embodiment. This is why rhythm
of any kind, rhythm as a pre-established order, is one of the funda-
mental techniques of the beautiful. From the elementary rhythm of
primitives to the superior rhythm of the harmony of colours or ideas,
the aesthetic act is engrafted onto rhythm as onto a necessary order, in
the margins of which the freedom to create becomes possible. The ten-
sion between freedom and necessity, more so than unity in diversity, as
has been said of the aesthetic act, seems to provide the latter with its
measure. It is an unexpected equilibrium, but equilibrium neverthe-
less: one that suppresses itself, but permanently knows how to redis-
cover itself. Within this order that is presupposed by the aesthetic act,
all freedoms, processes, becoming are possible; and nevertheless each
of them, taken to the limit, does nothing more than to realise the order
given in advance. "You would not seek me if you had not found me" is
here much more than the search, in beautiful things, for the beauty
that is possessed in advance. It is, in accordance with the beautiful, the
pursuit, in the world of sensible becoming, of a permanence that is of
the order of Being.

CHAPTER 2

THE CIRCLE IN THE

PHILOSOPHY OF THE SPIRIT

With "you would not seek me if you had not found me", as an expression of the circle of consciousness, all philosophical consciousness must begin and end. In each of its acts, philosophy gives expression to the paradox of this circular search. We have seen, in the case of the philosophical disciplines, that they did not constitute themselves as such except in the moment they became conscious of their circle. For each of them, the circle took a specific form. In the logical act, the circle was clearly given by the syllogism, with the movement of the Individual towards the General and from the latter towards the former. In the act of cognition, the circle was expressed by the double instability of knowledge proper and of contemplation. In the ethical act, the circle appeared concretised in the conversion of freedom to subjugation and the striving of subjugation towards freedom. In the aesthetic act, finally, the sensible and the idea interpenetrated. In varied forms, there was everywhere a striving towards reason of a superior kind, one of contraries, secondary reason; the particular *is* universal, knowledge *is* contemplation, freedom *is* subjugation, the sensible *is* idea. In four fundamentally different attitudes, there is an expression of the same modality: the circle.

But in truth, are there four different attitudes? Philosophical consciousness is subject to the interests of each discipline only in appearance. In reality, *philosophical consciousness is one*, just as philosophy, beyond its splitting into disciplines, is one. A "split" appears above all in non-philosophical epochs, or in epochs that are not creative at the philosophical level, but rather merely systematising. This is why distinct disciplines are not to be found in a creative vision. Neither Plato nor Hegel possesses such a thing. In ancient philosophy, it was not until Aristotle that there began to be a distinction in philosophical disciplines; that is, not until the philosopher in whom – even if he still depends on a great tradition – can be found the principles of the future decline: system as teaching, and the history of philosophy

as doxography, or collections of opinions. The split into disciplines is, however, fully characteristic of the Nineteenth Century, the non-philosophical century par excellence, the century of Victor Cousin. It arises from the impossibility of philosophising to the very limit in each of the disciplines, thus of arriving at their unity. In any great philosophy, however, it is a question of one thing only, in its full sense. For the Greeks, the Good, Beauty and Truth were all implicated in Being and fulfilled themselves within one perspective only, the metaphysical. However, the same thing has happened to all great philosophies, not just the Greek: in the form of a unique philosophical consciousness. This is why, if philosophy leads to the consciousness of the circle, it cannot be a question of anything other than the diversely reflected *one*. And this has appeared to us as the circle of becoming within Being.

In one way or another, any philosophical conception, in its entirety, ends up "falling into a circle" and, if it is consequent with itself, it finds itself forced to assent to the latter, which, according to us, will, directly or indirectly, be that of becoming within Being. Indeed, there is a typical objection, which comes back against *all* philosophical concepts and which can end up being accepted, in an attempt thereby to nullify its destructive character. It is their fundamental and inevitable circle. Scepticism – it has been said – is not sceptical, at least as regards scepticism. Criticism is not critical of itself, but rather dogmatic; in its Kantian form it accepts as a presupposition "the originary synthetic unity of apperception", and even the thing-in-itself. In general, idealism is not anywhere idealist: it ends up proclaiming the reality of the idea or of the ego. Realism, in its turn, inasmuch as it represents a doctrine *about* the real, becomes a kind of idealism. "Can a monad be a monadologist?" as has been objected. If the monad has no windows and depends, in a way, on imperfect knowledge, then from the perspective of a monad in which you are situated, you cannot conceive of a monadology. Each philosophical concept "contradicts itself", falling into a circle.

On what does this circle depend? Does it somehow depend on the fact that – inasmuch as the above-mentioned concepts employ knowledge – it necessarily arrives at the knowing of knowledge? If it is a question of a particular kind of knowledge (sceptical, critical, monadological) then naturally the knowledge of knowledge also ought

to be of the same particular kind.[1] Thus, leaving aside the fact that knowledge of knowledge can open to infinite regress, the situation that comes about is that a concept whereby knowledge is achieved cannot also arrive at knowing itself except as not being able to know itself (the scepticism that must doubt itself); the concept explains everything except itself.

In fact, however, in the light of the circle that we discovered in the act of knowing, it seems to us that it is not a question of the knowledge of knowledge but of the *contemplation* of knowledge. If the spirit, which as a rule refers to something else and is transitive, must now double back upon itself, then it tends towards a consciousness of self that would not be a consciousness of what it in itself does, produces, becomes, as much as of what it *is*. The knowledge of knowledge can therefore only be *contemplation* of self. The circle into which it (inevitably) falls is, it seems to us, a muffled consciousness of the circle of becoming within Being from any philosophical conception, which we have found reflected in the play between cognition and contemplation.

Otherwise, when one or another philosophical concept is taken to the limit, that is, when it is not a mere concept *about* human knowledge, such as the doctrines above, but rather a metaphysical concept, then the circle of becoming within Being arises in a direct form. Such, it seems to us, is the case in the conception of Heidegger, where there is a circle and where the author himself recognises the existence of a circle. He says somewhere (*Sein und Zeit*, 1st ed., p. 314) that the full elucidation of human reality will not come except from the clarification of the meaning of Being; but until then, he seeks the meaning of Being in human reality. If there is a circle, says the author, it is one that he accepts. And what else other than our circle is this circle of *Being*, which makes human reality possible, in the temporal horizon of which – in the consciousness of the *becoming* of which – Being will have to be sought?

Philosophical consciousness is therefore one and, as it seems to us, it is invariably the consciousness of becoming within Being.

Let us nevertheless admit that, up to now, we do not have any effective proof that this unique consciousness, the same as the consciousness to which the different philosophical disciplines led, would be one of becoming within Being. Let us merely mention what seems to us

---

1   One of the "paradoxes" of contemporary mathematics seems to recall this circle.

assured: that it is a question of unique consciousness. All genuine phi-
losophies essentially recognise philosophical consciousness as unitary.
It is *from* this consciousness, now viewed as one and not in its acts,
that we shall in the end have to detach becoming within Being, if this
indeed has any meaning. We have seen a *first guarantee* that becoming
within Being, with its circle, has meaning: the fact that all the funda-
mental philosophical acts occur in a circle. Now we should seek a *sec-
ond guarantee*: the fact that, being unitary, philosophical consciousness
itself develops within a circle, and namely in that of becoming within
Being.

　But what is such a unitary consciousness? It is, in fact, unity of
consciousness. And where should unity of consciousness be sought?
Without doubt, in the so-called *philosophy of the spirit*, in German
philosophical idealism, understood precisely as consciousness of this
unity. There is no need for us to "construct" such an attitude, as we may
appear to have done with its acts, since it exists: it is the philosophy
of Kant. And there is no need for us to demonstrate the fundamental
presupposition, specifically the unity of consciousness; it is explicitly
formulated by Kant, with the "originary synthetic unity of appercep-
tion". Finally, there is no need for us to demonstrate the possible exer-
cise of this unity: it is – as clearly consigned by the philosopher him-
self – *the table of categories*. If becoming within Being has the meaning
we suspect it to have, then it must be reflected here and confer on
Kant's categories that which Aristotle's categories possessed from the
outset: an ontological meaning.

A. THE CIRCLE IN THE TABLE OF THE CATEGORIES

In this table of the categories, as an expression of the unity of con-
sciousness, resides the triumph of the philosophy of the spirit. Hence-
forth will it genuinely characterise itself, at least in the critical form.
Thus far, critical philosophy might have seemed a mere veleity, merely
(yet another) philosophical attitude, which moreover would not even
have been very new, inasmuch as it had been proposed by Locke. How-
ever, the moment the categories are established, by means of the unity
of consciousness, Kantian criticism becomes rigorous and systematic,
seeming to confirm itself with each new step in the system. Whoever
traverses the critical system feels that henceforward, with the table of
the categories, the game starts to get serious. Everything that follows

will depend on this table: directly in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, with *The Analytic of Principles* and then *The Paralogisms of Pure Reason*, *The Antinomies* and *The Ideal of Pure Reason*; and indirectly, in the other two *Critiques*. Only in the *Critique of Judgement* does Kant seem able and obliged to exit from hence; but the system of the categories, with their juridical and legalist spirit, will be retained.

Not only does the philosophy of the spirit *commence* with the table of the categories but it also continues through various of its aspects. It is here, according to an indication Kant notes in passing in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cassirer's edition, p. 101, obs. 2) that Fichte discovers his movement from one category to another, only for Hegel then to give, according to the triadic system, also mentioned by Kant (by chance, as Hegel will say), the process of the *dialectic* of the spirit.

Let us therefore select the table of categories as the touchstone for the topic of becoming within Being. The philosophical consciousness, upon which such a table depends, is not only unitary, but is also conceived as the very unity through which all the other unifying syntheses are possible; it is the originally unitary synthesis. Moreover, such a unity is thought of only from the point of view of the consciousness, not from that of existence. We are thus at the *antipodes* of any problematic of Being (in its classic sense, with essence and existence) as well as its possible becoming. Our presupposition, that philosophy's unity of consciousness is essentially the conscious unity of "becoming within Being", will thus be confronted with the extreme case, of a unity of consciousness (respectively of a unique philosophical consciousness) *which completely refuses itself to Being*. But if we succeed in finding, even in such a consciousness, the reflex of becoming within Being, then we shall obtain not only verification of the presupposition that any unique philosophical consciousness is, in the last instance, that of becoming within Being. In addition, perhaps, we shall obtain *the common root of the philosophy of spirit and that of Being*. In any case, we shall obtain the following new situation: that the philosophy of the spirit can be understood through the problematic of Being. This may, in some way, also be put inversely: the problematic of Being is to be understood by means of the spirit's unity of consciousness. And this might also be the same as expressing the solidarity of the two philosophies, which are antagonistic in fact but nevertheless only apparently opposed, according to the deeper foundations of philosophy. Let us then make this attempt.

In the place already cited – whence it seems to us Hegel's dialectic process might find its source – Kant says "any a priori division by means of concepts must be dichotomous". If, however, in his table the categories are arranged in threes, it is because the third category arises from the synthesis (*Verbindung*) of the first two. If we wish to follow Kant's construction step by step, then we cannot proceed otherwise than to divide our topic in the same way. Let us posit (as we have implicitly posited in reality) three terms: Being, becoming, and becoming within Being. It is true that becoming within Being will *not* appear to us in the end as a mere *Verbindung*, a synthesis between Being and becoming; or more precisely, we shall reckon that Being is not predestined, in reality, to enter into synthesis. On the other hand, becoming within Being qua "synthesis" will not come in third place (which will, perhaps, determine us to conceive of the table of categories in a different order). But for the time being, it is sufficient for us to arrange our terms alongside the Kantian categories, in order to see whether they in any way match all the four groups or "headings" Kant gives them: quantity, quality, relation, modality.

We shall, of course, commence with *quantity*. Our metaphysical terms seem in this way to match the judgements, as an expression of the functions of the intellect, and the corresponding categories in the Kantian table:

Judgements	*Categories*	
Universal	Unity	Becoming within Being
Particular	Plurality	Becoming
Singular	Totality	Being

Becoming within Being is, without doubt, *unity*. Compared to mere becoming's loss in multiplicity, it brings about a recovery, a means of re-gathering those *disjecta membra* of transformation into a unitary whole. It is not, of course, a question of the One, of a unique and exclusive reality; rather it is a question of a unity in the sense of the possibility of unification. On the other hand, becoming within Being has the character of a *generality*[2], thereby corresponding to universal judgement. As becoming within "Being", it does not leave things in their dissident particularity, but rather draws them together, positing

---

2 Noica, in this context, does not draw a distinction between general and universal judgments. Therefore, in this chapter, universal and general must be considered synonyms [e.n.].

them precisely under a new species (as historicity does with history), the species of the generic. Thus, the first Kantian term may reflect it.

That becoming pure and simple is fully on the side of *plurality*, and *particular* judgement needs no further comment. Likewise, the fact that Being is a *totality* of the "singular" or that total Being is *singular*.

The correspondence therefore seems to have been obtained in its entirety – perhaps with the exception of "unity", if the latter is conceived of as a simple arithmetic unity – of homogenes. But unity is not conceived of by Kant as exclusively thus. It is also the unity of diversity, a "qualitative" unity (the unity of a drama, for example), as Kant will say, when he attempts to reduce the *Unum*, *Verum* and *Bonum* of Scholasticism to the three categories of quantity. And then, how could unity correspond to a *universal* judgement, if it were not a unity of a general type, one which presupposes diversity and plurality – just as (plural) becoming does within (one) Being? Unity is not the One. Of course, this might mean that we ought to have posited plurality not unity at the head of the categories of quantity; the spirit would commence with particular judgements and with plurality, in order later to arrive at universal judgements and unity. But for the time being the arrangement of the categories is not important to us. What interests us is solely their correspondence with the three terms, and in the first group, this is, it seems to us, indisputable.

Let us pass on to the second category, that of *quality*. The table would produce:

Judgements	Categories	
Affirmative	Reality	Becoming within Being
Negative	Negation	Becoming
Infinite	Limitation	Being

Here, the correspondence is perhaps even more evident. Becoming within Being wholly has the sense of *reality*. We have seen that it alone can endow the things and the states of the world with the character of "real". Ordinary becoming, that of loss, produces evanescent reality, which ends up as the illusory. Becoming within Being alone extracts things from their blind flux, endowing them with the character of *res* (*re-al*), of subsistent things. – And undoubtedly it is also becoming within Being that will genuinely be affirmative, corresponding to the Kantian category at the head. Becoming within becoming is becoming between death and loss, thus it is an unending negation of self, prom-

ise, procreation, a postponement of self. Becoming within Being alone instantiates, edifies, affirms.

Thus, we have also said that mere becoming corresponds to *negation* and negative judgement. Becoming is essentially possible (in Hegel, for example) only through negation; initial negation, denial of Being, and then through the negation of each moment of the unstable thing, which constantly transforms itself because it can *not* be a single thing, it cannot genuinely *be*. In the end, the fact that Being corresponds to infinite judgement, as it is the permanently open horizon, is clear from the start.

There is one thing alone that might seem not to provide a match in the correspondence with the Kantian table: the category of "limitation" and therefore the character of limitation for Being. In the first place, however, it must be underlined that this mismatch also figures in the Kantian table, but nonetheless the author does not seem to have been put out by the fact that the category of limitation (which sounds almost like finitude) corresponds to one of *infinite* judgement. Therefore, it should not be overlooked that Being is sometimes represented, in the content of philosophical thought, precisely as limitation (as closed, spherical, according to Parmenides; or individual, according to Aristotle). Or else, if it possesses infinity (according to Melissos, for example), it still possesses the character of being sufficient unto itself, of being for itself. In reality, Being is always conceived as possessing infinity and finitude *at the same time*, as being infinite in the finite (like the Platonic Idea, for example, which suggestively corresponds to the description of the beautiful, or as "infinite in the finite" in Schelling). Consequently, the combination between finitude and infinity would be nothing more than the expression of an intrinsic tension within the idea of Being, thus a meaning fitting to it, in spite of the first impression.

However, let us see what it is that makes Kant employ the term of limitation for the category corresponding to infinite judgement. Kant thus names a judgement whose predicate *negatively* expresses an infinity (his example is "immortal") and which is affirmed as such. General logic, he says (p. 92, Cassirer edition), is not interested in the content of the predicate but only in whether it is affirmed of the subject or not. Transcendental logic, however, which does not leave aside all content but only the empirical one, must also see the value of the judgement in accordance with "the content of a logical affirmation made on the

basis of a negative predicate". For example, in the simple affirmative judgement according to general logic that "the soul is immortal", the predicate immortal contains an infinity, for only that which is mortal has been excluded from it, and the remainder is still infinite. Such infinite judgements are therefore restrictive, while remaining infinite. Their "quality" is that of being simultaneously affirmative regarding form and negative – in the sense of restrictive – regarding the content of the predicate, which nevertheless remains infinite. Thus, they contain the affirmation of a negation, which does not, however, annul. Only the infinite can negate itself without refuting itself, and is even still susceptible to affirmation as being infinite as such.

Consequently, this "limitation" of the infinite (in-finite) is that which makes Kant speak of a category of limitation. In reality, however, the character of limitation is secondary, since the infinity remains; or in any case, it should be revealed by means of the name of the category that, in spite of limitation, infinity persists. The term "limitation" taken in itself is therefore not wholly adequate, as it expresses only restriction, but not the persistence of the whole, in spite of it. What determines Kant to adopt the term is perhaps the tendency (one that is disputable, as we shall attempt to demonstrate below) subsequently to make it, as a third term, a "synthesis" between reality and negation. Likewise, he will of course have arrived at the idea of "infinite" judgement in seeking a judgement that would be simultaneously affirmative and negative, in accordance with the two he found in general logic. Rather *non-limitation* (a reality that bears negation without being abolished), or a *limitation that does not limit* would be more fitting.

Moreover, "infinite" judgements are also improperly named, for they are qualified according to the content and not the quality of the judgement. More proper would have been: indifferent judgements (the indifference of the absolute or of the infinite, in the later idealists, which requires the ± sign of the mathematicians) or, ultimately, negatively-affirmative judgements (immortal). In any case, it is clear – as Kant also suspects – that, beyond affirmation and negation, there is room for a third quality of judgement and that this quality brings into play a kind of infinity. Only the infinite is beyond negation and affirmation, and therefore it may be both negated and affirmed. Consequently, it provides a third "quality".

At the categorial level, this quality of judgement produces the type of reality that cannot be abolished through negation (because it carries

negation in it, it has "trampled death", it commences from negation).
But it is to *this* category that Being corresponds. Negative theology did
nothing more than issue such "infinite" judgements: God is immortal,
unlimited, timeless etc. Whereas the philosophy of Being, when it was
merely a philosophy of Being (with the Eleatics) and not of becom-
ing within Being, was unable to issue judgements about Being of any
other type than: it is immobile, incorruptible, atemporal etc., judge-
ments that corresponded to the category of limitation, respectively of
non-limitation. It therefore seems to us – however many reservations
we might have about the nomenclature used in the final category, as
well as in the final type of judgement under the heading of quality, and
even if were we to accept, in the absence of any other more suggestive,
the Kantian term of "limitation" – that our term of Being corresponds
to the fundamental notion conceived by Kant in that place.

We may thus go on to the third group of judgements and categories,
that of relation. This time, the table is:

Judgements	Categories	
Categorical	Of inherence & subsistence (substantia et accidens)	Becoming within Being
Hypothetical	Of causality and dependence (cause and effect)	Becoming
Disjunctive	Of community--- (reciprocity between the agent and patient)	

For the first two Kantian terms, the match with our terms is, on
this occasion, obvious. Becoming *within* Being may very well be under-
stood as *inherence*. It is a becoming at the heart of Being, one which the
preposition "within" (meaning both "inside" and "towards", in Roma-
nian "întru") makes you regard also as an unfolding of accidents within
a substance, within a permanence: Being. Of course, any philosophy
of becoming within Being will not obligatorily take this substantial-
ist aspect. What we understand we are revealing is that becoming
within Being also includes the moment of substantiality. Similarly, it
goes without saying that it will appear as being in agreement with the
categorical judgement. Becoming within Being expresses the decisive
(positive or negative) relation between the subject that becomes and
the predicate at the heart of which becoming takes place. There is no
room for mere becoming within a categorical judgement: it is and it is
not, both at the same time; it has a precarious reality, one of approxi-

mation. This is why, at its heart, things are what they are, but they might also be something else; in the end they will *be* something else. The categorical is merely the relation on the inside of becoming within Being.

In mere becoming – to move on to the second term – the relation between one term and another will be precisely that of *causality* (or, as in the first case, it will be represented as also being thus). The causal chain, determinism and causal linearity represent – as we saw at the beginning of this chapter – the schema of this becoming. For, given that it is becoming within becoming, it brings link after link in the chain of things; it refers, just like a cause, to an effect, which in its turn will be a cause of another effect. The causal chain perfectly expresses the "wasting" of this type of becoming, its permanent and irremediable postponement. And, just as the category of causality results from a *hypothetical* judgement, with the former expressing the hypothetical relation in itself (*if* you posit the cause you will obtain the effect), so too mere becoming, with its instability and flux, is the chain of the infinite successive conditioning of one term by another, a progression without beginning or end, in which each term is conditioned and at the same time conditions. It is only through the uninterrupted action of the hypothetical (hypothesis), of placing one term beneath another, of sustaining one term with the crutch of another, that this becoming can make sense, a becoming which does not really "hold", but is nevertheless not a collapse, because it is "self-sustaining". Each term is fleeting, but subsists as long as it – hypothetically – sustains the next.

Consequently, for the first two types of judgement and category in the group of relation, there is a working correspondence with our terms. What happens in the third category? *If it is perfectly valid*, it means that "Being" will not find any correspondent here, in the group of relation; (respectively, like the Being of the Eleatics, it will not enter into any kind of relation,). *But it is not valid*, and it is precisely the situation of Being that would necessitate the revision or in any case the rethinking of the Kantian category of community; *it* can cause us to sense that there is a "void" here, just as Charles Renouvier noted last century. Is community truly a category? Does it express an original, non-derived function of the intellect, as Kant would wish for every category? Does it deserve to stand among "predicaments"? Or merely among the pure concepts derived from the first, therefore only among what Kant calls the "praedicabilia"?

Since Kant's "guiding thread" is the judgements, let us seek the meaning of the category of community under the heading of the judgements. What is the meaning of a "disjunctive" judgement? How original is it as a function of thought? It appears to us quite simply as a derivation of hypothetical judgement. *The disjunctive is merely a modality of the hypothetical.* Here, for instance, is Kant's example for disjunctive judgement: "The world exists, either through blind chance, or through internal necessity, or through an external cause".[3] These eventualities, Kant specifies, coexist on an equal footing, they make up a "community". But what does his example represent? Rather than, by means of a hypothetical judgement, saying that "if there is a cause, then the world too exists", one divides the protasis, the "if there is a cause", into its various possibilities: accidental, necessary, external cause. Or else, if the "term" cause is here troublesome (for it is opposed to the fact that the first hypothesis is one of chance, of the absence of cause), then Kant's judgement may still perhaps be posited in hypothetical form: "The world results from something, it has an antecedent". Thus: *if* its antecedent exists, then it exists; and this antecedent is now "disjointed" into a number of eventualities. But surely, would multiplication of the hypothesis by division abolish its characteristic of being a hypothesis? The whole of the hypothesis is shattered, disjointed; this is why it will also arrive at the "community" of members; but the shattering of the protasis as a whole does not change the hypothetical, and in any case it is in itself a derivative act.

Moreover, this derivative character, this dependency of the disjunctive on the hypothetical, is perfectly mirrored in the corresponding categories, those of community and causality. What is community in Kant's example? It is *causality* in common, that is, a special form of causality, and nothing more. It is true that, to the right of the category of community, Kant places "reciprocity between the agent and patient" in brackets. However, from the example of disjunctive judgement given above, it by no means results that it is a question of any reciprocal action: the members of the alternative (the cause of the world is "internal", the cause of the world is "external" etc.) are not only alien to any reciprocity but also explicitly exclude each other. It might be the case that what we have here is one of Kant's unfortunate examples, a number of which have been revealed by his commentators. Let us

3   Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by J.M.D. Meiklejohn. (London: Dent, 1934). Page 76. [t.n.]

nevertheless accept the meaning of reciprocal action for community; let us find a possible example, for instance: "Either criticism makes philosophy possible, or philosophy makes criticism possible". And let us ask ourselves what divers types of relations, what autonomous and "original function" does community represent qua reciprocal action. None other than yet another modality of causality! Its two terms are, successively (or, in order to be a perfect reciprocal action, simultaneously), cause and effect one to the other. Community, thus understood, is nothing other than reciprocal causality. The category of community reverts, in any form, to that of causality.

Consequently, the third category in the group of relation *is not perfectly valid*. Community, or reciprocal action, is a form of causality, just as the disjunctive is a form of the hypothetical. (Even Kant will later see the kinship between the hypothetical and the disjunctive, when he says that the two propositions in the hypothetical judgement and the parts of the alternative in the disjunctive judgement can all be given as examples of problematic judgements.) In the place of the third, both for judgements and for categories, it is as if there is a void. How can it be filled, if it is true, as Kant says, that for each group there must be three terms and if the three ontological terms we have brought into play must also correspond to something here?

What is lacking in this third position is a type of "relation", namely *that of a thing to itself* (that of the self, we might say). Kant had spoken about the relationship between predicate and subject in the first case, thus about inherence; he had spoken about the relationship between the ground and the consequence (*Grund und Folge*), thus about causality, in the second case. While the third relationship, that of the "members of a division", can be reduced, as we have seen, to the relationship of causality, there is still room left for the relationship of a term to itself. One term can be in another, the first case; it can be a product or producer of another (through and for another), the second case; or else it can be *in* itself and "through and for" itself.

How would this relationship be reflected in the field of judgement? It would, without doubt, give an *absolute judgement*, one "unbound", detached from anything else; not a "categorical" affirmation of something as being in something else, still less a "hypothetical" affirmation, dependent upon something else, but rather one in which the subject would also be the predicate, the ground would also be the effect. That there exist such judgements, even beyond the world of the "philosophi-

cal" self, seems to us to be fully proven by *impersonal judgements*. (The strange thing here is that, from the point of view of the objective world, it is only the impersonal that can correspond precisely to the order of the self, which is the personal-extreme.) Take for example the judgement "it is raining" – for a judgement it is. Its subject is also its predicate (in the sense that the predicate is "internal", as is said in grammar): it is raining is nothing more than the fact that it is raining and the fact that it is raining is rain. In relation to the rain, nothing more is to be thought than the rain itself, the rain separated from any inherence, from any causal action. There is rain, that is to say, it is raining rain. In Romanian, there is a nice example of impersonal judgement, as contained in the saying "vremea vremuieşte" <time temporalises>[4]. It is not an isolated aspect of natural manifestations (rain, thunder) and you cannot escape from the impersonal, as is usually attempted, by saying that "in the beginning" impersonal judgements nevertheless had a subject: for example, Zeus thunders, Ouranos rains etc. Here, in the example with the time, there is no longer any way out of it: it is impersonal *in itself*, not through the forgetting, or through the loss of the subject. For, it is not an isolated aspect of nature, but nature in itself, the whole in itself qua time which, in manifesting itself, *is*. What does *a vremui* (to temporalise) mean (taken not as "the weather turns bad" but with the meaning, also attested, of "the time flows")? It is the time itself. But what is the time? *Vremuire* (temporalisation). It is not a tautology yet the predicate is the subject. Likewise, it might be said: Being is, *fiinţa fiinţează* <Being is being>.

If, however, even in the world of the object such an absolute judgement is possible, then it will be all the more possible in the world of the subject. This is also its true field (the self). The impersonal judgement now becomes a personal judgement to the highest degree; it is in this that its absolute character resides. Yet the most striking example, one taken from the plane at which the absolute truly has a meaning,

---

4   Noica here plays on the double meaning of "vreme" in Romanian. It means, on the one hand, simply "weather" (e.g. "cum e vremea?" – "what is the weather like?") but it is also used in time-related situations such as "a venit vremea sa plecam" (it is high time we left) or "nu mai e vreme" (there is no more time). It is unclear whether in this context Noica has in mind only the temporal connotation of "vreme" or discusses this example only in relation to the previous one "it rains". It is more likely, however, that we should understand this example as a Romanian version of the famous *die Zeit zeitigt*. [e.n.]

is to be found in that which was spoken to the prophet Moses: "I am that I am". It is surprising that what is said is not: "I am that is", or "I am all that is", but "I am that I am". Hence, the fact of first person existence is all; it is not subordinated, it participates in no other Being than its own. In accordance with this limit case, we may easily imagine the absolute judgement that a subject is capable of uttering about itself; that is, the exclusive relationship in which it will reside with itself. In the table of judgements, here under the group of relation, it is for *such* an order of subjects (which human thought actually conceives of, even if they do not "exist" in any form, even as philosophical principles, not to mention as the "religious absolute"), it is for *this order* that we must conceive of an absolute type of judgement – let it be called that or no – in accordance with the categorical and hypothetical, instead of the disjunctive.

It is now not difficult to see what "category" will correspond to this type of judgement, in place of the Kantian "community". The relationship of a term (subject) to itself, the fact that it is its own cause, can no longer lead to confusion with the category of causality, just as nor will it lead to confusion with inherence. This relationship to self imposes a separate category, in which it is a question of the independence, of the autarchy of the term at stake. This category can only be entitled *autonomy*, as it comes to complete the table opened by inherence and causality. (With "autonomy" we thus rediscover something of Renouvier's category of personality.) In his case, it can no longer be a question, as in Kant, of "reciprocal action" – which in any case does not always function, as we have seen – now we are dealing at most with a reflexive action. The category of autonomy will thus have to fill the void which, at the first moment, we were made to feel by the inadequacy between community and Being.

But it is not the concept of Being that has guided us, rather it has merely opened the search. If Being will this time be in complete harmony with the category of autonomy and with absolute judgement, thereby finding its place in the group of the revised third Kantian table, then this will depend – as we believe we have proved – on the inner logic of the categorial table and not on the mere need for symmetries. At no point did we ask ourselves exclusively: what ought here to correspond to *Being?* But above all: what ought here to complete the *table of possible relationships* for the understanding? I.e. what ought to round off, as in the other groups, the first two terms of the Kantian group. It

is from the nature of the *relation* that we have set out, not from Being, which at a given moment (with the Eleatics) might well have seemed to rest beyond any relationship. But that Being, beyond the Eleatic congelation, now knows how to rediscover itself in the world of relations too: as a relation to self and leading to an "absolute" judgement, by which the field of relations possible in principle terminates, must terminate.

We are now at the final group of the categories of criticism, those depending on the "heading" *modality*. Kant will tell us that it expresses a function wholly particular to the judgements. The groups up to now – quantity, quality and relation – regarded the content of the judgements and exhausted it, in its formal respect, of course. (Be it quantity, quality or relation, only one of these is expressed through the act of judgement in itself.) But this act, says Kant, can still be regarded with respect to the understanding; the value to thought of the connective particle "is", its modality, will thus provide a new group of judgements and categories.

This table, supplemented, like the others with our terms, is as follows:

Judgements	*Categories*	
Problematical	Possibility—Impossibility	Becoming
Assertorical	Existence (Dasein)–Non-existence	Becoming within Being
Apodeictical	Necessity—Contingence	Being

On this occasion, does the correspondence between the terms require any commentary? It is here more directly evident than in any other group, perhaps precisely for the reason we find revealed by Kant: here, in the group of modalities, what is at stake is the manner in which the "is" is, the manner in which existence, or the relation of existence, is thought of. This time, Being, becoming and becoming within Being are truly at home. It is of *them* that we speak, as various modalities of 'to be'. In the other groups the impression might still linger that the metaphysical terms are arbitrarily juxtaposed with the Kantian terms and that the match depends on some kind of fortunate coincidence. On this occasion, however, the terms do not just harmonise but also correspond with each other, to the extent that one might be substituted for another. Besides, what could be more elucidative than the fact that Kant himself feels the need to employ a compound of *Sein* (*Da-*

sein), as he is unable to avoid the real name of the concept with which he is operating? Becoming *is* effectively possibility and only possibility, in all the indeterminacy and problematicality of the latter. Becoming within Being *is* existence, the only form of existence valid in this world, or that which invests any form of existence. That Being taken in itself *is* necessity and expresses itself apodeictically has always been said and felt by human consciousness.

In this categorial group of the "how it is" of a thing, the problematic of Being fully emerges into the light. Perhaps in the other groups as well, those of quantity, quality and relation, it should have been placed directly in the light. Whereas the final group was the expression of the "how it is" of a thing, the first three could be those of the "*what* it is" of a thing, thus they too are an echo of the metaphysical terms. And it would then remain to be seen if they are indeed three independent groups – quality, quantity, relation – and not a unitary triad in some kind of dialectical movement, one of *Being*.

But we have not yet reached the dialectical movement of the categories; we are still looking at their table, at the last group, and with this, we might be able to conclude our comparison of the Kantian categories with the terms of ontology. Nevertheless, one striking thing still remains, here in the last group, in comparison with the others. The weak category and the weak judgement ("Possibility", "Problematical") occur at position 1, not position 2 as usual, forcing us to place simple becoming at position 1. In all the other groups, becoming occurred at position 2, since the weak term (plurality/particular judgement; negation/negative judgement; causality/hypothetical judgement) came in this position. What is going on here, for the symmetry, so beloved by Kant, not to function? — It was *another* symmetry that attracted him, and nothing more! He will say in a note: "As if thought were in the first case <in the case of possibility – *our note*> a function of the *intellect*, in the second case of the *judgement*, and in the third case of the *reason*". The symmetry with the faculties of the spirit, as they are described by Kant, is thus that which causes him to order the categories here in a different way than usual.

Symmetry – let it be said in passing – ought to be thought-provoking. For, while it is true that the intellect (*Verstand*) will, in Kant, result in the order of the possible – that is to say, it will make experience and "nature" possible, it will bind all to the supreme principle of synthetic judgements, which is the "possibility" of experience, in distinction to

the supreme principle of analytical judgements, which was contradic-
tion – it is not at all clear that the faculty of judgement will result in
existence and the assertorical. In the *Critique of Judgement*, at least,
where aesthetic and teleological judgements will be at stake, it will be
a question at most of a judgement of the *appreciation* of existence, not
of existence in itself. In any case, it would be hard to say, for the third
term, that in Kant reason produces necessity. It will be the case in
Schelling and especially in Hegel (who distinguish *positively* between
Verstand and *Vernunft*), but not in Kant. And this is precisely what
Hegel reproaches Kant for, the fact that he didn't conceive of reason
as a faculty of the absolute and that, ultimately, he limited himself to
providing a "philosophy of the intellect" and not one of the reason,
thus of necessity. Far from being the seat of necessity, the reason is,
for Kant, the seat of transcendental appearance (*des transzendentalen
Scheins*) leading to paralogisms, antinomies or to what is, for him, the
unfounded "ontological argument". At most, it might be said that rea-
son has, according to Kant, the *velleity* of necessity. As for its meaning
as "practical reason" and the necessity to which it would lead by this
roundabout way, these were unable to satisfy Hegel or philosophical
thought in general. The latter has always striven to overcome dualism,
and should all the more have to do so at the moment it sees it splitting
even reason into two fields. But reason genuinely corresponds to ne-
cessity – and Kant's symmetry *is* valid – only if reason represents the
organ of Being.

Kant's symmetry is not, it seem to us, justified for the faculties of
the spirit *unless* it is, in essence, the following symmetry: becoming
(possibility, the field of the faculties of the intellect, of the concept that
attempts to regulate the flow of diversity); becoming within Being (ex-
istence, the field of the judgement, the locus where a thing occurs, the
locus of inherence or of durable realities); Being (necessity, the field of
reason).

Given that things stand thus, the question will arise as to whether
the inter-change of terms made by Kant in the final table, out of the
formal need for symmetry with the faculties of the spirit, essentially
expresses *a real situation*, not merely a formal situation. There is thus a
question as to whether the same thing should be done with the other
tables, that is, to commence with the weakest rather than the middle
term. In the following we shall not attempt it merely from *our own*
need for symmetry, that is, merely in order to obtain the following

order overall: 1) becoming, 2) becoming within Being, 3) Being. Such a need might more easily be satisfied if we were to suggest a change merely in the final Kantian table, placing existence (and the Assertorical) before possibility (and the Problematical), thereby to obtain, as in the other three groups, the order: 1) becoming within Being, 2) becoming, 3) Being. However, the situation in Kant's final table prompts us to revise the others, with a more distant goal: we shall, in the end, *have to set the three terms in motion*, as Kant also does, and for a dialectical process the order is not irrelevant. And precisely the arguments we should have for inter-changing Kant's order might later open for us the way to a means, distinct from Kant, of setting the categories in motion.

Consequently: is the order in the third table not somehow the best? Should not the weakest term (which for us corresponds to becoming) not be placed first overall?

Kant takes the table of judgement – which is to provide him the categories – as he finds it in the logic of the time, in "general logic". In a usual logic, however, the order is that of *exposition*: the general will precede the particular, the affirmative precedes the negative, and the categorical precedes the hypothetical. Here, in Kant, there ought to be an order of "deduction". Except that transcendental deduction – as we shall see – limits itself to "making possible" the categories found by means of the guiding thread of the table of judgements (by means of so-called "metaphysical deduction") and the table of judgements is accepted as such.

But, before arriving at a "deduction" (by which judgements and not just categories might be made possible) even so, quite simply by having before us this table of judgements and categories, should we then not attempt to redistribute them, a redistribution that deduction will later justify? Thus, for example, in the first group, that of quantity: whereas in the order of "exposition" it is natural that the general should precede the particular and unity should precede plurality, from the point of view of thought it does not seem to be thus. Rather, plurality precedes unity and the particular precedes the general. Kant, at least, ought to think thus. Does he not constantly say that the synthesis (one of plurality) precedes analysis (into units)? Is this not one of the basic topics

of his philosophy? Is not the *synthetic* unity of apperception the key to the entire critical edifice?

Or else, if these appear specious (inasmuch as synthesis is nevertheless a unity), we might simplify, leaving Kant aside and saying: we have before us a table of categories; we do not yet know what deduction might lead to it; let us then see, according to other criteria, how the terms there might be arranged. Given that it is a question of the understanding, we have no reason to prefer the criterion of exposition to the *genetic* criterion, for example. But how do the terms occur in the understanding?

Is not the first experience of understanding the general, as well as unity? No, it is the particular and particularity. It is with *them* that we commence and by means of them that we elevate ourselves to generality and unity; we generalise the particular – which is thus given in advance – and introduce unity into plurality, which thus also precedes the former. Therefore, nothing impedes us – prior to a rigorous deduction – from positing plurality at the head.

This situation might better result from the second group of categories. If what Kant says is true, that the synthetical precedes the analytical, then negation must precede "reality" and negative judgement must precede affirmative judgement. Indeed, the synthetical implies negation (terms that are *not* tautological, "other" than the first term, thus *non*-A). The negative approach makes the affirmative one possible and meaningful for us. As in the first case, where from the outset we had a quantitative vagueness, which changed into plurality and ended as unity and units of the plural, here we have a tautology (*Ich denke*) that is *negated* at a given moment, only to reappear as an affirmation. If, however, we now, as in the first case, go beyond Kant and regard the genetic order of understanding, might we not likewise be able to say that in any search we first negate and afterwards affirm? In any case, the effects of affirmation are felt only *after consciousness of negation has been achieved*. First the thing "is neither this nor that", and only afterwards is it affirmed as what it is. Thus, here too the second term would be apt to move to the first place.

Finally, a similar argument might move the hypothetical in front of the categorical and causality in front of inherence. Firstly, we see the causal chain in things, afterwards the subsistence of some of them or of the whole. First of all, we see their hypothetical, and then their categorical character. But now the table of judgements and categories

would always have the weakest term at the front, just as in the fourth group. However, only their "deduction", if there is one other than the Kantian, will be able to show to what extent this is the case or not. Finding ourselves before such a deduction as we do, the above things regarding the place of the terms might seem a mere game.

Whatever it might be in terms of order, the table of Kantian categories wholly corresponds to the metaphysical triad we have brought into play. We may leave the Kantian arrangement as inconsequential as it is, given that there is an inter-change in the fourth group. Or, we can make it consequential, changing merely the final group. Or, finally, we can change the first three. But the fact remains: becoming, becoming within Being and Being all find their echo in the Kantian categories.

Here is the complete table, changed as we have been suggesting (see right):

On what does this correspondence of the categories with the three proposed terms depend? It cannot be mere coincidence. It is difficult to ascribe the imposed match to us: it was very much apparent with what ease each of the ontological terms could be assigned to "its" place. Then could it be a confirmation of the validity of the Kantian categories, which would thus be applicable everywhere, in any field of knowledge, even in ontology? But how is it that things hold so well that the three ontological terms seem to be *another* facet of the categories and a new systematisation of them? How is it that it is not the categories that apply to the three terms, but rather the latter that come to envelop and "make possible" the categories?

Kant says at one point (ibid. p. 123): we cannot know why we have categories and why they have that number; (just as little as regards time

	Judgments	Categories	
Quantity	Particular	Plurality	
	Universal	Unity	
	Singular	Totality	
Quality	Negative	Negation	
	Affirmative	Reality	
	Infinite	Limitation (which does not limitate)	
Relation	Hypothetical	Causality	
	Categorical	Inherence	
	Absolute (instead of disjunctive)	Autonomy (instead of community)	
Modality	Problematical	Possibility	:Becoming
	Assertoric	Existence	:Becoming within Being
	Apodictic	Necessity	:Being

and space). – Of course, we do not presume to have outlined an an-
swer to this problem. But the problem now seems to have been shift-
ed: there are no longer twelve categories but rather three groups (other
than those according to the headings: quantity etc.); or, if we may so
venture, there are now three new *categorial functions*. Why are there
categories and why in that number? It is a question that remains open.
But the terms have been reduced from twelve to three. It is as though
the Kantian categories – predicaments, as opposed to their deriva-
tives, named by him "praedicabilia" – themselves now become a sort
of *praedicabilia* in comparison to the deeper, more unitary, categorial
functions that they might reveal: becoming, becoming within Being,
Being.

But this cannot be accepted, at least at first sight, by anybody who
knows his Kant. How can one elevate a concept as "impure" as be-
coming to the rank of category? Or even more so, to elevate it to su-
pra-category? The categories – at least in the Kantian understanding
– represent functions of the intellect and depend exclusively on the
spontaneity of the latter. How can one believe that becoming depends
only on such a spontaneity, and not also on "that which becomes"?
Could it be the spirit's own becoming that is at stake? But do the intel-
lect and its product, the concept, tend precisely – as we have seen – to
arrest becoming, to nullify it, and not at all to posit it. The intellect has
always been what it was for Bergson, the executioner of becoming.

And nevertheless, the fact remains: our terms match the categories
and, in a sense, include them. Even becoming, which the intellect abol-
ishes, or chops up into static, dead, concepts, even becoming can fully
be discovered here, as it has the categories to correspond to its fluidity
or precariousness. What is then to be done, if not: *either to reduce the
three terms under categories; or decide wholly to reduce categories to them?*

Let us make the first attempt, seeking to see whether the three terms
prove to be mere derivatives of the categories. Let us set aside "becom-
ing within Being", retaining the two usual terms. From what category
or categories might they derive? As regards Being, which correspond-
ed to the final Kantian categories (totality, the limitation that does not
limit, autonomy, necessity), it could not be "derivative", since it envelops
all the categories, inasmuch as, according to Kant himself, the final
category in each group will be the "synthesis" of the other two.

Nevertheless, perhaps one or another of the categories of *modality*
might generate Being or at least becoming, given that in them it is pre-

cisely a question of the "how it is" of a thing? And indeed, something strange happens to the development of our ideas here: among the few examples of the *praedicabilia*, of the pure concepts derived from categories indicated by Kant, there are, for modality (ibid. p. 99): *Entstehen*, *Vergehen* and *Veränderung*. But these are precisely those that might define becoming: origination, extinction, and change. Would this not then mean that "becoming" is something derived? Kant does not say from which particular category of modality (possibility, existence or necessity) they derive. He says in general: the "categories of modality". But whichever of them it might be, it would seem that becoming, just as we have described it above, cannot now have the pretension to stand alongside, let alone at the head of the categories. And therefore it may be said: even if Being is a concept that moves across the entire categorial table ("it is" occurs by definition in any judgement, according to the logic adopted by Kant; all the categories may thus be viewed as determinations of "it is": something is real, something is substantial, etc.); even if it is admissible to think of Being precisely as beyond, prior to or *in* all the other judgements, as the most general determination – the same thing cannot be said of becoming. For behold, somewhere, in a note jotted down in passing, Kant was capable of referring to it as a mere derived concept, as a mere determination of another category, which alone is an original function of our intellect. Becoming is a concept which, in its first phase, the philosophy of the spirit was not to take into account.

Let us leave aside the concept of Being, although any valid philosophy seems to commence from it and ought to end with Being. (And nor does Hegel's *Science of Logic* posit any other point of departure except this.) The concept of Being, taken on its own, cannot replace the Kantian table of the categories. It might undermine it in its claims to be irreducible, but it cannot substitute it. It must be associated with the concept of becoming, and it is precisely in respect of this that the Kantian table lays claim to priority. Let us then see *whether becoming might not be rescued from this impasse*; at least becoming as we have outlined it above.

The objection would thus be: if becoming is origination, extinction, and change, then it is condemned by Kant to be a mere *praedicabilium*, since *Enstehen*, *Vergehen* and *Veränderung* are merely *praedicabilia*. But firstly: the *praedicabilia of what predicament*, of what category? Kant does not say, as we have seen; he merely says, generally: those of mo-

dality. Let us suppose that *Enstehen*, "origination" corresponds to possibility, *Veränderung*, change, corresponds to existence, and *Vergehen*, extinction, death, corresponds to necessity – a symmetry more literary than philosophical. Shall we say that all of them depend on possibility? (In what way *is* a thing? Does it necessarily have the possibility to be born, to transform itself, to perish, each as a possibility?) Or, shall we say that all of them depend on existence (something *is* in birth, in transformation, in death)? Or, shall we say that all of them depend on necessity (everything is born, transforms itself and perishes according to necessity, these are the concrete modalities of necessity, of *fatum*)? – Shall we therefore attribute the virtue of producing these *praedicabilia* to all the categories of modality *together*? But then, without realising it, Kant would have admitted that *each* of the derived concepts *precedes*, in reality, the supposedly original concepts. For one cannot derive the same concept from three so-called original concepts, except by proving thereby that that unique concept commands the three "original" concepts. In any case, if from all three one obtains the same thing, it might mean that all of them are *in* that thing and that derivation is therefore illusory. Thus, the Kantian example is, once again, rather unfortunate, and the indeterminacy in which it leaves things might cause us to uphold the contrary of the objections brought against us: precisely because becoming "derives" from *all* three categories of modality, it precedes them or at least stands on an equal footing with them. But, naturally, we shall not uphold this to the very limit since, for us, it corresponds to possibility, and nothing more. We shall however mention the problem, because it shows that the subordination of the concept of becoming is not something as natural as it might appear.

Let us now see whether *in itself* our concept of becoming falls under any Kantian "derivation". The concept of becoming that we have brought to light is not as impure as it might seem at first sight. If at the first moment we were able to detach it from the substance of history, with the sense of birth (*Entstehen*) and death (*Vergehen*), it was precisely in order to eliminate these meanings, as depending on non-being. They are provisory characters.[5] There would thus remain a becoming more accessible to reason, as an *organon* of Being, a becoming that might further be named as within death only because it is becoming within becoming, an uninterrupted progression of states

---

5   It is curious that in Hegel they remain definitive characters. We shall reveal why below.

and terms, towards other states and terms. But it is now susceptible also to removal from this possible fall. Birth and death, if it can still be a question of them, are now *inside* becoming, the fate of one or other term taken in isolation, while becoming itself tends to be a pure processuality of the whole.[6] It is left with the meaning of "change", thus up to a point it still risks being a derived concept, of *Veränderung*, *alloiôsis*. But is not the striving for this change, as becoming, precisely not to be "pure and simple", but rather to be a change that holds, a becoming that might engage in Being, thus an oriented change, a growth, a reflex of Being? If it does not succeed in attaining becoming within Being, if it remains mere becoming, it can only have *one* heading of identity: that of *opposite to Being*, of a term irreducible to Being, one which in any case must contradict Being in all its extent. Being, however, cannot be reduced to a particular "heading" it cannot merely be a quantitative or qualitative etc. aspect. It ruptures one or another of the category's viewpoints – and the concept of becoming will also have to do likewise, if it is fated both to be and to balance Being.

Consequently, change will not mean simply *Veränderung* in the modal sense (in the sense of: *how*), simple transition from one thing to another, *alloiôsis*. Rather, it will also mean plurality, negation of self and causal chain, that is, it will traverse, with the meaning of becoming, all the categorial fields. Just as a certain purity in the notion of becoming was required in order for it validly to be brought into opposition with that of Being (the separation of becoming from non-being), what is now required is a certain *inclusiveness* for it. This inclusiveness comes to show us that, like Being, becoming cannot be enclosed in one or other point of view, as the categorial perspective would have it. This is why nor will it be a mere means of indicating the "how is it" of a thing,

---

6 This "purification" of the concept of becoming, or its pure sense compared to one that is almost empirical, ought not to surprise a Kantian, who knows that in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cassirer's edition, p. 128) a distinction is made between a movement as subjective act – e.g. the tracing of a mental line, an act of the synthesis of diversity – and objective movement, which is empirical. The first, says Kant, does not come down only to geometry, but also to transcendental philosophy. Thus movement too has the sense of purity, although it had been condemned by Kant as empirical, when he had found it among the ten Aristotelian categories (p. 99); becoming might have it all the more so.

a mere modality; but rather it will rest, alongside and against Being, as an original term to open reason's debate with itself.

The poverty of the categories – and thus of the intellect, as has justly been shown – is that of representing mere "points of view". *Between* these points of view and this tautological original unity, Kant has nothing. We shall immediately see whether and how he is able to pass from such a unity to such points of view. But Being, and together with it becoming, do not allow themselves to be captured, still less to be "derived" from these points of view. *The three ontological terms cannot be reduced to categories.*

It then remains for us to reduce the categories to the three terms, to becoming within Being, becoming, and Being.

Here opens the trial in which Kant had displayed so much interest and which, in a way, must provide the measure of criticism, as a philosophy of *de jure*: *the deduction of the categories*. The situation in which there appear to us the three terms we have juxtaposed with the categories might lead – and we say this cautiously – to a revision of transcendental deduction; and in any case this situation obliges the latter to be rethought.

In what this deduction consists is known: in its first moment – which Kant will later qualify, perhaps quite improperly, as "metaphysical" deduction – the problem is to use the table of judgements almost as it is given by ordinary logic, in order to deduce from the functions of the intellect there manifest their categorial expression. After the categories have been determined by means of this "guiding thread", the "originary synthetic unity of apperception" arrives to reveal their justification, providing them, as if in principle, with the justification that they do not have except in fact, separated from judgements as they are. It is, says Kant (ibid. p. 90), the advantage and obligation of transcendental philosophy to seek its concepts in accordance with a principle. But, in order to possess these concepts completely, an idea of the whole is required (ibid. p. 88). Does Kant really possess it?

He considers that any conception that relates a priori to objects is a simple "action of pure thought", more precisely it depends on a function given by the spontaneity of thought and, inasmuch as only through judgement is it possible to think, that is, only in judgement does the intellect "function", it is normal that the functions of the intellect should be sought in the act of judgement. To put it in a more rigorously Kantian way, if the intellect is the faculty of rules (for it

is thus that its concepts appear, as rules), then the judgement is the faculty of subordination to rules, and the rule, which is also to say the pure concept, is to be found precisely in the process of subordination. Thus, what is the "idea of the whole" at this initial moment? It is the idea of the functional aggregate of the intellect, an aggregate that is realised *in fact* by judgements. The *de jure* problem, from whence Kant had set out, seemed to turn from the outset into a *de facto* one. Indeed: we "discover" – says Kant (ibid. p. 92) – that the intellect functions according to the table of judgements given by general logic. How do we "discover" this? What, then, does deduction consist in? Should not the types of judgement also be deduced? Does not transcendental logic have privileges, which is also to say responsibilities, to judgements *as well*? Should they not also be obtained from an "idea" of the whole?

Behold how the deduction, which Kant will further name (ibid. p. 131), but only in passing, "metaphysical", is not genuinely a deduction. It *is* operative, in the sense that it provides a means whereby the "origin" of the categories might be sought, although not *de jure* but *de facto*. This is why perhaps Kant (except subsequently) will not even title it a deduction. At the moment he employs it, it appears to him as a mere "guiding thread" for the discovery of the concepts. Only now can true deduction begin, in the special chapter *Von der Deduktion der reinen Begriffe*; and it will be "transcendental".

The principle of this deduction is (ibid. p. 111): the categories are a priori conditions of the possibility of experience. This means: conditions for unifying the manifold of experience. But unification, synthesis, is not given at the first moment by the intellect proper but by the imagination. (No psychologist has seen this role of the imagination, as Kant himself says, in the First Edition, p. 120.) In its turn, synthesis implies a unity, the so-called synthetic unity of the manifold, and only the latter properly qualifies the intellect. The *manifold* given by the sensibility (whether pure or empirical); the *synthesis* given by the imagination; the *unity* of the synthesis given by the intellect – behold "the whole" of cognition, a whole in the light of which Kant's transcendental deduction occurs.

What, in the final instance, conditions this whole? It is an original unity, what Kant calls "the originary synthetic unity of apperception". Yet, this unity is the intellect itself, as Kant notes at one point (note to p. 116). It is namely the *Ich denke* that accompanies all our sensuous or intellectual intuitions, a kind of *cogito*, obtained and valorised

wholly differently than the Cartesian *cogito*. An intellect that produced its own manifold, says Kant (ibid. p. 118), would have no need of pure apperception. But the human intellect does not produce its own diversity, but rather receives it; judgement – the exercise of the intellect – is precisely the means of reducing the "cognisance" *given* beneath the objective unity of apperception. Yet, the functions of the judgements are the categories. It is from original unity, thus by means of its obligation to make experience possible, that the categories are deduced. Why exactly we possess them, specifically *these* functions of the intellect, and why there are *this many*, we cannot know (ibid. p. 123). But this is their deduction.

Can it really be a "deduction"? Only up to a point. To recognise that it is not known why the spirit has these categories and why it has this number means precisely *not* to take deduction to its limit. A deduction presupposes a whole, thus a system, not merely conditions in principle. Kant admits that he cannot provide a system, but only "discover" one. But the *de jure* problem, the meaning of deduction, was precisely that of showing how and why these "units" are obtained. Specifically, what was interesting and obligatory was to show how *more than one unit* was obtained from the essentially tautological unity of *Ich denke*; how there was a transition from original unity to the plurality of the categories. (In a way, perhaps, it is here that the main effort of Fichte will inscribe itself.) Transcendental deduction too is therefore deficient. Metaphysical deduction *was* operative, it provided categories, but it was not deduction; transcendental deduction is, in its intention, a deduction, but it is not operative, it does not effectively provide the categories.[7] The *Ich denke* is not sufficient, in Kant, to produce the categories. The faculty of imagination is also required, sensuous matter is required (in its "possibility", of course) in order to obtain anything with the *Ich denke*. The Kantian *a priori* must be "transcendental", that is, refer to a thing…; otherwise it does not hold. Is it that precisely this is the "whole": the original unity, plus the recourse to possible experience, plus all that is implied *between* them? We shall admit this and recognise that, in a sense, it is precisely the merit and the novelty of

---

7   Likewise, it will appear as insufficient in the First Edition (p. 120). The unity of apperception, says Kant, is the intellect; thus (?) there is pure cognition in the intellect, the categories, which contain the unity of the synthesis of any possible phenomena. Whence the consequence, one asks? How can the transition from unity to units be made here?

the Kantian a priori to be transcendental, not a supra-instantiated a priori. But if the system of categories is *neither* obtained by this directing of the *Ich denke* towards possible experience, if they only appear as a necessary link, and no more, between an original unity and a given manifold, then it means that transcendental deduction has indicated only the *locus* of the categories, not their nature and number. And this is what Kant himself recognises.

Can any more be attempted? Post-Kantian idealism did so in a sense, but by then leaving behind the formal problem of the categories. Yet, from the perspective in which we have situated ourselves here, we are forced to attempt it, however presumptuous the attempt might seem. For we have set out from the following alternative: the three terms we have brought into play and juxtaposed with the categories are either reducible to categories, or they are capable of reducing the latter to three functions, groups, or headings – as they might be termed – more rigorous than themselves. If, however, there is no room for becoming within Being, becoming, and Being within the "point of view" of any category, then it remains for us to deduce these from them.

We shall do so under the simple heading of an essay. We shall name reason the reflection in spirit of becoming within Being, thus the *consciousness* of becoming within Being.[8] The same as Kant says of the originary synthetic unity that it is the intellect itself – this consciousness *is reason itself*. Do we not find such a model in Hegelian reason? Is that reason not pure processuality, pure progression, a pure becoming within itself? Does not Hegel claim even to make it the absolute, to give it the character of Being, thus to posit it, a becoming within itself, as becoming within Being?[9] -- Now, such a *reason* may very well be viewed *from the perspective of the intellect*, whether, like Kant, we consider the intellect as another faculty of the spirit, or whether it is merely a moment in the becoming of reason, which thereby *would regard itself* from any of its given moments. Yet, the intellect is the faculty of rules, as Kant says, that is, of "points of view". How might the reason be reflected in the intellect? *This reflection might be the sought-after deduction.*

---

8 A "rational" man becomes, in the sense of a law. A rational situation likewise.

9 "The truth is self-becoming, the circle". (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 20, F. Meiner's edition, 1937).

Indeed, situated before reason understood as "consciousness of becoming within Being", the intellect, *discriminatory* as it is, would distinguish between the concepts of becoming, becoming within Being, and Being. It would say (from *its* perspective, however, not from that of reason): becoming within Being is the synthesis between a thesis and an antithesis. Thus, we have three terms. What do these three terms produce, when further reflected in the perspectives or in the *classes* of the viewpoints of the intellect, which is to say in the class of quantity, of quality, of relation, of modality? Simple becoming gives plurality, negation etc. Becoming within Being gives unity, affirmation etc. Finally, Being, thus reflected would give totality, the limitation that does not limit etc. I.e.: the three would, in effect, give the categories. Yet, if the latter are further viewed in *their act of thinking*, in their exercise, then the three terms reflected by intellect would give the respective *judgements*.

Consequently: *not only the categories would be deduced, but also the judgements*; not only their fact is brought to light, but also their nature; not only their plurality, but also their number, their organised aggregate, the system. One single thing remains to be deduced – apart, of course, from the hypothesis of reason and of the intellect, if hypotheses they are – in this deductive vision: the fact that the intellect has four classes and only four; which is to say three on the one hand (quantity, quality, relation) and one on the other. However, the dialectic of reason will perhaps justify them, at least the first three, in their concluded system. In any case, *this* alone remains unanswered, from our perspective, among all the irreducible things that Kant left behind him.

What are the categories? *They are the reflex of the reason in the intellect* (of the secondary reason in the primary reason, that which cannot integrate the irrational, as we shall see below). Being reflected in the intellect, the unitary reason – the consciousness of becoming within Being – is seen divided according to three concepts: becoming, becoming within Being, and Being, which, regarded from the four perspectives of the intellect, give the twelve points of view, the categories. These appear to be their deduction. The originary synthetic unity still remains, in its way, the source of deduction, but this time the combination of unity with a pure manifold, the fact that it is a "*synthetic unity*", is clearly expressed through the reflection of becoming within

Being. *Synthetic unity is now precisely: becoming within Being as it is reflected.*

This is, it seems to us, also the deduction of the judgements. For judgement is, in Kantian terms, "the faculty of subordination under rules", thus it represents *these* categories, in their determined exercise. But what does their exercise mean? It is also Kant who says that judgement does not seems to him to be "the relation between two notions" (ibid. p. 120), but the manner of bringing certain given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception, and in judgement the particle *it is* tends towards this objective unification (in distinction to the subjective connection of representations). Judgement is thus the invocation of "it is"; and even if it does so from the perspective of *a* point of view, the categorial, it discovers – in distinction to category – the connection with what is beyond the point of view, that is, with the objectivity of Being. It rediscovers that which had been lost, becoming within Being (within what *is* something), and thus the path towards reason. In this sense, the deduction of the categories is prior to that of the judgements (it is not made by the means of the guiding thread of the latter, as Kant said). Whereas the intellect, which had made reason dissident with itself, dividing it according to the three concepts and then the twelve points of view, now relates to a judgement that has chances of rediscovering reason.

It is as if the reason, reflected in intellect, alone tended to rediscover itself, by means of the faculty of judgement, as reason. (This is why, perhaps, in criticism, the *Critique of Judgement* was what caused this philosophy "of the intellect" to emerge, seemingly, from the moulds in which it had been case– as has been observed so many times – and to surmise reason.) If things stand thus, then the schema of the faculties of the spirit will be circular; everything will progress as by means of a dialectical movement – in a circle. Reason is disarticulated by intellect, but tends, by means of the faculty of judgement, to remake itself as reason.

From the perspective of this schema, we may now also schematically formulate the deduction we gave above for the categories. It would sound thus:

Reason, reflected in the *intellect* according to quantity, quality, relation, and modality, gives meaning to *becoming* (as plurality, negation, causality, and possibility), then to *becoming within Being* (as unity, reality, inherence, and existence) and finally to *Being* (as totality, the limitation that does not limit, autonomy, and necessity), and making

possible the *judgement*, it tends to discover *reason*, the term we started from.

But if we wish also to include in this circle the table of judgements, in order thereby to be able to schematise the deduction in its entirety, it will be necessary to make the three metaphysical terms function as *acts* of understanding, as judgements. The are only four judgements possible with these terms: 1) *Becoming is becoming*; 2) *Being is becoming*; 3) *becoming is Being*; 4) *Being is Being*.

The first judgement, however, has only a formal consistency. At the level of *content*, an affirmation of the type "*becoming is becoming*" is equivalent to a nonsense (with the attempt to think and posit non-being, if we take the concept of becoming as isolated from Being). Namely, it is equivalent with "what is evanescent is evanescent". As such, it will not give any type of judgement (except anecdotally) and will leave the other three to form a table of judgements by themselves, in agreement with themselves, just as were the categories, from the four perspectives of the intellect. The first type of judgement – *Being is becoming* – will naturally give judgements: particular, negative, hypothetical and problematical ones. The second type – *becoming is Being* – will be the prototype of valid judgements and will properly and positively define the act of judgement. We shall thus have general judgements, affirmative judgements, categorical judgements and assertorical judgements. As regards the last type of judgement, that given by the prototype *Being is Being*, it will not for a moment represent a tautology of the type A=A. Thus, it will not repeat the sterile principle of identity, but will fulfil a precise function in the field of judgement, that of expressing *the self-discovery of Being*, or the self-discovery (through consciousness) of a spiritual subject. In its pattern will arise the judgements: the singular, infinite, absolute, and apodictic judgements of the traditional table, considered above.

The deduction of categories and judgements has thus acquired a systematic form. The whole table sets out from reason, understood as the consciousness of becoming within Being, and comes back to it. This is why it might equally be said that it is not the categories that are the original functions of thought, but rather that there is only one function: *reason itself*. We may name the fact that it is consciousness of becoming within Being as "the originary synthetic (becoming) unity (Being)". And then our deduction will also arise from this unity, just as in Kant. But we can also name reason, or the consciousness of becom-

ing within Being, *a unique category* (just as Leibniz understood it when he said: *nisi intellectus ipse*). And then the way will be open for us to rethink another Kantian chapter, that of the *Schematism*.

Indeed, we shall no longer encounter exactly that Kantian problem, as spiny as deduction, the problem of the Schematism of pure concepts. Rather, inasmuch as the schema of reason, as becoming within Being, is the *circle* – as has appeared from the outset, together with the doubling back of reason, by means of judgement, upon itself – we shall have to apply the categories by means of the schema of the circle, and not by means of that of Kantian time, generative of so many difficulties. Except that this time, the categories will no longer be applied in isolation, for now they no longer seem to us as isolated and irreducible point of views; instead they will be included in threes within a *circular movement*, by which they immerse themselves and separate from the world of real contents. Thus, at the end of this comparison with the table of categories, everything comes to refer us to a dialectics of these categories, that is, to a *dialectics* pure and simple.

B. THE CIRCLE IN DIALECTICS

Thus, in this first confrontation of the philosophy of the spirit with the terms of a philosophy of Being, we have seen that the latter are fully and clearly to be found in the former under its Kantian aspect. The philosophy of the spirit, however, barely commences from here, from the table of the categories, and ultimately goes on to be entirely different to what it was at the outset. Specifically, it goes on to become dialectics. Is it not also worth attempting a confrontation of the problematic of the philosophy of Being with this second aspect of the philosophy of the spirit? Here, it will be all the more appropriate, the more the confrontation with the first aspect led us precisely to the problem of the dialectic, seemingly imposing of itself the new confrontation. It was as if not only the philosophy of the spirit necessarily arrived at dialectics, but also the philosophy of Being itself. And it is a natural destiny for both, essentially. For, nor can the spirit – conceived as a *cogito*, as an originary unity – indefinitely remain mere self-affirmation, mere tautology; nor can Being wholly remain within the Eleatic tautology. Each at its own level, both the one and the other shall accordingly lead to a dialectics. In the end, it will, perhaps, be seen that their dialectic is in reality *one*.

We have been saying that, as it seems to us, it is also in the table of categories that the dialectical motion is to be found at its source. Kant discovered "triplicity" rather by "instinct", as Hegel will say (*Phänomenologie*, ed. cit., p. 40). However, if it is an instinct, it is one that is systematic. Reflecting on the table of the categories as he had established them, Kant ascertained (ed. Cassirer, p. 101, obs. 2) that, although any a priori division in concepts would have to be dichotomous, here three terms appear. He considered that the principle of a priori division is only apparently refuted, inasmuch as the third term "arises" in reality from the first two. It is, it has been said, their synthesis. And the philosopher demonstrates, in a few words, in what the connection consists each time:

- Under Quantity: Totality, the final category, is Plurality contemplated *as* Unity;
- Under Quality: Limitation is Reality conjoined with Negation;
- Under Relation: Community is the Causality of a Substance "reciprocally determining, and determined by other substances"
- Under Modality: Necessity is nothing but Existence, which is given through the Possibility itself.[10]

Before examining each "synthesis" in itself, it is the case to ask ourselves whether here, in a table of the categories, synthetic derivation may be allowed, and whether it is derivation at all. Kant had decisively shown that a category must always express a "primitive function". This is why he himself will hasten to demonstrate that "deduction" does not at all mean that the third category is derived; it also represents a primitive function. Indeed, he says, a "special act", different from the previous two, is needed in order to cover the third term. An act is needed which is of course much more than that of their connection – although he had said that it is a question only of the connection (Verbindung) of two pure conceptions given in advance. Like the first and second categories in each group, the third category would represent an irreducibility of understanding, and only within a certain perspective of our intellect could it be regarded *as* a synthesis of the first two. But in order to illustrate this, Kant gives an example: the concept of number, he says, which depends on totality, is not always possible where the

---

10   Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by J.M.D. Meiklejohn. (Dent: London, 1934). Page 82. [t.n.]

conceptions of plurality (*Menge*) and unity exist; for example, "infinity", *das Unendliche*, implies a new act of understanding.

But, one wonders, is this infinity really a conception dependent upon the heading of "quantity"? It seems rather to relate to quality, where "infinite" judgements appear and where what is at stake is that category of the limitation that does not limit. It may be that in this case – as in the case of unity – Kant is playing on the dual, quantitative and qualitative, aspect of one or another category in the group of quantity. Secondly: if, indeed, this infinity, and the third category in general, implies a new act of understanding, then how can it still be produced by the mere *Verbindung* of the first two? It is true that synthesis demands, in a way, a new act. For example, in Hegel, Being and non-Being will in synthesis produce becoming, which is thought through a new act. But then any synthesis between categories could lead to new acts, just as "primitive", and the number of categories would no longer be so strictly limited.

As we were saying, can the synthesis of the categories be a mere indication towards a third? Then it would remain to be seen whether, in any given group of categories, the connection of two of them might be an indication towards the remaining third. Thus, *each* of them might be synthesis, antithesis and thesis in turn. In any case, if there are three categories distinct through their acts of understanding, then the claim not to refute the procedure of any *Einteilung a priori durch Begriffe*, a procedure which is dichotomous, would collapse, and Kant would genuinely have to give an account of why there exists a priori a triplicity and not a simple duality.

Hegel will be more consistent with this Kantian principle. He contents himself with two terms (thesis and antithesis), if not with one alone, thesis, and will be capable of extracting from thence the synthesis. In a word, if the third category is simple synthesis, then it cannot be a question of three, but rather of two terms. Even Kant's example of infinity might reveal that "number" is immediately obtainable as a synthesis between unity and plurality, with the exception that it is *outside* unity and plurality (essentially it is outside "number") and thus infinity cannot result from their connection. Nevertheless, it is clear that *three* terms are necessary, but Kant does not seem to be able to explain, in *principle*, the movement of one towards the other.

Let us look at how he explains it, in fact. In all the groups, Kant places the final category as synthesis; thus, he proceeds consistently, mak-

ing the first two a thesis and an antithesis respectively – to speak in other, albeit not inadequate, terms. Except that terms 1 and 2 are each time weaker: they have a lesser content (under quantity), or express a defect of reality (under quantity), or a more lax, less intrinsic connection (under relation), or a way of being that is less peremptory (under modality). And then the question arises as to how exactly, from two relatively weak terms – which moreover contradict themselves, therefore becoming even further weakened– it will be possible for there to result the term of absolute strength, such as the third seems to be? For example: how can "Plurality contemplated as Unity" produce Totality? It is true that a unitary plurality is a kind of totality: a local, regional totality. But then, we do not have a totality but *totalities* (manifold pluralities made unitary), therefore plurality once more! And even if such a category of totality is also necessary in order to understand local totalities, how will it be possible to move from this to a totality – also requiring to be understood – that might genuinely correspond to singular judgement? Since perhaps only this is genuinely totality, as the other "category" is merely totalisation, which is, of course, something else.

In the sphere of quality, matters seem to be even worse. Limitation, says Kant, is merely Reality conjoined with Negation. (He no longer says: reality *as* negation, in symmetry with the synthesis of the first case. Thus, he somewhat alters the mode of synthesising). Except that reality conjoined with negation means a weakening of reality. And if the result can be named a "limitation", it is by no means a case of the limitation that does not limit, a limitation that is at the same time non-limitation, such as was the third category of quality. One has the impression that, precisely in order to be able to attain the "synthesis", Kant contents himself, in the third category, with the simple term of limitation, when in reality, as we have seen, what would be required is something to correspond in effect to *infinite* judgement. If it is said that the limitation that does not limit ("immortal", for example, which only excludes the mortal, but otherwise has an infinite sphere) is precisely an infinite reality partially negated (as Kant makes the synthesis), then it means that, under the category of reality, it is not ordinary reality that is understood, the quality of a thing as being real, but rather the quality of an *ens realissimum*, which alone can be negated and limited without being abolished or weakened. Once again, it will be obvious

that a strong term cannot be obtained from two weak terms, all the more so if the two also contradict each other.

The synthesis that Kant performs in the group of relation does not resemble the others. It is not a case of causality *as* substance, or of causality *conjoined with* substance, but rather of the causality of a substance *in Bestimmung der andern wechselseitig*. The category of community would thereby be obtained. However, we have seen that it is not this "category" that should figure here, as it is not primitive, but rather another, which is naturally still less obtainable from the simple synthesis of causality with inherence. But even if we accepted community in this position, it is not at all apparent how it would result from the other two. This synthesis seems to us laboured and ultimately equivocal, if we understand it more fully. It would be: the causality of one substance by means of the reciprocal determination of the others; it would therefore be a causality in common, as is demonstrated in the example of corresponding disjunctive judgement given by Kant. But causality in common does not mean reciprocal action, as the category of community would have it. A thing can be viewed as having many causes (not simultaneously, but through a disjunctive judgement: be it one, be it another). These causes or juxtaposed causal series can be inherent to a single substance. But nowhere will it result, and even less so in Kant's example, that as causes in common they are also *wechselseitig*, reciprocal. They are only *wechselseitig*, in the sense of mutuality, like the parts of the alternative created by a disjunction. And after all, it is exactly this that is shown by the corresponding judgement, the parts. It therefore seems to us that the synthesis, in the case of relation, does not function in the same way. In any case, it should be observed that the third category in the group of relation should be replaced in Kant's table.

As for the class of modality, it is quite simply inadmissible for necessity, however synthesised it might be, to result from possibility and existence. If, as we suspect, in the synthesis *Existenz die durch die Möglichkeit selbst gegeben ist*, Kant implicitly brings into play something of the species of the ontological argument (repudiated by him!), then the necessity of an existence results from its simple possibility only because it has from the outset been placed in it. In the possibility of a thing existence has also been understood as necessary. Otherwise, a merely possible existence is infinitely weaker than necessity; a possible existence is only the materialisation of a possibility, an existence

in fact. How may we synthesise possibility and existence in a different way?

Kant should probably be understood as follows: necessity means to extract the existence of a thing from its mere possibility. But, *either* this is the ontological argument – which Kant will otherwise constantly refute, thus a model according to which it is hard to believe he could have understood necessity, since then he would not admit either of them or would also admit the ontological argument – *or* it is a mere manner of speaking (of synthesising the categories), no more fitting or "necessary" than any other synthesis, which would this time produce "existence": for example, it might be said that existence is the synthesis, as it is a *possibility* that has become *necessary*. Therefore it is not possibility and existence that would give necessity, rather better still possibility and necessity may give existence. We sense it clearly now, at the end of this analysis: *either* the Kantian categories effectively possess a univocal movement one towards the other, a dialectic, or it is a mere combination of concepts – according to one's perspective. And: either this dialectic unfolds according to a certain type, the same in all four cases, or it is only a "dialectic" in the Kantian sense of *Schein*, appearance.

However, it seems to us that there *is* a movement of the concepts here – whether dialectical or not, whether of one kind or another. And, undoubtedly, it is the great historic merit of Kant to have raised and suggested the problem, even if he did not think it through to the end, since it was not significant to his system. On the other hand, how much significance it must have had beyond his system is proven by what follows historically. We therefore sense a *movement* of these pure conceptions, and the road to the dialectic of philosophy will open to us, in the case in which we shall be able to describe it.

We set out from the finding that we are dealing with three terms, each equally as primitive and irreducible; that it cannot, therefore, ultimately be a question of the mere synthesis of two terms within a third, that is, the process thesis-antithesis-synthesis, a process for which two terms are sufficient, or even just one that is capable of contradicting itself. This finding causes us to suspect, from the outset, that neither can it be a question of a linear process, of a linear dialectic. Rather, if a dialectical movement will nevertheless be obtained, it must be of another type, which will include the three terms given in advance. In the second place, from an examination of the terms at stake, it results,

as we have seen, that the third is the strong term. Therefore the *third* term must or should, in some way, make possible the other two, since it cannot be obtained through their simple intensification, inasmuch as their association is not an intensification, but precisely their weakening. Given this, the strong term must produce the beginning of the movement, even if we are to find it at the terminus. Indeed, it seems to negate itself, to abolish itself as such, through the weak term, and then to remake itself as a middle term (with the tendency to return to its original strength).

For example, in the case of the class of quantity, having the same order as in our table, with the weak term at the head: setting out from the third category, that of totality, we may think of it as being abolished, negated by plurality and then re-making itself as unity (= totalities, Kantian totalisation), with the tendency to re-make itself as singular totality. Or else, in the case of quality: the limitation that does not limit (the example of "immortality"), having been denied though negation, becomes a limitation in the negative sense, that is, externally, and passes into limitation in the positive sense, that is, internally, like with any reality, while "reality" will also tend to affirm itself to the point of non-limitation. Or else in the case of relation: autonomy, contradicted by causality (as heteronomy) transforms itself into inherence (inner causality, from substance to *proper* accidents), with the tendency to rediscover itself as autonomy. Finally, in the last group, necessary existence, confronted by merely possible existence, remakes itself as existence in fact (*Dasein*), with the tendency to rediscover itself as necessary existence.

Thus, it is not, as Kant says, totality (the third category) that is the unity of a plurality; but rather unity is the totality of a plurality. And – in distinction to Kant, who did not proceed in the same way elsewhere, for example, he did not say: limitation is the reality of a negation – we shall say *at each point in the same way*: reality is the limitation (that no longer negates but now affirms) of a negation; inherence (substance) is causality's form of autonomy; existence is the necessity of possibility.

That is, the second term (corresponding to becoming within Being) is that which would give the so-called "synthesis". Therefore, overall we have 2=3-1. With Kant, by contrast, it was apparent that 3=2+1, whereas in reality it was 3=2+(-1), since the first two terms could not be amplified one by means of the other, which is in any case apparent from the "quality" of the term *1* as that which negates, occurring

exactly as negation in the group of quality. Without doubt, it is not arithmetic or algebra that are decisive in philosophical matters, where 1+1 often equals 1. But nor are we obliged to deny them at every step.

For the table of the categories, we therefore have a *unitary means* of setting the conceptions in each group into motion. In any case, here – at least according to the working method of criticism and the philosophy of the spirit in general, where it is the symmetries and the "system" that provide the measure and the key – there is a guarantor of truth for the dialectic we now glimpse. But, at the same time as the description of this means of obtaining movement in the categories, our impulse to rearrange them in a way other than in the Kantian table is also confirmed. From motives of symmetry at the beginning, then from the implications of Kantian thinking, and lastly from the consideration of the genetic in thinking, it seems to us that the place of the weak category ought to be 1 rather than 2. If nevertheless, it began with another, the explanation was, for us, that in exposition one can not commence or open the way with a weak term. One requires, not least, a term to support the edifice. Now, we see more clearly that the weak term *must* effectively stand in the first position, for the motive, more profound than any of those invoked at the beginning, that it is only in this order that the movement of the categories can unfold, that is, only thus can they appear in their real solidarity. And now the weak term no longer stands alone in order to open the process of movement. It is not the precarious existence of the weak term that sustains the dialectical edifice. Rather, it is *enveloped* by the strong term, which thereby represents not only the terminus but also the beginning of things, through a movement destined to reveal from the outset the meaning of "generation" in the deeper life of the spirit and how it may be without "corruption".

That this positioning of the weak (albeit enveloped) term at the head, and that the entire movement – even before it is justified through its philosophical foundation – responds to something at the "heart" of reality may be suggested (but only suggested) by means of an attempt to deepen the genetic perspective we have invoked. Is it not according to such a triptych that the so-called "evolution of humanity" and, ontogenetically, the evolution of humans develop, at least when they rediscover the categories? For example, from the point of view of quantity, the human experience seems to commence (with the child, or the childhood of the spirit) from totality and singularity (everything

exists first, the world appears as a One, as a solidary block) towards plurality, which is the bitter experience of the adolescent, and then towards unity, the mature experience of wisdom – with the tendency, in the spirits, respectively epochs, of superior culture, to rediscover the One in unity. And, from the point of view of "quality", do we not proceed from the limitless, obscurely infinite, limitation towards seemingly irreducible and inimical negation, only afterwards arriving at positive reality and hence striving towards non-limitation? Do we not all evolve, on the one hand, from the absolute and absolute autonomy towards the relative and causal, only afterwards encountering substance, inherence, and along with it sometimes tending once more towards the absolute? Finally, is this not the itinerary of any conscious individual and human collective: from the necessary towards the possible (respectively the impossible), only to end up at the existent, as a promise of new and this time viable necessity? – In this movement of the categories, there is without doubt a ladder, a ladder upon which one rediscovers at the upper rungs that which, in some way, constituted the lowest rung.

But it is not the genetic or the evolutionary that will have to authenticate the dialectical beginning described above. At least at the level we now find ourselves, with our development of ideas in principle, the genetic, like the "evolution of Humanity" or of humans, may be invoked just as little as the arithmetical above. The justification for and organised constitution of this movement in the table of categories, discovered here seemingly as a matter of fact, will have to be provided by means of philosophical reason, not by means of reasons, illegitimate in comparison with the former, from one or another arbitrary plane of life or culture.

The development inside one or another categorial group discovered, in its way, the development of the "faculties of the spirit", as we established it consequent to Kant's suggestion in connection with the categories of modality, then trying to turn it into the schema for deduction of the categories and the table of judgements. Indeed, the intellect, the faculty of judgement, and reason were placed in order, but in such a way that reason encircled the others. The schema was as follows:

INTELLECT
JUDGEMENT
REASON

The categories were to schematise their dialectical movement in the same way: for example, for quantity, the point of departure will be found in totality, and the point of arrival will (ideally) be the same. Thus, we have:

Plurality
Unity
Totality (One)
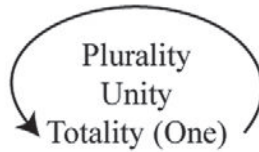
We may halt – and in fact more often than not we do halt – at unity as a "synthesis" of totality with plurality. But the dialectical movement indicates a direction, and the directing of the dialectic (and not the indifference, the neutrality of the synthesis) might be just as decisive in establishing its nature. Moreover, neither does judgement discover reason in the case of the faculties of the spirit, but merely "intends" towards it. With the group of quantity, we are, therefore, in perfect agreement with the movement of the faculties of the spirit; and it will be the same with each of the other groups. Inside each group of categories of the spirit, the movement takes places as if *in the whole of the spirit*. Here is a first justification of the suspected dialectical movement.

In its turn, upon what does the dialectical movement of the faculties of the spirit depend? From the outset, it appeared to us that these faculties are symmetrical with the three ontological terms: becoming, becoming within Being, Being. Reason was essentially becoming within Being in the *conscious* unity of this act. It was not until the intellect that there occurred decomposition into the three terms; and precisely because the intellect viewed everything, even reason, as manifold, it appeared to correspond to becoming, in the sense that its object was the attempt to "fixate" the latter in its possible units. Lastly, judgement was the commencement of a restoration of rational unity, through the three types of synthesis: Being is becoming, becoming is Being, Be-

ing is Being. In this sense, judgement seemed to correspond to the restricted (isolated by intellect) moment of becoming within Being at the heart of reason.

— However things might stand with these "symmetries" and correspondences, the movement of the faculties of the spirit will have to mirror, or to repeat, the movement of the terms of ontology, if the latter are indeed the primitive terms. We have seen how the consciousness of becoming within Being (as well as reason itself) is the true originary synthetic unity of thought. It is now only legitimate to make of the movement inside it, *the dialectical prototype*. Consequently, the dialectical movement, in its purity, must be examined according to this triad.

The three terms, also having been arranged starting from the weakest, will thereby give the first dialectical act, which will also be the *first dialectical circle*. In becoming, Being is contradicted, but it is restored in becoming within Being, which tends to re-become Being. (In Hegelian terms, it is the tendency of reason to develop to the very end, to take full "consciousness of itself", i.e. to be whole, genuinely to *be*.) Its movement is therefore the prototype of that according to which the categories unfold:
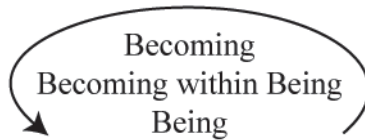
Analysis of the "dialectic", which we are beginning upon this fundamental movement, poses from the outset the problem: is it possible to speak of dialectics here in the usual, Hegelian sense? Only up to a point. Whereas the usual dialectics is ruled by three terms with a precise function and order – thesis, antithesis, synthesis (although Hegel, as is known, preferred different denominations) – here there can no longer be any question of function nor of precise order in *that sense*. Becoming would have to be thesis, inasmuch as it warrants to stand in first place; but, in reality, it is antithesis, because Being is "prior" to it, encircling it. Therefore, it would follow that Being is the thesis. But how is it that it can also be synthesis? And then that would mean that antithesis (becoming) contradicts not only thesis but also synthesis. Extreme complication is produced by the middle term, which, stand-

ing in position 2, would apparently have to be antithesis; in fact (if one begins with the third term), it becomes synthesis (as it comes in position 3 and is, essentially, *both* becoming *and* Being at the same time); but which in reality is the true thesis!

For this is the firm point, setting out from which we must attempt to emerge from the terminological chaos that has been created: becoming within Being is the thesis, it is that which posits reason, its permanent "position". This is what reason affirms, or else, in this way, it affirms itself: as becoming within that which is and encircling in its becoming all that is, all that has an opening towards Being. Consequently, becoming within Being is the thesis. However, in a material sense – as it is a combination of becoming and Being – it is also the true synthesis. But, in formal terms, between what is it a synthesis? This time, one cannot say that it is a synthesis between a thesis (since it is in itself a thesis) and an antithesis, inasmuch as that one would then fall back into terminological chaos. And besides, would it be fitting to say that Being is a mere thesis? No, it appears as a theme for reason. It is a theme from which one sets out and towards which –naturally, in a different manner – one tends. And then, becoming within Being, qua thesis, *is* also simultaneously a synthesis; but not a synthesis between a thesis and an antithesis, but between a *theme* and an *anti-theme*.

For this reason, Being is a theme, which raises against it an anti-theme – becoming – only to emerge from this confrontation with a true thesis, "becoming within Being". *What one posits (the thesis) is at the end* – this is how this dialectic now appears. This thesis, now affirmed in the end as a synthesis, no longer appears, like the Hegelian synthesis, as *neutral* between a thesis and an antithesis, both of them *aufgehoben*. Rather, it is oriented: leaving the anti-theme behind, avoiding it, just as the Good/Being of the Greeks rejected the Bad/non-being, or just as their cosmos denies chaos, it orients itself towards theme. Once it has begun to constitute itself as such, becoming within Being no longer wishes to know about becoming pure and simple, about endless plurality, about negation, about simple causality and simple possibility; it tends towards Being, that is, towards necessity.

Therefore in one sense, namely in the formal sense, we arrive at a dialectic that is the reverse of the usual dialectic. The latter was thesis, antithesis, synthesis; its direction was a movement from the first to the last. Now we have the opposite direction, from the last to the first.

```
                    Thesis      ▲ Direction
           │        Anti-thesis │  here
   Usual   │        Synthesis   │
  direction▼                    │
```
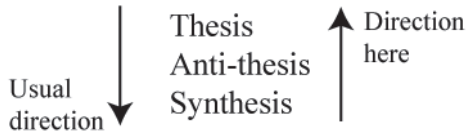
Except that, as we have seen, the order must be changed to: antithesis, thesis, synthesis. And then the movement no longer appears as regressive but rather circular.

```
              ⌒ Thesis ⌒
              Anti-thesis
           ▼  Synthesis
```
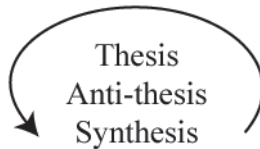
In fact, however, of the terms "thesis", "antithesis" and "synthesis" we can retain only *the first* – since otherwise we would arrive at terminological chaos. And, by placing theme and anti-theme in the place of synthesis and antithesis, by making thesis the affirmation as such, which may only *appear* to be a synthesis, we show that, in reality, the dialectical process does not come to rest in "synthesis". It does not conclude there, but rather, inasmuch as the apparent synthesis is the true thesis, it further orients itself, towards the theme *within which it, in itself, has been possible*. Thus: *theme—anti-theme—thesis—theme*.

Hegelian reason, which we have taken as an illustration, accordingly suggests a dialectics other than Hegel's.

Before seeing this dialectic in operation – beyond and in the light of its prototype – as well as the perspectives it might open, let us attempt, again under the heading of suggestion, to describe its essence from the point of view of the mediation of understanding. What does it mean to posit the theme, to contradict it, and from this conflict to extract a thesis, which tends to become theme once more? Essentially, it means to describe the procedure of philosophical thinking – which perhaps ordinary thinking also experiences, albeit understanding it the other way round – the procedure of positing the whole first and then seeking the part within it, as one that might lead one to the whole. One does not begin by positing the thesis (here the part), but rather one arrives at something of its nature. Firstly, one posits the whole, in a

banal sense, the goal together with the road that leads to it; and then one approaches it, traversing that whole. One posits the horizon, and one moves, one travels inside it. More banal still: firstly, you propose something and then, in the end, you achieve it, that is, in the end you posit something within that pro-posal. Our thinking is *thematic*, not thetic. The distinction between ordinary and philosophical thinking might be that the latter is *consciously* thematic.

We must thoroughly underscore this distinction between the thematic and the thetic, if we wish, at every level, to make clear the new path that now opens for dialectics. The thesis, taken in the usual sense, represents a "position", predestined to be abandoned; the thesis is merely the beginning of a road, the point of departure. You will recall it at some point, in the midst of another world, laden with so many other successes as you are: this is from whence I set out, this is what made this entire journey possible. Sometimes you will maintain it in the present – just as the hero does not repudiate but on the contrary brings to light the humble hearth of those who brought him into the world – but *you no longer recognise yourself in it* and *it no longer recognises itself in you*. This is the condition of the thetic, a condition that dialectics, as we have become accustomed to conceive it since Hegel, fully reveals.

The thetic therefore means consent to privation and engagement in novelty; consent to privation in the interests of novelty. This is why the thetic is "historical" – in the *usual* meaning of historical. It can correspond to history, even or above all understood as becoming within death. We are not saying, let us repeat, that this is what the dialectical philosophy of Hegel would really look like. How could reason have been rediscovered in him if it was merely privation? (Or then perhaps it was not really rediscovered – the Prussian State! – and in Hegel it only has the *positive sense* of rediscovery.) But this seems to be the dialectical method, as it has all too often been understood through Hegel and since then. Yet, we claim that, neither in Hegel nor since him, philosophy proper, on the one hand, and the dialectic effective in history, on the other, have not unfolded according to this dialectical model; but rather while openly proclaiming it, *they have in fact used the other model, the thematic dialectic*.

Compared to the thetic, the thematic brings about the constant presence of the fundamental theme in all that is created, the communion between thesis and theme at every moment. The unfolding towards

novelty is still possible – in one sense it is only now that it is possible, for it is novelty inside the way – but all that is made is inscribed within the horizon of the theme. This is why the theme is permanently to be recognised in thesis and the latter is just as steadfastly mirrored in theme.

Will the dialectical process end here? Is there, in this development – which is no longer linear but circular – a closed world, and do we thus arrive at mere dialectical circles, at dialectical monads, unable to form a true world except on the basis of co-existence? Then precisely this would be the superiority and would therefore explain the necessity of the linear dialectic, the fact that it can take into account the world (history) in its entire development, restoring it by means of a single trajectory. – But nor will the dialectics of dialectical circles give up this claim. While still remaining at the external description of its essence, we shall say that it may, in its way, answer this exigency. It is true that, in the prototypical dialectical circle, at the moment when the theme – becoming within Being – attained Being, the dialectical movement would have to have come to an end. But this is perhaps the ultimate dialectical circle, *within which* all the others occur, just as within Hegelian reason the entire dialectical development occurs. Being is the *theme par excellence*, the concept that cannot be thesis except at the ideal terminus of the development of philosophical knowledge. To set out from Being as from a thesis and not as from a theme is perhaps philosophy's greatest mistake: for the thesis is doomed to perish, and this will mean that Being should perish (as indeed has happened). It would seem that herein the risk of Hegelianism (though perhaps not of Hegel) resides. Yet here, in the thematic, Being does not even for a moment perish, but nor is it attained except at the ideal terminus of the dialectical movement.

In any other dialectical circle, the thesis that tends towards theme will never truly come to rest in the latter; rather, inasmuch as it has exhausted the theme, it is to be found within another. When the limit of the horizon has been reached, then it has been crossed: there has been an entry into another horizon. Therefore, another whole has been posited, another theme. At the immediate level: a thing done, known, is itself *conjoined with* something else. It brings "l'excès sur le tout", of which Valéry once spoke. The thesis therefore approximates the theme; but if it becomes theme, it enters the horizon of another theme; you enclose the exhausted horizon within another horizon.

And there is no reason to believe that this transition from one theme to another (in reality, the inclusion of one theme within another) is any less rigorous than the transition from the synthesis in linear deduction to another dialectical triad, through the transformation of the synthesis into a thesis generative of new terms. The rigour of linearity is here replaced by the rigour of this succession of concentric horizons whereby thought unfolds.

It is ultimately like an undulating movement, as soon as there is a transition from one dialectical circle to another, and it seems to us that an undulational mechanics of the spirit might very well be sketched. But is it not surprising, and perhaps suggestive, that here too this undulational mechanics co-exists with one that is "corpuscular" with a linear development, according to series of seemingly determinist-causal things? For the theme, anti-theme and thesis are in perfect logical continuity and fully create the same appearance of linearity as at the level of the corpuscular world; to the extent that, having arrived at a thesis, the spirit realises that it is much more than result: that the thesis is predestined to extend towards something else, which was essentially its point of departure. Then, apparently linear dialectics will be transformed into a dialectical circle, which demands to be taken to the very end, insofar as the thesis is indeed understood as far as its plenitude, which is the theme. Once the circle has been attained to its very limit, it has also been transcended. Thus, here we have linear determinism co-existing, as if naturally, with circular progression.

The contradiction that worries scientists, the irreducibility at which they have arrived, has, in reality, always figured in the intrinsic life of the spirit. And perhaps scientists themselves do not find such a contradiction outwardly mirrored except because it bears itself within itself. Or, because "outside" and "inside" no longer have almost any meaning at this level, where it is a question of a reason being an "identity" between whatever is external and whatever is internal. However, in the perspective of the intellect, within which they are situated, scientists will undoubtedly perceive such a situation as a paradox, predestined to constitute an outrage to reason. Whereas from the perspective of reason, within which philosophical understanding must situate itself from the very start – to speak the language of Hegel – such a situation will express merely the nature of reason itself, and the dialectical exercise of this reason will be dialectics proper. Undulational reason *is* corpuscular reason – as is revealed by this dialectics.

However, we have come much further than is permissible for the time being, with the promise of this dialectics. We have yet to show – after we have described the nature of a circular dialectic – its exercise *in fact*, on the one hand, *its legitimacy*, on the other.

Is it as universal and as efficient as linear dialectics? — What might be surprising at first, in the case of the dialectics here, is that it also appears on planes where ordinary dialectics was not at home. Let us take Kantian thought, for example, from whence, essentially, we have always set out, in this comparison of the terms of ontology with the philosophy of spirit. Kantian thinking, which wants to make possible the act of cognition, itself possesses a dialectic of which it does not seem to be conscious. It conceives of the act of cognition in three tenses, by my means of three terms, which it explicitly underscores: 1) the intellect, which is the steadfast source of the unity; 2) (pure or empirical) sensibility, just as steadfast a source of the manifold; and 3) imagination, reproductive but above all productive, as a faculty for synthesising the manifold and consequently preparing it to receive the imprint of intellectual unity. If we now wish to understand the Kantian process of cognition as taking place dialectically – and in one way or another we must do so, since the three moments do not rest separately and motionlessly, but rather converge, according to Kant, in order to produce the act of cognition – then the first thought would of course be for us to make intellect the thesis, sensibility the antithesis and imagination the synthesis. In other words, the Kantian act of cognition would reside only in the faculty of the imagination – as it has sometimes been claimed – a faculty that unites in itself the condition of the sensuous manifold and intellectual unity, as it is precisely a faculty of *synthesis*. The third term, i.e. the synthesis in an ordinary dialectic, is here none other than the synthesis! Not only formally, therefore, would we have a synthesis, but also in terms of content. Accordingly, we might say: what is happening here with synthesis, in content and form, must be a provider of measure for any synthesis, since the very faculty of synthesis is at stake.

But what in fact is happening? Is the faculty of imagination the mere synthesis between sensibility and intellect? Is the synthesis simultaneously the sought after result, the ultimate consciousness? By no means. Or at least not yet: the synthesis of imagination does not become consciousness except *if it sheds the sensuous manifold and rediscovers the unity of the intellect*. The so-called synthesis has a direction; it is even

oriented towards one of the terms that it is about to "abolish" as such, mediating between them. In fact, it is therefore not to be equated with both terms, as it ought to be as their synthesis: it tends to lose most of all from one (sensibility) and to rediscover most of all from the other. Of course, the manifold of sensibility will never be completely lost; it still needs a manifold in order to be consciousness and not empty understanding. But Kant as conceives it, it is, at its limit, a synthesis produced by an "intuitive intellect", which would produce its own manifold. Therefore, he conceives the intellect as being able to produce all. Yet, not for a moment does he conceive that sensibility might be able to produce (or receive from the thing-in-itself) everything, that is, its manifold and unity at the same time. He imagines an active, creative intellect in the extreme; but not one that is passive in the extreme, receptive of forms (like the passive intellect attributed to Aristotle by the Averroists). This means that things-in-themselves will never be able to be known, according to Kant, under any circumstances: not by our intellect, because it is restricted by sensibility; not by the intuitive intellect, because there will no longer be "things", but rather the exercise of an *intellectus ipse*. The thing is destined to perish as thing, to remain mere manifold; yet, the intellect is never lost as intellect.

What, therefore, is the dialectical mode in the Kantian act of cognition? It is the oriented mode we have been describing. It can be summarised in the three hypostases of the synthesis here: synthesis is firstly an expression of content, a synthesis of sensuous material, therefore it would appear to incline towards *sensibility* and the thing-in-itself; synthesis is then form, a mediation between sensibility and intellect, therefore it would appear to be neutral between thing-in-itself and primitive unity; lastly, it is an originary *synthetic* unity. And it is this moment that is decisive for it: it is, or ought to be, *intellect* at the limit. The schema of knowledge is therefore not:

> Intellect – Sensibility – Imagination (synthesis)

but rather:

> Intellect   (theme)
> Sensibility   (anti- theme)
> Imagination   (thesis), which tends towards:
> Intellect   (theme).

That the intellect in its turn enters the thematic horizon of *reason* and thereby leads tcognitiveo a new dialectical circle is perhaps now self-evident.

Accordingly, we have seen our first applied exercise of the dialectical type, at a level where ordinary dialectics is neither seeking itself and nor, as we have shown, is it genuinely to be found. Let us now see the circle within a theme just as central to the life of the spirit as the *theme of cognition*, which was encapsulated dialectically above: the *theme of the Eros*. It is as though we wished to compare, from the start, our dialectic with the two great human themes, the Logos (if indeed it can be reduced to knowledge) and the Eros. Like the cognitive Logos, the Eros also possesses, perhaps especially so, a living development of which our dialectic seems to be able to take account. The movement, the instability, is evident in it from the start – in contrast to the act of cognition, which might have seemed fixative, stabilising. However, the Eros is usually conveyed as a simple aspiration, as a simple thirst for fulfilment, not as a true dialectical development. Yet, if we analyse its intrinsic sense of "simple aspiration", we discover the dialectical mechanism. This analysis *has already been made* at the core of philosophy, except that it does not explicitly carry the epithet of dialectical analysis: it is made by Plato in the *Symposium* and, perhaps even better, in any case in a more purely philosophical way, in the *Lysis*.

The myth in the *Symposium* puts forward the three terms necessary for the dialectical circle: *Poros* and *Penia*, the "parents" of Eros, and the latter himself, the thesis. From the mythical point of view, nothing can better correspond to the kinship and solidarity of the terms inside a dialectical circle than their presentation as forming a "holy family". Within a dialectical circle such as the one we have described, the *theme* will always appear as the father, who envelops and seems to perish in the anti-theme, only to be reborn as thesis. The *anti-theme* will be the maternal principle, which not only bears, but also equally transforms after itself the fruit of the father. And the *thesis* will be the son, the good child of both, but ultimately predestined to abandon the "earthly" and the limiting condition of the maternal principle, in order to seek and discover as fully as possible the almost inexhaustible nature of the father. (Normally, however, when it is not a case of "ultimate" dialectical circles, such as that of the Eros, the nature of the father will exhaust itself. The thesis will become theme, thereby to

enter the horizon of another theme; i.e. the son will live his *own* life as
a human being, not merely the life of the father.)

Plato's myth transposes precisely this movement of a familial whole
within itself. *Penia* is poverty, lack, the indeterminacy of matter, as
Plotinus will later say. *Poros* is abundance, the unquenched source of
the solution to, of the exit from the difficulty (*aporia*), plenitude. *Poros*,
at a moment of supreme abundance, drunk on ambrosia in the gardens
of Zeus, on the birthday of Aphrodite, is attracted by the call of *Penia*
(just as the anti-theme ceaselessly invokes the theme, an ideal that is
unattainable for it because by its nature it contradicts it). Thus does he
bring into the world Eros, who will be impelled by poverty, precisely
by the share of poverty in him, to flee from mother/poverty and re-
make himself within the abundance of the father. Thus, it is exactly as
in our schema.

But the *Lysis*, as I was saying, is able to give philosophical expression
to this movement, and the question is whether, in the end, the philo-
sophical is not to be preferred to the mythical. The theme, the father,
is here *to proton philon*, the primitive friend, the term of the striving of
any *philia*. It is the Good in itself (it is neither merely indeterminate
abundance, as in the *Symposium*, nor abundance in a merely function-
al sense). This final term can be invoked by the, apparently neutral,
neither-good-nor-bad world, in reality both-good-and-bad, the world
of desire, in which inner evil, in the form of lack, of indeterminacy,
of chaos, activates the path towards good and leads – through the
engagement of the good in the up to now blind aspiration of desire,
that is, through the consciousness that any *desire* or *friendship for*, any
love of, is in reality desire and friendship for the ultimate friend, that
any love is essentially and ultimately "love of the divine" – to offspring,
to the *thesis* of friendship, of the Eros which has here become *philia*,
which can only truly be what it is if it is oriented towards theme. In its
dialectical circle, this Platonic *philia* will, in contrast to the Eros of the
Symposium, directly implicate the ancient good and evil. This is why it
seems to us more suggestive. The ancient dialectic might in principle
be one of good and evil; an evil that is, for the Greeks, never absolute,
however. Nor was *Penia*, although poverty, an absolute evil, but rather
preserved, in her precariousness, the attraction towards good, in the
form of *Poros*. In the *Lysis*, Plato will be able to demonstrate that evil
does not have to be radical, but rather merely an "impulse" towards
good. This dialectic of good and evil (how much evil the world can

support before it ceases to be the world, i.e. before it falls back into chaos) is: the dialectic of Being and that which threatens to fall back into non-being (mere becoming). In any dialectical circle, it will seem that we will be able to find, in ancient thought, our dialectical proto-type, if it is true that everything is commanded there by the dialectic of good and evil. And the dialectical circle of the Eros will be:

(anti-theme)	*Penia*		Neither-good-nor-bad
			(Both-good-and-bad)
(thesis)	Eros	or:	*Philia*
(theme)	*Poros*		The primitive friend
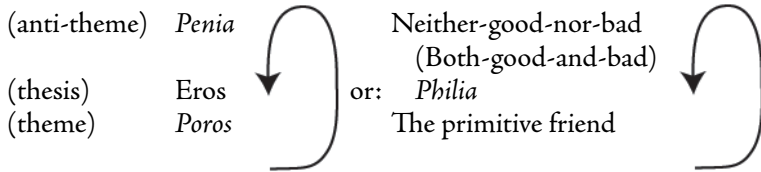
The tendency of the thesis, i.e. of the Eros, is to rediscover the theme in its plenitude, in the form of the Good.

Thus, with the Eros, here we have the dialectical type proposed. However, with the circle of the Logos or of the Eros, we are, as we have shown, still too close to the "ultimate wave", the wave of Being, to be able to see the dialectic developed in more than *one* dialectical circle. The Eros leads us to the theme of the Good, which, for the Greeks, corresponds to the term of Being. The unity of the intellect, which we found as a theme in the Kantian dialectic of knowledge, is perhaps also the expression – this time logical – of the end-point of the road. It is perhaps the penultimate or antepenultimate wave before the circle of reason, beyond which there remains only the logical "generality" of Being. This is why the dialectical examples given can show the extensive field for application of our dialectical type, but not also its complete nature, that of not being a simple circle but the *inclusion* of dialectical circles. Therefore, let us seek an example from an order more distant from the ultimate circle of Being. Let us seek it this time at a level where ordinary dialectics does not concern itself with – or does not feel capable of – finding itself.

It seems to us that such a level can be found *in the field of existential-ist philosophy* and we shall attempt to show that it is perfectly pos-sible to speak of an existentialist dialectic. In principle, this should not be surprising: "dialectics" is a technique for capturing the living. It would thus be legitimate to see it manifested in that ocean of ani-mation brought by existentialism. Historically, however, things do not stand thus. From the start, the nascent existentialist philosophy, or

what might thus be named in Kierkegaard, rose up against Hegelian logic, striving to express something other than the rational meaning of Being. It was not until today, that existentialist philosophy, with its ever more assertive constructivism, has been able to recover something of the dialectical modes. And it might seem strange that it was exactly phenomenology, as *descriptive* as the latter is, that led to the philosophy of Heidegger, which was to be *constructive* and therefore capable of logical categorisation. But it seems to us that, in reality, it is not its phenomenological but rather its transcendental character of enabling the rediscovery of the constructive that will lead us to dialectical "logicism".

Indeed, it is proper to the transcendental attitude to "make possible", to ground, to show how what is was possible. In the case of Heidegger, human reality as it is had to be made possible. This is why we witness an initiation of levels, which do not rise above one another in tiers, do not superimpose each other (as if philosophical thought wanted to use them to scale to the heavens, the "transcendent"), but on the contrary will be laid one beneath the other, will give themselves an ever larger base, an ever more solid foundation, until the horizon is reached in which all these successive groundings are possible, i.e. hold. Each of these successive groundings might seem to us a horizon inside which occurs the "making possible", properly speaking, of the respective given, just as the dialectical circle described above, once concluded, found itself contained within another circle. The transcendental is therefore that which, through constructivism, would restore "reason" to the existential.

Let us see whether, indeed, and in what sense it is possible to speak about such an existentialist dialectic. We shall proceed according to the privileged example, in Heideggerian philosophy, of the fundamental *Stimmung* of *Angst*. But it is not from anxiety that we should initially set out, but from the authentically fundamental positing of the fact of "being in the world", a fact constitutive of human existence. Transcendental regression, at the heart of which the disposition of *Angst* will also be included, will occur inside this "fundamental constitution" of – being-in–the-world. Just as Kant sets up a field a priori whereby to make real experience possible, Heidegger also sets up a *field* whereby to make human reality possible. The analytic of human reality will, according to him, consist only in the interpretation of this constitution (*Sein und Zeit*, 1st ed., p. 63). The latter fully functions as an a priori

that is predestined to ground. However, the strange thing is that the "a priori" for the understanding of human reality resides precisely in the fact that man does not have an a priori, that he is-*in*-the-world. That which is essentially given to man is his existence (in the world). Hence, there will occur the thesis – sometimes incorrectly understood by interpreters – that existence precedes essence. In reality, we can see clearly that existence is its own essence and nothing more.

Consequently, the Heideggerian transcendental, at the heart of which we shall seek the dialectical regression, is "man's essence as being-in-the-world", that is, its existence. What happens in this transcendental field? How does human consciousness here move self-wards, in order to ground itself? What is the unfolding of existentialist philosophy as such? Perhaps we were incorrect in saying above that we are tracing an existential dialectic; what interests us above all is the dialectic of existential *thinking*.

Possessing the character of being-in-the-world, human reality seems endowed with a note of spatiality, as it is capable of opening its own space. It is in the world, only in the sense that it is the world, that it possesses in itself the character of a world as an "existential" (a term corresponding to the Kantian category, as was to be expected in this transcendental philosophy; but distinct, in the sense that it is a term of human reality, whereas the category is also one of the non-human existent; *Sein und Zeit*, p. 44). Therefore, human reality is in the world in the sense that the "world" is articulated through it. Given this, human reality possesses the character of making space possible. It is not in space but rather *is* space (*Ibid.*, p. 111); this is why space may also sometimes appear as an a priori, says Heidegger. Only inside this horizon can it perceive a thing as being in the world, in space etc. Just as we shall be told (*Ibid.*, p. 163) that human reality hears because it understands, so it is here too: human reality perceives a here and a there, or something in the world, because it opens its own horizon.

For example, only through the primitive disposition to fear does one perceive the thing as frightening. Fear is genuinely a privileged example for existentialism, since it leads to *Angst*. There is a spatiality of fear, just as there might be said to be a spatiality of hunger (a horizon in which it can be satisfied and a determinate, measured positivity – does not the hungry person know *how much* he needs? – through which it will be satisfied). In the horizon of fear, one now sees the threatening thing approach (*Ibid.* p. 140). In itself, the field, the region, that which

is before you (*Gegend*) is not something frightening; nor what "comes" to you thence. Only the approach makes the threatening truly become a threat. In the act of fear, you do not "ascertain" pure and simple the approach of something, but rather you *unveil* the thing in its capacity to be threatening. In fearing, you fear *something*. The fact of fearing, of having the disposition to fear, is that which makes you discover in the world the thing to be feared.

It is as though fear opened a horizon (as though it posited the theme, we might say), which attempts to neutralise itself as being indifferent, as being a mere field inside which one thing or another (the anti-theme) might loom before you, and finds itself as one in which that which looms and approaches is the frightening thing (the thesis). Fear is fear of something in the world; this is what is specific to it. The frightening thing reveals itself as the encounter between a primitive disposition, fear itself, and a world of things that might also open to you otherwise, if you greeted it otherwise, but which opens to you thus because you greet it thus, with "fear in your heart".

But if fear is that which posits frightening things in the world, will frightening things themselves not somehow refer to something beyond, i.e. behind, fear? Will the dialectical circle close here too, tending from the thesis, which is the frightening thing, to the exhaustion of the theme, which is fear? It is precisely this that seems to us to be the movement of existential thought. The dialectical circle would then be:

(Theme)	The horizon of fear
(Anti-theme)	The neutral horizon
(Thesis)	The frightening thing… which tends towards:
(Theme)	The horizon of fear

Fear is of one thing or another; it is of something in the world. The frightening thing is, taken to the extreme, a frightening *world*. In order to suppress fear, a refuge *from* the world ought to be possible.

But, in the case of man, can fear, any fear, truly be suppressed? What is this fear that now sends us nevertheless back *into* the world? How is it that human reality flees, seemingly also for fear, towards the world in which it encountered only threats? It is as if fear, exhausting its content, in accepting the fear of something determinate, finds itself in the horizon of another acceptation: fear of something indeterminate. This will be the meaning of *anxiety*, fundamental to existentialism. It is such a primitive disposition that causes human reality – viewed as

das Man, in his fall, in the impersonal – to take refuge back in the world. From the horizon of fear, we have entered that of anxiety. And it is only anxiety that truly makes fear possible, says Heidegger (*Ibid*., p. 186).

The dialectical circle of fear can thus be contained within another circle, that of anxiety. Will this too be a true dialectical circle, which is to say will it possess an internal development? Thence we would obtain, for the first time, a *concatenation* of dialectical circles and we would see how the transition from one to another is achieved. Let us therefore examine the internal movement of the concept of *Angst*, anxiety.

Anxiety is now the new theme. The fear that it unveils at the heart of human reality is the fear of something indeterminate. This means, by the very terms of the definition, that the *anti-theme* to this theme is the fear of something determinate, which is to say fear proper. Anxiety is the theme; the fear from which we set out has become the anti-theme. Therefore, *the new anti-theme is the old theme*. But what about the thesis? What will become the "nothing of the world" having passed through the filter of "something in the world"? It will become this world itself (not something determinate in it and nevertheless in itself in the form of something). The *thesis* of anxiety will have to be the fear of the world as such. And this is the true direction of Heidegger's thought (*Ibid*., p. 187). He sees anxiety as fear of the world qua world, or the fear of being-in-the-world. Of course, says the author, this does not mean to exclude, through reflection, all that is in the world and only to think the world; but it is only in anxiety that the world first opens to you as world, that being-in-the-world. Here then is the thesis, arising from the theme of anxiety and the anti-theme of fear.

But will the thesis not tend towards the theme this time as well? Heidegger himself describes this process, showing the meaning of the fear of being-in-the-world if it is taken to the extreme. Not only are you afraid *of* being in the world but also *for* the sake of this fact. In fear you are afraid of something in the world for the sake of your own being, which is threatened by that something. Here the fact of being-in-the-world is your own being, in its potentiality, in its freedom to choose and seize (*ergreifen*) itself. Therefore, it is as if you are afraid of yourself – behold the privileged status of anxiety in the existential field. You are *solus ipse*, in complete solipsism; not isolated, however, but rather alone – before yourself, as being-in-the-world! Nowhere

do you have a refuge, a home. You might fall back into the world, re-discover that positive, open fear – the fear of something in particular for the sake of something in particular. But now you feel that it would be a "fall" into inauthenticity. The fear of being-in-the-world must be brought back to anxiety, in order to exhaust in it the sense of its own, irremediable freedom of human reality.

The dialectical circle here is thus:

(Theme)	Anxiety
(Anti-theme)	Fear
(Thesis)	Being-in-the-world as such which comes back to:
(Theme)	Anxiety

This is the dialectical circle of the consciousness of human reality of having to choose between inauthenticity and authenticity, of being or not being free. From the fear of nothing determinate, the first sense of anxiety, we have now reached the full sense of freedom. But thereby we have also emerged from the horizon of anxiety and penetrated into another, that of *disquietude*.

Indeed, anxiety, understood as the fear of being or not being up to one's own freedom, is to be enveloped beneath the larger and more active fact of this freedom, which is *Sorge*[11]. *Angst* is, in a way, still a theoretical freedom, the *consciousness* of freedom; disquietude begins to be its exercise. In *Angst*, it is the fear of knowing *whether* you can be authentic or not; it is worry for *how* you are. Disquietude, however, is worry for *what* you are, for what you might be. This is why anxiety can be enveloped by disquietude; but the latter will, in a way, be contradicted by anxiety. Disquietude is now the theme, and the anti-theme will be the former theme, anxiety. Disquietude, as a de facto exercise of the freedom of human reality viewed as authentic being ("Freisein für das eigenste Seinkönnen", *Ibid.*, p. 191), is now contradicted by anxiety as simple consciousness of this freedom. The theme now expresses the disquietude for what you *must* be, while the anti-theme is the fear in the face of the freedom to be or not to be. What will the thesis be? The fact of being that which you are not yet; the fact of being permanently

---

11   Here Noica goes against the great majority of Heidegger translations which interpret *Sorge* as *care*. In Romanian, Noica uses the word "îngrijo-rare" which means literally "being worried about", "disquietude". However, the Romanian word is actually built upon the word "grija" which is exactly "concern" and "care". [e.n.]

beyond yourself, of being ahead of yourself (*Sich-vorweg-sein*). Accordingly, we shall have:

(Theme)	Disquietude (for that which one must be)
(Anti-theme)	Anxiety (for the freedom to be or not to be)
(Thesis)	To be beyond oneself (as: to be what you are not yet) which tends towards:
(Theme)	Disquietude

To be that which you are not yet, if taken to the extreme, is in reality to be what you are: the real that is-not-yet, permanent self-transcendence. On this occasion, the thesis will also tend to exhaust the theme. If, in the beginning, *Sorge* could fall back into inauthenticity (it could be *Besorgen* and *Fürsorge*, worry in the usual sense of *das Man*, as the character of human reality, even in this fallen situation, that of self-projection, *Ibid*., 193), now, when the thesis rediscovers the theme, the latter, *Sorge*, is no longer a mode of inauthentic existence, but rather tends to take account not only of the existence that is *between* a beginning and an end, of everyday life, but also to take into account existence as a whole, from its beginning to its end (*Ibid*., p. 233). And thus, disquietude itself can be contained and made possible by a deeper theme, temporality. The dialectical circle of anxiety, we shall say, comes to a close, allowing itself to be contained by that of *temporality*.

We shall not continue this exercise of applying our dialectical model to existentialist thought with temporality. Even thus far, the attempt to place things in the schema may have seemed laborious; it would be more laborious still in the case of Heideggerian temporality. We shall content ourselves with the *three dialectical circles* that have been brought to light and with their concatenation. It is not, however, superfluous to recall that it is *not* in the order of this concatenation that existentialism conceives things. On the contrary, as in any transcendental philosophy, in any philosophy of making possible the real, things here too will have to appear upside down: temporality will make possible disquietude, which grounds anxiety, through the decadence of which fear becomes possible. Heidegger openly affirms this order when he says, more than once, that only from an understanding of Being will human reality acquire full meaning; therefore, the meaning of Being will make temporality possible, which makes all the rest possible.

However, we are now at the order of *expositing* existential thought, and here things unfold thus: setting out from the disposition to fear

and as far as temporality, from the horizon of the former to that of the latter. This is why our circle has also developed in this direction. At most, we shall say that perhaps it is not a mere order of exposition, the order of existentialist *thought*, but rather it is the natural order, when consciousness penetrates, step by step, from the horizon of the immediate and of its inauthenticity into its horizon of authenticity. And who knows whether it is precisely this philosophy of successive horizons, such as existentialism has appeared to us, that a dialectics of circles has been able to suggest to us! But we are not sure whether thereby we are falsifying existentialism to a certain extent, on the one hand; and whether we are doing ourselves an injustice, by invoking its suggestion, on the other, instead of the suggestion which has consistently been given to us by the preposition "întru" <within>.

It is sufficient for us to retain the dialectical concatenation obtained and the mechanism of this concatenation. Compared to the examples of application given thus far, the existential field has opened a new possibility for us: that of connecting dialectical circles between themselves. We are thereby permitted to describe an essential new aspect of this dialectic. For indeed, what would a dialectic be unless it led to a dialectical *aggregate*?

The law of dialectical movement in each circle (theme – anti-theme – thesis – theme) reoccurs at this level. The new difficulty was that of making the transition from one circle to another. Does not the fact that you introduce a horizon into another horizon, that you envelop a circle with another circle, permit too many liberties? Is there not a risk – apart from the material risk of stumbling upon a circle that merely intersects with the first, not one that is concentric and has a larger radius – of choosing too distant a circle, or on the contrary, one too close to the one from which it departs? If the schema will be one of concentric circles, of horizons that enclose themselves one within another, what assurance and above all what measure, what rigour is possessed by this passage from one dialectical wave to another? What is it that gives its amplitude?

In ordinary dialectics, the passage from one triad to another seems assured by the fact that the synthesis of the first triad (or the *whole* triad) becomes the thesis of the second. Therefore, one is sure that one proceeds with regularity, transforming the synthesis into a new thesis and contradicting it in order to open a new triad. But what about here? *Here, there is still a norm*: the theme of the first triad becomes the

anti-theme of the second. Thus, one cannot choose just *any* new circle, which is to say just any new theme, but rather, only one which will be contradicted by the first theme. The dialectical strangeness and novelty is that the first theme will, on its own, lead to the second, which, however, will end up being contradicted by the first one.

Accordingly, is the new theme contradictory to the old? Is it enough to contradict it in order to obtain a new theme? No, since *the new theme does not contradict the old; only the old theme contradicts the new*, when the latter doubles back upon the first. And nor does the old theme contradict the new at the beginning, since it leads to it, but only when you rotate the second above it (just as the real number contradicts the complex number, to which it has led). – Therefore, in this dialectic too, there is a rigorous procedure: the new theme is obtained in the extension of the old, which contradicts the new.

But what kind of dialectics is this: of two contradictory terms, only one contradicts the other, and this, the one that contradicts it, is also the one that in effect makes it possible, seeks it, aspires to it. Is something of the sort possible?

We shall see below, when we justify *de jure* our dialectic , how something of the sort is in principle possible. But now we can show that things stand thus *in fact*. The three dialectical circles found in the existential field clearly show it.

	The first circle				
(Theme)	The horizon of fear				
(Anti-theme)	The neutral horizon	*The second circle*			
(Thesis)	The frightening thing	(Theme)	Anxiety		
(Theme)	The horizon of fear =	(Anti-theme)	The horizon of fear	*The third circle*	
		(Thesis)	Being-in-the-world	(Theme)	Disquietude
		(Theme)	Anxiety =	(Anti-theme)	Anxiety
				(Thesis)	To be what one *not* yet is
				(Theme)	Disquietude

Indeed, anxiety does not contradict fear, but rather it is its extension. But to return to the level of fear, anxiety (the fear of nothing determi-

nate) is contradicted by fear (fear of something determinate). In its turn, disquietude does not contradict anxiety, since it is also its extension. But reduced to the level of anxiety, disquietude (as the de facto exercise of the freedom to be) is contradicted by anxiety (as the simple *consciousness* of the freedom to be or not to be). Therefore, indeed, the new theme does not contradict the old but opens from within it; only the latter can contradict the new theme, becoming its anti-theme.

But was it not thus inside any dialectical circle, and not just *between* circles? Are not the relationships between theme and anti-theme the same: i.e. not of bipolar contradictories but terms at the same time deduced linearly and in contradiction only if they emerge from linearity, namely if the second turns back to the level of the first? This, for example, is how things stand in the first example of a dialectical circle, the Kantian. The anti-theme here, sensibility, stands in the same curious relation to the theme that it contradicts, intellect. Nevertheless, sensibility was, from the outset, that which referred to the unity of the intellect, according to Kant. There is, he says (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 1st ed. p. 122), an "affinity" of phenomena, as they are given to us by the sensibility, an affinity which will be precisely the synthetic unity of apperception. The affinity of phenomena, for Kant, expresses that which does not belong *to them*, which is to say to the sensibility by which they are given: it is the unity of the intellect. And so here we have the sensibility – the anti-theme by which the theme of the intellect will be contradicted – betraying its aspiration to reach the intellect, to be fulfilled in the theme that it is nevertheless fated to contradict. It will contradict the intellect, but the latter will not contradict it.

The same process of unilateral contradiction aquires an even more plastic representation in the dialectical circle of the Eros. *Penia*, the anti-theme – poverty, lack, as she is – does not flee from but rather, on the contrary, seeks *Poros*, wealth. She seeks him incessantly, until she catches him at the hour of loss of self in sleep and drunkenness, the hour at which "contradiction" of self becomes possible. And then *Poros* will in effect contradict himself. Wealth stretches out its arms to poverty; while the latter does not contradict herself, but fulfils herself. But whereas she does not contradict herself, Poverty steadfastly contradicts Wealth, endowing their child with the same contradictory nature.

The anti-theme leads to and contradicts the theme. The same thing happens, on an even larger scale, in life. This is why some see contradiction where others do *not* see contradiction but rather growth; and both are right. Goethe was to be scandalised by the assertion of his younger friend, Dr Hegel, later to be professor, that the fruit contradicts the flower just as the flower contradicts the bud. "What is this joke?" writes Goethe (Letter to Seebeck, 28 November 1812). "To abolish the eternal reality of nature through a sophistic joke in bad taste!" Of course, Goethe, that monster of common sense, could see only *die ewige Realität der Natur*, the sure, *positive* progression from bud to flower and from flower to fruit. Whereas Hegel, that monster of the philosophical spirit, sensed the contradiction in itself of that "organic" growth. At most, we shall venture to say, in the light of the above: it is not the flower that contradicts the bud, as Hegel would have it, but inverse; it is not the fruit that contradicts the flower, but inverse; the weaker term will contradict the stronger, the anti-theme will consistently contradict the theme, while the latter does not contradict but integrates the former.

With the Hegelian example cited above, do we not enter into the field of life itself? Is not the dialectics here – perhaps more so than the usual dialectic – a dialectics of the living? The living is a permanent *yes*, a progression from a weaker *yes* to a stronger *yes*. The progress of the living is not achieved through a *no*, i.e. in an ordinary logical fashion, through the opposition of *yes* and *no*. It is achieved thematically through a *yes* which becomes *no* only at a given moment (the irrational number only apparently contradicts the rational number) in order to later regain a fuller *yes* (the irrational number integrates the rational one). The *no* is possible only inside the thematic life of the *yes*, as a moment of this life.

If we have now met a dialectical mode in which *yes* predominates over *no*, it is because we have proceeded from Being as theme, respectively from the ontological terms of becoming, becoming within Being, and Being. Just as ordinary logic claims to make "logical" thought a mere mode, its mere particularisation, so we shall now say: the logical, the world of formal indifference to the *yes* and the *no*, is a simple moment in the dialectical progression described above. Inside the life of the *yes*, of the multiple succession of the *yes*, thinking confronts a *yes* that has been taken as the theme against a prior term, reducing the first to the level of the second and obtaining the opposition between

a theme and its anti-theme. The contradiction is unilateral and will
remain so, if it remains in the dialectic, i.e. in living progression. How-
ever, the consecration of this contradiction and its bipolarisation will
mean the transition to logic.

— But we have again travelled too far, perhaps. We wished to show
merely that our dialectics based on unilateral contradiction is possible
de facto, and we have arrived at a *de jure* discussion. In reality, not until
we demonstrate how the unilaterality of dialectical contradiction can
be justified will the considerations here endeavoured, above all those
regarding formal logic, acquire full meaning. However, we are, for the
moment, at the order of fact. We have shown that there is a dialectical
circle and how a concatenation of circles can be made. Moreover, the
concatenation of circles, through that rule that made the theme of a
dialectical circle become the anti-theme of another, drew our attention
to the situation inside each circle, to the relationship which is *not* in
bilateral contradiction, between theme and anti-theme. Now, after we
have described a dialectical circle, after we have seen how a concatena-
tion of dialectical circles can be made, is it not time to ask ourselves
how the dialectical aggregate will look, albeit also in fact?

The usual, linear dialectics of thesis, antithesis and synthesis might
in principle take two forms of aggregate. The first might be linear in its
entirety, therefore mono-linear, which, setting out from a single thesis,
would go on to develop all the rest along a single dialectical line. The
second might be arborescent, i.e. accept many levels, in which another
thesis would always lead dialectically to one or another specific dialec-
tical series. The engagement of this typical dialectics in the unique de-
velopment of *history* might seem to plead in favour of mono-linearity.
Respect for the independence of many levels would plead in favour of
arborescence (as in the philosophy of culture, where different cultures
are independent). However, we shall not examine which of the two
possibilities is achieved in the dialectics of Hegel or his followers, but
rather we shall remain at the observation that, for the usual dialectical
aggregate, there are two possibilities and two only. — What happens
to the aggregate of dialectical circles? It seems to us, in the case of the
latter, that we have *three* possibilities in principle. Either the circles are
all concentric, corresponding to mono-linearity and growing one from
another, from the centre to the whole or from the circumference of the
whole towards the centre, according to the model of concatenation de-
scribed. Or, they can be grouped in different aggregates, *all* contained

under one or more circles. Or, finally, they can be grouped concentrically in a number of aggregates without being contained in one circle, but rather remaining in pure plurality, the same as the dialectical series in the first dialectics.

Of these three possibilities, however, it seems that the last must, in fact, be excluded from our dialectics. The prototype according to which we have established it is the circle of becoming within Being, and this prototype commands, not only formally but also *in reality* (as we have seen in the case of the four philosophical disciplines), philosophical consciousness. Consequently, the circle of *Being*, its "wave", will always be the last, enveloping the others, and this not only in philosophical consciousness but also, through it, in any cultural or, understood more widely, human consciousness. It has seemed to us that, in all that is made and all that is, a horizon is affirmed, which expands towards new waves, towards other horizons, in the striving to obtain the horizon of Being. It is true that the horizon is ever weakening, perishing. It is like a succession of ever larger, evanescent waves, and whether nearer or farther away, the horizon of each consciousness comes to an end. Being is the most general "concept" because it is the most distant wave, one that is obtained by philosophical consciousness only at its ideal limit. But the fact that sooner or later the waves perish does not mean that their *direction* towards Being also perishes. Heidegger may rightly say that "Being can be (for that reason) inconceivable, but it is never completely misunderstood" (*Sein und Zeit*, p. 183). It is the final wave, implied in all the others; or else – transcendentally, i.e. inverted – it is that which makes all the others possible. You can set off in any direction, from any horizon (from the falling of any stone into water); but in any case, all the waves you have thereby brought to life will be contained in the circle of becoming within Being. At most, it can be said that these dialectical circles make up either a single growth within Being, or a number of dialectical fields, which, however, will all ultimately be included in the circle of Being.

Consequently, we shall retain only the concentric succession of circles, or the inclusion of the fields of dialectical circles in the final circle or circles. These two possibilities for the aggregate here do *not* correspond exactly to the two possibilities of the usual dialectical aggregate, mono-linearity and arborescence. We have seen that arborescence corresponds to case 3, here excluded. With this dialectics commanded by the circle of becoming within Being, we are within a more rigor-

ously philosophical world, where things in any case depend on the One. The entire problem would be whether philosophy has to take into account the One and unity (respectively the units of concentric circles, thus understood within a relative multiplicity) or the One and the Multiple, in the absolute sense not only for the One but also for the Multiple. In a scholastic sense, the problem would translate as whether Plato's *Parmenides* has to be resumed from the point it left off; or whether, alongside the One and the Multiple, unity must also be conceived. It seems to us that our dialectics opens this perspective for the rethinking of the Platonic dialogue, while usual dialectics leaves things in their irreducibility as One and Multiple, from which not even Plato was able to escape.

Thus, accepting, for the time being, that the dialectical aggregate can take the appearance either of concentric circles or that of concentric groups included ultimately in a single circle, it will not be hard for us to find or to imagine examples for each of the two schemata. In the first case, that of concentric dialectical circles, an example has even been found: it is precisely that given to illustrate the concatenation of circles, the series of "existential" horizons. The circle or horizon of fear seemed to us to be included in that of anxiety, which in its turn was included in that of disquietude, only for the latter to enter into that of temporality. Here, everything grew – existentially – towards a final wave, which will, of course, not remain temporality, but will have to be Being. How may we now imagine an example for the other case?

The case of disquietude, thus of fear, appeared from the start as privileged for Heidegger. Are there any other "primitive dispositions"[12] from whence it is possible to set out – less directly, but possible – towards the same term? It seems to us that it would be possible to invoke (but constructively, therefore narrowly, not descriptively, i.e. "openly" or limitlessly, as O. F. Bollnow wished, in *Das Wesen der Stimmungen*, 1941) three fundamental dispositions of human reality, which are al-

---

12   In *Sein und Zeit* there are two related concepts that Noica might be translating by "primitive dispositions", i.e. *Grundbefindlichkeiten* (the more probable) and *Grundstimmungen*. They have been usually rendered in English as follows: *Grundbefindlichkeiten* as "basic states-of-mind" (the 1962 Macquarrie-Robinson translation of *Sein und Zeit*) and "fundamental attunement" (1993 Stambaugh translation). Grundstimmungen (only one occurrence in the entire text) by "basic moods" (Macquarrie-Robinson) and "fundamental moods" (Stambaugh) [e.n.].

ways interwoven with man's organic being: not only that of *fear*, but also *hunger*, together with the *eros*.[13] Just as the analysis of fear led to the fundamental disposition of anxiety (which in reality "made" fear "possible"), likewise hunger and the eros now seem to lead us to fundamental dispositions that ascend to the essence of the human. And – a thing that is curious at first sight – the transition will be made just as in the first case from fear to anxiety. Fear is fear of something determinate, and anxiety is fear of something indeterminate, therefore of the world as world, of the consciousness of being-in-the-world, of the self in itself. Hunger too is the hunger for something determinate, usually; but the hunger for something indeterminate is still hunger; it too is hunger for the world as world, this time with the acceptance of being-in-the-world, with the acceptance of the constitution of the self. What exactly is this "disposition"? In the absence of anything else, we shall name it: *Drang* (impulse), seeing in it something perfectly symmetrical to *Angst*. Like *Angst*, which produced a certain unsettlement, an *Unzuhause*, the sentiment that nowhere are you at home, this *Drang* too will be instability: nowhere are you at home, you permanently seek something else, everything caves in. The hunger is not sated because it cannot be sated, just as in *Angst* fear did not come to an end because it could not come to an end. At most, you bring it down to the level of the world, you cause it to "decline", and then it becomes the fear of something determinate, it is objectified, localised: I was *only* afraid of that. The same with hunger, in Being that declines: it becomes hunger for something (for worldly goods, for conquests, for power); and then again you recover your quietude – I was hungry only for that. In reality, at the individual as well as the collective level, you preserve the awareness that it was not that which you wanted, just as in the case of *Angst* degraded to fear you very well know that it was not that of which you were afraid. You hunger for yourself and you cannot obtain yourself. This *Drang* will be a *search for the self*, a projection of self, a *Sich-vorweg*, as it appeared beyond disquietude. One single nuance will distinguish between "being beyond the self", on the one hand and on the other: from the perspective of *Angst* it was, for human reality, a question of being that which is not yet; here, what will be at stake is a form of not being what you still are. This *Sich-vorweg* of *Drang*, as a projection of what you are not towards what you are, will somewhere

13   The Eros is here taken in the minor, modern sense, not in the plenitude of the ancient Eros, with a capital E.

rediscover the *Sich-vorweg* as a projection towards what you are not yet: if it does not rediscover it in the very horizon of *Sorge*, it will certainly do so in the horizon of *temporality*. The existential analytic that sets out from hunger would *lead to the same result* as that which set out from fear.

The eros seemingly remains as an intermediary term, between the primitive disposition of fear and that of hunger. Will the eros have a similar development? Usually, the eros is the eros for something. But, taken to the extreme, it survives: it is still eros, the eros of nothing determinate. Just as the fear of nothing determinate, of world as world, of being in the world, thus of the self, was *Angst*, and just as the hunger for nothing determinate, for world as world, for being-in-the-world, thus for the self, was *Drang*, so the eros for nothing determinate is *Sehnsucht*, let us say the Romanian *dor* <yearning>.[14] *Angst, Drang* and *Sehnsucht* might therefore appear to be fundamental dispositions, equally justified in an existential analysis. *Sehnsucht* seems to us to stand between the fear of self in *Angst* and the hunger for self in *Drang*: it is a mixture of suffering and exultation, a striving towards something that is both painful and delightful. With it, you have no "home", as with the other affective dispositions. In existentialist terms, shall we not encounter here too the mode of the other two "dispositions" to make human reality project itself beyond itself, the mode of *Sich-vorweg-sein*? It is sufficient for us to name it; the same as it will be obvious that along the line of the eros the same horizon of temporality is arrived at, if the encounter does not occur even lower, at *Sorge*. Thus: the circle of fear, of hunger and of the eros will all be included in a single circle, that of temporality.

This is what an aggregate of dialectical circles looks like in accordance with the second schema. But will the dialectical aggregate to which our dialectics of circles leads be of *this* type? Is it not possible to arrive at a unitary dialectic of concentric circles? -- On this occasion, we shall have to leave the problem open, until the effective establish-

---

14   In *Creație și frumos în rostirea românească* <*Creation and Beauty in Romanian Utterance*> (1973), Noica speaks of the contradictory meanings that exist simultaneously, or dialectically, within the word *dor* "yearning" (from Latin *dolor* "pain"): whereas, for example, the Greek word *philoneikia* "love of strife" brings together two contradictory meanings in a compound word, the Romanian *dor*, which he defines as "love of sorrow", contains two contradictory meanings in a simple word. – Translator's note

ment of a corresponding dialectics, which is to say of a true dialectical Logic.

We have thus shown above what is the *de facto* exercise of the dialectics of circles, setting out from the example of the Kantian faculties of knowledge and finishing with the dialectical circles found, or posited, in the existentialist perspective. All the above developments regard only the possible exemplification of the proposed dialectics. It now follows for us to move on to an examination of the *legitimacy* of this dialectic. Firstly, we shall merely underline that the examples given all regard a subject matter to which linear dialectics does seem to be usually applied and in any case is not to be found, as we have shown. Our dialectics, however, will have equally to cover the field in which the linear dialectic is exercised, and here it shall of course do so with much more ease than in the examples proposed, since it is a matter of a field prepared in advance for dialectical exercise.

Moreover, we have seen that this dialectic of circles has also arisen and imposed itself, at the very first, precisely in the margin of the Kantian table of the categories, from whence it seems to us that usual dialectic draws its origins. The decisive exercise of the dialectic of circles would be precisely in the field where the other has been established. In other words, it would tend to cover the Hegelian "Logic", at least as regards its subject matter. We thus find ourselves placed before the task of thinking: *how is this Logic possible other than through a linear dialectic?* It may seem presumptuous, even if it does not seem pointless: but a perspective that opens, consequent to all the considerations above, would be that of rethinking Hegel's "Logic". It is, however, enough to *mention* this task – and this is all we are doing – in order to put a stop to the game.

For the time being, let us undertake something that may seem closer to the measure of the idea here: let us attempt to justify *de jure* the dialectic of circles proposed in the place of the linear dialectic. That it is possible has seemed to us evident in fact. But what supports it by rights?

The dialectics we have conceived is circular. This signifies not only what may result formally from this: that the last term is also the first. It also signifies two other things, which are not to be extrapolated from the formal condition of the circle and now demand justification: 1) that the second term, which now becomes the third and may appear as the synthesis, is in reality the true thesis; and 2) that it is not neu-

tral, it does not arbitrate indifferently between theme and anti-theme, but tends towards the last (respectively the first) term, the theme.

A simple dialectical circle – in accordance with the expression "to fall into a circle" – would have signified only that the last term rediscovers the first: that it rediscovers it perfectly, and then the circle becomes in reality a *pendulation*; or that it rediscovers it at a higher level, *aufgehoben*, and then it might arrive at a dialectical spiral, an almost mechanical way of reconciling a certain circularity with a certain linearity. With such forms, however, usually qualified as "circular" thought, we fall in fact into the circle's vicious mode of being a movement that can no longer be halted – infinite pendulation, or an infinitely ascending or descending spiral. There is something of the broken mechanism in these forms, an automatism that philosophy has always shunned as though it were its Unclean One: specifically, it is – to speak only of the spiral, since the viciousness of pendulation is self-evident – the fear of "infinite regress" in the case of the descending spiral, fear of the vice that has so many times during history been imputed to one philosophy or another. In *these* meanings, consequently, our circle would stand condemned from the start.

However, it seems to us that it *emerges* from the state of endless movement. It emerges from here precisely because it possesses the property that the thesis is oriented in it. In one sense, it is not only circle: in it, there is also a linear movement. This is why we were able, through it, to turn our mind back to the contradiction in modern physics between the undulatory and the corpuscular. Perhaps a certain co-existence of linearity with the circle is permanently necessary, in order to extract the circle from "circularity", from the state of a sign just as good, or just as bad, as that usual for the infinite (X). With its linearity, the return to the theme is made, not at the same point which was also that of departure, but to that situated on the diameter of the circle, at the opposite end. The theme is the same, of course, but now it has finally matured, been fulfilled. All that was possible to obtain from it has been obtained. It set out from a margin of the horizon and has arrived at its other margin. It is the same "horizon" but at a *different* hour, at the hour of its fulfilment. *Das Wahre ist das Ganze*, says Hegel (*Phänomenologie*, Meiner's edition, p. 21). "The whole is merely the essence that is fulfilled through its development."

The schema at which we have arrived cannot be reduced – and this is highly significant – to one that is merely linear, as though the dia-

lectical development took place only along the line of the diameter. It would mean claiming that the theme at the beginning is nevertheless different to that at the end. This renunciation of the circle cannot be made, because it is the same theme, it is *return* to the theme. The theme (like Hegel's essence) therefore moves within itself. It has to move in order to arrive from its initial at its final moment, but it moves only within itself, therefore in a circle. And while it moves along the length of its *circle*, it envelops the anti-theme and the thesis, which move along the length of their *line*, attracted and set in motion by a theme that they had in some way left behind. The theme is not therefore a prime mover; it is a mover that is itself moved, *one moved within itself*. But the movement of the theme within itself is not made in a single way but rather in two ways (along the line of the circle and along the line of the diameter), so that at the point the two movements meet there will this time be a halt, not an interminable circular movement. This is why the theme could *appear* to be a prime mover, an "un-moved" mover, which attracted the thesis towards it. In reality, the two oriented arcs of the theme permanently attract to themselves the axis of the thesis (to each moment on the anti-theme-thesis line correspond a double point on the base *circle*), making it tend in a single direction, towards the point where the theme rediscovers itself. The schema of the dialectical circle thereby ends in a purely vectorial expression:

(regained theme)
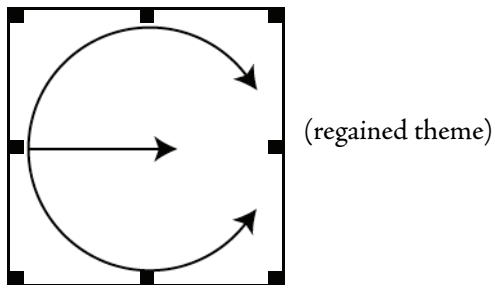
— The entire game above does not yet bring any *de jure* justification, of course; it is a mere formal description and the reduction to a schema. But it allows us to bring to light *what exactly* has to be justified *de jure*, within such a circular dialectic, and what exactly is specific in the dialectical circle. Now, above all with the last schema, which has been reduced to vectoriality, the specific of this dialectic may be seen: *there is no indifference in it*. Everything is oriented within a direction,

everything tends towards "its own place", just as the ancients believed that the flame tends towards a place in which there might also be repose for it. Specifically, everything is oriented towards a theme, even the theme.

If such a schema might be a solution for thinking, nothing would prevent us from saying: here is the solution for a Theodicy, here is the way in which the Demiurge might co-exist with the world, without being confounded with its evil and matter. Just as the theme does here, the Demiurge unfolds his eternity along the *circle* through which he "contemplates himself"; but in this act, he envelops the world. Not for a moment does his circle come into contact with the *line*, with the process of the becoming of the world. And at some moments (the limiting, material moment of the anti-theme), the circle of the Demiurge is further away or in the course of moving further away, while at another moment (that of the thesis), with the promise of rediscovering them, the circle is closer or in the course of moving closer. But, while the circle of the Demiurge nowhere touches the line, with the latter's "history" of the world, it permanently accompanies, further away or closer, the passage of the world; it is a permanent co-presence. Only *inside it* is the unfolding of the world possible: without it and nonetheless with it at the same time. And its great concession to the world, its supreme "participation", is to journey, but on *its* itinerary, together with the world. Except that while the world tends towards him, he tends only towards himself. The world is world, and the Demiurge is demiurge. The world has its poverty, the creator his glory; the world is becoming along its line, the Demiurge is existence on his circle. But the Demiurge is at the beginning of the world and at its end. His "eternity" can co-exist with, or, even more so, make possible the temporality of the world (it is the background against which it is measured). His incorruptibility co-exists with the corruptibility of creation, without annulling it. His being unfolds together with that of the world – he sustains it, drags it behind him, permanently attracts it – but, unlike the world, he does not "become", but rather is. He himself bears everything and bears himself – towards himself; just as the theme bears everything and bears itself, towards itself.

If we have not avoided this major example, to which our dialectic's specific of being *oriented* has led us, it is because, however grandiloquent it might be, it is explanatory here. It comes to show how oriented thought is – whether it be speculative or of any other sort, or

even whether it be common, since all kinds of thought are at stake, in such an example. One will have the right only to conceive an *oriented dialectic*, one in which the thesis tends towards the theme, if indeed human thought is constitutively oriented.

But *it is this that will be the* de jure *justification of the dialectic proposed*. Dialectics is thus because reason is thus. For, before being a method, a kind of organised movement – as Plato and Hegel would have had it – towards the interception of the essential in this world of the real, dialectics must be a transcription of reason's debate with itself. It can only be a "method" because it takes the fundamental endeavour of reason further and organises it. Consequently, in reason itself, there must reside the principle of orientation that we have found in its dialectical exercise. *Reason must not be neutral* – this is the key to our dialectics. Contrary to the manner in which reason is sometimes understood and represented by modern thought (which is essentially alien to reason, remaining, as has been said, merely at the level of the intellect); contrary to reason viewed as absolute indifference, as cold impartiality, as the supreme instance of arbitration, as blindfolded justice; and contrary to its logical "healthiness" – which might, on the contrary, be the intrinsic vice, the veritable cancer of human consciousness – reason now appears to us as having to be rescued from neutrality.

But was it not thus, that is, beyond neutrality, *oriented*, when it first arose, as we all like to say, with the Greeks? This is the great lesson we have to learn from them, one which, as a rule, is nevertheless ignored. The philosophy of Being, which anyone might encounter there and invoke in *its terms* – and our times, with their impetus towards the "metaphysical", veritably squander this recourse to the philosophical authority of the Greeks – means almost nothing if it does not lead to another concept of reason, suitable to the ancient. There does not truly exist a *philosophy* of Being unless it leads to another understanding of reason. *The measure for the understanding of the problem of Being seems to us to reside precisely in the reconsideration of the concept of reason*, so that for one to turn back towards the Greeks and towards the so-called philosophy of Being means precisely to perform the philosophy of spirit.

Of course, the Greeks *did not* do so – and this is our advantage over them. To them, it seemed *natural* that reason should be thus, specifically oriented. For them, reason was evidently the instrument of Being. Dialectics of itself meant an emergence from all neutrality and an en-

try into the process of ascendancy; just as, in general, philosophy was, for them, in a way that was *immediate*, the transition from the plane of what is to that of what ought to be. We, however, must learn all these things, un-learning as such a multitude of other things. Here, it is, of course, a reduction in spontaneity; but it is also the perspective of knowing things otherwise, at their foundations, in their "transcendental". And while, perhaps, at the level of philosophical creativity, there is no gain, there is, in exchange, additional philosophical *consciousness*. Thus, in the final instance, it might be that, insofar as philosophy is precisely the expression of additional consciousness, modern man is nevertheless more philosophical than ancient man.

What does the Greek philosophy of Being shows, when examined from the restricted but now more profound perspective of the spirit? It shows that reason and its dialectical exercise are fundamentally "oriented". It shows that nowhere is there any neutrality in them. In Greek thought, as we mentioned in the Preface, a preference is, in every dialectical act, apparent; in every opposition of terms, one is "better" than the other, whatever the nature of the opposition might be, whether physical, geometrical, ethical, metaphysical or even logical. For example, warm is the opposite of cold, but is better than it. Dry is better than wet. The full is better than the empty. Repose is better than motion. The curve is better than the point. The measurable is better than the immeasurable. The just is better than the unjust (naturally). And being is better than non-being, again naturally. But for there to be a preference at the *logical* level is no longer natural for a modern – who sees logic only as a formal exercise – but a veritable scandal. Nevertheless, here again, for the Greeks, the identical is better than the contradictory! It is sufficient to look at this table, compiled only as an outline, in order for us to see from the outset upon what preference depends, namely *where* it appears as evident: at the "moral" level", that is, at the level where "better than" is at home, and at the metaphysical level, that is, in the opposition between being and non-being.

Indeed, if, for the Greeks, there was a better and a worse in *every* opposition, respectively in every dialectical exercise, this means that every dialectic is, in reality, one of Good and Evil, insofar as it is in these two terms that it is possible to substitute, or to "formalise", any other oppositions. We have even seen that it is possible to formalise formal terms themselves, the logical terms of identity and contradiction, as these are still reducible to the good/evil opposition. The latter

opposition is therefore fundamental in Greek thinking and dialectics. It sustains the rest and emerges more or less clearly to light in any dialectical process (as can be seen, for example, in the case of the dialogue *Lysis*, where the opposition is, from the outset, between friend and enemy; it is formalised, becoming an opposition between like and unlike; then it is brought to its formal extreme: identical and contradictory, ending up at the good/evil opposition).

But not for a moment will the opposition between good and evil have a "moral" sense. It is elementary, but useful to recall at every opportunity, that in the opposition between good and evil such an opposition is not at stake – except, of course, through restriction of good and evil at the moral level. The Greek Good – however many complications it might bring about, above all in its Platonic form – in any case signifies fulfilment; therefore additional Being, implication in Being. The opposition between good and evil is, undoubtedly, metaphysical, here. Therefore, it is not possible to say: the fact that Greek thinking found, in such an opposition of terms, one better than the other constitutes a judgement of moral evaluation (as if the philosopher were situated within the perspective of the Demiurge and wished to see what does or does not fit with his ultimate "ends"). Shall we then say that, since it is not a judgement of moral evaluation, it is nevertheless one of evaluation, a so-called *judgement of value?* Shall we therefore recognise that Greek dialectics was normally constituted, through an opposition of terms, but that it brought about *besides* a judgement of value, a criterion of evaluation? Except that dialectics *would not function* in the Greek consciousness if the terms were not from the outset laden with "value". Therefore, it is not possible to say: there is a dialectics of neutral terms and another of oriented terms. Greek dialectics is possible precisely because the terms are oriented (precisely because *Penia*, for example, strives towards *Poros*; out of Poverty and Wealth, left to their indifference, nothing would emerge, for the Greek). Consequently, it is false to say that the preference for one of the two opposites appears as a judgement of value *upon* dialectical terms: *it causes* dialectics, this is all that can be said.

But, in the second place, is a "judgement of value" genuinely at stake, or only what we moderns name as such? A judgement of value opposes the judgement of existence or ascertainment. Here, however, the fact that one term is better means that it is more engaged in Being. Consequently, the judgement of value, here, *would precisely be one of*

existence. Specifically, it would be a judgement of ascertainment of an increment or deficit of existence. It is therefore not possible to speak of an evaluation, since evaluation resides precisely in ascertainment. The Greek dialectic – that of good and evil, ending in one of being and non-being – is not a formal game, because nor is reason a formal faculty. Dialectics is rescued from indifference and oriented, because reason too, of which it is the exercise, emerges from the outset from indifference and neutrality.

Value is, usually, a sign placed *above things*. Here, things are nothing except their sign. In that they are, they are signs: the sign *that* they are and *how much* they are. The real is in orientation and reason does not see except in orientation: it orients itself in what is oriented. The same as it can be said of a traffic sign that its manner of being is to indicate and nothing more, so it is with Being: it is indicative, signifying. And reason is the instrument of Being, therefore of a sense (in the double sense of sense: that of meaning and direction), specifically of the sole sense,[15] in opposition to nonsense.

That Greek reason is from the outset "on the side" of Being, that they understand nothing except Being can be seen not only from the fact that, but above all the way in which, they everywhere posit the problem of evil and, as an extension of it, of non-being. On the occasion of the dialectical circle of the Eros, we recalled that evil for the ancients was not understood as being absolute: it could not be thought of thus, for then the world risked not *being* (disintegration, total chaos) and reason would not function. While the Good was conceived as a limit like the absolute – it was precisely this Good in its absoluteness that seemed to set everything in motion – evil remained a "more or less". It was precisely because it ended up being a dialectic of good and evil that the ancient dialectic betrayed its orientation from the start. For, good and evil are signs, orientations, and the Greek consciousness wanted thereby to show that everything is in orientation. And by saying "good and evil", it was not merely doing a kind of algebra, with a + and − , in which a preference for the order of the positive is asserted, as well as a way of noting, of taking note of the real: here it is plus, here it is minus. If good and evil were held in balance, as the order of the positive and the negative are held in the formal world of algebra, going as far as the infinite + and infinite −, then they might be signs of the real, but not the *real as sign*. However, they are not held in balance, for

15   In Romanian, "sens unic", which can also mean "one-way (street)" –[t.n.]

the Greeks. The world weighs more to the side of good; it cannot be irremediably bad. It may be as evil as might be, and it is in fact unutterably evil (what else would the tragic consciousness depend on?), but it is not irrevocably evil. Somewhere, there is a right to appeal to the good. Once thought of, the good can be thought to the limit, and the balance collapses. The Good becomes "that towards all existences aspire" (Plotinus, I, viii, 2). But the supreme distinction between good and evil is that the former can be conceived of in isolation – detached, separate, "absolute" – whereas the latter cannot (*ou mónon esti*). It is necessarily caught up in the bonds of good, like a slave, as Plotinus said, in chains of gold.

Therefore, even evil is still intertwined with the Good and allows orientation towards it. Matter, for the Greeks, is precisely the potential source of evil; but there is no indifferent matter, both good and bad; in this vision, there are not *three* terms, but two. When it is not determined, matter is "evil". It is, in fact, non-determination, absence of form, absence of quality. How can it be evil, if it is devoid of qualities? But it is evil precisely inasmuch as it devoid of qualities, says Plotinus (*Enneads*, I, viii, 10). It is evil because it is "indifferent".

All these things bring us back, in the last instance, to the problem of Being and non-being, to the manner of positing the problem of non-being in Greek thinking. The ancients cannot conceive of non-being, but only non-existence. Greek reason can not and will not conceive of the void, the absence of anything at all, the nothingness that is all too often invoked nowadays. Non-being is, for the Greeks, the absence of any manner of being (non-existence), not the absence of the fact of being. This is why Greek reason refused to conceive of "becoming", insofar as the latter was birth and disintegration into nothing. Evil cannot be absolute, nor can non-being be absolute non-being. It is not between evil and good, respectively between Being and non-being, that reason has to arbitrate, but rather it sees what is as it is: as weighing more towards the good and as permanently preferring Being.

In *this* sense, therefore, ancient dialectics is one of good and evil. The fact that in any opposition it sees one term as "better" than another is not a means of preference, except because everything is conceived as being in preference. Reason does not prefer warm to hot except because everything prefers the warm, including the cold. To say evil *and* good, together with Greek thought, means to weaken evil and tip

the balance towards the good. When you "equate" good and evil, evil is done with: it can no longer hold the good in balance.

--- All these things are known, in the end, and have long ago been said, in exegesis of ancient thinking. Why, however, are their natural consequences not taken further? Yet, these consequences concern *reason* rather than Being.

The first consequence is historical: the Greeks have the innate disposition to dialectics, they possess dialecticity. Precisely through the fact that their reason was, from the outset, emergent from the condition of *neutrality*, precisely through its partiality, Greek thinking possessed, as if pre-formed within its core, dialectics. In fact, it was not until Plato that they reached a recognised and affirmed dialectic; and even then, their dialectics did not become a genuine "logic", that is, an organised development of pure concepts. But this can easily be explained by the fact that they had no classified dialectical "terms", concepts; they had not discovered pure logic. (How different philosophy might have been if – as historically absurd as the thought may be – Plato had come *after* Aristotle!) We moderns, on the other hand, have the dialectical terms wholly at the ready, but we do not always have a dialectics. We possessed one, in a way, with Hegel, but then too, perhaps, it appeared to some as more of an imposition upon the real, almost as forced as it was unnatural. For the Greeks, the dialectical sense of the ordinary real was natural. Everything, not only abstract concepts, was susceptible to organise itself, and lead somewhere, towards Being.

But this leads us to a second consequence, which is not only of a historical order: the dialectical makes no sense and is not genuinely possible without orientation. The dialectical movement has to be a movement *towards* something. In contemporary philosophy, much has been made of the "intentional" character of consciousness. Taken up by Husserl and phenomenology after Brentano (although it might just as easily have been found in Hegel), this character expresses the fact that any consciousness is the consciousness *of* something, *about* something. Why can it not similarly be said that any dialectical motion is motion "somewhither"? There is no movement without direction and *there can be no dialectics without orientation*. The absurdity of one tendency in modern thinking – and of modern historicism in general – is that it sometimes sees everywhere a flux without the knowledge of or even forbidding the knowledge of whither things are progressing.

Modern consciousness thereby engages in a journey without a path, in the blind and absolute progression of the relative.

Reason would not take that which cognises any further unless it possessed the meaning and the direction of this taking further. It would remain as a mere intellect before the real, to perceive it or make it possible, as Kant would wish, or in any case reduce it to a conceptual unity. It would view the thing to the point of making the concept in it "transparent", and no more. Reason, however, comes to take up from the intellect that which was from the outset its own and to restore the concept to the organised and directed aggregate of which it is part. It can only be neutral at the sacrifice of its exercise. Whenever it has been neutral, reason has perished as reason, remaining mere intellect.

How inexplicable it will therefore seem to us – if the degradation of reason to mere intellect were not sufficient explanation – that the moderns have sometimes considered dialectics as an *impartial* confrontation of contradictory terms. In the consciousness of almost any thinker that operates with it, the ordinary, linear dialectic is fated to turn the synthesis into an "indifferent" position between thesis and antithesis. It is, nonetheless, not hard to see that they do not genuinely attain a dialectical moment except precisely insofar as they abandon such an attitude of neutrality. Even those who invoke the Hegelian dialectic, conceived in its neutrality, even they move, in reality, according to another dialectical type. And perhaps precisely this is the explanation of the cultural decline, so frequently met, from philosophy to non-philosophy: the degradation of reason into intellect and the invocation of rational "indifference". In any case, so it has been for the last century, and that is why it appears to us today as non-philosophical par excellence. It remains to be seen what forms are taken by reason in this case, and to what manifestations it leads.

THE ETHOS OF NEUTRALITY

Indeed, what dominates in the Nineteenth Century (and sometimes even today) is a certain ethos of neutrality. Reason appears more as a faculty of deliberation. Between something and something else, it intervenes in order to decide. It weighs up, it estimates and provides things with logical value. It *knows* nothing in advance and demands nothing; it is nothing. It puts things into order (idealism), or discovers order in them (realism), but in itself, it *is* not an order, still less so

order itself. Thus is the scientific reason. And what is curious is that philosophical reason has sometimes appeared the same – inasmuch as it can still be named reason.

Yet, is philosophy anything other than "a coincidence of opposites"? Philosophy has always set out from or led to such a coincidence and it seems clear to us that, with any philosophy, an abyss of contrariety opens up, which is then to be transcended. Why else would there be a transition from the scientific to the philosophical model, unless the march of progress, the indifferent continuity of science could not, at a given moment, explain the discontinuity that appears, be it in the real, be it in the spirit?

But in the final instance, in order to formalise matters, any philosophical contrariety can be reduced to that between particular and universal. In other words, any philosophy says, in its way, the following: the particular *is* the universal (reality is water, is fire, is thought, is Idea, is form, is Will etc.). – Let us now presuppose that – and our presupposition was and often still is translated into reality, claiming the name of "philosophy" – a thought does not want to emerge from this duality; that it is neutral between particular and universal, saying: "It is true that the particular is, essentially, the universal, that the particular is what it is and the universal is what it is; they stand face to face, in irreducible duality". And *this is what almost all modern thinking has said*. Hence all the dualities in which Nineteenth Century thought was caught up: finite/infinite, body/soul, relative/absolute, science/philosophy etc.

As in the duality of particular/universal, upon which all ultimately depend, in each of them what is at stake is a weaker compared with a stronger term; for, however much we might wish to "equate" the terms, in order to make them contradictory and irreducible to one another, we cannot, in reality, place them in balance except by viewing them from a certain angle (at a given moment in their progression). It is not possible to equate them except precisely through reason's disposition to neutrality, to impartiality. But now it clearly appears that neutrality is, at least here, a *renunciation*. This renunciation, it is true, may go very deep, as far, for example, as Schelling's "indifference" of the Absolute. But, leaving this case to one side, a case which nevertheless requires further examination, since it encloses multiple meanings, the breath of renunciation brought by the ethos of neutrality authorises a veritable renunciation of philosophy. With the above dualities, reason ceases

to be philosophical, since in order truly to be it ought to emerge from dualities, specifically, always to seek how it is possible for the particular nevertheless to be universal.

And we now know what is the valid path for philosophy: it is the recognition that the particular leads to the universal, that the anti-theme invokes the theme, which it will contradict, but which will not contradict itself. It is the recognition of the fact that, essentially, inside philosophical reason there is only unilateral contradiction.

Unilateral contradiction becomes bilateral and leads to bipolarity only through abstraction (from the fact that one of the terms is weaker than the other). The logical model is thereby arrived at, and this, weighing and balancing as it is, will naturally be invoked by a neutral reason, one based on indifference and equilibrium of opposing terms. The reason of dualisms is, undoubtedly, perfectly "logical". But precisely inasmuch as it is nothing but logic (in the restricted sense of the word), it ceases to be philosophical, it ceases to obtain the coincidence of the particular with the universal. In this sense, we might say, this time without hesitation, that philosophy is only possible as an emergence from logic, that is, from bipolarity, and as an entry into the dialectical, that is, into unilateral contradiction. *Philosophy makes no sense through logic; it makes sense only from the dialectical onwards.*

Thus it happens that modern reason has too often been able to lose philosophy. With logical neutrality, philosophy can no longer understand itself, and neutral reason becomes mere intellect, incapable of emerging from duality and capable only of doubling the real world with a world of concepts, laws, local systems (the sciences), which essentially appear to the consciousness as just as chaotic, in their dissident plurality, as the real world. At most, ever more general principles are arrived at, at a law or an idea in which the real world is no longer recognisable and which is in no case recognisable in the real world. This general law and this ghostly idea will not be able to form a genuine philosophical principle, since it is in the essence of any genuine principle to be able to reflect itself, and to possess the richness of the world in its diversity. Here, the world has become rarefied; it is the "night" of which Hegel spoke, the world in which everything is ash, because everything has been viewed with indifference.

An examination of modern thinking can therefore be instructive, to the extent that it shows where the ethos of neutrality leads. In the modern world, it is Goethe who is among those primarily responsible

for it.[16] *Weltanschauung*, that most artistic and winning expression of non-philosophy, ought to be put on trial. If Goethe is right, then philosophy no longer has the right to life. And the justice glorified by Goethe is *that everything should be justified*, all that is alive – nature, the subhuman world, humans, ideas – all should have equal justification and grow, ascend, aspire to fulfilment, within a blind "demonism", at the heart of which reason ought to be only one of the heroes overwhelmed by "Bacchic frenzy", or then it should be the mind's eye which sees all and indulges all, without partiality.

It is possible to bring this trial against Goethe, inasmuch as his spiritual type is revealed with all the candour of the artist. It would be hard to attempt the same thing in the more complex case of a philosopher such as Nietzsche. In spite of that, Nietzsche might appear to be the other "most guilty one" for the naturalisation of the ethos of neutrality in the modern consciousness. Nietzsche understood and forgave the non-philosopher Goethe. He understood him in this urge to capture the world – this time not that of simple nature, but of the spirit – in its "innocence". He understood him, or came to an understanding with him, in the same urge for something beyond good and evil, for a blind, ineluctable and, for him, pathetic becoming. Nietzsche is the Great Neutral, in a sense the Great Health of our world. This "health" of reason is that which seems to us decisive in Goethe as well as Nietzsche, and in their being and art health took on two extreme forms: that of harmony, in Goethe, that of the paroxysm of normality, in Nietzsche. One embodies the healthy type of Healthiness, the other the pathological type. Both of them, however, in their own way, are monsters of healthiness, and the balanced and passionate equilibrium of the one, and the almost mystical equilibrium of the other, are essentially one and the same neutrality.[17]

Between them stands Hegel. With him, it is not possible to end. In one sense, from the perspective in which we have situated ourselves, it is possible only to *commence* with him, and barely after his itinerary

16   It seems to us that the attempt by contemporary anthropology to integrate existentialism also depends upon the tendency to "neutrality", considering, as it does, "depressive" alongside "exultant" dispositions. Man would be *both* the one *and* the other: both sadness and joy.

17   "An invalid with the instincts of a healthy man", as Nietzsche has described him psychologically. But spiritually, he is precisely the opposite: healthiness taken to its absolute exasperation.

will have been reconstructed will it be possible to decide whether there is something *beyond* him or not. In the end, we have been thinking in the margins of Hegel. It is from him that we have been able to take the meaning of reason beyond intellect and it was through him that we have a number of times been able to illustrate the foundation of a dialectical exercise other than his. But nevertheless, from now on, from the very moment when the task of philosophy seems to us to be to rethink Hegelianism (in particular the *Science of Logic*, which Hegel himself said needed to be rewritten), *something* can and must be said about it, if only as a indication of the angle from which it will be necessary to attempt to confront it.

It has to be said, namely, that in Hegelianism too (but only in the *Science of Logic*, not in the rest), there is an echo of the ethos of neutrality. What seemed "monstrous" to some in Hegel's *Logic* cannot be the construction itself; it is its *indifference*. That cold world of neutral forms, a world that is animated in its way but nevertheless dead, like the world of skulls and bones in the fantastic vision of the prophet Ezekiel, cannot genuinely convince that it succeeds in capturing life. It is not its formalism that is destined to estrange it from things, but the neutrality of its formalism. In its linear dialectic, the terms, which refer one to another, but at the same time do not always refer to the whole upon which they depend, which, therefore, from the outset have no evident *orientation* towards the whole, seem just so many intellectual concepts, concepts pure and simple, rather than momenta of the reason that is in progression. But in its formal "indifference", the Hegelian dialectic seems to constitute a logical exercise, a vast, philosophical *Kunst der Fuge*, by means of which you can plunge into and rise up from the real (you can perform either ascending or descending dialectics), but which is held in the state of simple exercise precisely by freedom of movement. Philosophy has known another such opus, itself a veritable *Kunst der Fuge*. It is Plato's *Parmenides*, the masterpiece of ancient dialectics, as Hegel himself named this dialogue (*Phänomenologie*, p. 57). But while the *Parmenides* is nothing but a negative exercise, a sceptical moment, which gives *die negative Seite des Absoluten*, as Hegel says in another place (*Vom Verhältnis des Skeptizismus zur Phil.*, edited by Glöcker, vol. III, p. 230); while Plato's exercise, also neutral, is nonconclusive and non-affirmative, compared with Hegel's affirmative and constructive *Logic*, nevertheless how dramatic and unreconciled is the neutrality on display here, seemingly imposed by ancient philosophy,

compared to the reconciled, harmonious, all-encompassing neutrality of Hegel's construction.

While the latter's reason concerns and favours, with maternal impartiality, the progression of all dialectical moments towards life, the reason brought into play by Plato imposes, as if *against* its natural inclination, the acceptance with equal rights of a Manifold alongside the Parmenidean One. And if the dialectical exercise thereby constituted ends up not only in the *aporiai* of the multiple but also in the One, there is a nevertheless permanent and evident supremacy of the One, in all that happens there, through which things themselves can hold, if they truly hold. It is precisely because Plato does *not* possess the ethos of neutrality that its neutrally imposed exercise seems so striking. And this is precisely why, perhaps, it deliberately remains an exercise, with a deliberately sceptical result – as if Plato had understood how to show that an indifferent thinking between One and Manifold can no longer conceive the world. For Hegel, however, the ethos of neutrality does justice to the entire conceptual world, even – a supreme concession, a supreme act of logical neutrality – to the concept of non-being.

Perhaps it is to this that, in the last instance, the ethos of neutrality is philosophically bound: to the acceptance of non-being. Just as the ethos of an oriented reason would, ultimately, be that of Being, the ethos of indifferent reason might be an ethos of non-Being. Orientation would mean orientation towards Being; lack of orientation, the pendulation between Being and non-Being, the acceptance that that which "is" is interwoven with that which is not. Of course, "around any being there is an immensity of non-being", as Plato said; that is, any thing is something and is *not* a multitude of other things. But here it is a matter of non-existence, not non-being, and Plato's *Sophist* has shown that *only in this sense* can non-being be accepted, contra "father" Parmenides. On the other hand, the modern world wishes to conceive of non-being in itself; more so, to open towards the world – towards that which is! – through consideration with an impartial eye of that which is and also that which is not *at all*. Thus begins Hegel's *Logic*.[18]

We shall not pretend that Hegel's first triadic dialectic, being/non-being/becoming, commands his entire dialectic; it has rightly been demonstrated that it is first only in the order of exposition. But its

---

18   We are forced, for the sake of clarity, to say "non-being" rather than "nothing" for the first triad of the *Logic*, with the risk of provisionally doing an injustice to Hegelian thinking.

spirit of neutrality is what seems to us significant; it is this disposition of impartiality and "indifference" that might command the entire Hegelian dialectic here, and to that extent we might, in effect, assert that the ethos of non-being hovers everywhere in the *Logic*.

All the above, having been put thus, outside of things, will probably not be convincing; and moreover, nor would it wish to be convincing if the result were to discredit the only *traditional* philosophy that remains standing today, alongside the Platonic: the philosophy of Hegel. However, the above has been said in order to elucidate the framework of ideas in the debate that we propose, the rules of the game in which it seems that we must engage philosophical thinking. And the principle rules are: 1) Philosophical thinking must be dialectical and not logical/formal; 2) as such, it must be oriented, not neutral; 3) it must not cultivate the illusion that it can conceive of non-being, since then it degrades becoming, Being and the dialectic.

All these three moments together hold together, ultimately, and are implied by the ethos of neutrality, the median moment, which, on the one hand, leads to pure logic, and on the other, to the ethos of non-being, that of death. If we were making a philosophy of culture, we could thereby show how it comes to pass that, in our culture today, there coexist a logic of perfect neutrality, such as the logistic, and a sentiment of despair and death, specifically the philosophy of Shestov or others. And we would therefore show that they do not merely co-exist, that is, they are not merely juxtaposed historically, but also that they essentially coincide, through the same ethos of non-being (respectively of neutrality) which animates them, with the logicism of some being the expression of indifference brought by the concept of non-being, the tragism of the others being the expression of the echo of that indifference within a consciousness frightened of knowing itself voided of any preference.

The temptation of the contemporary world has been to conceive of non-being; not to believe the preservers of the philosophical mystery, headed by Parmenides, in that non-being must not be conceived. Formally at least, Hegel situated himself upon this line (but only in the *Logic*) and favoured, in his way, the urge to a neutrality which, *in fact*, he consistently abolished. This apparent success, of thinking non-being in spite of the ancient interdiction, this performance which modern thought has striven to realise, was to be paid for dearly. Not only did human existence reach the absurdity of man being neutral

between Being and non-being, that is, between self, between his only possible self and something else; but there was also thereby the risk of remaining wholly in logic, because the only sense of philosophy was lost, which is that of being dialectical.

This (third) consequence of the acceptance of non-being will now appear to us decisive. The mistake of modern (non-Marxist) dialectics is that of being neutral, therefore, of not genuinely leading to a dialectics. This might explain why the *Logic* was viewed as a mere "logic", thus as a spider's web cast over the world, and why it was unable to convince, to bear fruit, remaining a unique specimen – the most related to Plato's *Parmenides* – in the museum of human thinking. Dialectics was to be found only in the rest of his work, or in its *spirit*.

For, at the very moment when we claim to conceive a dialectics other than Hegel's, it is clear that we are doing so through it and with it. Contrary to appearances, Hegel himself thinks *thematically*, as we have intended to do above, and not thetically. His constant obsession with setting out from the whole (in its *An-sich*, and its generality), in order truly to rediscover it as a whole (in its *An-und-für-sich*) at the same time as its concrete progression, is compatible with our dialectical vision, insofar as it was very well able to suggest it. We are thereby forced to be Hegelians against Hegel and Hegelianism. And the task that now opens would be systematically to conceive a new dialectics; historically, however, it would be reduced to rethinking the old by means of its *spirit* and not its letter; therefore, to see how Hegel's *Logic* might be understood through another dialectical movement than that which he proclaims.

In what would ultimately reside the distinction between one dialectical movement and another? The fact that one is linear and the other unfolds in a circle represents only an external description of matters. Nor can it, in itself, be decisive that, in the one, synthesis is only synthesis, that is, the term of repose, the end point, while in the other it is genuinely the thesis, that is, the referring further. In the end, it is only the fact that in the dialectics of circles the thesis is oriented, and namely towards a theme, that brings about an onset of specificity, explaining at the same time the circle and the constitutive instability of the synthesis. But by the fact of orientation, the dialectical movement is clarified in its entirety as movement, although not in the mechanism of its terms. It is only with *these* that the distinction between one dialectics and another will be complete. And the distinction from Hegel,

in the latter respect, will be: a term contradicts itself only through affirmation, not through negation.

Indeed, we have very well seen that the term which, in fact, is set out from (the anti-theme, while the theme was merely the *de jure* beginning, the anti-theme's recognition that it is nothing without the theme) led to another term, which was to contradict it, since it was not apt to it.[19] The anti-theme did not contradict *itself*, although it contradicted. Still less was the theme to enclose a contradiction in it, towards which everything grew. From this perspective, the world appears as a growth, a *succession of yeses*. It obtains more than it hoped, it obtains something else. The world is not ready given from the beginning, but rather extracts from itself that which was not, that which did not seem capable of being extracted. Affirming itself, but not negating itself, a term opens towards another, which it will contradict. The contradiction, however, is in reality made through affirmation, not through negation; in increasing, not decreasing. The dialectics of circles expresses, in this sense, the act of life in its richness, its increase. And what should a dialectics serve if not the world of increase?

In the other dialectics, however, a term contradicts itself, and therefore it decreases. However much Hegel might say that the terms are "enriched" by negation, that is, an extra determination, it is, in his dialectics, nonetheless a decrease, inasmuch as there is a steadfast transition from substance to *subject*. But, independently of Hegel, the ethos of neutrality brings about the principle of the decrease in terms: under the appearance that it defines them, it causes them to be *only that*, to remain somewhere in the middle, between themselves and their contraries. Of this type of "dialectic", a striking – and essentially sterile – example was given long before it came into being, in the chapter on the "virtues" in Aristotle's *Ethics*, where each virtue is "intermediary" between something and its contrary (for example, courage, between cowardice and insane boldness etc.). And the sterility of this Aristotelian vision in the ethical field, its banality of not-too-much-not-too-little, ought also to be considered as regards the dialectical field, if by that we are offered once again the intermediate, in the form of the "synthesis".

---

19   In principle: the new theme (e.g. the irrational number) seems to contradict ("non-rational") the old theme; but in fact, only the latter, having become anti-theme, contradicts the new theme (only the rational number contradicts the real, irrational).

The world has to be understood in its affirmative, in what is, comes into being and grows in it. Negation can only be *one* moment in this growth, and precisely not the moment of growth. It is the fixation of dialectics in logic. And naturally, the negation of negation will be able to be logic's return to the dialectical, but what is essential is to conceive of the dialectical in principle – as the dialectical circle of logic demands – *prior* to logic, or in logic, as enveloping it. Therefore, what is essential is that we conceive of *yes* as more comprehensive than *no* and as a term generative of the latter. In the final instance, we shall be able to say: the distinction between our dialectical movement and the other is that "no" represents a mere facet of "yes". The world does not hang in the balance between *da* (yes) and *ba* (no), it does not say *da* (yes) and at the same time *ba* (no) (see the Romanian meaning of *ba da*[20])[21]. Just as in ancient mythology, everything was borne by Eros, while Anteros was merely the logical moment, the necessity in principle that Eros, who caused everything to tend towards its counterpart, should himself be thought of as having a counterpart, so too now, with the dialectical *yes* and the logical *no*. But the dialectical *yes* includes the logical *no* and remakes itself as a philosophical thesis, destined to be a dialectical *yes*, at the extreme, without any doubling back towards no; the final wave, a circle of Being.

Neutral thought, however, means precisely this doubling back upon the road, the logical pendulation between *da* (yes) and *ba* (no). Its negative prototype would be the Kantian antinomies. Its positive prototype was evinced by the Aristotelian virtues, the same as with linear dialectics. But it is not sufficient to make a contradiction fruitful, as modern dialectics has done, contrary to Kant. It is not sufficient to suppress (*aufheben*) it in its content; you must also suppress it in its formal character of bilateral contradiction. Dialectics is, for us, the science of contradiction not as contradiction but as merely *gainsaying*[22]. Just as non-being could only be abolition, contradiction can now only be gainsaying. Reason may and must say no; but as it is not neutral, it

20   In Hasdeu's *Magnum Etymologicum* appear all the riches of "ba".

21   In Romanian, the usual word for short negation is "nu" (no). However, an old form of it is "ba", still used today only in constructions like: "ba nu" (on the contrary, no!) or "ba da" (on the contrary, yes!), to mark a strong negation / affirmation. [e.n.]

22   Noica's play of words here is between *contradictie* (contradiction) and *contrazicere* (gainsaying). [e.n.]

only says a *yes* which becomes for a moment: *no*. And speculative reason, that of philosophy – as we shall claim together with Hegel, even if apparently contrary to him – is that of the affirmation of a theme, not of the maintenance of a contradiction. Because it is affirmation, thinking may at a given moment be negation and self-contradiction. Because it is oriented, it may at a given moment be neutral. To remain at the moment of neutrality of reason means not to understand neutrality itself.

THE ETHOS OF ORIENTATION

In opposition to this ethos of neutrality, which we have described above in its aspects in modern thought, an ethos of orientation must therefore be established. It is because of neutrality that it has been possible to arrive at such an impoverished concept of reason as that of today. Historically, for example, we shall be able to maintain that it was only the "indifference", whether apparent or no, of Hegelian reason in the *Logic* that was able to allow the emergence of the likes of Kierkegaard alongside and against Hegel. Or else, if things presented in this way seem unjust both to the one thinker and to the other, let us transpose them into the order of present times. We shall thereby be able to say: only because modern thought has such an impoverished concept of human reason is it possible for current anthropology to see in existentialism a contribution to the understanding of man as a more than "rational" being.

Indeed, in anthropology, too much is made of the fact that the definition of man as "rational animal" is insufficient and that human specificity needs to be expanded to beyond reason. In this sense, existentialism is supposed to have come to reveal essential new aspects (for example, being-in-the-world, the fall into *das Man*, the "dispositions", freedom, and the temporality of human reality), which would all be inscribed *alongside* rationality. But, besides the fact that existentialism is something other than an anthropology, namely that it is a genuine philosophical rather than descriptive endeavour, as we have shown, it is to be asked whether Heidegger would accept such an adaptation and signification of his philosophy. In any case, from our perspective, here, the endeavour of anthropology does not hold, and the supposed emergence from rationality is nothing more than a proof of the impoverishment of the concept of reason with which anthropology operates,

and nothing more. For, if one understands reason as being oriented, then it is to be found in an abundance capable of allowing human being to define *itself*, that is, to restore meaning to the definition of man as a rational being.

And, indeed, taken as consciousness of the becoming within Being, that is, orientation towards Being, as we have here understood it, reason expresses human reality throughout its history, including its "existentialist" history.

What, for example, is anxiety, from this perspective? It is still reason. It is becoming's anxiety at not being within Being; the consciousness of becoming within Being (that is, reason) that it might be becoming within becoming, if it did not truly follow its orientation towards Being. Or else, what is the fall into the impersonal model, into *das Man*? It is, in reality, man's fall into becoming within becoming; the human way of being mere nature, man's automatism, the ready-made, instead of the aspiration towards Being. Or else, what is freedom? It cannot be freedom of choice, in the sense of indifference of choice, such as existentialism has seemed to produce when, as we see it, it has been misunderstood. Freedom, which only reason can confer upon human reality, is the freedom to be that is available to that which must be, if, of course – and here existentialism has been capable of providing an analysis of the fall of free man – it does not abdicate from this opportunity. As for temporality, where else might it truly be at home if not in the consciousness of the *becoming* within Being? Only a rational being can live beneath the sign of temporality, of anxiety and of freedom.

It is therefore absurd to say that man is something other than a rational being. Being rational, he is all that is, even that which is, apparently, beyond reason. Man is rational even in his absurdity, even in excess. It is because he is rational that he is also absurd (he may commit suicide, for example). The works of nature are not absurd; they do not know any form of our human absurdity. Contrary to modern "descriptivism", contrary to its anthropology, which is philosophy only in name; contrary to the tendency characteristic of today's world, self-sufficient in its modesty, of claiming that it does not know a multitude of things, and above all that man is an "unknown being" for it; contrary to all this, philosophy must provide a full understanding of that which was known or suspected long ago, since it has already been articulated with precision long ago. Just as Heidegger finds, in the ancient legend regarding Cura, a pre-ontological confirmation of his existentialism,

so must today's philosophy, inasmuch as, in reality, its task is to re-think the concept of reason: to discover in the definition of man as rational animal confirmation of the full meaning of reason. Only an oriented reason can restore to man his integrity and dignity. Just as it is only through an understanding of the *orientation* of reason that, as it seems to us, philosophy is capable of discovering the unity between spirit and Being, restoring the philosophy of spirit to a philosophy of Being and thereby regaining, as well as its self-unity, its central position at the heart of culture.

This is why the final schema that we discovered for the dialectical movement, the schema that was reducible to pure vectoriality is also
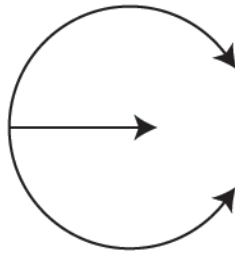
the most suitable not only for the dialectical circle but also, thereby, for reason itself. As regards the Kantian table of the categories, the solution we have provided for their deduction and that of the corresponding judgements had merely a provisional form with the circle, inside which unfolded all the momenta, discovering themselves at the heart of the same reason from whence they had set out. Now that we have examined its dialectical movement and its obligatory sense of orientation, the "circle" of reason appears to us as far too static a representation. Schematising things once more, we shall represent our solution, for Kantian deduction, as follows:

$$\text{Reason} \longrightarrow \quad \underset{\text{of categories}}{\overset{\text{Table}}{\longrightarrow}} \quad \underset{\text{of judgements}}{\overset{\text{Table}}{\longrightarrow}} \quad \text{Reason}$$
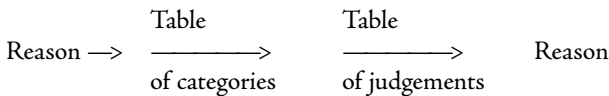
This indicates that everything is oriented towards reason, including reason itself.

This vectorial schema now unifies the initial moment of the philosophy of the spirit, which we have found concretised in the table of the categories, with its final moment, which is the Hegelian dialectic.

Furthermore, together with the Kantian and the Hegelian aspect of the philosophy of spirit, the schema expresses the meaning of the reason which, beyond its formalism (the Kantian moment) and also its mechanism (the dialectical moment), is the life specific to human being, with categories but also with "existentials" (as Heidegger wanted), with a dialectical movement but also with an "existential failure". If philosophical consciousness has always been historically contiguous with tragic consciousness, it is because philosophy and the tragic are the two faces of rational lucidity.

And everything depends, from what has become evident to us, upon the essentially oriented character of reason. It seems to us that this is why the first thing to be done, in order to re-open the way to philosophy today, to combat the ethos of neutrality, which dominates the modern philosophical sensibility and leads to so many forms of understanding adjacent to non-philosophy. It would be necessary, therefore, to set up an ethos of orientation.

But *must* it be set up? Is it not permanently expressed, beyond the sterility of neutrality, in all that is fecund – albeit also often dangerous– in the work of reason? For, whenever reason is at stake (and in the case of human being, it is always at stake, albeit all too often without self-consciousness, thus without philosophical consciousness), the orientation of reason can be made evident. The Greeks said that any form of life is a form of intentionality, which they named Eros; everything aspires towards something else, whether determinate or no, each being has its *daimōn*. And in Goethe's terms – but not with the same philosophical impassivity as him – it might be said: everywhere in the world there is one or another form of demonism. Now, however, we reckon that, at the terminus of the comparison of philosophical reason with the reason of the philosophy of spirit, this almost universal demonism still depends upon reason, namely upon reason's nature of being oriented. Reason must be understood in a living way, as a form of reference towards, not as perception and filtering of, a thing. Given this, reason is partisan. It is sectarian, exclusive. But it is sectarian and fanatical for Being. It is partisan (from part, siding with) for the whole, for itself.

From hence to the point of rational failure, in our infra-human wretchedness. For, the wretchedness of man all too often depends precisely upon the fact that he is a rational being and that, not attaining full reason, he nevertheless preserves the sense of orientation and

therefore the fanaticism of reason. Wherever there is semi-reason at stake, it is its entire fanaticism. Our individual forms of madness – and every life appears to others as a form of insanity – also depend, in reality, upon reason. Why do we so often understand others as absurd, or teratological beings, and why do we not see how much reason there is in them? We might then grasp that the principal motor, not only the General but also the human Individual, proves to be of the order of reason, of that reason that is always fanatical for itself, even when it is not truly itself.

Philosophy, therefore, will not reveal that reason is oriented, if indeed this is how human being brings it into play, or if this is how it is always brought into play by reason, and nor will the ethos of orientation be instituted, but merely understood to the very end. Perhaps, in spite of neutrality, human being dwells permanently beneath this ethos, even when the ethos of neutrality is manifest. For, neutrality too is ultimately a form of fanaticism, that of the lack of fanaticism, or at least an orientation, that of permanently refusing any orientation. Philosophy's mission is therefore not to show that reason is oriented; but rather, separating its orientation from fact, to show *how* it ought to be oriented. Philosophy is destined, in that it is the consciousness of oriented reason, to show towards *what* reason is in fact oriented. It alone carries the movement of reason to the very end, causing it not to remain a mere rational impulse and mere fanaticism of consequence, but rather illuminating its entire progression towards the fulfilment of its entire purpose. In this sense, not only kings should be philosophers, as has been said, but also every human being, as a bearer of reason, is incapable of fulfilment except through "philosophising".

In the latter respect, our times seem to bring favourable signs. The return of Greek thinking in the ontological problematic; the adjacent, not only spectacular, interest for Greek philosophy; on the other hand the currency, through and even beyond Marxism, of Hegelianism: in a word, the striving to combine the problematic of reason with that of Being. These are all as many stages towards a return to order. And even when these tendencies are absent, whether wholly or in part, there remains, in the consciousness of our times, a symptom which, it seems to us, is in itself capable of manifesting the striving to rediscover the proper mode of philosophy. This symptom is a consciousness that philosophy bears responsibility for all that does or does not happen in the human world, and therefore in the world. Whether it is a matter

of the moral/political meaning of our human arrangements, or a mat-
ter of scientific knowledge and its theoretical horizon, as well as the
meaning and sometimes dangers of its application, or whether what is
a stake is human artistic enjoyment or religious disquiet, it has become
ever more clear to the contemporary consciousness that it is in the
modality of philosophy that all these things are grounded and fulfilled.
In all these, it is a matter of a "sense", which demands to be taken to the
very end, which is to say, to be transposed onto the scale of philosophy.
These things do or do not make sense, reason is either everything or
it is nothing, either something is wholly responsible for this world or
else nothing is.

   The consciousness of philosophy's responsibility appears, at least in
a negative fashion, through an almost Rousseau-type critique of philo-
sophical ideas. Ideas, it is said, are guilty for the chaos we find ourselves
in. It is ideas that have removed us from our natural equilibrium and it
is they that permanently poison a world that would find its habitation
if human reason, inasmuch as it exists, were not in permanent unrest.
But this is the non-philosopher's criticism of philosophy; the negative
side of philosophical responsibility. Such criticism is perhaps far from
being predominant today, but it demonstrates itself the gravity of the
philosophical game. Philosophy no longer appears and in any case is
no longer experienced as a mere matter of specialiaty.

   It is as if everywhere, whether in positive or negative form, at infe-
rior or adequate levels, the aspiration towards Being were at last felt in
the contemporary consciousness. The feeling of responsibility borne
by philosophy referred to the order of Being. This is why we were also
able to view the non-philosophical consciousness of this responsibil-
ity as a symptom, alongside other strictly philosophical symptoms, of
the return to the problematic of Being. At the same time, the pursuit
of the problematic of Being, and the feeling of responsibility borne
by philosophy for what is known and how much can be known, bring
today's philosophy back to the Platonic topic of the consequences our
philosophy has on the whole of life, as well as on other lives.

   But *Being is not something immediate*. In philosophy, everything, as it
seems to us, depends upon our position before Being. The philosophy
of the spirit, in its entirety, may now appear as an expression of our
distancing from Being, that is, our distancing also ourselves. In
one sense, we *are* Being. But in the fuller sense, we do nothing except
endeavour – through knowledge and the progression of the spiritual

life – to be Being. In other words, it is always as if we are within Being. And the philosophy of the spirit has shown that this is the condition of the thematic dialectic: to posit the theme at the beginning and at the end of the dialectical progression.

If Being is not something immediate, that is, if it is above all theme, then it means that our reason, which is also inside Being, will be steadfastly oriented towards it. Through such an orientation of reason, the dialectics of circles is legitimised. The circle of Being, inside which our spiritual existence develops, is thereby that which justifies a dialectics of circles. Just as the circle of becoming within Being found stronger or weaker echo in each of the fundamental disciplines of philosophy, so here too the philosophy of spirit, as an expression of the unity of consciousness, discovers in itself, if it is taken to the limit, the ontological circle.

What sense can it now make to conceive of the spirit *contrary* to Being, without Being? The spirit is given to us precisely in order that, having emerged as human beings from the state of nature, we might strive towards the plenitude and durability of Being. The spirit is that *distensio*, that Eros, that processuality, in other words that mediation – which only philosophy performs in an organised way – towards that which is given to us in an unmediated way. The philosophy of spirit thus opens towards the philosophy of Being.

CHAPTER 3

THE CIRCLE IN THE
PHILOSOPHY OF BEING

BECOMING AND BEING

We thus possess a second guarantee that becoming within Being is meaningful. Indeed, it was from hence that we set out, from the necessity of finding the circle of becoming within Being reflected everywhere in philosophy. Formally, philosophy proved not to be possible except in a circle; its matter was not possible except inasmuch as and only where it perceived becoming within Being. These two conditions combined of themselves: becoming within Being of itself implied the schema of the circle. As such, it seems to us that the full potential condition of philosophy is the circle of becoming within Being. As a first guarantee that things stand thus, we detected, in each of the four main philosophical disciplines, the echo of becoming within Being. By way of substantiation, we might say that this fact is a guarantee of validity for the disciplines of philosophy. By way of exposition, we were forced to say that the fact is a guarantee that becoming within Being is meaningful.

With the philosophy of *spirit*, we acquired a second guarantee. This time, it was not the acts of the philosophical consciousness that were at stake but rather this consciousness in itself, in its unity; and on this occasion too, becoming within Being was active. However, while the circle of becoming within Being could, in general philosophy, be revealed without much difficulty, even if it only arose in the form of an echo, its presence in the philosophy of spirit could seem all the more questionable the more it was precisely a matter of a philosophy in which any problematic of Being was eliminated from the outset. This is why the rediscovery of the ontological circle was now to be all the more laborious. At first, with the table of the categories, it could seem to be rather a fortuitous compatibility of terms. Then, with the dialectical movement, the rediscovery of the metaphysical circle could still appear as the doubling of the ordinary type of dialectic with another,

circular type of dialectic – and this all the more so as the examples of dialectical circles were taken from planes other than those of ordinary dialectics. At last, with the legitimacy of the dialectics of circles, it became apparent that reason does not allow *two* dialectical movements but rather imposes one alone, which, in any case, even on cursory examination, was to be found from the very start behind that apparent in Hegelianism. In this way, what might have seemed surprising at first, the claim to discover the ontological circle in the philosophy of spirit, ended by being an explanation of this very philosophy.

Ultimately, what is brought by the philosophy of spirit is, after the initial, somewhat static moment of Kantianism, an ever more emphatic affirmation of the becoming of spirit (and with it, of reality). But was the affirmation here in fact grounded? Was it not more of an exigency? In Fichte, was it not a deliberate act at the philosophical level, that of setting the spirit in motion in order to obtain the Kantian categories, which irritatingly appeared to him as ready-made? Did not Hegel, also willingly, come to remove the antinomies from the fixity of their equilibrium and their conversion to dialectics? What is it that obligates the life of the spirit and, with it, the real?

Hegel will reply "contradiction". But behold, it is precisely the same contradiction that led to a dead-end in criticism, thus, it is not in itself a source of life. It might even be a source for the interruption of life. The motor of principle is not, in itself, contradiction but, as it has seemed to us, *orientation*. Contradiction is merely one moment of orientation, precisely the moment in which orientation risks perishing and falling into logical formalism. The *yes* is life, that cascade of *yeses* unfolded by the spirit and the real, throughout becoming towards Being. But the *yes*, with the *nos* which only it makes possible, is the expression of orientation.

How clear the philosophy of the spirit becomes through the acceptance of this orientation. Instead of animation being a philosophical exigency, it now acquires grounding. Why else would the Hegelian concept, which, with its life, makes possible the entire *Logic*, be in motion? The consciousness of becoming within Being explains conceptual life, which Hegelianism merely posits or presupposes. Distance from Being has seemed to us to be the spirit itself, *distensio*. From this perspective, life is more than natural: it is the given of the spirit, the spirit itself. On the other hand, Fichte's absolute Ego and Hegel's Spirit emerge from their equilibrium only *pro causa*. The Hegelian "in

itself" would not, in principle, need to pass through the "for itself" in order to produce the "in and for itself" (synthesis), for, this is precisely what philosophy designates "in itself": that which possesses equilibrium, which reposes in itself, which has no need of anything else, being sufficient unto itself.

Orientation and its background of becoming within Being alone seem to us able to explain why Hegelian logic is nevertheless life and not congelation. Just as it is they that enable us ceaselessly to understand the repeated affirmation that only the whole is valid, the target together with the entire road covered. For, indeed, what sense (other than philosophical exigency) would such an affirmation make anywhere else other than in the thematic? Only thematic, not thetic, thinking, thus only thinking that openly acknowledges its orientation and, in the last instance, the necessity of the metaphysical circle, can sustain this supreme exigency of Hegelianism.

The consciousness of becoming within Being does not therefore come only to juxtapose itself, with its themes and movements, against a philosophy of the spirit. It *is* the philosophy of the spirit, although it is undeclared. Now, we shall genuinely be able to say: it is not the fact that philosophy everywhere displays the traces of becoming within Being that justifies the latter, but rather it is becoming within Being, and the consciousness thereof, which, it seems to us, is reason itself, that justifies philosophy.

But what becomes philosophy thereby? Inasmuch as such a consciousness is, in reality, supported by culture and human being itself, consciousness of becoming within Being proves to be the measure of humanness. Understood restrictively, it is the key to philosophy, it is reason. However, as it is the key to reason, it is, understood broadly, the profound principle of the cultural man and of human being. And it is clear that it is so much, since only through it can man realise that he ought to extract nature or to see it extracted from its natural state and understand it in its ontic state. Becoming within Being expresses precisely this striving to emerge from becoming within becoming and enter into the state of Being.

What, therefore, is philosophy? Undoubtedly, it appears to us as the exercise of reason (for us, the consciousness of becoming within Being). But given that it is thus, is it anything other than a mere impulse, the striving towards an ideal fulfilment?

Having reached this point, it seems clear to us that there will have to be *a third guarantor* for the fact of becoming within Being. Ultimately, we have been talking about the *consciousness* of becoming within Being. But what is becoming within being? If we do not get as far as this question, then we will understand things awry. We might be tempted to find one of the classic but culpable meanings of philosophy, the most current of its meanings, namely, that of the "consolation" it brings. "Do not be tempted by transient things," as philosophy, from the perspective of becoming within Being in which it is situated, might seem to say, together with Boethius. "Do not engage in those things that are born and perish, nor in futile knowledge of them, nor in the glorification of them in equally as futile art. Rescue the world, through culture, from its precarious state and project it into the absolute of Being". – It is as though the role of philosophy had been reduced to the mission of distinguishing between two versions of becoming, one good and the other bad. But once this distinction was made, philosophy would come to urge human consciousness towards positive becoming, or console it when, along with the rest of the world, it allowed itself to be overcome by negative becoming. Philosophy would console human being, as Boethius was consoled in prison where he had been cast by the temptations and vanities of the world. Can this be the meaning of philosophy, to be exhortatory and consoling?

Hegel's warning is perennial: "Philosophy must avoid being consolatory". It is not in order to soothe or beautify the spectacle of the world that philosophy arose. It would thereby be alien to the world, something *compared with* the world, about it, when in reality it is, or ought to be, its rediscovered organisation. And here arises the problem before which, in one way or another, any philosophical thought has had to situate itself: what is man doing by means of culture and philosophy? Is he contemplating the world or transforming it, as has been said. Does he fulfil it, insofar as he is concerned, and does he find his own fulfilment? What does philosophy, to put it in our terms, do? Does it speak *about* becoming within Being, or does it in itself bring about becoming within Being?

Herein appears the necessity that philosophy, any philosophy, must end up as one of Being. In this way, we shall be able to obtain the *third guarantor*. In the present case, indeed, if we halt the progression of ideas at this point, if, therefore, we satisfy ourselves with having proven that any philosophical consciousness is one of becoming with-

in Being, then we shall not have succeeded in proving anything except that philosophy is a noble exigency of human being, an exigency that, moreover, explains things *as if* they reflected becoming within being – and nothing more.

It is sufficient for us to take things as far as a certain limit meaning in order to see that this is *not* in fact the sense of philosophy. Could it merely be a successful game? A mere artificial explanation, since it comprises an artificial, super-instantiated viewpoint? It is true that philosophy brings about the consciousness of a "must", of an imperative, and thus it would seem to be inscribed on the side of the ideal. Except that this "must" does not function beyond the world, within a *topos noêtos*, but rather it *is* the world, specifically the human world itself, in its possibility of being or else not being. This is why, like Hegel, any philosophy makes the transition from "consciousness of a thing" that ought to be truth and order, to the "consciousness of the self" that *is* truth and order. We recalled above that Plato knew how to distinguish the responsibility in which human being was thereby engaged, and the consciousness of that responsibility, borne by the philosophical act, was almost as large as the philosophical consciousness. Thus, any philosophical consciousness will, in the final instance, have to make the transition from consciousness *of* what it is to the consciousness of what it is in itself. The consciousness of becoming within being ought *to be* becoming within Being.

What does this mean? It means, in the first place, an exit from the state of nature, which has no consciousness of its becoming, still less of becoming within Being. But this is too little, as long as mere consciousness can also be theoretical consciousness, the consciousness 'of'. In the second place, it must mean precisely the exit from the theoretical model. And, indeed, we have shown (in the unpublished work *Introduction to Becoming within Being*) that, compared to science and the scientific culture of modern man in general, which tend to close it in a *theoretical* universe, philosophy appears today – since it has always been thus – as an exit from the theoretical, in other words, as an engagement of the philosophising subject in a world of existence, in any case in an extra-philosophical world. This self-consciousness – as we have seen – took three forms: consciousness of human existence (of the self), that of the limitation of the self and that of the possibility of transcending the limitation of the self. Now, in the light of becoming within Being, we may better understand these three moments. The

first would correspond precisely to the awakening of reason in man; the second moment, limitation, would correspond to reason in the variant of the spirit without Being; while the third represents the living echo, in the human consciousness, of Being.

But self-consciousness as such, having emerged from the theoretical state, is merely a moment *at the beginning* of philosophising. Once assured, once master of its certainties, philosophy desires more: not only to be removed from the theoretical, but also to engage itself in order, specifically in Being. Whereas, at the beginning, the first type of certitude, that of the existence of the self, was decisive, with the latter providing only "ideal certainties", now the certainties provided by the possibility of emerging from limitation are those which will, for us, appear specifically to qualify the philosophical act. Having become possible, the act of philosophical cognition wants to be that of initiation at the heart of the world. It wants to lead beyond limitation, to Being. Thus, not simple consciousness; not self-consciousness; but affirmation of Being.

It is only now that we recover the full sense of the philosophic act. This act occurs in a circle; it is possible only as a circle of cognition. But as it is a circle – and as it materially proves, in becoming within Being, to be a valid circle – it is much more than an act of cognition. If the second thesis of Gorgias, that we cannot *know* Being, is overturned, then the first thesis, that "there is not anything", will also collapse. Philosophical cognition permanently comes to show that something exists: that which is known and as much as is known. Our Romanian saying, "if it were not then it wouldn't be told"[1], is perfectly true at the level of philosophic thought. If there were not order and Being, then it would not be possible to weave a tale around them. As long as a tale is told about them, it means that they are. And in a way, everything that is told about them *is*.

But then, is everything true that philosophy, with all its narratives, unfolds? Are all these fictions in the history of philosophy to be taken at face value, as also expressing reality? In one sense, however strange it might seem, this ought to be so. And Hegel, in his *Lectures*, very well showed that all these systematic visions hold together, within a history of the spirit. Indeed, even from our perspective, all these things

---

1 The Romanian saying here mentioned ("Däca n-ar fi, nu s-ar povesti") usually comes at the beginning or at the end of fairy tales and folk tales, as an "argument" for their "reality" [e.n.]

have, in the last instance, seemed to us as historically the same thing, in the same way as the particular *is* universal. "All things", of course, inasmuch as they will be elevated to the rank of philosophy and not remain, for example, dualism, that is, simple "conceptions about the world". For German idealism, and similarly in any authentic speculative thinking, the same thing is manifest: the identity between reason and Being. Consequently, it is not all that scandalous to say, on the subject of philosophy: if it were not, then it wouldn't be told – as long as it is everywhere a matter of the same story.

However, taking up "if it were not, it wouldn't be told" on the scale of pure philosophy, we discover the permanent modality of the philosophy of Being, which is the *ontological argument*. The circle in the philosophy of Being is, in its way, the ontological argument in itself. However compromised that argument might seem, along with the highly categorical criticism of Kant in the final instance, we shall have to say – again along with Hegel – that philosophical understanding ought, in the end, to rest upon it.

The ontological argument affirms that, of all the conceptions, that of Being (of consummate Being, as is said at the first moment) is that which also necessarily implies existence. It is the nature of Being that causes Being to be; within its meaning is also comprised the note of existence. One cannot have the concept of the human without necessarily having the note of rationality; man might not exist, but if he exists, then he is rational. One cannot have the concept of deity without it possessing in it the note of immortality; in fact, the deities do not exist; but if they did, then they would have to be immortal. The concept of Being, in its turn, implies existence. One cannot have the concept of Being without it being existent. ("I am that I am, I am that which is existent", was the well known place that I mentioned above as expressing absolute judgement in the category of autonomy.) Among all these meanings or mental concepts, it alone is the one which, as long as it is thought, *has* Being. One cannot say, as of deity: if it were. But such is Being, as actually being. Its way of being conceived is that of being realised. All the other conceptions are something that possess existence *in addition*, when they possess it. Being, however, is not unless it is being. If it is not being then it means that you do not have a correct conception of Being, that you do not think of it as it is. It is as if you conceived of man without rationality, or of deity without immortality: you would not in fact be conceiving of them. Thus, "if it were not, then

it wouldn't be told" is the ontological argument. As long as it is told, then it is. As long as you have the conception of Being, then it is.

Except that – and here today's philosophical thought may indeed come to make the ontological argument utilisable – what you conceive ought not to be the conception of consummate Being, as the classic argument would have it, but that of Being (or its equivalent) as we are about to see it. Theological thinking, at the heart of which the first ontological argument arose, did not posit the problem of Being qua Being in its purity, but viewed being[2] merely as an attribute of divinity, wanting to show that divinity exists. The ontological argument goes thus: in the conception of perfect "Being" (but where Being is *not* important, since it might be any other term with the same generality, for example, "perfect reality") the fact of being enters as a note of perfection. Therefore, it is *perfection* that is important. If we conceive something as perfect, goes the ontological argument, as having all the "qualities", it must also have that of being. This means: 1) that we conceive perfect reality as exhaustive; and 2) that Being – respectively, its essential attribute of being – cannot be absent from this aggregate. It is not conceived of as necessary in itself, but it is necessarily "encountered", as long as one posits the aggregate of the qualities of which being is also part.

In this form, therefore, the ontological argument is not, it seems to us, useful; and nor is it genuinely "ontological", in the second place.

Indeed, this argument presupposes that the mind has a concept, that of perfection, even that of perfection in the inclusive sense, which includes all the notes of perfection and therefore being. In fact, our thinking can not have such a concept; it is a mere ideal, a striving for knowledge and nothing more. The whole of negative theology comes precisely in order to show that human intelligence has no sense of perfection. As for the sense of a perfection of inclusiveness, through the enumeration of all perfections, our intellect possesses it just as little as the positive concept of an infinity of inclusiveness. And a third proof that we cannot possess the concept of perfect reality, as the classic ontological argument would have it, can be provided precisely by the note of being; the common ontological argument enumerates the

---

2   Here Noica seems to follow the distinction *Sein – Seiende*, translated in Romanian by *fiinţă*, *fiinţăre* and in English by *Being* and *being*. Noica chose to use *fiinţăre* (being) instead of the more distinct *existentă* (existence) and we have decided to keep this option [e.n.].

fact of being among the perfections divinity is supposed to have. But what is being for the human intellect? Is it really a state of perfection? Can we conceive of being in its perfection? Do we not reckon it exactly as an inferior form, as a non-perfection, a "fall into the world", as it is a genuinely open problem, for our understanding, to imagine how the absolute might exist without degrading?

Consequently, the ontological argument cannot be used in the classic form, because it implies a concept of perfection which we cannot positively possess. And moreover – and here we go on to the second point – is it genuinely an *ontological* argument in this form? It is preoccupied with divinity and its attributes, not with Being, discovering, as we have seen, being as a simple note in the inclusiveness of the concept of divinity. A genuine ontological argument, however, would have to stop exclusively at Being. Naturally, the mediaeval argument was in order to prove the existence of God; therefore, it cannot be demanded that it do something else. But the philosophical significance which subsequent thought draws from this argument shifts its centre of gravity: it must no longer be an argument for the concept of divinity, but for that of Being. It has to be a purely ontological argument, not an ontological theology.

Thus, abandoning the ontological argument in its classic form, let us take the concept of Being in itself, not that of perfect Being. An authentic ontological argument would seek to establish the necessity of being merely by thinking the concept of Being. Being necessarily *is*. As long as it is thought of, then it is. But this is exactly the Eleatic idea. The ontological argument, in its pure form, was utilised long before it took on a theological garb. – If, however, we recognise the ontological argument in Eleatic thought, then once again we give it a form that makes it non-utilisable. Specifically, we end up at an impasse similar to that wither we were led by its theological form. Indeed, although on this occasion, with Eleatic thinking, perfect Being is no longer at stake, qua divinity, but rather Being pure and simple, in the end, this Being will also prove perfect, even if it will not bear the name of divinity. Being is of itself perfection – hither leads Eleatic thinking. This time, it is no longer inclusive perfection, a totality of perfections; but in itself it is destined to possess absolute attributes; that of being without beginning or end, thus eternal; that of lacking the possibility of corruption, therefore of being incorruptible; that of being without plurality, therefore being one. To what does such a concept of Being lead? As has been

demonstrated with good reason: to another kind of negative theology. The ontological argument of the Eleatics "succeeded" so well that it caused Being to be beyond the reach of human understanding. It was possible only to say, either glorification of ineffable Being, or mere tautological proclamation of it: the One is, or the One, the One… in the manner of the Eleatic mentioned in an historical anecdote.

Thus, neither is the ontological argument genuinely utilisable in its pure form. What complicates matters here too is the nature of perfection. In the concept of Being it is, without doubt, a specific tendency of being taken to the limit, to the point of consummation. This is why it was possible to seek the perfection of Being in divinity. Being appears from the outset as a quality (as it also is for Hegel); it is, in one sense, at least for the Greeks, quality in the highest sense, the Good. Given that it is thus, it naturally slides towards idealisation. But this temptation is legitimate only at the *terminus* of philosophy. It can neither begin nor think with it. An ontological argument which, from the outset, projects Being into its absolute, is no longer an argument, that is, a progression of ideas: it is ontological hypostasis. Being cannot be conceived of in its perfection. If only the divinity necessarily *is*, or only perfect Being, then the world is left with nothing except not to be -- to be illusory, as in Parmenides.

And nevertheless, in this world too the problem of Being is posed. This is why the ontological argument, in order genuinely to serve philosophical understanding, ought to be reduced to the level of *this* world. Beyond its classical, theological form, and its Eleatic form, which is rigorous but philosophically inefficient, the ontological argument must take a third form, in order to make it the progress rather than the noble interdiction of understanding. And in the light of the above, it seems to us that this might take a *third form*. If it is true that Being cannot be a thesis for our understanding, that it is only a *theme*, namely the highest possible theme, then the ontological argument cannot produce Being, but rather the opening towards Being. That which exists is, for us, that which becomes within Being. We do not conceive of Being, but only becoming within Being. It *is*, therefore, all that that has becoming within Being. For, Being is not a given, still less so one that is consummate, but precisely a theme. We conceive of it inside the thematic and we realise it through the mode of the thematic. The ontological argument ought to go: it is not the concept of Being

that necessarily is, but the consciousness of becoming within Being *is* becoming within Being.

But – and herein lies the problem – how is it possible to make the transition from the consciousness of a thing to its existence? In the common ontological argument, this transition seemed possible to the extent that in the cognised essence of something there was necessarily comprised the note of existence. A thing therefore exists with "logical" necessity. But such an essence could not be thought positively, as long as in both the one case and the other it arrived at something perfect. Now, however, it is no longer a matter of something perfect; it is no longer even a matter of a determined thing that might necessarily exist, but of a state. Finally, it is no longer even a question of a simple thought, a concept, but of the *consciousness* of a state. And the chances for existence are then different. If you think a thing, if you conceive of something in particular, Kant's criticism, with a hundred in-mind thalers which are not a hundred real thalers, might, although quite roughly, hit the mark. But becoming within Being is not a thing but a state; and it is not thought of as a conceptual essence, but rather it is at most an essentialisation of becoming. That is why, even in this form, it necessarily exists. Why might there not be consciousness of "becoming within Being", occurring somewhere on some kind of Olympus? Why should it not be a consciousness 'about'?

Because it is truly consciousness and not mere consciousness, mere cognisance; because it is consciousness of becoming, and not consciousness of what has already become somewhere else. Consciousness of becoming within Being (reason) *is* conscious becoming within Being; reason, once obtained, brings-into-being <înfiinţează>. It is enough to know the Good in order to do it, said the ancients. It is *enough for reason to appear in order for Being to arise.*

Let us order things, as far as we can, so that we should see how this entry into Being is made, thus how the ontological argument will be borne out. The stages that lead from nature <*fire*> to Being <*fiinţă*>, respectively from becoming within becoming to becoming within Being, might be those that follow.

BECOMING WITHIN BECOMING

1. *Unconscious becoming within becoming*. This is nature in the proper sense: the blind progression of Being, with the becoming of the indi-

vidual organism, through maturity, to fruition, then to fruit and seed, in order to lead to another organism, which then further gives fruit. Only in a broader sense can inorganic nature be included in this unconscious becoming, viewed as unending corruption, slow change and limitless alteration. Except that inorganic nature is in becoming once and for all, within a blocked becoming, not in becoming within becoming in the proper sense: it is generation and corruption, as ancient thinking would have it, by means of a *single* act of genesis, and not, unlike organic nature, through the conclusion of one cycle of life and its re-commencement with another birth.

Above this unconscious becoming rests:

2. *Subjectively conscious becoming within becoming.* This is the stage reached by animal life, and from which human life proceeds. Characteristic at this stage is perhaps the fact that, at the inferior level at which things as yet are, consciousness is confused with cognisance. Cognisance is always accompanied by consciousness, just as in man consciousness is always accompanied (whether muffled or not) by consciousness of self. One cannot cognise without the consciousness that one cognises, and in the final instance, consciousness of a thing will be consciousness of self. However, at the level we are now at, consciousness of self is confused with cognisance. Everything occurs inside a subjectivity that ascribes to itself, as a favourable or detrimental term, everything that "knows" as regards something other than itself. This something else has no independent existence: it is amalgamated with the self of elementary subjectivity.

3. *Becoming within becoming accompanied by objective consciousness.* Now we enter the human realm properly speaking. This time, cognisance although accompanied by consciousness, is the cognisance of things themselves. It is therefore characteristic that cognisance is now distinguished from consciousness and distinguishes things. Consciousness of a thing may not genuinely be full consciousness of that thing, but it will no longer combine from the outset with self-consciousness. I am I, and the world is world. The world is even itself to such an extent– objectivity is taken so far – that in the end, at this level, even consciousness of self becomes *objective* consciousness of self. It appears to itself as arising inside the becoming of the world, produced as it is at a given moment of this becoming. It is, for example, the consciousness of the historical becoming in which human being is situated, the human consciousness that it is a mere individuality inside

an objective aggregate which causes it to be what it is. With such an objective consciousness, becoming within becoming reaches its highest level. Everything is inside it. Everything, even consciousness, is its already-become <*devenit*>.[3]

From the strict perspective of becoming, this is, perhaps, the characteristic of the three momenta outlined up to now: inside becoming within becoming there is no consciousness of becoming, but only of the *already-become*. The fact is self-evident for the first becoming, that of nature, whereas there is not any becoming accompanied by consciousness, any external cognisance of becoming will be above the that-which-has-become of nature. But it is thus also at the other two levels. The subjective consciousness that may accompany becoming is a consciousness of the that-which-has-become inside a subjectivity: it is, for example, one's own hunger, of which one takes cognisance; (but at this level one might just as well say: of which one takes consciousness); either fear, or the Eros. The process of becoming *has taken place*, and the consciousness to which you now elevate yourself is the consciousness of this finished process, concluded in one way or another and having, of itself, arrived at an "expression of consciousness". The same also happens at the third moment: the objective consciousness of becoming within becoming is the consciousness of those-things-which-have-become <*celor devenite*> inside this progression. Due to objective consciousness, you now take cognisance – as a distinct act – of the process of the becoming that has taken place at the heart of the external world. And precisely because that world appears as one that is external, it can only offer species of the already-become <*devenituri*>, for a consciousness that fully has the sense of distance between the subject and what is happening in the world of the object.

Everywhere it is thus a matter of species of the already-become <*devenituri*> and cognitions, a matter of cognisance upon them. Even if the already-become <*devenitul*> continues to enter into becoming, the

---

3 In the following, Noica coins an unusual substantive using *devenit*, the past participle of the verb a *deveni* (from the French *devenir*). With the suffix for the masculine/neuter definite article (*devenitul*), this is here translated as "the already-become" or "the that-which-has-become". Noica also uses the participle as a (feminine/neuter) plural adjective with the demonstrative article (*cele devenite* = "those-things-which-have-become"), and with the specific neuter plural suffix (*devenituri*). Likewise, the verbal noun *devenire* ("becoming") in common usage is employed, unusually, as a (feminine) plural: *deveniri*. – Translator's note.

cognisance you have, at each of these three levels, is of a given; a given
to which might be added another, a whole, not something that only
now is integrated. And the superior expression of the already-become
– and thereby that of becoming within becoming – has seemed to us
to be the cognisance of self that is objectively taken by the conscious-
ness of self, which ends by perceiving itself as an already-become at
the heart of becoming, of the cosmic, historical or organic becoming.
Human being, reason and all, appears to itself as a product among
products, possessing at most knowledge of productivity, but not con-
sciousness of consubstantiality with it.

Is no more than this possible? Is nothing more given to human being
than consciousness of becoming? But consciousness of *becoming*, that
is, of processuality and not just the finished process, might be precisely
the measure of the human: consciousness of temporality, as well as of
fulfilment in time, of emergence from necessity and entry into the field
of freedom, consciousness of the organised self-development of rea-
son. If humans are humans, there must be consciousness of becoming.

But of what type will it be? Its opposition to the consciousness of
the already-become is reflected best of all in the two types of con-
sciousness of infinity present in our thinking. The first – and this
corresponds to the consciousness of the already-become – is the
consciousness of a finite that ceaselessly negates itself and ceaselessly
remakes itself; therefore, it is more a consciousness of the finite that
nevertheless cannot remain finite. The finite and the already-become
refer beyond themselves – towards another finite and already-become,
if not towards their own dissolution. Here, infinity is, in the final in-
stance, the impossibility of the finite remaining finite. But until then,
it is finite. Consciousness of the infinite (as well as of the already-be-
come) does not transfigure the whole of reality; but somewhere, at its
boundary, it encounters an instability, which will abolish it as finite,
but will not this time remake it as infinite.

Alongside this infinite of finite thinking must be conceived an infi-
nite that is infinite in its entirety, that is, everywhere and always. The
true action of infinity is that of manifesting itself everywhere (just
as becoming must be preserved everywhere). The distinction between
the two infinities is, in the final instance: in the first, the finite is af-
firmative, infinity is negative; in the second – and this is the infinite
properly speaking – the finite is negation, and the infinite is the true
affirmation. (The infinity of the intellect and that of the reason, as

Hegel named them. On the other hand, Goethe, will perceive only the first[4].)

To us, becoming now appears likewise; and perhaps the two infinities are unitary with the two species of becoming <*deveniri*>. Becoming was one of the species of the already-become <*devenituri*>, in each of the three types of becoming within becoming: the already-become could enter once more into becoming, that is, it could be taken further, but it was always perceived as the already-become. Shall we then nowhere have consciousness of *becoming*? And do we not need to pass beyond becoming within becoming in order to possess it? — Thus we arrive at a new stage of reality, its most elevated: becoming within Being.

BECOMING WITHIN BEING

Being is that which makes becoming genuinely becoming, at each of its moments. As it is within Being, becoming never concludes, at no level is it the already-become, but a constant opening. The infinite was co-present at each of its moments, in the case of the second type. So too is Being, with its circle, co-present at each moment upon the line of becoming.

Being alone manages to make full sense of becoming. Only the consciousness of Being can provide a genuine consciousness of becoming; and only an existent that possesses this consciousness of Being is capable of possessing consciousness of becoming. Therefore, if man is, then Being is; not only in the sense that man bears witness to the pre-established, immutable reality of Being, but in the sense that, by means of the consciousness of Being that he possesses, a consciousness of becoming is realised, which passes into conscious becoming. We may therefore say: consciousness of becoming within Being *is* conscious becoming within Being.

Subjective consciousness reduced everything to the immediate self, the self before it is distinguished from the world, and from object, unifying any consciousness with a cognisance. Objective consciousness, on the other hand, distinguished between the level of the subject and that of the object, in such a way as no longer to be able to discover their unity, but at best the primacy of one of the levels, that of objectivity.

---

4   *Willst du ins Unendliche schreiten, / Geh ins Endlichenach allen Seiten.*
     ("Will you step into infinity? You go in the finite, on all sides".)

From the perspective of such an objective consciousness, consciousness proper became something other than consciousness. Now, with becoming within Being, absolute consciousness reunites the two levels. A subject and an object are no longer at stake, but rather a single term, a 'subject-object' as science today itself says. And cognisance is again consciousness; not, however, at the level of subjective vagueness, but with the maturity of a consciousness that "has lost itself in the world" and succeeds after that in rediscovering itself *by bearing the world with it.*

This is what Kant's "originary synthetic unity" intended, and this is why it opens an important chapter in philosophy – the philosophy of the spirit – one predestined to rediscover philosophy in its plenitude. "I think" (synthetic unity) is not only subjective consciousness; it is also a condition for the possibility of the object; it is, as Kant put it in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the moment of "affinity" between things. Through it, an exemplary type of subject-object is realised, whose deepening will signify German idealism itself. According to its model, an absolute consciousness will permanently be conceived, one that is of self and at the same time of the world: it is the aggregate of the world's possible forms, structures and laws.

With becoming within Being we have, by paths other than those of idealism, arrived at the stage of the self that is. But now we know the meaning of "is": it does not mean that God is, or the world is, or something is; nor even that everything is; rather, it means a subjectivity (self) understood as an objectivity. This does not, of course, mean that only man shares in Being; but man has the privileged position of one who can carry on a dialogue with everything that "is". Whatever it might be: another human, another meaningful reality, an order other than the human. To man, it is given to be able to understand what his model of being is, through realisation of the self in reason. Everything that *is* means a rational concentration in act; a nucleus of rationality, which is also of reality.

This seems to us to have "rectified" the ontological argument. The rectification had to be made in three respects, which completely transform the appearance but not the nature of the ontological argument. It is no longer a matter of conceiving of a perfect thing, since perfection cannot be conceived. Nor is it a question of conceiving of something determinate, since, in being determinate, a thing is merely itself. Thirdly, the concept of a thing must make room (in the case of man)

for the consciousness of a thing, or the cognisance must become self-consciousness once more. Only the consciousness of becoming within Being, with its exercise, answers these three conditions of the ontological argument. It does not directly posit the idea of a consummate Being, but it nevertheless posits the theme of Being in the form of becoming within it. It does not establish something determinate, for what is at stake is a simple process, which tends to coagulate within Being. And it does not objectify this process within an intelligible product, but rather subjectifies it within a concentration of self, which, in man, is rational consciousness. But given that it is thus, the ontological argument continues to function. Perhaps it is only now that it truly begins to function. It says that by the simple fact one possesses the consciousness (beyond man, it might be 'the control') of becoming within Being, one engages (consciously in man) in this becoming. At the moment in which a "reality", such as the human, which possesses consciousness of becoming within Being, appears in the world, then Being also appears. Consciousness of positive becoming *is* positive becoming. Man is not merely thrown-into-the-world (again, a mistaken way of understanding existentialism, that is, of not knowing what the "existential", a category, is); it might just as well be said that the world is thrown into man. Or else, man is thrown into *a* world, that of nature, and brings about a second, of Being. He does not therefore appear as a stranger who might just as well be absent from the world.

The significance – almost the metaphysical gravity – of the ontological argument, what makes it an irreplaceable component of philosophical understanding, resides precisely in the soldering it makes between man and world, necessarily binding human cognisance or consciousness to the existence of the world. By means of this argument, philosophy ceases, in the first place, to be an essay about… It is not *about* the circle of Being, but is in itself the circle of Being, taken as *sophia*. Again, it is not merely a way of regarding the real, a mere attitude towards the real (towards life, circumstances, destiny), but a superior modality of the real itself. The rational is the real – this time, in the sense that reason, in reality, is.

For, indeed, what is the consciousness of becoming within Being, by which philosophy is grounded? Above, we have given it its true name a number of times: reason. It is too little to define reason, as is usually the case, as a faculty for thinking unity in plurality. Such a definition has, in the first place, the disadvantage of not separating reason

from intellect; and in the second place, of being irritatingly formal. Even given that it is thus, it is still comprised in our definition: the consciousness of becoming within Being is fully the consciousness of the plurality of becoming in the unity of Being. But the definition is insufficient and this is why philosophy has constantly sought for much more. Again, it is perhaps too little to define, as Hegel sometimes does (*Die philosophischee Propädeutik*, edited by Glockner, vol. III, p. 111, Zweiter Kursus), reason as: the "Supreme union between consciousness and self-consciousness, or between the knowledge of an object and the knowledge of self." The consciousness of becoming within being also includes this, as we have seen. For, at the final stage, where consciousness of becoming within Being at last occurred, self-consciousness has to merge once more with consciousness of something else, although now not inside a conscious subjectivity, but in the sense of the unity of consciousness with the world. That is to say, as Hegel would have it. Except that he thereby defines reason by means of one of its *accompanying* aspects.

It seemed natural to us here that becoming within Being should lead to an "absolute" consciousness and allow itself to be permanently accompanied by such a consciousness. Reason, however, is much more than the identity between consciousness and consciousness of self. Just as, contrary to the current definition, it seemed to us much more than a formal faculty, so we may regard it now as much more than an infra-human and in any case infra-conscious faculty. The advantage of the definition we are suggesting for reason is thus that of being not so much a transcription of what happens in consciousness as much as of what occurs *by means of* it. Consciousness (like any rational concentration, in things) now appears to have an ontological face. *With* it, the world has no simple way of being reflected, but possesses a means of intensifying itself in its Being. Reason causes Being to be but also causes there to be more Being in the world. It brings-into-Being <*înfiinţează*>at the heart of the world.

Indeed, understood as consciousness of becoming within Being in man, reason makes one become conscious within Being, that is, to live "rationally". So, what does the ontological argument say? That *as soon as a reality endowed with reason appears in the world, Being also is initiated*, insofar as a rational becoming within Being is thereby achieved[5].

5   Before the appearance of rational Being, reality was blocked; existence was unfulfilled. It was not "Being".

Reason necessarily refers to "realisation". It does not leave the world in peace; it does not leave *you* in peace. The consciousness of becoming is an organised consequence and the organisation of becoming means precisely its engagement in Being. The commandment of reason is not 'let things be, reflect them, receive their meaning in perfect neutrality'. Rather, it is '*do such as* that things might be'. Being is in creation and is in itself creation. But it is creation through reason, that is, without un-creation.

Having arrived thus far, at the understanding of the consciousness of becoming within Being as reason and at the positing of conscious becoming within Being as rational progression, we are now able to illustrate becoming within Being through its characteristic modes, which might be reckoned as so many stages of it, as was the case with becoming within becoming. It will occur to us that we discover here the subjectivity (this time, only human), the objectivity and the absolute of German philosophy. But now we find them distributed not between becoming within becoming, on the one hand, and becoming within Being, on the other, but rather inside the last modality only. And inasmuch as this has an absolute character, it is as if there existed a human subjectivity of the absolute, a human objectivity of it, and even – and we shall not flinch from using an expression used by German philosophy – a human absolute of the absolute. A fourth stage, beyond the human, will integrate the meaning of Being.

1. *There is a subjective stage of becoming within Being* and, therefore, inasmuch as the consciousness of it is reason, there is a subjective form that leads to Being through reason. Humanity, at every single hour and perhaps with every single one of its individual persons, is aware – but without result, unless exceptionally – of such a striving, as any human life is nothing but the striving towards Being through reason, according to the measure of that life. Every individual person wants to live "rationally". The immediate self, even without elevating itself to consciousness of a more profound self, tends to develop in a self-organised way, in such a way that it subsists within Being: it is, not merely becomes.

The prototypical example of this subjective form of becoming within Being, which solicits all humans (even when they live in the modes of *das Man*), was undoubtedly provided by Goethe. In his way, Goethe is mankind itself; this is why he is so closely related to any given person, genuinely expressing any given person, even the ideas and senti-

ments of *das Man*. But he is man himself in his particular self, in his unrepeatable being. He is truly reason in its subjective form, absolute consciousness under its particular species. In other words, he is the human-person, *personality*.

The characteristic of the person is that it incorporates reason, but does not really conceive it. If it conceived it, if it had philosophical consciousness of it, then it would not remain at the mere stage of personality, but would discover itself, qua person, as engaged within a self more profound than the proper, subjective self. But thus, it remains at itself and rationally shapes only itself, qua immediate self. And this is Goethe. He openly acknowledges that he has no "organ for philosophy" – and this is genuinely striking, however many commentators might wish to vindicate him. It is an admission that does not have more bitterness than irony. He has no organ for becoming within Being, that is, he does not understand the world by means of reason; he sees it by means of his eyes and conceives it only by means of the intellect. But the intellect is apt only for becoming. The categories of the intellect, and in the final instance that of polarity, are those which will help him to capture becoming; but his thinking will remain at the level of mere becoming, at that eternally nascent and transitory nature, which nowhere seems truly to coagulate into Being. Ordinary humanity thinks in the same way.

But, although he does not have an organ for becoming within Being, he is nevertheless *in* becoming within Being. He is not aware of reason, but embodies it. And behold him becoming within himself, in all that he does. Behold him developing his life, more and more certain of himself, assimilating all that is around him, rationally transforming all his immediate surroundings, taking from all and giving in return only himself – as he did strikingly with his friend Schiller – and in the end recreating his life, recreating himself within himself, from his own substance, when, at a distance of decades, he resumes, in his travel diaries, in his novels or even in his autobiography, his own life and describes it ideally, "poetically", but nevertheless as it was. For, that is what it was: ideality. Consciousness of becoming within Being is here not so much a conscious becoming within Being as much as one that is lived thus. The world is not, it becomes; but I am. And Goethe *is* – with so much transfiguration of his person within Being that he succeeds in idealising himself even to the point of his physical being. His mere presence had become a form of harmony, which had penetrated

so deeply into his mortal frame that Eckermann felt nothing macabre in contemplating his lifeless body, but could exclaim: how beautiful he still is! -- Becoming within Being, in its subjective model, will, through the rational life, obtain only this conquest of earthly beauty, in which Being is mirrored.

2. There is, however, *an objective stage of becoming within Being*. Reason now transcends the plane of the subjective self and attempts to attain more than the individual person. It believes it can attain the profound, communal self, at the heart of which persons might be possible, they themselves understood this time generically. In one respect, from the human perspective at least, individualisation might represent a triumph; but one that cannot be taken as far as singular forms of ideality, for then the path towards the unity of Being is lost. And it is precisely this that is the correct imputation brought to the subjective type of becoming within Being: it obtains a valid world, beautiful in itself, but closed. Reason comes to reopen the path towards Being and to transform the almost blind course of each individual life into an organised, communal course. Becoming within Being, precisely because it is within unitary Being, must create a community of destiny "for persons". And the rational expression of this community is – the historical community, today the state.

We shall not shy from naming it here, in the objective mode of becoming within Being. The political has always been a difficult moment for philosophy (Plato, Hegel) and moreover it makes no sense except in the philosophical. That kings must be philosophers is a stringent assertion: engineers must be mathematicians. Reason now strives, at this objective stage, to bring-into-being <*în-fiinţeze*> both humans and human creation that might express the self of a community; that might *be*. At the individual level, reason shaped a sole existence, to the point of elevating it to the stage of personality, thus to the stage of prototype, now it shapes an entire world of existents, in order to attain the stage of historical truth. By means of reason, every historical community desires to confirm itself, to *be* in such a way that humanity will be mirrored in and eventually correspond to it. For this, a conscious becoming is also needed – even if now consciousness is no longer in each but only in the legislative – that is, it is a transformation organised within historical Being.

History is thus a true *paideia*, as the ancients intended: a shaping of human beings within their historical Being. Through history, reason

no longer leaves the world to be, but *causes* it to be. Even the empty ideal of freedom possessed essentially this presupposition, that "left to be" in its so-called freedom, the human world succeeded in leading to a fulfilment, in making itself, by means of the same reason, active in each individual person of a community. But it was also antiquity which was aware that such a form of governance, which at the time bore the limited name of democracy, is – as Plato and Aristotle said in almost the same terms – the least bad of all the bad forms of government. The ideal government is that which, from the outset, appropriated reason to itself, causing but not letting the world be; giving it a suitable form with an idea of man and community.

Consequent to this idea as it is, history will not leave human being a moment's peace until it engages itself upon the path to its true being. And inasmuch as historical consciousness believes it *knows* from the outset what exactly the direction of historical Being is, the existents that it is to shape will live in a world that is as if already given, at the heart of which, from a given moment henceforward, everything will seem to be repetition. And indeed, everything then depends on "organisation"; the future is known in advance, what happens is a mere embodiment of the rule. The individual consciousness often revolts against this rigour. But any *objective* becoming within Being means rationally to constrain subjectivity to perish as such, in order to rediscover itself in its own being.

3. There is, however, *an absolute stage of becoming within Being*, where there is no longer any room for the constraint of subjectivity by objectivity, for, this time, they will both be one. Any consciousness of becoming within Being seemed to us "absolute", in the sense that it united consciousness of self with consciousness of something else; that is, it realised that aspect of reason by means of which Hegel defined reason itself. But while reason, with its absolute character, was once more realised at a subjective level, in the case of the individual consciousness, it arrives at an objective level in the case of the historical consciousness. Will an identification of the subjective with the objective not be realised here also? Absolute reason may, in its turn, be realised absolutely; not inside a single individual existence, nor inside a historical community, but inside the human itself: this was the modality of religion in the past, and today the *consciousness of planetary solidarity*.

In one or another of the religions of the past, reason, having now become *logos*, shaped and tended to "rescue" not just a single being, not

just a single community, but humanity. It tended to rescue humanity from its state of alienation in the face of Being. If becoming within Being has, at the human level, anywhere been more striking, then it was undoubtedly in this behaviour. The "thirst for the absolute", is so frequent and universal that – perhaps even more clearly – it seems, even in pre-literate man, to express no other spiritual need in human being except: becoming within Being, which is ultimately the deciding need, the core of human being. Such a need is often so irrepressibly resonant – without the restraint of culture, of rational education – that it seems to take on anti-rational forms, and it sometimes even asserts its hostility to reason. Hence, the opposition between faith and reason, which people of faith only sometimes proclaim and which those who imagine themselves as belonging to reason have always asserted. What then is man: a being who has faith? Or a being endowed with reason?

In reality, the opposition between faith and reason occurs only at an inferior level, where so many other, albeit fleeting, oppositions are proclaimed and upheld. It was *precisely* because man is a rational being that he then had faith. It was precisely because he is defined by "consciousness of becoming within Being" that man had, in the past, this religious thirst for the absolute, which was nothing more than the thirst for becoming within Being. Reason is man himself, in his potentiality to realise himself and embody values; and the man of faith, in the final instance, did exactly the same thing. It has been possible to go as far as to say that the man of faith is more "rational" than the man of science, for example. Since, for the latter, reason can be reduced to knowledge and thus remains mere intellect, while the man of faith has to live simultaneously under knowledge and consciousness of self, as he is within a conscious, *rational* becoming. Reason cannot be reduced to some kind of settling things in order, as we have been saying; it intends and has to be a kind of settling the self, as bearer of things, in order.

And that which is now at stake is not the subjective self, or the objective self, but the absolute self. (Reason, with its character of being absolute, now exercises at the level of the human absolute.) One single "rational" being, with its rational becoming within Being, might redress everything else. One single person might "rescue", or help to rescue, all the others. Goethe was able only to fulfil himself; and his fulfilment is *beautiful* precisely because it is unrepeatable, inimitable, essentially limited (since the beautiful is "infinity in the finite"). The

historical community tended to lead to fulfilment, that is, to mould, in the sense of historical being, the existents it comprised; and only through an ideal enlargement of self could it aspire to comprise the human whole. In the truth of reason/faith, however, man desires from the outset to be humanity itself. One alone can pay for all and everyone and everything else.

Has humanity thereby elevated itself to another stage? Has it engaged in Being to such an extent that everything can be created in advance? Faith cannot say this. Then is everything to be taken from the beginning? No, for it claims to have given man the *path* to engagement in Being (Tao, for the Chinese). And then faith (essentially, the reason that ignores itself) will become a recreation of the path and a moulding of humanity along the length of this path, which will sometimes be an "imitation" of the prototype. This "imitation", which depends upon the essence of the believer, became ritualised, just as affirmations of the *logos* became dogma, and subject to faith, now resting before the consciousness of the believer as a given. Modern man, with all his freedoms, then wonders what the "rational" is here. There is, of course, nothing rational from the perspective of the individual consciousness, as long as it is a matter of simple imitation, of the simple recreation of an already consummated gesture. Nor inside the political community of the individual person was it possible for a multitude of commandments to appear rational until they were elevated to the objective consciousness of the legislator. This time, however, it is only inside the absolute consciousness of humanity that true reason will be possible. And the task which such a faith assumes, of engaging all of humanity in Being, that theme of a universal becoming within Being, might of itself reveal that it is now not a matter of everyday reason, but of a higher-order reason, which is nowadays sought by humanity at the level of planetary consciousness.

In the case of the religious *logos*, its difficulty in preserving a likeness to current reason, which we usually make the criterion of "rationality", all the more increased the more the *logos* tended not only to provide all of humanity with the path towards Being but also in this way to rescue nature. This is, at least, the interpretation according to which nature also fell from grace at the same time as the "fall" of man; and now it is to be remade, at its own level, together with the remaking of man. From the perspective in which we are now situated, this means that not only becoming within Being would be the object of faith but

also becoming within becoming, that is, all of nature. And whatever we might think about religiously travestied reason, we cannot deny it the pathos of universality as well as the merit of having reflected, albeit negatively, the entire significance and unity of the material world, from light to the human clay, with their rational transfiguration. However, this leads us to a *fourth* type of becoming within Being.

Is there more than can be thought of? But this is what philosophical thinking desires, in the end. Through its modality, reason, or philosophical consciousness, was essentially active everywhere, in each of the three stages of becoming within Being described above. But what philosophical consciousness can impute to all things, now that it is separated from them, is that they describe a becoming within Being that is none other than the lot of *the human*. Both fulfilment of the individual type and that of the communal political type or, finally, the religious type, all primarily concern man. But in addition, they can also engage nature in their becoming within Being. Goethe affirmed that the human – *der schöne Mensch* – is the crown of nature. And, whereas in his artistic vision this crowning will occur by means of the eternal feminine (something explicable, since he theorises only becoming within becoming), on the other hand, in the self-affirmation represented by his personality, that is, where becoming within Being is genuinely at stake, his own nature will still be borne to fulfilment. – On the other hand, in the historical affirmation of a community, nature is also at stake; it provides the conditions for a human community to affirm itself within Being, and in political concepts taken to the limit, nature itself has to receive the shaping impulse of reason. As we have shown, it must itself be transformed in such a way as to favour the fulfilment of the community. Finally, faith, as we have seen, explicitly posits, through some interpretations, the problem of Being, and perhaps in any vision this world has to be led towards Being with something other than the humanity it contains. – But if nature also appears in the case of the other types of becoming within Being, it is merely *indirectly* or as though brought into play of itself. By the mere fact that man is fulfilled, nature is also fulfilled along with him.

Philosophy is also, in its way, a science of humans and what is human. But it is not man's becoming within Being that will be its object – not mere personality, not mere historical reality, and not mere salvation of humanness. Philosophy pursues becoming within Being, not mere *human* becoming within Being. It begins with man only because

becoming within Being arises through him; it "commences" with him. But, if through philosophy man unveils Being in the world, he unveils it for everything that is. Philosophical reason, therefore, does not just do justice to the absolute claim of faith; it extends it beyond the human absolute.

At the moment when a being endowed with reason appears in the world, Being also comes to light – we may thus say. But what does "at the moment a thing appears" mean? Is man his own datum in philosophy, as he appears as a datum in individual, historical and religious consciousness? Philosophy cannot merely set out from man; it must arrive at a Genesis of man, one which no longer prejudices him, as was the case with the religious Genesis, and which will no longer be a "narrative" of what has happened, but a construction of that which must be. *Through* man, philosophy is aware of the humanity beyond it. Consciousness of becoming within Being, or reason, must, in other words, give man the possibility of conceiving of a becoming within Being that is in solidarity with human becoming within Being. We shall thereby attain the final stage:

4. *Absolute reason's becoming within Being*, that of the reason detached from its human meaning.

Is this a gratuitous exigency? But such a becoming within Being is that which philosophical thinking has always pursued. It desired to be a constantly organised discovery of what is, and at the moment it arrived at the full understanding of its nature, philosophy named itself: dialectics. This is the field proper to it. Up to now, only the *consciousness* of becoming within Being (active in the individual person, in the case of the community or that of humanity), thus human reason, was its field. Now what is at stake is the consciousness of *becoming within Being*, that is, dialectics. In this sense, we have been able to say that philosophy is *only* dialectics – the dialectics, however, in which the categories of man are also those of the world.

Understood as becoming within Being in the highest sense, where subjectivity, objectivity and the human absolute are no longer at stake, since now reason is sought in the order of the world, beyond the boundaries of the human, dialectics seems to be no different than in Hegel. And nevertheless, *it cannot rest at what it was for him*. It might rather seem to develop according to the arrangement of the Kantian categories: from *quantity* to quality and then to reality. Within an initial outline, the "world" might commence with the non-differentiation

and homogeneity of quantity, thematically progressing according to the dialectical circle of totality—plurality—unity—totality. Quantitative totality, the theme here in the first group, simultaneously encloses in itself, however, both the *infinity* and the *negation* of any differentiation. Therefore, it is capable of inclusion in the second theme, that of quality: "the infinity that cannot be limited" (or the limitation that does not limit), which is everywhere negated and remains nevertheless in infinity. – In relation to it, as in the dialectical aggregates described above, the first theme will become the veritable anti-theme: it will be the "negation" (the lack of differentiation). For, from the perspective of quality, quantitative totality is negation: here there *is not anything*; there is something, but nowhere is there anything determinate, it is empty quantity. It is precisely with negation that the triad of the second dialectical circle opens, having, as is known, thematically progressed in its entirety as: non-limitation, negation, affirmation, non-limitation. In this way, it will be possible to make the transition from the world of the homogenous to affirmation of the *heterogeneous*. – In its turn, non-limitation, infinity of a qualitative type, inasmuch as it is an infinity of heterogeneity, of differentiation, expresses either a form of co-existence, or a chain of infinite conditioning of the moment inside it. Therefore, it can lead to relation and, as heteronomy, it can be included in the category of autonomy, the theme of the group of relation. And in relation to this theme, it will function as an anti-theme (heteronomy, an infinite causal chain); it will become the causality that opens the third dialectical circle: autonomy—causality—inherence—autonomy.

The beginning of the dialectic might therefore be (with a justification of the "beginning", just as Hegel was indebted to make at the beginning of his *Logic*):

	The First Circle				
Theme:	Totality				
Anti-theme:	Plurality		*The Second Circle*		
Thesis:	Unity	Theme:	Non-limitation		
Theme:	Q u a n t i t a t i v e	Anti-theme:	Negation		*The Third Circle*
	totality =				
		Thesis:	Affirmation	Theme:	Autonomy
		Theme:	Q u a l i t a t i v e	Anti-theme:	C a u s a l i t y
			non-limitation =		(causal chain)
				Thesis:	Inherence
				Theme:	*Autonomy*

Only now, having arrived at autonomy, does dialectics encounter self-relation, self-consciousness, the self, that is, *human being* above all.

It is thereby apt to provide (and is this not what any philosophical thinking does?) man with a veritable genesis. This time, man is no longer a given, and reason does not have the ontological sense of leading to a merely human fulfilment, but rather *all that is*, inside which the human is also fulfilled.

"At the moment in which a being endowed with reason appears in the world" therefore means, in reality, a moment (that of autonomy), inside a progression that enables that moment also. Henceforward, something else *can* commence: a "subjective" logic, as Hegel names it; but subjective logic is in itself implanted in the logic of absolute reason, which now no longer wishes to know about subjectivity, objectivity or the merely human absolute. Philosophy qua philosophy is therefore made possible; rational Being conceives a reason whereby it might be grounded as rational being. Man inscribes and is inscribed by Genesis, which is the becoming towards *his* Being of the world in becoming.

What especially forewarns us against the Hegelian dialectic, against that classic philosophy of *becoming*, is the poverty of the concept of becoming as the synthesis between being and non-being. How can the becoming of the absolute spirit be explained, understood, posited by means of a concept that includes only *Entstehen* and *Vergehen*, generation and corruption, precisely those which were condemned by the ancients? In our terms, how is it possible to affirm becoming within Being as long as here the character of becoming is that of being within non-being, of permanently depending on non-being? With his concept of becoming, Hegel, it seems to us, cannot explain becoming as far as man and beyond man. We find ourselves faced with the most organised and grandiose philosophy of becoming; with it, we are apt to understand and take account of all that becomes, apart from becoming itself!

But, from such a perspective, one final reservation regarding Hegelian dialectic becomes justified: the failure to take account of the "category" of relation. It is within philosophy of this kind, in which self-relation, or autonomy, plays such a great role, it is precisely in this philosophy – as in the case of becoming – that a sufficiently profound basis for the concept of relation fails to be achieved. Specifically, it seems to us that Hegel, who in so many other places was able to emerge from the tutelage of Kant, here sticks to the letter of criticism; relation understood as: inherence, causality and *community* (reciprocal action). The acceptance of community as "synthesis", as the ultimate

expression of relation, causes the latter to become incapable of fulfilling its dialectical function.

If, however, as we have attempted in the above, community is understood as a simple form of *causality* in common, and the space left vacant is filled with the category of autonomy, of absolute relation to self, then the relation becomes a fundamental "theme", predestined to resolve the antinomy between quantity and quality (without recourse to *Maass*, which is nothing but *one* kind of relation, as Hegel himself recognises) and to open the way, from the blind world of void quantity, to the world of the person and of history and, along with them, to that which lies beyond them.

Dialectics will thus be the last stage of becoming within Being, that in which human reason tends to attain the path to reason in itself. Through philosophy, human being desires to open that reason which, since it enables it as rational being, might henceforward correspond with its own reason. Philosophy is the "place" in which human reason obtains a juncture with reason in itself. But, in this way, philosophy, for its entire course, has been nothing but an ontological argument: at the moment in which you open your reason, which carries the entire world towards Being, you open your being.

What, then, is Being?

Among the terms of philosophy, that of Being probably has the most opposites. The principal opposites are as follows: being and non-being, being and consciousness, being and appearance, being and possibility, being and manifestation, being and nature, being and temporality, being and becoming. Each opposition might provide one or other characteristic of Being.

Being and non-being provide the characteristic of	— presence
Being and consciousness	— materialised presence
Being and appearance	—truth
Being and possibility	— reality in act
Being and manifestation	— principle, foundation
Being and nature	— unity in diversity
Being and temporality	— permanence
Being and becoming	— (all the characteristics together)

Becoming includes, indeed, all the terms opposite to Being, since it is temporality, nature, manifestation, possibility, appearance, even non-being, and all these for a consciousness.

"Being" might therefore mean: *presence*, be it more muted or be it more affirmed; a presence that is simultaneously *material*, not just mental; with a verifiably *true*, not illusory, existence, and namely as an actual existence, an existence *in act*, operating as a *foundation* for things and as a *unity* at their core, beneath a system of *permanence*.

If this is, in broad terms, the classic sense of Being, it follows that we should ask how it can be identified. —It will be clear that Being is not a thing of the first but rather of the last instance, inasmuch as it is precisely what appears in the immediate that does *not* represent Being. Therefore, Being, although present, is withdrawn. This is also what gives inner tension to the idea of Being: it is a presence without a present. The more manifestations there take place in the immediate, the more Being seems to withdraw. Even objectively, not only for a perceiving consciousness, to the extent that Being manifests itself, it must clothe itself in as many coverings. Identification of it, in an initial acceptation, therefore means the removal of integuments, in order that Being in itself might be obtained.

But given that it is thus, we are on the trail of a Being that is ever withdrawing from its manifestations (as has also happened in the exploration of the world of the atom). To capture such a Being represents one of the ideals of knowledge – but it is not everything. What thinking sought was the Being *in* manifestations, not so much Being without them. We shall find ourselves in front of an embryonic, enfolded Being, a Hegelian *An sich*, which, in order to be ascertained, needs to be unfolded as a *Für sich*, or even transferred into an *An und für sich*. In any case, if we are thinking under the sign of dialectics, then we must admit that Being may signify the whole rather than an inceptive moment of the whole. Moreover, independently of the Hegelian or even the dialectical language, does it not become clear that it is only through unveiling that we encounter the *Being that generates*, one which, for this reason, perhaps explains things in act just as little as the fact of procreation explains creatures in act? And if, nevertheless, it does explain them, it does not cause them to "hold", but on the contrary authorises such waves of Being that, at the level of man, the "maddened self" of which Indian thinking speaks must once again be awoken.

Therefore, a second sense of Being, as a second species of it, arises before us. If a Being for manifestations needs to be conceived of and captured, then alongside the Being that generates there arises the *Be-*

ing that integrates. Perhaps, in the end, there will not only be two, but in encountering each other they will close the loop of Being. But at the present stage, they still appear as two.

Being withdrew from its manifestations and concentrated itself ever more around its own truth. The new Being is, on the contrary, in expansion. It is ever more diffuse, together with its manifestations. The first was unity in diversity; the second is unity *as* diversity. The first was tautological, the second heterological. It causes things to hold, not because it halts them or because it might provide a skeleton for their varied embodiments, but because it ceaselessly totalised them; because it is "their totality at every moment". — That this specific sense of integrative Being may nevertheless become generic (as it has indeed become in modern thinking, which for integrative truths would require an integrative Being) is proven by its comparison with the table of the characteristics of classic Being. Integrative Being would be: a presence, even an omnipresence as totality; with an everywhere materialised existence; it bears in it the truth of appearances, for the whole is the truth of the parts; it is actual and not virtual; it represents the constitutive principle of things, to the extent that the whole precedes and grounds the part; it gives them their sole unity, that of totality, and their sole justification, that of being integrated into a form of permanence. We thus find ourselves confronted with *two* senses of Being, just as legitimate as the classic headings of Being. Why two? And are there really only two?

That there are no more than two can be demonstrated only by means of a negative trial: any other sense, whether it corresponds to all the characteristics of Being or not, implicates these two in reality. For example – to take an extreme case – in its thirst for Being, thinking has sought its absolute image, that of stable Being, that of the divine. But the divine itself affirms the *double* sense of Being, specifically creation and integration (here "salvation"). Alongside the Father must appear the Son. No Theodicy has been able to pull the divine out of this equivocation, will all its implications. For, why does he create a world so badly that he then has to redeem it?

As for the fact that Being, a Being that is pre-eminent, must be conceived of in two ways, this depends not upon a split in Being but upon the split between intellectual thought and reason. The intellect analyses, abstracts and fixates: therefore, it will pursue, according to its logical nature, the concentration of Being. The reason unites, integrates

and develops; with its dialectical nature, it will everywhere encounter Being in expansion. Thus, in thought, we reflect Being in two ways. But if one understands thought as self-consciousness brought from the real to the stage of man, then one might say that Being *is* thus, concentration on the one hand and expansion on the other. It is not a splitting in Being, but rather the pulsation of Being itself, perhaps.

In one sense, therefore, it is preferable to say: there is no Being, there is a regression towards Being and a progression towards it. Among given realities, some have a greater *capacity for Being* (whether regressive or progressive), and that is all. This is why we can speak of "being in miniature", at the level of things, instead of each time confronting the immensity of Being.

Through science, the intellect has identified something of the order of Being, as an ultimate form of the existence of matter, the fields. Through philosophy, reason too identifies integrative Being – specifically, the human sphere. It is, of course, absurd, to see in mere electromagnetic fields, on the one hand, and in the human sphere on the other, the Being itself of the world. But it is not at all absurd to see here: *the realia with the greatest capacity for Being* at the heart of the given world.

Behold the human (the only superior cerebralised creature known to us), in whose makeup, at a stricter count, there is not lacking a single one of the substances or processes leading up to him. Is this man, who, in fact, integrates nature, not at the same time the being most open to future integrations? — In terms of the nature beneath him, as well as in his own terms, man constantly absorbs the world into himself. The fundamental acts of the *bios*, respiration or nutrition, are a-*similations*, identifications, a reduction to self of another element. The desire for and pleasure of union, at this level, are moreover united with human desire and pleasure at any level. Sentiment is nothing other than union, the abolition of the barriers between subject and world. In its turn, the human will resolutely unifies that which is not of itself united. Through consciousness, nature has obtained a superior form of union with the world, that of isolated Being; an almost improbable deepening, through memory. Language itself unites with others; knowledge also unites with things in some way, specifically in the principle of existence. And the fact that man has also "usurped" them is proven by his capacity to remake them in practice.

Life, consciousness, knowledge and practice thus appear as so many "natural solutions" to augment the lot of union. The cosmogonic Eros of which the ancients spoke essentially expresses the sense of the integration of Being; except that the ancients passed over the passivity of *things*, that which appears active only in the case of man. Nowadays, man's capacity for Being refers even to "absolute" forms: thus, there has opened the perspective of man surviving in outer space after the pulverisation of the Earth, whose quintessence would be prolonged and preserved in man. The somewhat meaningless idea of the prophet of former times: "This earth will pass, but my words will remain", acquires meaning for man as such. If the term of Being means anything, this is the ultimate meaning that might be conferred upon it, for the world of this planet, and the human sphere would then truly be its Being. But it is more fitting to say that man is the integrative being, at his core, and in this sense, any homunculus produced and tolerated by the Earth has a greater proximity to "Being" than the world itself.

The terms of Being, Being that integrates, and capacity for Being have thereby opened towards man's becoming within Being. What man brings about in the world of universal becoming, through his capacity to integrate, is becoming within Being. Participant and protagonist of becoming within becoming, he possesses at the same time the virtue of the other becoming; even more so, *consciousness* of it, which is reason and which transforms becoming within Being into *conscious* becoming within Being.

But it is around man that everything else pivots. If there is no reason beyond man, then he is the "being of the world". If, however, there is becoming within Being (verified and not necessarily conscious) beyond man, if therefore there are order and laws in the world, then Being is also beyond man, man and all.

CONCLUSION

The problem of philosophy is, in the final instance, Being. But the way in which the theme of Being has been posed risked becoming the end of philosophy. As long as Being is *opposed* to becoming, thinking remains at an impasse. If the philosophy of the past nonetheless preserves the mere character of museum piece, it is, to a large extent, because it did not always bring Being into opposition with becoming. Plato and Hegel reappear in the path of any philosophical conscious-

ness precisely because, whether deliberately or not, they gave expression to becoming within Being through their dialectics.

Becoming *serves* Being, rather than opposes it – this is what the present book sets out to say. A new ontological term is thereby obtained, apart from Being and becoming: becoming within Being. With these three terms, it is as though the dialectical process arises of itself: not in the usual sense, as though becoming within Being were a "synthesis" between becoming and Being, but rather with the new sense, apparent only in this triad, that the last term is placed within the other two, as tending from the one to the other. This is why becoming within Being proved to be a thesis, not an external synthesis, while the term towards which it strives, Being, was a genuine *theme*. We thereby arrived at an oriented dialectics, one which is simultaneously circular: *theme—anti-theme—thesis—theme*, where the theme is contradicted by the anti-theme and is recreated as thesis. The new term, becoming within Being, unleashed a new dialectical mechanism.

But is it merely a new term? Does it not denominate humanness in all its validity, in all that extracts it from the becoming within becoming of nature? To concretise, it is as though the circle formed by Being, becoming, and becoming within Being produced, in classical as well as Hegelian terms, the absolute, the nature, and the human. The absolute was to be denied by nature and transform itself through man, just as, formally, the theme is denied through the anti-theme and remade through the thesis. Nature has a negative sense; it is the anti-theme. This fact is seen by philosophy but not by science. But it nevertheless also has a positive sense, leading to the thesis and through it back to the theme: this is seen by philosophy but not by religion. It is the duty of philosophy to rehabilitate nature by transcending it. It is the duty of philosophy to integrate becoming within becoming into becoming within Being.

Becoming within becoming is approximated, unrealised becoming within Being ("nature tends towards man"). What is Being in its way? It is successful becoming within Being. We thereby arrive at the conclusion that becoming within Being, the apparently constructed, artificial term, *is* the core of the real. From the *formal* point of view, we have been able to find three ontological terms: Being, becoming, and becoming within Being. From the *material*-ontological point of view, we have found just two: becoming (nature) and becoming within Being (the human), while the third, absolute Being, is merely an ideal. From

the *functional*-ontological point of view, we find a single term: becoming within Being. Everything is becoming within Being —the flower is thus, the absolute is thus. Except that the flower is unattained becoming within Being, while the absolute designates attained becoming within Being. To understand nature to the very limit means to view it from the perspective of becoming within Being. And to understand Being means to view it still as becoming within Being.

If becoming within Being is everything, at least functionally, then what does it represent in fact? It is, of course, quite superfluous for us to recall that it cannot correspond to man and is not intended to define him in a new way. Human nature can only *open* towards becoming within Being, but apart from that, it is becoming within becoming itself, nature. What, therefore, is becoming within Being? Through it, we understand the other things. But how is it to be understood in itself?

Since it gave meaning to the other things, its consciousness of itself will be a form of reason. Is not the *consciousness* of becoming within Being (not mere becoming within Being) reason itself? —This is the hypothesis the present book puts forward, or *the new definition of reason it proposes*. And the laborious but inevitable comparison of the Kantian table of the categories, their reduction to three terms and then to one alone, from which they are deduced, intends only to demonstrate that the consciousness of becoming within Being is indeed reason itself, since only it provides the key (the transcendental deduction) to the classical philosophy of reason, just as it gives the key (the "thematic") for the classical philosophy of the dialectic.

But have we not become lost among schemata? No, since reason is not merely a formal game, but rather refers to the realisation of self. The consciousness of becoming within Being is converted into conscious becoming within Being. Reason refers to its own embodiment. And, as concrete expressions of becoming within Being, there now appear the person, historical community, humanity as a whole, and the *logos* of dialectics. Reason is in all things, it brings-into-being <*în-fiinţează*> all these stages of reality: but at the first three stages it embodies itself in the matter of the human-individual, the human-historic and the human-absolute, while at the last stage it is its own object.

Then is Being to be sought here? Is this all there is? No, not at all, for each of the modalities at these four unique stages of reality has

a precarious existence. Neither the person, nor the community, nor humanity as a whole, nor even the *logos* proclaimed by philosophy reached as far as Being, *in fact*. The person has no "immortality", the historical community does not fulfil itself supra-historically, humanity is not assured as a whole, and the *logos* (or dialectically endowed matter) has not been decrypted. But what does this imply? Just as the realist believes that matter or a thing *is*, even if everything that appears to him as matter dissolves into relations, concepts, abstractions, so too Being is everywhere everything that rests beneath its law, even when it is contradicted.

And it is beneath *such* a law that the real is to be understood and permanently sought. It is, in its entire extent, an exception to Being, but it makes no sense except in the light of Being. So too was the finite an exception to the infinite, but it had no equilibrium except in the latter. So too becoming is transformed into the mere already-become if it has not been understood inside Being, which it nevertheless contradicted. And what are all these things if not expressions of the anti-theme, which is not to be understood except in the light of the theme, which it nevertheless contradicts? It is, of course, a paradox to speak of "a law to which there are no exceptions", as Goethe once chanced to say. But the dialectical circle *explains* this paradox and ultimately abolishes it, showing that there is only unilateral contradiction, at the heart of reality. We are in a world in which everything contradicts Being, but nothing is contradicted by it.

VOLUME 2

TREATISE ON ONTOLOGY (1980)

INTRODUCTION

After it had been deprived of everything else, philosophy was left with one initial problem: *Being* (*dialectics*, in the elaborated sense). But with this, it can perhaps re-conquer all.

That philosophy has been deprived of everything else is plain. The mere fact that the sciences have been better able to speak about its privileged concepts has dispossessed it of them. About time and space, things have been discovered which are of a subtlety that diminishes philosophical thought; and about object, whole and part, relation, system, causality likewise. Lingering upon the modest distinction between substance and attributes, philosophy was not capable of conceiving modern scientific culture's extraordinary idea of "function". Philosophical infinity pales beside the infinities of set theory. Philosophy's idea of cosmos, whether finite or infinite, seems coarse in comparison with the scientific concept of a universe that is elastic or expanding. The philosophic principle of identity is naïve in comparison with that of substances with multiple isotopes (a kind of multiple One, which would have caused Plato to rewrite the *Parmenides*). If philosophy has retained a certain mastery of "values", then these too, headed by the good, the beautiful and even truth, not to mention soul, individual or society, are on their way to being replanted in different soil.

Thus, not even speculative imagination has proven to possess philosophical thought. In its as yet untapped reserves, it does not seem to possess any kind of concept or utilisable vision for the novelties which have now appeared but which have not yet discovered their names. As for *language*, philosophical reflection has made unutterably more use of the lexical inventions of mathematics, physics and biology than of the rest of the culture of tortured and often ungrounded philosophic idioms.

One concept alone has remained beyond the reach of scientific culture: the concept of *Being*. For Being cannot be reduced to *law* and neither can it be made transparent to law, neither can it be assimilated, literally eaten (to use Fichte's expression), as knowledge has proven able to do, in reducing everything else to relationships, symbols and structures. Just as any nutritive material is ultimately transformed into one of the four fundamental substances that seep into the blood, so the re-converted object of knowledge is absorbed into the blood of the spirit, hence, with any local being, knowledge everywhere engages in "ontophagy". But for Being itself, knowledge has no assimilating organ.

If it is clear that philosophy has been deprived of everything except the concept of Being, what is less clear, at first sight, is the way in which philosophy might recover everything through this single concept. Of course, it might be said that whereas the sciences lead to knowledge, philosophy leads to *meanings. It might therefore be allowed*, at a pinch and not without indulgence, that meanings envelop knowledge, once obtained, and place it in order, or at least in *an* order, and that in this way philosophy, with its free meanings and conception of the world, somehow rediscovers everything it had lost in terms of knowledge. But how can it be admitted that any "meaning" ultimately relates to or mirrors *that of Being*?

It is this that we shall attempt to prove; and if not, then let us reveal it, or at least suggest it. And the first way of revealing it is to say that this does not contain any novelty in itself: philosophy has always suggested it, even at the time when it strove or found itself obliged (in the absence of the sciences) also to produce knowledge. Not only does a science of Being, which we shall further name ontology, sustain everything that is philosophical discipline – from the most formal (logic) to that most bound to content (hermeneutics) – but it is also ontology, or at least the language of Being, that supplies "meaning" to any domain of reality or ideality, as well as to the corresponding knowledge.

However, it is not a question of the monolithic Being of Parmenides or of the Being – however pliant – of declared and perpetual ontology, including the Being invoked by Heidegger: a Being that with Parmenides is silent from the beginning and with Heidegger ends in silence. What is at stake is the Being of an ontology that is *undeclared* but active at the heart of any philosophy. This Being is not monolithic, but rather – in order to designate its character from the outset – it is trinitary. Although, in his own way, Hegel, with his triplicity, may

have given it expression (revealing its traces and aspiration in the *entire* history of philosophy), this concept of Being had been affirmed in speculation elsewhere than in school philosophy, for example in myth. It is here, albeit in historic guise, that threefold Being, qua General, Individual and Determinations, all of them inherent to Being, which is nevertheless one, could sometimes appear in its purity.

Hegel understood that it was thus, making avowed recourse to the trinitary model when he condensed his dialectics, essentially his speculation about Being in its triplicity: *Allgemeinheit*, *Besonderheit* (which represents determinations) and *Einzelnheit*. For him, everything is, at its base, i.e. in Being, the development of this triplicity (as a rule defectively presented as: thesis, antithesis, synthesis). But in Hegel it is a *development* and not an envelopment, as it seems to us the model of Being ought to be presented, while behind this development there remains, for him, something else: spirit. One might say that "Being" is here precisely development (the first real concept is in fact "becoming", as Hegel himself declares at the beginning of the *Logic*) or, conversely, that Being might be Spirit. In both cases, one cannot identify Being in Hegel. For if like him one says that Being is truly "the result, road and all", thus the Spirit in its development and all, then Being has the nature of a whole and is no longer manifest in part except as a "moment". Thus, it can nowhere be invoked in its plenitude and fulfilment, just as not even Hegel himself invokes it. But if you say that it is the Spirit itself, then Being has, for him, been left somewhere behind, it is identical to non-Being. Or else, it is somewhere at the extremity of a becoming which, in fact, does not come to an end, or which is resumed when it comes to an end.

Enfolded Being alone seems to provide us with the model of Being, present and active in all that is reality. That this model might also possess subsistence in itself was the mere truth of belief. However, that it operates everywhere is, we shall assert, the truth of philosophy. It is from this truth that all philosophies have derived life. Some have proceeded from the *General*, others from the *Individual*, others still from *Determinations* (phenomena, manifestations); for there are epochs or thought situations that claim to bring to light one term or another. Some philosophies have reconstructed the *entire* model (but in a single way, such as Hegel himself did, with the order: General-Determinations-Individual); other philosophies, through the deficit of one term or another, have remained exposed but, precisely for that reason, open

and stimulating. On the one hand, saturation of the model leads not to petrified Being but to that fulfilled Being which we shall understand as "becoming within Being" and whence it seems to us that dialectical development barely begins. On the other hand, the *tendency* to saturation is the ferment of the world and the resort of spiritual life itself. This is why we shall venture to say that, with its three terms and their exercise, ontology not only lays the foundation for all philosophical disciplines, but also, at its base, expresses spiritual life and all the meanings of the latter, howsoever they might be manifested (in knowledge, in art, in behaviour). Directly or indirectly, it signifies everything that is real or ideal processuality.

However, for now, these are mere assertions. One alone demands to be accepted henceforward, even if only for the sake of inventory, namely that the initial theme of philosophy is Being. It has been said that philosophy has no unitary subject matter, since each philosophy speaks in its own name about something different and takes things from the start. Only the second half of the assertion is true, that each philosophy takes everything from the start. As for the first half, that philosophy has no unitary subject matter, the answer is simple: not only does it have one, at its base, but also, from the outset, it has one subject alone, *when it is philosophy*. On the other hand, *access* to this subject differs, as there is no royal road to arrive at Being, like there is – in spite of the famous saying – a royal road in geometry. The road of mathematical reason is the same for any rational being and therefore can be named the royal road, and the same rational knowledge is the royal road in any science. On the other hand, the roads of philosophical reason are, in comparison with this road, mere paths, traversed with difficulty by each, when they are not paths that peter out, "Holzwege" as Heidegger called them. Nevertheless, there is only one endpoint to the road: Being.

We are speaking of all kinds of matters in philosophy, but we are no longer speaking openly about Being; in modern philosophy there are all kinds of treatises, but only singular ones on ontology: as that of the author of definitions Wolff. Being usually seems something self-evident, either beyond understanding or beyond us, something unique and massive, caught in a mobile or immobile eternity. But this unique and sacral Being does not explain anything about what *is*. Rather, it crushes and degrades everything. As it is, the Being of traditional ontology *could do without the world* – this is the situation at which it ar-

rives. And then, the world itself has ended up becoming absent from the subject matter of Being. Similarly, all culture is, unfortunately, deprived of that which might genuinely sustain it: ontology.

Why does it happen thus? Perhaps because, in the past, nothing was seen at the heart of reality except *substances*, with their manifestations, and in our times *functions*, with their relations and structures. (In this respect, a work published by E. Cassirer some time ago, *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*, is significant). Nevertheless, *between* substances (even if they are general substances, as Aristotle would have it), which represent too dense a reality, and functions, which have too rarefied a reality, there exists something else, namely *elements*. And with a theory of the concept of element (of a vaster reality, such as the species, Ideas, or the objective Spirit of Hegel, although all of them generalised) it would be worth rethinking the problem of ontology.

Being itself must then be rethought – and in fact it is rethought, but only implicitly. In any case, it must be secularised. Traditional ontology has, perhaps, done that which has been unjustly imputed to Plato: it has *doubled* the world with another incorruptible world. Being can no longer be of the Parmenidean type, one of détente and peace, but nor one in the Heracleitean sense, of empty conflict. It is, rather, one of *tension*, due to its terms, which are in act and in prevalence or weakening. It is arborescent, orchestrated and polyphonic. Although culture may not invoke it and philosophies themselves may conceal it, Being, with its articulations and action, is that which *comprehends* all (from the Latin *comprehendere* "bind together, unite"). What we call philosophy is this comprehension of the world. However if Being, rethought philosophically, will not be able to say to each thing how it "is" – insofar as it is – then philosophy should disappear from the world.

❦

Since "Being" has two meanings: Being in general and the Being of each thing, the present ontology has two parts: in the first, the Being in things is examined (what is the meaning of the Being of an atom, of a substance, of a tree, of a man, of a layer, of a thought); in the second part it is Being in *itself* that is examined, as grounding the Being in things.

BEING IN THINGS THAT ARE

1. Nothing of that which is expresses Being

Ontology has opened a number of times with the thesis: Being is neither thus, nor thus; it is neither this, nor that. The thesis ought to be turned upon its head: neither this, nor that is Being.

Such an upturned beginning can be justified historically. Beyond the mythical-philosophical vision of Indian thought ("neti-neti", says each reality to the one who seeks Brahma) and beyond the vision of the Book of Job ("it is not in me – nor in me", says each reality with respect to wisdom), rests the philosophical beginning proper, by means of "methodical doubt" regarding things, to use the expression of Descartes, or by means of "phenomenological reduction", to use a later expression. Just as living beings do not express life in itself, or languages speech in itself, the things that are do not express Being in itself.

From the outset, the investigation into Being finds itself faced with a total phenomenological reduction. There is no longer any need for an investigating consciousness to undertake the reduction: things themselves balk before Being and place themselves in brackets. Descartes' piece of wax is everywhere. "Methodical doubt" even says too little in comparison with the dubitation or actual doubling of things, among which nothing remains what is, and in the end perishes.

But should credence be given to things and should Being thereby be sought *beyond* them? Ontology has, in the past, given them credence, discounting them as such for the investigation into Being. Ontology felt that Being was something else and should be sought somewhere else. From that moment, philosophy fell into the *sublime manner*.

The ontology of the past most often floats in the sublime ("Being is eternal and unchanging"), just as logic, especially the new logic, develops within the sublime (respectively within the sublime of exactitude). In order to remain there, logic has decreed that nothing can be said about any real concatenation, or about any concatenation of thought, since these cannot possess any final rigour. Ontology, in its turn, has

turned its gaze from all that is corruptible. "Logic demonstrates how badly the natural languages are made", as one contemporary logician observed. Ontology – anyone might equally say – demonstrates how badly things are made.

Since the Presocratics, it has been possible to follow the transition from ontological principles in the *real* to principles in the *sublime*. Thales' water, air and fire could still be sacred, as they were not yet sublime, unlike Being for Parmenides, number for Pythagoras or, later, the Idea of the Good (but not Ideas themselves) for Plato, the Prime Mover for Aristotle, and the One for Plotinus. The religious spirit affirmed this vision of ontology. However, with or without the religious spirit, ontology remained in the sublime. It seemed that Being could by no means be sought in things, which do not claim it for themselves. However, nor could it be sought in the symbols, structures and laws of science, which do not convey Being, but only the cognitive spectrum of realities. Afterwards, ontology ceased to be practised, or, when it was, Being was projected further into the absolute.

Can ontology be left in the sublime? Whereas logic, with its sublime of exactitude (through which even the fundaments of mathematics have been called into question), still has a justification, namely its applications, ontology, on the other hand, has none. It cannot say that things have been made badly, let us make others, as logic has said since Leibniz, or that languages are badly made, let us make another, universal language. Perhaps, on more careful consideration, philosophy should say to the logicians the opposite: languages, in their turn, demonstrate how stupidly narrow, rigid and external logic is made. In any case, things steadfastly come to show ontology how badly it is made if it lingers in the sublime.

To this the reply is that there is no exit: *either* we should call Being merely the existence of these individual things, the rest being names (nominalism), *or* Being is nevertheless somewhere else other than in things (as traditional ontology asserts). However, ontology should begin precisely by overcoming this alternative, demonstrating that *there is a possible* exit from it.

Essentially, in any of its versions, ontology is confronted, from the outset, by nothingness. But it all depends on what kind of nothing you set out from; for nothing is always something specific, as it is the absence of something. When one sets out from above, from Being, saying "Being is neither this, nor that", one immediately arrives at Hegel's as-

sertion that Being is the permanent transition into nothing, and that it is nothing, respectively *a void of things*. When one sets out from below, from things, then the fact of saying that they are not Being also leads to a void, but to a *void of Being*. Is the void of things the same as the void of Being?

The void of things is "logical". Indeed, it avowedly leads Hegel to the first "concept", which is that of becoming (processuality, in fact), with which ontology instantly crosses into logic. However, the void of Being is *ontological*, and if it too leads to becoming, it will do so only at its end-point and by preserving an ontological meaning.

When it is said that Being is neither this, nor that, Being retracts ever further into meaninglessness. On the other hand, if one says that neither this, nor that is Being, then a horizon to it or at least a question regarding it have become possible.

Being is neither this nor that: this is an answer. Neither this nor that is Being: this is a question.

2. Being, however, is not, without the last of the things that are

If nothing in that which is, even though in some way it "is", expresses Being, then it means that Being as such is an absence in things. However, it is not just any absence, but one that is *in* them. Other absences are *around* the thing, not in it ("around any embodiment there is an immensity of non-being", says Plato in the *Sophist* 256d), given that the fact of not being something else is external to the thing, for example the fact that the tree is not also a river. On the other hand, the absence of Being is in the thing. There is not enough Being in it, or it is not genuinely Being.

Being has thus made the thing a "possible place" for it. It has distributed itself everywhere – but nowhere has it appeared as such. Each thing is a monad that *might have been able* to reflect all Being.

❦

The very same existent which shows that it is not Being might add: "but without me Being is not". The real might refute Being, and does in fact refute it, but it is not alien to it. A man's hand is not the man, but the man is the hand, the same as the eye, voice, or body – merely to give an organic example. Indian thought gave expression to this situa-

tion by saying: "If some one worships Brahma as distinct from himself, then he is deceived". Philosophy has deceived itself a number of times: it worshipped Being as distinct from real things and sought it without them. However, Being cannot be separated from things, if every existent is a point within its field; it cannot be except in a manner *other* than existents, the same as the field.

The code of Being might then figure in real things, but not be fulfilled; or the terms of the code might exist in them, but not be arranged in the order of a genuine code. If things refute Being, while the latter does not refute them, it means that Being invests things.

The idea of Being has nevertheless had the opposite fate: instead of investing things, it has deposed or degraded them, in any of its great versions. Being has an-nihil-ated[1] the real.

<p style="text-align:center">❦</p>

But it is *this* that is demonstrated by things too, that they are a nothing, an absence of Being. However, an ontic nothing may be *truer* than its direct invocation. Whereas its direct invocation elicits a response that risks being untrue, the non-assumption of Being leaves room for its question. It cannot be decided at the outset that these things are not, in their way, Being, even if they do not express it and do not assume it. It is not possible to pass over them on the pretext that they are degraded. Things can be better than they seem. And the consciousness of *universal* ontological non-fulfilment might be a stage towards Being.

The questioning about Being then changes its meaning and orientation: Being is not inscribed in privileged realities, but rather (be it even negatively) everywhere. Nor will access to it be privileged. In our times, Heidegger has sought to obtain access through a privileged reality: humans, who are precisely the existent that inquires about Be-

---

1 The etymon of the Romanian *nimic* ("nothing") is *nemica* < Latin *ne mica* ("not a crumb"). It thus closely matches, albeit more concretely, the etymon of the Latin *nihil* < *nehilum* < *ne hilum* (*hilum* = "a tiny thing", "a thing of no importance", "a trifle"). The verb a *nimicnici* ("to annihilate"), and its variant a *nimici*, might thus be translated as "to reduce a thing to less than its ultimate crumb of matter". The *mica*, which refers to the smallest possible particle of matter (cf. the *hilum*, which can also refer to the moral unimportance of a thing; Lucretius uses it both in this sense – *ne hilum* = "not a whit", "not a jot" – and in the sense of "smallest part (of a thing)"), is thus the final threshold between "something" and "nothing". – Translator's note

ing. The interrogation about Being has been reduced to the question put to the questioner. But the question should be put to the question, which is everywhere. More fitting is the question put to realities, to *all* realities, by Indian thought ("neti") or in the Book of Job than the questioning of humans alone. But Heidegger himself later saw that there are realities more ontologically expressive than humans, such as language, which in itself is a question about Being, whose "dwelling" it is, according to him.

Things are not Being; not even all of them together are Being. All of them together are bracketed as *not being* Being. There might seem to remain the "doubt" that they are Being; but this doubt is one of a cognitive consciousness that itself stands beneath doubt, given that it too is a piece of wax. The one who has put the question ought also to be bracketed. The questioner has done nothing more than to *see* the doubt, the dubitation. Things are that which dubitate, which double themselves, questioner and all.

On the other hand, it might be said about things: *dubitant, ergo duplicantur*. On the one hand, they are what they are, on the other hand, they are an emptiness. The fact that the tree is not at the same time a mountain and a man says nothing in particular. However, the fact that the tree is not Being says something intrinsic about it. There is an emptiness in the intimacy of each thing.

But emptiness might have a positive meaning, as that which opens towards something other than the nothingness of the thing. Independent of the various kinds of positive emptiness in scientific knowledge – e.g. in mathematics, the *positive* meaning of the real number, defined as a "scission" in the numeric continuum; or the function of emptiness in the case of logical operators; or even more clearly, the different kinds of "emptiness" that surround a verb, in a certain vision of grammar – ontological argumentation might begin with the nothing of Being, respectively with its own emptiness. The mediaeval ontological argument claimed that a particular being, wholly consummate being, (and not just any reality, like the consummate island imagined by Gaunilo, the opponent of Anselm) also possessed the fulfilment of existence. Likewise, not just any emptiness possesses an ontologically positive sense, but only that of Being.

The mere fact of having put the question to things, or having read in them the question of whether they are not somehow the Being, has placed them all in brackets, but it has also put them to rights. The

suitable question restores health to the whole world; but this time the question bears upon the emptiness at the heart of every reality, restoring its dignity as reality. "Mirari omnia, etiam tritissima", said the naturalist Linné; "even the most ordinary". They may all contradict Being, but Being does not contradict them.

In this sense, ontology can indeed begin, as it began in Wolff's treatise, with the principle of contradiction. But not with the classical principle of contradiction, with its vain solemnity and narrowness ("if we judge that something is, we cannot at the same time judge that it is not"), but with the principle of unilateral contradiction.

3. This means that Being cannot be sought anywhere else

Things are not Being, but without things, Being is not. Is Being also *somewhere else*, or is it merely *otherwise* than things?

Being is not somewhere else. "Somewhere else" means some-other-place, another somewhere, thus the same mode of being somewhere. Being would be the condition of the world also as such, a second world, separate to the first. But if it is a world *like* the first, then (as the ancients said) there would have to be a third world to underlie the first two. Consequently, it cannot be a world like the first; it has to be *otherwise* than the first. The problem of Being is not that of being somewhere else, it is essentially that of being otherwise. In things, it might appear as a medium for all of them, or as an internal medium for each.

§

The ontology of split worlds ("somewhere else") has, on a number of occasions, rendered ontology itself impossible. A second world can only repeat the existing world and itself demands explanation, rather than explaining the latter. When he tried to compromise Platonism, Aristotle showed that it doubled realities with Ideas and, in attempting to explain them, thereby raised new problems. The idea of a man ought to have something in common with the real man, and as such a third man is necessary (with the objection that Plato himself had put forward in the *Parmenides*) in order to understand the first two. Aristotle himself did not allow substantial forms to be subsistent and thus independent of matter; and when the *intellectus agens* he conceived was thought *separately*, his philosophising about "soul" brought about

an imbalance in thought which was to have repercussions until the Middle Ages.

From "separation" begins the degradation of speculation into non-philosophy brought by common sense. The problem of the soul-body separation has been a curse of thought. Ancient speculation remained blocked in the here/beyond opposition (with Plotinus), after barely having survived the split between corruptible and incorruptible. In terms of speculation, modern thought has never recovered from the oppositions between subject/object, relative/absolute, thought/world, self/other, individual/society, consciousness/existence, and, above all, Being/becoming – when it has retained them as opposites.

A separation that is maintained is non-truth itself: separation as opposition leads precisely to a maximum clenching together, thus to non-separation, as can be seen with a vengeance in man and with the dialectical process in man and things. There might remain the *indifferent* separation of things and in particular the separation of Being from the real. But thereby, as indifference, not only the doubling of the real world with a world of Being would become inoperable, but also there would be a denial of the ontological import that things are a particular void, that of Being, a well as a denial of the import that Being possesses a "possible place" in things.

The real separation – and not the logical one, obtained by means of the blade-edge of thought – in fact occurs within the inseparable. Something detaches itself from the medium in which it is caught, but taking the latter with it; or else it turns against the medium in which it has been caught and becomes caught more deeply within it. The only possible "separation" will be one that adopts the outer medium and transforms it into an inner or active medium *from within*. Similarly, it has been suggested that – regardless of whether the idea remains scientifically valid or not – the living organism enclosed the warm primal seas of life within itself in the form of the blood. The individual ego that separates from the larger self itself becomes an larger self, or else atrophies. To put it more concretely: the detachment of humans from the Earth and their separation from it, if such a thing is effectively to take place, as has been predicted, will be made by humans who have assumed the Earth as an internal medium within themselves. But the medium, insofar as it is a medium, is not genuinely somewhere inside, but merely functions *from* inside.

Being cannot be somewhere else, but nor can it be anywhere in particular. Whereas it crosses from the state of external medium enveloping things into the condition of their internal medium, it is, as medium, permanently beyond things. Since their intimacy is the emptiness of Being, henceforward it might be said that through its absence – an absence of an order different to the usual non-being around things – Being will be a medium that functions from inside realities.

As it is different, Being is not therefore to be understood as a different *world*. However, this *otherwise* of Being regressed to somewhere else, when it was understood as "completely otherwise", as has been said of the divine, namely as incorruptibility in comparison with the corruptibility of real existents. Insofar as the incorruptible world might have been merely *conceivable*, it would have had the simple meaning of ideality. But it was not conceived, rather it was *seen* by the ancients: they lifted their eyes to the starry heavens and believed that what they saw was always the same, with the firmament, or even the seven firmaments that bore the planets, sun and moon. The incorruptible seemed to exist in the literal, substantial sense for them, likewise there would also come to exist an incorruptible matter, a fifth element, the aether. The stars each had their own "soul", which was also incorruptible. Even if there were doubts – and the first doubt was brought by the fact that in the centre of an incorruptible astral world was placed all that could be most corruptible: the earth – the ancient Greeks had the speculative misfortune to be obliged to take account of an incorruptible world that was somewhere else.

The perplexity of the encounter with the incorruptible has also been experienced by the modern world, albeit on a different plane: at the level of the functional rather than, as in the case of the Greeks, the substantial. Since Galileo's telescope, the moderns have no longer "seen" the incorruptible, but they have been able to capture it somewhere, namely in mathematics. When it finally came to dominance, even without numbers and forms still possessing their Pythagorean prestige, a prestige which was ultimately of the order of substance, mathematics brought the similarly incorruptible prestige of the function and operation. Today's world of the incorruptible is that of mathematics. Yet in spite of the fact that mathematics does not pose the problem of Being, just as it does not pose the problem of truth or law (since every proposition would be a truth and a law), the prestige of the incorruptible makes mathematics the sovereign science.

Nevertheless, where is Being, in the case of this modern incorruptible? It was wholly on the side of the ancient incorruptible; it is professedly no longer anywhere within the mathematical incorruptible. But while mathematics denies itself to Being, culture of the mathematical type revolves around it, or seeks to capture the Being of the real in formal schemata, structures and expressions of a mathematical type. The modern incorruptible too offers "another world" for the, on this occasion truer, understanding of the immediate world. For incorruptibility is no longer that of a substance, as for the ancients, it is that of function. It would thus remain for Being to be totally de-substantialised and for all that is Being to be reduced to laws and symbolic configuration. While the ancient incorruptible conferred upon Being a plenitude that degraded all that is real, the modern incorruptible makes Being spectral. But nor is the spectrum *here*; it is somewhere else, on an ideal band. The ancient incorruptible was wholly Being, the modern incorruptible is at a terminus; it is the diagram of Being, as has been said.

With the ancient and modern double attempt to provide an ontological answer by means of the incorruptible, the substance/function opposition has thus arisen. Through it, the ancient and modern have been compared (Ernst Cassirer's *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff* is profoundly significant in this respect) and the same duality risks imposing itself as an ontological alternative: Being is either substance (incorruptible) or function (again incorruptible).

However, in the present essay, everything will lead not only to an exit from the incorruptible but also from this alternative, which formulates the ontological impasse in categorical terms. A *third modality*, between substance and function, must be conceived (and detected, if not seen, as with the ancient incorruptible), and Being will have to be simultaneously substantial and functional. The universal unsettlement of things is, of course, that which led to the idea of an ultimate settlement in Being. However, Being might be understood not so much as settlement and in settlement, as much as in its re-settlement. Not so much as a form of balance opposed to imbalance, as much as a balance that is being restored or re-balanced. Not so much as Being opposed to becoming, as much as Being in the sense of becoming, namely becoming within Being. Becoming within Being has no need of *another* world.

Whereas Being is not somewhere else but is rather merely other-wise, then the very history of ontology suggests that it is simultane-ously a form of substantiality and a form of functionality, lacking sub-stantial consistency but also functional disparity. It would therefore possess the order of an enveloping medium for realities, shifted into an internal medium for them. It might be that something else before which all things are in deviation, but without which they *are* not.

4. If Being is viewed as somewhere else and incorruptible, then it is not

Realities deny the Being that refutes them, but they proclaim the Being that invests them. Physically incorruptible Being, formally in-corruptible Being, like any perfect Being, refutes the world. But the world also refutes it.

Modern thought has allowed realities to deny the Being that refutes them. (But it has not understood how to accept the second half of the proposition as well – that the same realities proclaim the Being that invests them.)

Indeed, physically incorruptible Being has disappeared, thanks to the effective knowledge of nature and the heavens. The formally in-corruptible Being of mathematics has appeared, but it does not really present itself as Being, but only as function. "Intelligible" Being re-mains, it too incorruptible, but it is along these lines that more recent visions of Being have been inscribed, visions whose character, accord-ing to the presentation of one contemporary thinker (Blondel), has been: unity, permanence, autonomy, substantiality, perfection, efficient causality, final causality.

Whether such characteristics of Being were incumbent upon a Cre-ator, or whether they were incumbent upon a secularly conceived su-preme Being, they each raised new problems: there can be no unity without distribution of self and multiple; permanence may not just be eternity, but also "aeviternity" (eternity in time, as they said in the Middle Ages); autonomy may not be isolation; substantiality does not lack functionality; perfection denies itself to imperfect creation; while causality, whether efficient or final, claims a foundation for its exercise. The only speculative representation of consummate Being had been attempted by Aristotle, with the topic of the "prime mover" (respec-tively the uncreated creator, the creator of un-consummate worlds, he

himself consummate); but even he could do no more than give it a name.

However perfect Being might have been conceived as "otherwise", its dignity was proclaimed at the expense of the indignity of the real. In fact, perfect Being could not have been anything more than a *compensation* for the corruptible real world. However, as such, not only did it not compensate and balance the world it should have explained: it thoroughly unbalanced it, transforming it into appearance, a transitory world, an evanescent world, even an illusion. What you wished to know is now no longer worth knowing. How, in the light of Being, can you understand that which in principle has no right to true Being? If there is a perfect Being, then it is for its own sake, not for the things that are.

Perfect Being dispensed with the world so much that, in the end, the world dispensed with it. But the world was unable to dispense with a meaning for Being in things or *with* things and all. If perfect Being died, did ontology too have to die?

Realities seek Being, not its perfection. They seek *access* to a Being that is better endowed than the incorruptible Being beyond. Namely, they seek a Being that will assume them too. From the perspective of realities, absolute Being (which is detached from them) does not exist; but it is not even relative to them, i.e. relative; *they* are relative to it. The Being of past ontology not only sometimes disfigured the real; it went as far as to abolish it herself, to take-it-from-being. The entire problem of Being is nevertheless to bring-to-being, or to reveal what really is in all that rests-in-being. Given this, the problem of Being recalls that of Plato: how is it possible for things to be but for that which invests them not to be?

But is Being perfect? Is it imperfect? The problem of perfection can no longer be posed, if bringing-into-being occurs from within and not from without. The disaster in ontology perhaps came from the fact that *an interiority has been described in terms of an exteriority*. We wanted to reveal what is the concrete universal in things (Being) and we were left with the universal on the one hand and with things on the other, ultimately with an abstract universal (Ideas, the divine, Being) *before* concrete things. In particular, ontology has consented to this separation, being forced either to admit the abstract character of separate Being, or on the contrary to shift everything concrete over to

the side of separate Being and make the latter absolute, in a concretion that is crushing for reality.

Such a Being, which would speak only of itself, is naturally "perfect" and represents a Superabundance, as for Plotinus, one before which all the rest would truly be a remainder; the world would be made from the overflow and emanation of this Superabundance. But then creation would take place through ontological thoughtlessness or indifference (*non-pensare*). Nothing would mean anything any longer in such a world, or it would become a fall which no internal law could prevent from collapsing into nothingness.

Precisely due to its perfection, the Being of the Superabundance *is* not. On the other hand, contrary to Plotinus, it would be possible to speak of Being as a Super-emptiness, at least if the Being in things is at stake. All of a sudden, the world, which had been disfigured and crushed by absolute Being, now opens to Being. For if there is no incorruptible Being and if it does not assume ontological responsibility for the real, then the world is relieved and released from ontological mutilation on the one hand, and laden with ontological responsibility on the other.

Rejecting the Being that rejects them, things seek access to that Being that might be "otherwise" together *with* them. In any case, even if a Being that was "completely otherwise" ultimately made sense, it would not exempt us from an investigation of the Being in things. The refusal to seek what might be understood of the Being in things appears as an evasion from the real, and an extra-mundane Being cannot be imagined without the lots of mundane Being nevertheless having been cast.

Being is like the Idea: it is incumbent in each thing but is nevertheless something universal. Even the word Being – like the words nature, essence, "be-ing" – expresses both the generic and the specific (Being in general and Being in particular), attesting to an infused speculation in speech. Being is "all Being", but also the being of each thing; the same as nature, the same as essence, which can also be the "intrinsic essence" of the thing. In all these ultimate situations of reality, the external medium has crossed over into the condition of the internal medium. In Romanian, "a fi în" <to be in> (e.g. to be in the core of nature, of an essence, of Being) has been transformed into "a fi întru" <to be within>. If the meaning of Being can be sought in the world and not outside it, then it must be sought as the internal medium of things and in each thing.

That the internal medium of each thing expresses, qua medium, a universal modality, can be revealed precisely by the case in which a situation, the same in each thing, since it is not a medium, does *not* express something universal. It also happens thus with the terminal situation that we name death. Each thing comes to an end, according to its inner measure or sometimes due to chance circumstances; similarly, each being dies. But death is not something common in the universal sense. Death is the death of each (as in the Romanian folk tale "Unageing Youth"[2]). Because it happens to each and every thing only externally, through the totalisation of cases. Internally, it does not express a universal situation, but merely the cessation of integration within a universal situation, such as life, nature, Being.

This is why, given that it is not a universal, it has been possible to personify death. While neither Being, nor nature, nor life have been personified, death has been imagined as a human skeleton with a scythe in its hands. But everything is forced here, even the manner of the personification. (Death ought to hold not a scythe – since beings do not die reaped together except by chance – but let us say a lance, since there is an end for each. And it ought not to be a human skeleton, but at most a hand, since it is not man that brings death into the world and among things, but rather things end of themselves.) All the philosophical literature on death has perhaps been literature not philosophy; or else, it wanted to be, without admitting it, an utterance about Being.

---

2 Romanian folk tale, whose earliest known version dates from 1838-44, and which was transcribed and published by folklorist Petre Ispirescu (1830-1887) in 1862. In the tale, a questing prince discovers the palace of "Unageing Youth and Deathless Life". He lives a life of monotonous ease in the palace, marrying the youngest of the three immortal sisters who dwell there. In spite of their warnings, he enters the Vale of Tears one day while hunting a hare, and is overwhelmed with yearning for his parents and the kingdom of his childhood. Ignoring the pleas of the sisters and promising to return, he sets out home. As he rides away, he begins to age, and by the time he finds his parents' castle, ruined for centuries, he is a wizened old man, with a beard reaching below his knees. In the cellar he finds a coffer and within it his own death, which strikes him a blow. He withers away and turns to dust. Noica analyses this folk tale in a number of his philosophical works, most notably in *Sentimentul românesc al ființei* <*The Romanian Sentiment of Being*> (1978). – Translator's note

Death is something intrinsic to things, but it is not an intrinsic *medium*. However, as such a medium, with its layer that is deeper than everything else, Being must be sought in the world. If it is conceived as being somewhere else and incorruptible, then perhaps it can be personified, just like death; it is not a universal, and it *is* not.

5. It may thus be said: alone, Being is not, all the rest has part in Being

For the Being in things, the well known saying of Pascal, that the world is like an infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere, has to be turned on its head: the periphery of Being is everywhere, its centre nowhere. There is no single, central Being; the rest participates in Being.

Through the absence of a centre, the world is not de-centred. It discovers its equilibrium through something that "is" not in it, or is in it in another way.

The disappearance of the centre (of luminous concentration, of the central sun) means:

1) The disappearance of the plenitude of Being; it is, in things at least, an emptiness;

2) The disappearance of the fixity of Being; it represents not repose but everywhere action;

3) The disappearance of permanence as Being: it is not an eternal co-presence, but an intrinsic presence (absence), transient along with the thing;

4) The disappearance of the simplicity of Being: it has a structure.

In things, Being might, at any level, be a model and modeller. In relation to the model of Being, all things would then stand judged: either they are – or they have not fulfilled their destiny to be.

Humans give a name to the answer they are aiming at and afterwards believe that they can find something else behind the name. They have named "soul" that which holds bodies together (for the ancients, even vegetal organisms had souls), but what else have they found for "soul" behind the unity encountered and nominated? They have named "time" the successive order of things but beyond that, they have not known what time is. Similarly, they have named "Being" that which causes any reality, including the soul and time, to hold. It remains to be seen what Being is and to what extent the world is the place where Being is fulfilled, or else its cemetery.

1) If there is no central Being and the Being in things appears as emptiness, then the latter is, in distinction to the Superabundance of Plotinus, a Super-emptiness inscribed in things. Just as the Superabundance is a fullness that overflows, the Super-emptiness is an emptiness that retracts into itself.

Being might be precisely that emptiness which all superior speculative thought has encountered in its ontological meditation. In his way, Kant encountered it when he momentarily abandoned the subject matter of knowledge and when, extending it, he spoke of *four* kinds of "nothing": *ens intelligibile*, *nihil privativum*, *ens imaginarium*, *nihil negativum*. As *outer* Superabundance, Being could appear – in negative theology, or even in Eleatic philosophy compared to the former – as a *nihil* (= *totum*) *negativum*. At other times, in a positive sense, it has appeared as an *ens imaginarium*. However, as *inner* emptiness, Being is, from the outset, inscribed in things as a "*nihil privativum*" – since it is an absence in all things, as we have seen. In any case, it is a Kantian "nothing" in its quality as *ens intelligibile*, one that is inscribed in all things and, insofar as it arises as nothingness, it is a structuring nothingness.

The same void qua Being is to be encountered in the Nothing at the beginning of Hegel's *Logic*. Likewise, it was to be encountered in the indeterminacy or nothingness of Vedic ontology (at the beginning there was "neither Being, nor Un-being"), as well as in the original nothingness or chaos of all the great cosmologies in the history of culture. However, as a structuring nothingness inscribed in things, most lucid of all is the Being that occurs in the vision of Pascal, when he leaves aside religious subject matter. If, indeed, for him "*tout ce qui est arrivé a quelque chose d'admirable*" (*Pensées*, fragment 212), as he thus praises the periphery, adding by way of explanation "*parce que la volonté de Dieu y est incorporée*", then it is sufficient to transpose the explanation as "parce que l'empreinte de l'être y est marquée" in order to rediscover the emptiness of Being. Being *is* not, except at its periphery, as an *ens intelligibile* in each thing.

2) Now, when emptiness is not just in the consciousness that seeks it but also in things, it becomes active precisely from the perspective of things in their search for access to Being. It ceases to be an otiose nothingness invoked by ontology, for whose animation or transformation in the cosmos were necessary the intervention and decision of a *different Being*, but rather Being itself progresses, as *ens intelligibile* or arche-

typal model, to structuring nothingness. As central Being, it would be at rest and in distension; as a means of being distributed everywhere, it steadfastly generates and regenerates the real. Being must be seen in things and at work, rather than being abandoned to its inertia. Just as the void in the literal sense, both the material and the spiritual void, has been put to work by modern physicians and mathematicians (but had the void, qua non-existence, not been put to work by Plato himself in the *Sophist?*) so too Being in its entirety, as an initial emptiness in things, is to be seen in act.

That Being, with its model, is active everywhere, is no longer to be doubted: it is to be demonstrated. But this is not always to be seen, because we live in "forgetfulness of Being". But this forgetfulness is not, perhaps, that denounced by Heidegger, the forgetfulness of Being as Being, if by this must be understood something of the order of central Being. Rather, it is the forgetfulness of that Being whose periphery is everywhere and whose centre nowhere; of humble, precarious Being, the Being at the heart of the real. Heidegger himself – if he is to be taken literally – and the very ontology that rediscovers the majesty of Being might deviate from Being, thereby indirectly consecrating, through their abandonment of the real, the situation we have today: namely, the situation in which the real has remained almost wholly at the disposal of mathematicians or formalists, because nothing of the order of Being is active in it any longer.

In distinction, therefore, to the nothingness invoked as Being by some speculative conceptions, the emptiness invoked here is active of itself. What *is* not in fact fills the world, in the from of that which not yet is, of that which was, that which was not but was to be, that which might be, that which is about to be, that which causes to be, that which will have been, and even in the form of that which will be. All of these, bundled together in the *emptiness* of Being, model things.

3) But emptiness is active *from inside*. It represents a form of intimacy, but not a presence and permanent existence, that is, an eternal co-presence. The first sentiment that Being awakens has often seemed to be presence. However, if presence is taken as the present, then its ontological injustice to what has been rebounds back upon it, insofar as the present, which wishes to be all, slips away into the past; and if presence is taken as eternity and Being were a steadfast presence accompanying all that arises and passes, then it becomes an exteriority which must work *upon* the thing and not in it. Being, however, is not

obligatorily a permanence, at least in the sense of presence: that which "is" in things and causes them to be can be transient, just as the soul is not necessarily immortal in order to function as soul.

Being as permanence and changelessness, Being that confiscates "is" for itself, was paradoxical (just as common sense taken to its limit is paradoxical): it tended to restore that which causes-to-be in the real by means of its contrary. It is as if, wondering what life is in living beings, we said it was death. If Being must invest and sustain the real, then it cannot deny it: it must be according to its image and likeness, or else it must be another image of the *real*.

All the attributes detached from the real (unity, permanence etc.) that have been accorded to Being are destined to collapse, at least from the perspective of the Being in things. On the other hand, an attribute that has been steadfastly rejected must be accepted: *connaturalness* with the real. It would be difficult to understand just how the idea of Being as "of another nature" could have appeared if common sense (sometimes extended into speculation, however elevated) did not have the tendency to *separate* where it cannot join. But things do not hold together and do not have a "soul" if they inwardly lack the support of Being. Instead of abandoning the real world, on the grounds that it has no assured substance, in favour of a world that might have one but has preserved nothing except empty subsistence, we ought to give the name Being precisely to that which causes things to be – inasmuch as they are.

4) Thus, with its initial emptiness, Being is not only the formative intrinsicality of things: it is also their measure. If not everything is wholly Being, or if no one thing is truly Being, although nothing of that which arises is alien to Being, then ontology becomes – beyond its double analysis of Being in things and Being in itself – a "critique" in the proper sense of the Greek word: it is a judgement upon the things that are. The words of Protagoras, that "man is the measure of all things, of those that are in that they are and those that are not in that they are not", were perhaps uttered in their full sense: the man that thinks upon Being (not man in his subjectivity, as the words are often taken) decides upon what is in the real, as well as upon what is not and what only seems to be.

But the judgement is made in the name of a *meaning* of Being. Could it be the meaning of a simple Being (in Greek, simple also means absolute)? None of the ontologies of the past that have proclaimed absolute

Being could be prevented from speaking of "grades" of Being or different manifestations of Being (phenomenon, appearance, apparition, manifestation). But the ontology that sets out from the real upwards can enhance understanding and nuance. In the case of absolute, simple and unitary Being, the distinctions sprang merely from the grades and *intensities* of Being, while in an ontology detached from the real the criteria for judgement can hold to a veritable *structure* of Being and the extent to which this structure has been realised. Non-fulfilment of Being may exist, but precarities of Being may also appear, varied qualitatively and not just on the basis of mere intensity of manifestation. There may be durable partial consummations, or else transient total consummations, just as precarities are also sometimes destined to accelerate and activate the real, or else to lead to its unravelling and extinction.

In humans, in whom Being is more intrinsically active than anywhere else, since they also possesses spirit, and thus additional ontological receptivity, the precarities of Being are best to be detected as "spiritual maladies"[3], which lend or refuse them ontological affirmation. However, with or without the human problematic, ontology must be a *medicina entis*, where nothing is healed but everything judged – just as in the words of Protagoras.

6. All the rest has part in Being, in the sense of opening towards it

That Being in things can be an emptiness; that it can be an active emptiness; that it thus represents a transient action, like the thing, but at the same time a criterion and a measure of things – all these will have meaning if Being in things has a meaning. However, in distinction to separate and eternal Being, herein lies a problem: what sense does it make to invoke Being, and a unitary Being at that, in a corruptible world?

It is simple to reject absolute Being, as we are doing here, simpler even than to institute it. However, left without its cover, this chaotic and dissident reality, even if it had Being distributed in it, thus if it were one of "beings" in the plural, does not at the outset seem also to possess a unitary Being.

Given that at first sight things are thus, he who resists philosophising is disposed to simplify everything and to be reductionist. Asked

---

3 See Constantin Noica, *Six Maladies of Contemporary Spirit*, translated by Alistair Ian Blyth, will be published by Plymouth University Press in 2009.

what he thinks about Being in things, he will have to admit that for him, "in the final instance", the real is reduced to an primitive element, let us say hydrogen or light photons (in the case in which, of course, he does not invoke a demiurge). Yet inasmuch as it is meaningless to assert that the Being of things – of an organic or spiritual entity <*făptură*>,[4] for example – is hydrogen or condensed light, he willingly gives up on the problematic of Being and ontology is consigned to the museum of culture. This is the common opinion, or that of the scientist in general.

At the opposite extreme, the ontology of absolute Being, by willing in effect to be an ontology, nevertheless distorts it. By the simple fact that it presupposes, institutes or infers an absolute Being, it brings into play a problematic of *knowledge* of or *access* to Being, rather than the problematic of Being. The principal question of ontology nevertheless ought to be not our access to Being, but rather the access of Being to a unitary affirmation. Or else, since through ontology Being must be identified, the perception of Being by a knowing consciousness simultaneously reveals the way in which it is "identified", that is, the Being of the world acquires an identity.

In this sense, precisely the removal of absolute Being and of any ontological presupposition regarding content becomes the condition for the establishment of an ontology. The total void <*vidul*>[5] must here be assented to. In any other science, there nevertheless exist presuppositions and something is possessed in advance: the circumscribed domain in which knowledge is to be exercised and laws discovered is at least known. Here, in ontology, nothing can be presupposed. It is empty <*goală*> reason in the face of the emptiness <*golul*> of Being.

Thus, Being appears to us, initially, as a *name*, given for meanings that do not yet have a determined content, as has happened with names such as soul, time, destiny, divinity. However, while the other

---

4 *Făptură* is a multivalent word in Romanian, with the meanings "formation", "being", "creature", "body", "form", "appearance", "nature", "essence". The etymology is the Latin *factura* ("a making" or "thing made"), which is also equivalent to the Greek *poiêsis*. - Translator's note

5 *Vid* derives from the Latin *viduus* ("bereft", "deprived of") and, as a substantive, has the meaning of "a void" (the English "void" derives ultimately from the Latin *vacare* – "to vacate"). *Gol* is Slavonic in origin, and as an adjective means "bare", "naked", "empty", and as a substantive "bareness", "emptiness", "empty space", "void". – Translator's note.

names say what is or what seems to be, "Being" can say what is not, nominating an absence in the real. In any real thing, something is lacking. This something is not said by the word, but rather by things themselves, which open up to "something".

In Romanian terms it might be put even more clearly: the utterance <*rostire* >[6] of the name Being speaks about the settlement in meaning <*aşezarea* în *rost* >, about the *utterance* of the real itself. The mere fact that the blind processes of reality in the end give *embodiment* brings with it an opening towards a *meaning* <*rost*>. Inasmuch as the *meaning* (as far as the "code" of living things nowadays identified) is not already given and outside of things, but represents the intrinsicality, soul, principle of *existence* <*fiinţare*> of any given thing, then it is their true discourse < *cuvîntare* > rather than word <*cuvînt* >.

What, therefore do things "say" about Being? In their emptiness, they say that the *opening* towards Being, as towards their meaning, is the first indicator of Being. Initially, Being is an opening, but that which does not open further either is not or is no longer. In the beginning, was the opening. We then name Being the inner principle of any thing that it causes to open and remain, even having been fulfilled and placed in meaning according to its means, in further opening.

Since Being arises as an opening, it becomes a criterion for appreciating reality and reality situations: whether they are open or not. And then a second problem arises: whether the real remains in opening, on the one hand, and whether just any opening is good, on the other.

Indeed, the meaning of Being as opening does not persist everywhere in the real. It is clear that from this perspective – even or precisely because Being no longer signifies plenitude, ultimate equilibrium, permanence and homogeneity – that, once constituted in an embodiment, the real ought not to close in upon itself like dead matter. In fact, it nonetheless often closes itself and remains to the largest extent in closure upon itself. The real may in effect not lead

---

6 *Rostire/rost, asezare în rost – Rost* is a multivalent word, with the meanings "purpose", "motivation", "meaning", "understanding (of a thing)", "task", "material or familial status or situation", "manner of organising an activity", "organisation", "plan of execution" etc. Derived from *rost*, the verb *a rosti*, whence the verbal noun *rostire*, means "to articulate sounds or words" (a sense which points to the noun's Latin etymon: rostrum = "beak", "snout", "mouth"), "to utter", "to pronounce", "to narrate", "to express", "to opine". – Translator's note

to other forms of organisation other than those obtained, and then it will remain at the level attained, that of material fields, of substances, of organic substances, of living but stagnant entities, of people and societies without any further opening. The human demonstrates in numerous ways how the destiny of Being can perish, when it remains at the type of a society and does not open further to what is human. Here, it cannot be a matter of non-Being – or, figuratively at most, of secondary non-Being – but a blockage of Being it is, where there is no longer room for opening.

On the other hand, not just any opening is good. Just as for man not just any surrender of self is necessarily productive both for him and his world, so empty opening and mere expansion are not invested with Being. For a similar situation, Descartes gave the familiar example of the bad servant who, in his zeal to serve well, sets off to fulfil his task before understanding what it is. Man's intelligence and will often do the same, setting off to seek and do before having understood what is to be sought and to be done. Yet the real itself might, in many respects, be reckoned ontologically deficient (with the "naivety of nature" about which Hegel spoke) when, like Descartes' servant, it fills the world with its processes and irremediably chaotic precipitates. Shall we say yet again that there is non-Being, in the secondary chaos that is thus created in the world? It is merely a blockage of Being; it is "meaningless Being" and in any case, meaningless in the proper sense, reality with merely a statistical meaning. Naturally, somewhere the share of active Being in the world takes up into its procession the share of Being extinguished in it; but an extinction of Being is produced, and it is not in the ash of Being that its meanings can be read.

— The question then arises, regarding the Being in things, whether it makes any sense to speak of the Being of that which is *not* present. Since ontological extinction appears even in the real of the present, there must be all the more extinction in the ashes of the past or in the non-Being of the emptiness of the future. What sense does it make, for example, to speak of "Being" for that which has come to an end? Is it in some way the sense – which has sometimes been attempted – of asserting that only what *has been* has been elevated to essence (*Wesen*, *gewesen* in German, or "*a fost să fie*" <it was to be> in Romanian), while the present would everywhere have an uncertain subsistence? But then the problem has done nothing more than to invert itself, in the sense

that the past is the "essential" and the present the inessential, with both
being further left not to have the *same* Being.

Without a status of Being of *the same* order as that of the present
even for past or future things, Being would go on to become an "eter-
nal present" once more and we would fall back either into something
eternal or into the eternal collapse of things. However, ontology can-
not regard the past with the indifference of the Christian religion
(open rather to the future), which posed for a moment the problem
of whether the people of former times who did not know Christianity
are "saved", that is, enter into the order of Being – only then to forget
the problem and speak of the judgement of the whole of humanity in
the absence of the whole of humanity. The man present at any given
hour does not have the right, in the case in which he finds an ontic
meaning in his own person or historical community, to cast those in
the past into non-Being. If he possesses a shadow of investment from
the part of Being, then those in the past must also possess it.

Otherwise, in the case in which the "*it is*" does not also comprise the
"it was" and the "it will be", then it is the spirit, not matter, that pos-
sesses the most precarious ontological status. Matter might be fully
eternal, while the spirit is necessarily implanted in the ephemeral. It
would not then be possible to speak of Being as regards anything in
the world of the spirit, nor as regards great works of art, states, civi-
lisations or personal destinies, all of them transient and necessarily
transient. Nevertheless, if some *works* of the spirit do survive, it would
remain to be understood, beyond their material survival, in itself lim-
ited, *what* it is that enables them to do so. And just how "is" a song or
a true sentence obtained by thought?

Even in those things *beneath* man, things do not necessarily have a
better ontic status because they endure for longer. It cannot be assert-
ed of the amoeba that it has additional Being just because it subsists
as such for millions of years more than other species, nor the same of
hydrogen, just because it is older than all the other elements. No dura-
tion means anything when compared with eternity; and if eternity is
also an empty word, then what should be understood by *to be* for the
things that endure? For, ultimately it is for transient things that the
problem of Being has been posed, not for those presupposed to be in
eternity.

The verb *to be* has a particularity: it is the only verb whose present is
not just present (leaving aside the "historic present"). In a number of

the main cultivated languages it has disappeared in its use as present, becoming a linking word, a copula. This means that it has been emptied of its meaning. But Hegel said: in the proposition "the tree is green", anyone else thinks of a tree or thinks of green, but the philosopher must reflect on the meaning of "is". The verb *to be* has been emptied of meaning; it has been emptied so much so that in some great languages (such as Russian) it is virtually not used at all. And nevertheless in this emptiness there is a meaning, precisely the meaning of the emptiness of Being, which we have invoked above.

If the Being in things were plenitude, then "is" could express only the Being of the present. But the very Being of the present is a permanent disappearance. Being is an emptiness, yet its unity, in things at least, is given by the positive sense of emptiness, which can be emptiness of the present, just as it can be emptiness of the past and of the future. At most, it might be possible to speak about the three temporal aspects of emptiness, if it were not more fitting to say that the present is the meeting of two ontic emptinesses, the past and the future, which also void it of substance. It is again man that best demonstrates this, whose present, as soon as it tends to acquire plenitude, is voided of "presence" and the action of the past, just as the action of the future upon him is also voided of presence.

However, emptiness here means opening. What is common to all, whether they have been fulfilled or not, is their opening to Being. And what is common to those things that have been ontologically fulfilled, both present and past, is the fact that the opening has further remained open. In one way or another, through one interdependency or another, things are open, when they are. And just as not just any present thing "is", and not just any past thing has truly been (as the historian and historian of nature know), so too, not just any future thing "will be" (as the researcher of the future attempts to know). But all that is – in the larger sense of "is", as far as to be in general, as occurs in the linking particle – has entered into and remained in opening.

Past things, then, have not been buried with their opening and all. If the opening has been "*rostitoare*" <purposeful, meaningful> (in Romanian an opposition can be made between *punerea în rost* <bringing into meaning>, *rostirea* <meaningfulness> and the mere *rotire* <rotation> of things), then it has occurred beneath something of a general order, as a becoming that integrates the hypostases of time, as past

becoming is the same as present becoming, in their opening to future becoming.

7. But the opening to Being cannot occur without a closure

It may thus be said that, at the level of things, Being is purely an opening, just as in the Middle Ages it was said that the divine being was purely act. But to characterise Being as an opening or something that brings about an opening in things is much too summary. This represents merely its *apparent* sense in those things that are and the necessary condition towards being, but not also sufficiency, since it is precisely mere opening that can be a loss of self and of Being.

The opening to Being cannot take place without a closure, just as the real does not enter into positive expansion without a concentration, or man into the positive surrender and overcoming of self without having been centred upon a spiritual nucleus. Being announces itself in things as a closure that opens. (This is why for example, technical objects have no share in Being: they are, conversely, an opening that *closes* and remains closed as such.)

As a closure that opens – and which permanently remains in opening, which is thus permanently recast from its closure – Being announces itself in things as a *pulsation*. The most general and abstract pulsation of things, as well as of thought, seems to us to be *number*. For Pythagoras, it gave, and to some still seems to restore, the intrinsicality of Being. In any case, it provides its spectrum.

That which does not open loses the destiny to be, remaining in the non-fulfilment of Being; but without a *measure* to the opening, the embodiments of the real may thereby enter into dissolution. As an ultimate embodiment of the real that "is", man can offer the most instructive example. When, in the spiritual experience of the oriental world, man opens to the Great All, then the opening, which ought to be an integration with the preservation and increase of man, is transformed into his disintegration, as can sometimes be seen in Indian spiritual experiences. Without an inner measure to things, the Being in them enters into the entropy of unique Being. A principle of life (of Being) but also of death, the opening brings, with its equivocation, the equivocation of the real itself, which everywhere tends to resist decomposition, until it discovers the concentration to confer on it a positive opening. Thus, while Being does not arise without an opening, it is just as clear that neither can it lack a closure.

However, just as the opening – the first indicator of Being and of existence – cannot remain simple, so too the closure will not be simple. Closed upon itself and remaining thus, reality stagnates, like its dead matter. Both nature in empty expansion and nature in empty contraction give undetermined (non-embodied) matter, the non-Being of the ancients. But at the heart of these realities which, even if they are not non-being, do not express Being, some detach themselves from simple opening and simple closure alike, then causing something new to appear, an opening that endures; we shall say a promise of Being as a *closure that opens*. Only the coupling of closure with an opening, or rather their unity (a contraction that enters into expansion) conveys the real further and offers that beginning of organisation along the lines of which it is possible to trace Being in things.

It is not for a moment a case of a closure *and* an opening. Then, it would be easy to misunderstand that all is, ultimately, a kind of closure and opening, which would not tell us anything: closure would be the entry into a horizon, opening the egress from it; closure would be assimilation, opening elimination; in man, closure would be the entry into dwelling, opening the egress from it. But it is not the *relation* between closure and opening that is now at stake, but their unity: precisely closure is that which opens, as closure and remaining in closure. A material point enters into vibration and no longer emerges from it; but together *with* its vibration, it enters into the expansion of the wave. Something enters into a horizon and no longer emerges from it; but together with its horizon it opens further. When primitive man made himself a dwelling, he no longer "emerged" from it; but together with his dwelling and through it he opened to village settlements, to urban settlements, and thus to the Being of history. "Open", nomad nations have no history and do not make states; it is only when they literally close themselves in a space and when they literally close themselves in community forms, beginning with that of the family, that they have access to historical Being. Similarly, when speech enters into a system of rules that will lead to a grammar, it no longer emerges from this system; but together with system and by means of it, speech opens to utterance <*rostire*>, passing from the stage of speech to that of language.

Thus, precisely because it closes, any kind of reality can acquire an opening in the ontological sense. A simple closure *conjoined with* a simple opening would be the negation of a closure that opens and in their pure non-coagulation, they could not constitute together a promise of

Being. As for the reversed situation, an opening which closes (i.e. the machine) might be seen, rightfully, as the anti-Being. Indeed, within a machine is enclosed an energy, which was pure opening in nature. A mechanism is closed and the result obtained is that the machine is buried; if this result is not obtained, then the machine is scrap metal. However, in the face of Being, it was thus from the beginning. Only indirectly, in alliance with the Being of man and of nature, can the machine be of interest to ontology. And only when it gives the illusion that it too opens (as in the case of automatic machines that "learn") can it become a problem – a threat – for the Being of the real.

Closure is not, on the other hand, merely at the beginning and does not generate an opening as if it were its efficient cause, predestined to be left behind. Rather, it is present at every stage of opening, just as closure in a system of grammatical rules is present and active in every utterance of a language, or just as a ratio that has been opened in proportions is present in each proportion. With each proportion it is possible to speak about a pulsation of the ratio (the numerator and denominator change to $6/3 = 10/5 = 18/9 = 82/41$, but the ratio 2 has remained the same). In speech obtained as language, the grammatical rules are repeated, pulsate; in the varied forms of life, one or another code pulsates. The privileged ontological situation, which is to say, one that promises to open the way to the Being of Things, is the *pulsation*. We said above that in the beginning there has been the opening; now we can say that it has been the closure that opens or, better still, that there has been a pulsation. Cosmic rhythms, biorhythms and the rhythms of the spirit may now appear as so many fundamental pulsations in the real.

But henceforth, it is possible to bring to light *two* kinds of closure that open, or pulsations: some that enter into repetition, others that enter into evolution. The first are pulsations proper and are registered as such: all kinds of waves, cosmic rhythm, circadian rhythm, rotations, the spiral of amino acids and the rhythms of life, biorhythms, the heart, swimming, flying, walking, the voice, as far as the pulse of thought. However, they offer merely an elementary promise of Being, for they are as many resumptions, of closure and opening alike, on whose basis things seem to acquire Being. Moreover, if there are pulsations that emerge from blind repetition and which grow, which develop and transform, then the chances of identifying a more complex Being in things also increase. In any case, only along the lines of such a

growing pulsation, since it brings about new openings and eventually an arborescence of openings, is it worth following Being in things.

Before bringing to light a few augmentative pulsations essential to the world and in which Being might give its full measure, it is necessary to invoke the pure augmentative pulsation – "pure" because it occurs only in the immediate order of augmentation, namely in the quantitative – that is *number*.

Indeed, number, which allows all kinds of operations, is itself in reality an operation. *Closed* in a base which is also its structure (decimal, base 6 for the Babylonians, binary for cybernetics), number *opens* and augments under the form of successive powers of the same base, thus as a resumption of the initial closure. It is thus constituted by means of an operation: an elevation to nth the power. It is simple to demonstrate that within any given base, let us say base 3, number appears as a closure that opens, in perfect pulsation:
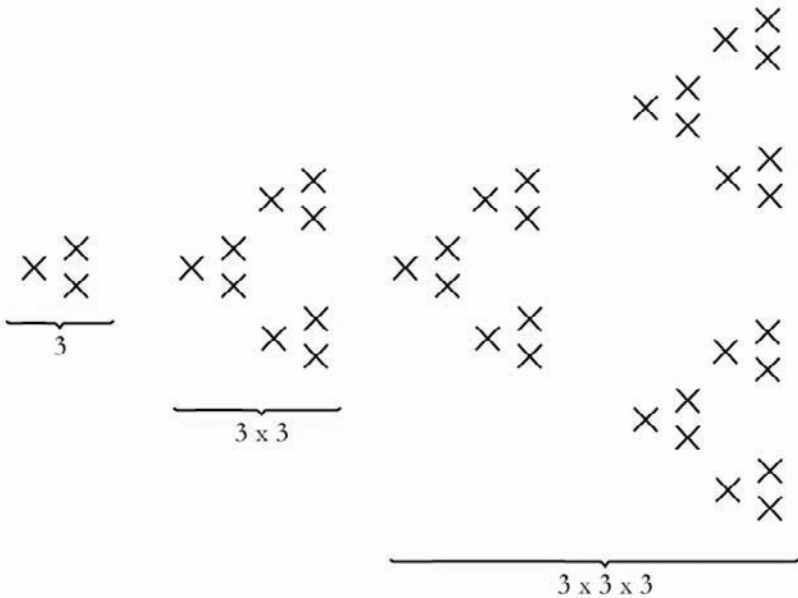
Each unit of the three is trebled. If we care to name the structure of the number with base 3 as "triangular" then it is apparent that the structure is preserved in its own pulsation.

It is thus that number appears in any base. It is, in any case, an idle and dully pedagogical thinking that presents number as ready-made and then uses it for addition and multiplication, only afterwards speaking about elevation to the nth power as merely a particular case of multiplication. If number is indeed fundamental, even beyond mathematics, in one domain or another (even more so in *all*, as the Pythagoreans claimed), then it must clearly be brought to light that number as such is an elevation to the nth power, and that *this* operation appears above all, while multiplication is nothing but a degraded elevation to the nth power and addition a degraded multiplication. Everything begins to be inverted in the arithmetic of the "natural" number – which forms the basis of any arithmetic – namely *from complex to simple*, respectively from the complex situation of a closure that opens and which unfolds as an *increasing* pulsation of this closure that opens.

This having been understood, number was able to be, if not the key, then at least the spectrum of Being. The real would remain in stagnation, or at most in blind repetition, as cosmic rhythms, if something of the potency of number did not arrive to give it *another* consistency, an ascending one. Even if, in fact, Being does not itself relate to the consistency of quantity and of quantitative structure, number can at least serve as an "introduction to Being", since it is in itself the diagram of the closure that opens in steadfast pulsation. Without closure, the numeric universe could not open. Likewise, without closure, the world that tends *to be* could not open.

8. The meaning of an ontological closure

Before going on to other examples of the closure that opens and to the ontological career of this primitive situation, it will be possible to see more clearly what a "closure" means by recourse to the universe of speech. After all, logic has also made recourse to this universe, when it has been capable of renewing itself. According to modern logic, there exist logical particles of language, and these are principally conjunctions: "and", "or", "if…then". We shall likewise say that there are *ontological* particles, and these are prepositions, or the principal prepositions.

Whereas logic restricts itself, without explanation, to a few conjunctions, ontology might invoke almost all the prepositions, and do so with an explanation: they represent – we shall say – primitive closures.

Usually, prepositions are defined as connective particles that create relations of dependence between various parts of the proposition. However, something of significance is not always seen in the fact that the relations at stake are preponderantly *spatial*. Nevertheless, Jakob Grimm invoked from the very start the fact that the prepositions of German have the character of indicating spatial relations, while the Romanian prepositions almost *all* have a fundamentally spatial meaning, such as: direction and surface of contact ("*asupra*" over, upon), direction and approach ("*către*" towards), association ("*cu*" with), separation or approach ("*de*" by, from), separation from within ("*din*" from in, out of), posteriority ("*după*" after), the interior of a space ("*în*" in), space ("*pînă*" up to), the traversal of a space ("*prin*" through), the space situated under ("*sub*" beneath).

What does the preposition thus express, as a relation that is primarily spatial? It expresses, variously, "sentence", as the word suggests, however unsatisfactory it might have seemed to modern linguists. Yet spatial relations, beyond space and the objects in a space, acquire autonomy, or can be viewed freely, as *situations*. There is a situation of "above", or of being above, of being *with*, of being *without*, of separation *from*, of passing *through*, of being *around*, of being *among*, of being *next to* or of being *beneath*. "Stimmungen" have been spoken of in terms of man's reception of Being, thus of superior dispositions and affects, of the spirit rather than of the soul. The positions named by prepositions can be as many dispositions. If, however, the term "situation" comprises position and disposition alike, then prepositionality always creates ultimate-situations, limit-situations, metaphysical states, as they have been called. "To be in" is no longer, in the spiritual life of man, a mere transient experience, but can be a *Stimmung* that lends its timbre to an entire existence. How rich and even stimulating the situation of "without" is – to be without something, permanently to lack something, which is nevertheless not something in particular – is shown not only by the experience of exile or "fall", in the religious *Stimmung*, but also even by the experience of knowledge, which, unable to be intuitive and direct, has created so many indirect rational channels. For the preposition "*lîngă*" (next to) testifies the strange disposition (and not mere idiosyncrasy) of Pascal, who, according to one account, lived for years as if he had an abyss next to him. The disposition of "to be among", however much it might seem the result of the infantile and then social

experience of man, remains fundamental, and perhaps not only for man.

Thus, apart from the "affective" dispositions of man, positions may, in things, also lead to dispositions (disposals), or at least to different inclinations. Why should we not speak of their situations, situations that the world of prepositions also commands, in a larger measure? "To be in" is a disposition of any material reality, in the general interdependence or under the law of who knows what attraction, while "to be without" would relate, in this succession, to the repulsion of something and not to the lack of the thing. How then could what is at stake in the world of things, permanently and not accidentally, thus as situation and not as event, not be "to be on", "to be beneath", or the detachment "from", the situation of "with" as well as "until", an extreme limit? One or other prepositional locution, such as "around" *<în jurul>*, would express the very state or processuality of the ideal situation which things can attain, that of inscription in an orbit. Yet even mathematics, as alien to ontology as it is, nevertheless sometimes comes across primitive situations rendered by means of prepositions, just as Hilbert in his geometrical axiomatic invoked the situation of "to be between (*între*)" as fundamental, to be situated between something and something else.

However, what is now interesting, with prepositions understood as ontological particles, is less the fact that they are indicative, by means of their positions or dispositions, as the fact that they indicate *closures*. Their spatial relations are as many possible closures. Naturally, the typical closure is *in* something; but another closure might be within an orbit, *around* something, in a direction, *towards* something, in an association *with* something, or at a distance *from* something. The relation of dependence suggested by a preposition creates a situation of closure and of fixation in any given field, whether physical, moral or mental, each with their own spatiality.

When we thus speak about a closure with an ontological signification, we have to understand, in the unbinding of any field, a form of binding, just as in the fundamental configuration of number there appeared a binding, or just as it is possible to speak of "bound variables". For prepositions, the relation of dependence says even more; the mere entry into relation signifies a binding, respectively an entry into dependence and closure.

Prepositions make a closure. They succeed so well in bringing about primitive closures that, by means of them, it would be possible to describe at any level entire systems of closure. The relations – spatial in origin – brought by prepositions have brought into play spatiality in order to restrict it to a few fundamental determinations within it. If ontology were ever to be formalised, as logic has been, then it would be possible to do so by transcribing prepositions as symbols, as logic has done by symbolising a number of conjunctions.[7*]

However, ontology has as its object Being, not formulae, relations or mere closures. While prepositions *bind*, it is also they that ought to *unbind*; or else while, in general, speech binds, it also unbinds. Heidegger once said this, speaking about language, which for him is the "dwelling of Being": its way is "*das entbindende Band*" (in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, 4th ed., 1971, p. 262), the binding that unbinds. Every language discovers its formulae of expression which fix the experience of thought and at the same time enlarge it; and for prepositions, in particular, languages *ought* to find the expression to extract them from closure. But they do not always succeed.

In Romanian, that which extracts prepositions from closure *is again a preposition*, namely "*întru*" <within>. What is astonishing in this preposition is the fact that it expresses a spatiality that is not also fixity; and that, given that it is thus, it can take up within itself, as if within a matrix, almost all the other prepositions, with all their spatiality. In "*întru*" is not just captured "in"; likewise there is room for: "*de la*" (from), "*din*" (out of), "*spre*" (towards), "*sub*" (beneath) and "*peste*" (over), "*cu*" (with) and "*fără*" (without), "*lîngă*" (next to), "*în jurul*" (around) and "*prin*" (through). What other languages are forced to express indirectly, for prepositionality, is here expressed directly, with a preposition that takes up within it all the closures of the others, in order to bring them into opening. "întru" is thus the paradigm of the closure that opens. Ontological particles, such as the prepositions, converge within an *ontological operator*, which is "*întru*".

---

7 "Prepositionality", as it is here invoked by Noica, would not, in fact, be universally valid in ontology. For example, prepositions are not are feature of agglutinating languages, such as Hungarian, which express spatial relations by means of postpositional locative cases. For instance, the Hungarian *falra* ("onto (the) wall", the sublative case), expresses synthetically what Indo-European languages such as English and Romanian are forced to express analytically. – *Translator's note*.

9. The closure that opens is the primal situation: a "*semen entis*"

The steps taken up to now can be resumed. In the investigation into Being, we have discarded the idea of an absolute and incorruptible Being. We have been left with things (the world, the real, realities). And, in this first part of the treatise, the question that has been raised is 'what can be named the Being in things?' They do not express Being; they are even an ontic emptiness. However, the ontic emptiness can be an *opening* to Being, which must be understood as *a closure that opens*, leading in the real to a *pulsation*, which can appear as a promise of Being, when it is an *augmentative pulsation*.

Therefore, it must be seen how vast is the exercise of the closure that opens and to what extent it is to be thought of as a promise of Being, as a *semen entis*.

The investigation into Being seeks an access to Being which, in distinction to that of scientific knowledge at its level, is neither uniform nor assured. Religious access to Being or that of the channels of art cannot devolve upon it. Philosophy seeks rational access, and if Being is indeed its principal subject, then philosophy represents precisely that: rational access to Being.

But what can be rational in an investigation which, with each philosophy, has proven to be different? What is rational in philosophical investigation is, firstly, *concatenation* ("ces longues chaînes de raison" – Descartes): in the unbinding of things and thoughts there is a situation that binds both things, in their states and processes, and the thoughts about them. What is rational is the *opening*, respectively the fact that both the real and investigation of it are carried further, thereby not blocking access to Being. What is rational is the *circle*, thus the doubling back of each moment in a concatenation upon the anterior moments, in order to invest them as things and better elucidate them as thoughts. Finally, what is rational is *integration*, this time only as regards thoughts, specifically that an investigation into Being might be capable of taking into account other investigations.

As such a situation, privileged both for the real and for thinking about the real, we here propose the closure that opens. Not everything is a closure that opens (there are simple closures, or simple openings, as we have seen). However, with the stricter meaning of the closure which, while remaining closure, opens and leads to an augmentative pulsation, it has seemed to us that through it can be pursued that which *is*. Such a closure leads to a *connection*, which would ascend – in

a way that is bound, open and circular – from things to their Being and hence to Being itself, with chances of integrating other ways of explaining the access to Being. In this sense, we vindicate the character of rationality for the closure that opens and the bound development that follows.

The vastness of the exercise of the closure that opens is not the same as the vastness of its *idea*. Thus, it might easily be asserted that all philosophies have definitively brought into play an ontological situation. In the Presocratics, it would be closure within a "principle" and opening through its manifestations. In Plato, it would appear as closure in Idea and opening through "participation" in it. In Aristotle, closure occurs through the imprinting of form upon matter, and opening through the substance thereby obtained. In Spinoza, it would be closure in the unique substance and opening through its attributes and modes. In Kant, closure is brought by the *a priori* field, with only fourteen forms, and opening through their varied exercise. – However, all these in fact operate a *single* closure that opens – closure in an idea and its hermeneutic opening. With such a *functional* sense, we now wish to follow the closure that opens, and for this, Pascal, rather than the aforementioned philosophers, is the one who unintentionally provides the keyword: "you would not seek me if you had not found me". Things would not open if they had not closed.

It is thus a question of the mechanism of the closure that opens, or, better still, of its *articulation*, promising to bring to light the way in which Being is articulated in things. In the examples that follow, among which some are scientific and thus provisory, it is not so much the exactitude of the example that interests as much as a potential illustration of the mechanism of the closure that opens. We have seen that number, with its closure in a base that opens through its powers, produced as though a diagram of the real. But the mechanism of spontaneous pulsation in the real passes beyond the pulsation of number, as well as implying it. A closure that opens pulses in the inorganic and organic world, and in society and in man, with their fundamental rhythms.

Thus the following exist: closure in a vibration, opening of the vibration through a *wave*; closure as simple repetition, opening of the repetition as *symmetry*; closure as ratio, opening as equality of ratios, which is to say *proportion*; closure of electrons around a nucleus, opening as atom of a *substance*; closure as structure, opening as *system*; closure of

the carbon chain (according to the hexagon of Kékulé), opening as an *organic substance*; closure in code, opening of the code as *life*; closure of life in an organism, opening through the *nervous system*; closure of the nervous system through cerebral concentration, opening through *reflex*, *instinct* and *thought*; closure of spoken thought in a grammatical system of rules, opening through *language*; closure of thought upon itself as idea, opening through the *spirit*; closure of the spirit upon itself, opening through *creation* and *culture*; closure of humans in communities, opening through *history*; closure of man in himself as person, opening through the *human*.

Even if not all the examples are assured, they leave room for many other similar examples, which all express the same procedure. Of what is the procedure? We shall say that it is of the Being in things, or else we shall see in it the promise of the affirmation, in things, of their Being.

Here it might be objected: such a closure that opens is eventually capable of indicating a universal procedure; but is it anything other than its name or, in the best case, the description of a procedure which, however universal, remains a procedure? The world is not reflected in a procedure. Specifically, everything can begin with a closure that opens, but by this, we say no more than: "everything is something in particular, which is manifested outside itself."

If no relationship to Being were made, then naturally the closure that opens would remain an almost mechanical procedure (something of the order of a spring, albeit one continually being recoiled). But now what is at stake is *that* closure of the real which opens to Being; thus, a particular closure, the ontological. In itself, the procedure of the closure that opens is devoid of investment. But just as a mere opening and a mere closure do not have full ontological rights, nor does a mere closure that opens have full ontological rights, as it can remain a situation whose exercise, even if growing and augmentative, can occur within an ontic emptiness. This is what happens in the world of technology; in spite of the fact that the machine arises as the inversion of Being, namely a closure that remains closed, nevertheless, with machines that learn and acquire a becoming, it can pass into the condition of a closure that opens. Except that if they succeed, such machines will probably fall beneath the opening of a bad infinity: they will open to *anything at all*, thus losing the measure of closure and assured pulsation. Machines will be transformed from ontological anti-morphosis

into ontological pseudo-morphosis. – The closure of the real that opens has another horizon; but with *it* can commence the book of Being, de facto and de jure.

In the primal chaos, there was no need for the *nous* of Anaxagoras, nor of any demiurge, in order for the world to be born: the situation of closure that opens was enough. It appears here as a veritable reason to be, a *ratio essendi*, which in man will become a *ratio cognoscendi*. Neither mere universal mechanism, nor "primal phenomenon" in the Goethean sense, the closure that opens is the primal *situation*, as generative of the possibility of Being, which is the common lot of things. Whereas the closure that opens could be viewed at the beginning as a simple schema, it represents, in fact, much more even than a structure; it is a structure in act, as can be seen with number, as well as a system *in nuce*. Today's cybernetic systems, as well as the organic and spiritual systems of all times, are possible illustrations for this initial system. But prior to them is number.

Ontology cannot set out from "principles", whether material or spiritual (such as Hegel's principle of the Spirit), even less so from logical principles, as Wolff did, invoking at the beginning: the principle of contradiction and sufficient reason. Nor can it set out from categories; for, principles and categories are themselves extracted from a "situation". *In the beginning was the situation.* Time arises from a situation, together with space, just as, with the closure that opens, there arises connectivity, from which shall be detached identity, causality, substantiality, system and contradiction, as so many forms of connectivity (see *Le principe de la connection nécessaire*, in "Revue Roumaine des sciences sociales", vol. 14, no. 2, 1970). As such, ontology is primarily a phenomenology in the Hegelian sense, namely one of Being.

Being also *appears*, even if it is not "born" except insofar as regards the real in which it appears. Having passed from its sphere into the real, Being is remade with each new existent: it makes the latter subsist according to its measure. It merely appears through realities, and it might thus be said that *precisely Being is appearance*, if it could be related to another substratum that might be other than itself.

Being's manner of apparition, with the closure that opens, will even become the archetypal model that can be realised beyond ontology proper. All that is described in the phenomenology of Being will be reflected in the rest of philosophical culture: in logic, in epistemology, in ethics or in aesthetics. A primal situation, such as the ontological,

will have its correspondent in the logical "circle", in the active circle of knowledge, in that of moral deed, and in that of artistic creation. But here, we shall remain at the ontological type of closure that opens.

Genuinely qualifying the closure in the real that opens as ontological, we shall for the time being say more than that such a situation can be a germ of Being, a *semen entis*. A first justification for seeing a promise of Being in the closure in the real that opens is provided, with the same internal mechanism, by number, which has been constantly related, avowedly or not, to the Being of the real and which can be taken as a paradigm of the germinality of Being. A second justification might reside in the table of illustrations given above for the ontological situation (as well as however many other possible examples), from which it would be worthwhile for us to retain at least a few: for the physical world, the closure that opens found in proportional ratios, since the majority of the primary laws of physics are based on proportional sizes; for the organic world, the closure of the carbon chain, which provides, with its opening, all the variety of organic substances; for the historical world, the closure of mankind in dwellings, with its opening, through dwellings, to historical Being; for the world of the spirit and the *logos*, the closure of speech in rules and their opening to language. – But the third justification for qualifying the closure that opens as a *semen entis* is its field of activity, which shall shortly be revealed.

We are only at the first stage of Being in things, and "what is Being" will continue to remain a problem, both for things and for Being in itself. This is why we are speaking about a simple grain of Being from which everything will have to be inferred. Just as, in the spiritual techniques of the Orient, the pupil places before him a real grain of rice and another identical but artificial grain, although there is nothing visibly to tell them apart, so in the closure that opens, now understood as a *semen entis*, we must read something that is not written, although it is ciphered there.

10. The closure that opens implies: tension, distension, field

Let us take the closure that opens as the first "trace" of Being in things. We shall not attempt to "reconstitute" Being from one or other of its fragments or traces; but we shall attempt to describe the connected manifestations of Being in things – thus the way in which Being appears, and its phenomena. This phenomenology of Being (that

is, a description bound to phenomena, in their essence) is unitary with the bringing-into-being <*înființare*> of things. The same *semen entis* we place at the beginning of ontology must, however spectrally, be the "genesis" of things. Ontology cannot be constituted without describing the very fact of constituting and constitution of the real. Any other science practices "ontophagy", reducing things to laws; it describes them in order to abolish, to take-from-being <*des-fiinţa*> things though laws. Ontology, on the other hand, does not reduce things to something else: it reveals them as they are and as they have brought-themselves-into-being <*s-au în-fiinţat*>.

If the closure that opens is the first trace of Being in the world, then its implications, by decoding the Being in things, can open ontology.

1) The first implication of the closure that opens is *tension*. Everything begins from a contradictory situation, which is not, however, also a logical contradiction. An "ontological situation" is prior to contradiction, as well as to identity, just as it is beyond temporality, spatiality or categories, since it is only the ontological situation that makes them possible.

2) But since the tension here is not also a blockage, the closure that opens will at the same time be a *distension*, as a self-development of the identical. While contradictory tension led to another sense of contradiction than that accredited, distension will bring into play another sense of identity.

3) In its turn, the opening of distension can not be a loss. Since it occurs beneath a process that preserves itself as identical, it must have or make itself a genuine "place", respectively content; it has to form a *field*.

<p style="text-align:center">❦</p>

Before researching these implications of the closure that opens, let us show that it is implicitly invoked by other ontologies.

When ontology does not commence with an answer (for example, Great Being, or with a thesis such as "Being alone is", of Parmenides), it follows that it will open with a question about Being. But to *what* should the question be put?

Heidegger believed it fitting to put the question precisely to the existent that asks, specifically to the human being. In the questioner he discovered the primal moment of "fear", which progresses, in man, from definite fear to fear of nothing determinate, then to anxiety, then to "Sorge" and, with this, to temporality, where Being was to have re-

vealed itself. But it has recognisably not revealed itself. He has been reproached (Husserl himself did so, in the margins of *Sein und Zeit*) for remaining at anthropology. Even if the charge is not just, since Heidegger seeks the meaning of Being in man, not the meaning of man as such, it is nevertheless true that the temporality at which he arrives remains blocked in "historicity", according to the model invoked by Dilthey, and historicity does not fully discover time. The human, the existent that asks did not even answer for the Being of things, let alone for Being itself, as the thinker would have wished.

It has seemed to us that the question regarding Being must be put not to a privileged existent but to all existents. In everything, there is an encounter, as primal moment, with the closure that opens, leading to a pulsation of repetition or augmentation.[8*]

But let us remain with Heidegger for a moment: does he not set out from a *particular* closure that opens? In all that has life, fear means a closure of the existent upon itself, a closure that remains closed. Only in man does this closure open – and this is why perhaps the thinker retained it. Ordinary fear, which is of something determinate, fixates. But the fear of nothing determinate, with all its negativity, extracts the existent from fixation, while anxiety and then care, with its freedom and responsibility, as well as its awareness of being within death and in time, in itself represents the opening of man, insofar as he may or may not be. But, like any genuine closure that opens, fear = the closure *that is preserved* as fear, in each of the pulsations that provide openings to the human, in anxiety, angst, and finite Temporality.

Thus nothing more fitting stands at our disposal, in order concretely to illustrate the closure that opens, than Heidegger's beginning; but having said that, we must condemn the *narrowness* of his approach. However expressive the human existent might be for ontological investigation, the latter cannot root itself only in the former. And if it does not find anything in man except a significant closure that opens, then it is worth commencing the book of ontology with the very signification of the closure that opens, not with one of its particular cases. With its opening, it offers itself as an interrogation of each thing: does

---

8 * Following the Being in things along the line of the growing pulsation, we leave aside the temptation to underline the discontinuity of the pulsation, as though Being were manifested in things in the form of quanta of Being. Otherwise, it would be just as fitting to speak of "horizons" of the Being in things.

it bear Being within it? And rather than putting to the questioner the question about Being, as in Heidegger, it must in itself be put to the unformulated question that is the closure that opens. Let us then see what are the implications of this.

1) With the closure that opens a *tension* within the general unbinding makes its appearance. The real stands beneath a tension, which can represent the first echo of the Being in things. Chaos, on the other hand, has as its characteristic the lack of any tension, whether it is a chaos of total non-differentiation, or one of total differentiation (*disjecta membra*). And thus it is not only to be imagined as a primal chaos, but also to be encountered, in its constant re-emergence, as a chaos prior to any creation *<înființare>*, such as the chaos prior to creative thought, in man, or that prior to the simple decision. All that "takes on Being" *<prinde ființă>* enters into tension, as a concentration that itself becomes expansion. The seed, buried in the code and its earth, gives shoot. That which does not provide the self-affirmation of the thing cannot be named Being, but nor that which leaves the thing to remain at self-affirmation.

Before this contradictory primal situation, our language, particularly that of logic – which ultimately speaks of merely derived situations – remains mute. Ontologically, the contradiction proves to be a *genesis*, while logically, the contradiction signifies annulment. In this sense, it would be possible to say that everything commences beneath a contradiction, a creative *<înființătoare>* contradiction, and ends at a contradiction, one that is destructive *<desființătoare>*. However, one of the gravest infirmities of logic has always been the incapacity to invoke anything except the contradiction that annuls, with that modern "p plus minus-p equals zero", which in fact annuls and annihilates logic itself, causing it to be incapable of accompanying any reality process, but only the faint ("expressed") processes of thought. With its principle of contradiction, it cannot render even a second form of contradiction, that by means of the blockage of terms, just as all that is inert ultimately represents an aggregate of contradictions in equilibrium (which has suggestively been said of an "arch", where the blocks of stone balance each other, preventing collapse precisely through their common tendency to collapse). And even less so can it render a third form of contradiction, that by means of bringing contradictory terms into act, as with everything that is alive. In the case of "logical" contradiction, there is no tension. Moreover, it produces its contrary: death.

In the second case, that of blockage, a tension appears, but one that is stationary, balanced. Only in the third case – which is that of the closure that opens – the tension is in active imbalance or in permanent re-balance. A *real* contradiction (but one also requiring formal expression) is one that is of such a nature as to emerge from it, together with it. If the closure that opens is the echo of Being in things, then Being itself will be: tension.

2) But Being at the same time brings *distension* in things. And in the purity of the beginning, the contradictory tension was precisely between tension and distension. A closure that remained closed, thereby augmenting the night of chaos, is now opposed to the closure that opens. For it bears a closure at its core, the opening is no longer one of dissolution. As self-possessed and controlled opening, it becomes, with its remade tension, its own diffusion: number had an assured pulsation, just as the wave effectively possesses its own diffusion, as the fear invoked by Heidegger reappeared in any superior horizon, or just as a human destiny, determined within its self, enters into the order of a guaranteed becoming.

Along the same lines can be sought "identity", it too an echo of Being in all that is real. That A=A, the logical principle of identity, says nothing and the fact that only the speculative genius of Fichte and Schelling were able to invoke it for a moment to the letter, only to deny it immediately afterwards, are things that have long been acknowledged. But like a physical wave – representing the purest image of self-identity for the material world – there is nevertheless an "invariable" <invarianță> in the distension and unfolding of the thing.

Otherwise, the logical principle of identity no longer need be repudiated: in itself, it has revealed its naivety, from the moment the phenomenon of isotopy was brought to light. The fact that any real substance has isotopes, and that thereby A is not merely A, has shattered the classical speculation on identity. – The strange thing is that A=A nevertheless makes sense for one thing: for chaos. In spite of its pretension not to reflect anything and to be strictly formal, logic would reflect precisely chaos. Here, in chaos, if it is one of total differentiation, A always remains A and – as in the ancient vision of primal chaos – a leg is nothing but a leg and a hand only a hand, *disjecta membra*. Being is proximate with non-Being, when all things are distinct and as well as loosely distinct.

Like contradictory ontological tension, an ontological identity, manifest in the distension of the closure that opens, *precedes* logical identity and ought to be reflected in the formality of the latter. Ontology might thus commence, as Wolff wanted, with the principle of contradiction and sufficient reason, but in the understanding that it begins with the primal contradictory situation and with the sufficient reason for which contradiction is resolved in a development of the identical.

3) The distension of the closure that opens does not lead to a void opening, since the opening occurred under the control of the initial closure. Thus, the distension, far from augmenting chaos with its lack of any tension, succeeds precisely in emerging from the condition of chaos; but not with blind development or envelopment, like the vortices of Descartes, but with now determinate measure and "pace". Such is the speed of light, if we wish, along with traditional wisdom, to see in it the creation <în-ființarea> of the world.

That which now takes on Being is a *field*, as the ultimate implication of the closure that opens and as a new echo of Being in things. The idea of field, about which it has been said that it is the greatest triumph of modern thinking, expresses something just as primal as tension and distension, with which the field is unitary. There are fields in material reality, just as there are in spiritual reality. Before it is embodied, any entity is a field, and after embodiment it too opens as a field. Traditional philosophy, which spoke of substances and attributes, did not have the courage to say that substance is the field of its attributes. But modern philosophy has drawn closer to the idea of field, at many levels, and Heidegger, with his closure that opens, naturally encounters fields, which he translated as "horizons" of human existence. Perhaps the idea of the field is nevertheless more fitting than the horizon, as it describes an *expanse* that not only has contour, even if it is mobile, like the horizon, but also has a content that is specific and at each point well-determined.

That the echo of Being in things could not be the limitation of a field is a prejudice in the spirit of the sublime infinite Being. If it is admitted, contrary to the reflection of accredited logic, that the phenomenology of Being can commence with a contradictory tension and a distension of the identical, it must equally be admitted that the exercise of these in the real imposes the idea of the field, albeit in a limited way. Or then, if indeed Being does not also accept the boundaries of the real, the idea of limitation will have to be rethought. As soon as

there is a contradiction that does not lead to extinction or blockage, and as soon as there is an identity that does not lead to fixity, then logical or pre-logical reflection will have to make the distinction, as in the case of closure, between a limitation that limits and one that does not limit.

11. The closure that opens as tension: the pulsation of Being in things

From its first appearance, as the closure that opens, Being in things refutes its classical image. It does not bring distension and repose. Once they enter into the order of Being, things pass from one form of restlessness to another.

The distinct image of Being, at a primary level, is given by pulsation. All that is pulsates.

For things as well as people, there is no room, in the closure that opens, for respite or the promise of obtaining Being as repose. In a more laic sense, the words of Pascal, that "you would not seek me if you had not found me", say this about all that has to do with Being, or rather all that Being has to do with. Being brings seeking and is, in things at least, the principle of restlessness. In the words of the same thinker, it will be possible to say, "all things will agonise" (will be in unrest and tension) to the very end.

Tension is thus not only the initial generative pulsation. When a language is constituted, and namely through the closure of speech within a system of rules, then throughout its entire opening, which is likewise endless, that language will rest beneath the tension to which its rules subject it. And even if a universal utterance could be imagined, it too would rest beneath such a strain, otherwise it would not be a genuine language but an opening of the *logos* that perishes in its dissipation. When the carbon chain was enclosed in nature, the organic world arose, whose evolution is unrest itself. When man was enclosed in human settlements, he passed over into the unrest of historical Being, whose disquiet was capable of spreading, like Teilhard de Chardin's *noosphere*, across the entire globe.

The initial ontological situation, which is the closure that opens, does not withdraw from things as a cause is from its effects. The "otiose gods" have been spoken of, those divinities who are supposed to have withdrawn, according to religious beliefs, into their heaven, after they had completed the act of creation, giving way to minor gods,

closer to the world. The same thing has happened with the traditional logical principles, primarily with the principle of identity and that of contradiction. For, these principles became otiose to thinking, after having performed, against sophistry or scepticism, the duty of placing thinking in the order of self-identity and non-contradiction and of meaningful utterance. After that, they became incapable of carrying thought onward to new meanings, or of accompanying newly found meanings.

Being, however, does not withdraw from things, if the closure that opens genuinely provides the first chapter in its phenomenality, that is, its manifestations in the real. Just as number, even if it does not render their ontological intrinsicality, permanently accompanies things and "numbers" them or attempts, at any level, to give them numeric configurations, their initial Being is also their accompanying Being, soliciting them with the permanent tension to which it subjects them. A Being younger than that of the beginnings must be conceived of. This is a Being alien to indifference, one of strains and differences.

Thus, far from appearing as something that causes things to rest, Being manifests itself in things as pulsation. The pulsation was one that was regular for elementary realities and in inferior beings, and the regulated pulsation is that which gives the real its fundamental rhythms. However, at superior levels, the pulsation liberates itself from rhythm, emerging from mechanical regularity. The Being of life beats with a regular rhythm, while the Being of the spirit, still with its own rhythm, beats freely. Thus the Being of thought pulsates, with the opening that constantly discovers its closure as rational constriction, but its pulsation has no rhythm, or relates to another rhythmicity. Plato's Idea also appears as a pulsation in the things that approximate it: it tries to fulfil itself in each of its processes, in an unknown rhythm, but which the Platonic dialectic nevertheless attempts always to place in order. The Romanian poet[9] says, "In each man a world makes its essay", thus invoking the pulsation of social Being, at the same time necessary and free, it too with another rhythm. Enclosed in man, the

9 Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889), in the poem "Emperor and Proletarian: A Philosophical Poem" (1874). "In each man a world makes its essay,/ In vain does the Demiurge strain to prevent; / In each mind the world poses its question / Once more: whence comes and whither goes the flower / Of the obscure desires sown in abundance?" – Translator's note

world ever attempts to open, and where the common rhythm of Being is not perceived, poetic thought has intuited it.

With each closure that opens, Being makes its essay. It is surprising that Being has so often been sought beneath almost all the images of static and sometimes dynamic order (rotation, as the perfect motion of the ancients), and on the other hand so rarely in the form of freely rhythmic pulsation. In terms of regular rhythm, there is nowadays perception of various "messages" from the cosmos, of material concentrations that pulsate (of closures that open pulsating); but the message of higher existences would certainly pulsate beneath free rhythms. Compared with the harmony of the spheres invoked by the Pythagoreans, it is possible to conceive a harmony that would be more discordant only in appearance, that of the pulsations.

The beats of Being are everywhere. Repetitive and regular pulsations, repetitive but irregular pulsations, swelling and again regular pulsations, such as number, increasing but irregular pulsations, some of them free, augmentative, expanding, foundational – all of these are described in its way by the primal ontological situation that Romanian translates by "*a fi întru*" <to be within>. Perhaps the Greek expression for Being, the infinitive "*to einai*" <the fact of being> is not sufficiently appropriate to render the Being of the things that are. A term is needed which, apart from naming their fact of being, would name their right to be, with the entitlements which this right would claim for itself. With "*a fi întru*", here we have a situation more primal than the simple fact of being. It is a situation in which the ceaseless discovery of the condition of being *întru* <within> confers, with its pulsation, the right to Being, from the lowest Being of the regular pulsations, where to be *întru* deteriorates in fact into a form of being *in*, to the augmentative and foundational pulsation, when its content of being *întru* expands and moulds the receptacle in which it is.

Otherwise, the most certain proof that to be *întru* is unitary with Being, in its first manifestation, is given by the fact that it could in itself be understood, mistakenly and unilaterally, as repose ("*întru Tine*"),[10] the same as Being – in such a hurry is the common thought of ontology to have done with things, instead of commencing with them and from their pulsations.

---

10   I.e. "rest in the Lord" – *Translator's note.*

12. The closure that opens as temporal pulsation

The pure pulsation, with no trace or contour, is temporality. Each closure that opens is a promise of Being. Similarly, each is a promise of temporality.

Temporality is a ceaseless closure in the present, which at the same time represents an opening *qua* present: the self-resumption of a closure that opens, with its pulsation. It is a typical tension that resolves itself in distension.

However, the temporal distension of the closure that opens is not of a general and unique time. Temporality returns to any closure that opens as its pulsation. Thus, in this case, it is not time that should be spoken of. Only at a level other than that of the Being in things could the problem of "unique" time arise. But perhaps this is why time has been capable of seeming the ultimate expression of Being, because even in its unique image it is pure closure that opens, like the germ of Being.

<div align="center">§</div>

It has been observed that it is not things that are in time, but time or a kind of time that is in things, namely in the distension of each as its own temporality. For Augustine, time itself was a *distensio animi*. But the distension does not devolve only upon the temporality of man, with his closed yet also open present, but devolves upon any *semen entis*. And it must be named temporality.

Temporality expresses in essence something other than time, indicating a concrete and more structured distension than time. Both signify "measure"; but while time brings exterior measure, thus the measurement ("the number of the movement according to antecedent and consequent", as Aristotle defines time), temporality signifies interior measure. Therefore, time measures from its immeasurability, while temporality is in itself the measure as limit. Time, in the end, always possesses measure as rhythm, while temporality can be measure without rhythm.

Understood as merely exterior measure, time does not model, it does not augment and does not complete things by means of itself, respectively those closures that open and are destined to give things. It is indifference itself: all that is strongest but also all that is weakest, as Hegel said of it. But as it is specific time and interior measure, as it is therefore temporality, it brings accumulations and with them irreversibility. Time in general has been ascribed characteristics that in

fact devolved upon temporality; and it is significant that, especially in modern culture, where time has been made relative and broken down into local times, its description is in reality one of temporality.

Unique time does not escape the curse of Kronos, that of destroying <de a desfiinţa> that which creates <înfiinţează>. Temporality, however, as internal and specific time, possesses measure and is measure. With this measure in it, the closure that opens makes its development in the world. And because the development is within a world, in interaction with it, the closure that opens accumulates, with each pulsation, new data and becomes something that moulds. Only the repetitive, regulated and rhythmic pulsations, such as cosmic or biological pulsations, of the closure that opens do not possess an augmentative character; that is why they can also serve to designate time-measure, a time of indifference. Concrete temporality, on the other hand, is, like the relative time of modern thinking, a form of interaction with the world and a ceaseless accumulation of information, and can be defined, far better than the definition that has been attempted for time, as the "succession of received information". With each pulsation, the closure that opens amplifies its possibilities, models itself, augments and eventually fulfils itself, so that its temporality is creative and irreversibly creative. Even the simple and purely augmentative pulsation of number, as we have described it, carries with it irreversibly augmentative temporality. For, the "triangular" structure of *three* for example, having entered into interaction with the universe of quantity, accumulates information quantitatively, it might be said, and affirms an amplified self, together with its accumulations, as powers of three.

For this reason, temporality is no mere succession and successive order of things (here, of closures that open), as Leibniz defined time, but develops as temporal *horizons*, within which succession also arises. It is true that some horizons are more powerful than others (the temporal horizon of life is more powerful than that of dead matter), thus making the entry into another horizon bring also a change of temporality and of times. It is again true that it can be "measured" by one or another external horizon of things, such as solar, lunar or atomic temporality or that of slow disaggregations; but temporality remains the *internal* measure of the closures that open. They have their pulsation, which does not beat with the same rhythm in all. For besides the temporality of specific rhythmic pulsation, there is a temporality of non-rhythmic pulsations, one which in man becomes compressible

and extensible, with the accelerations and decelerations that can be brought to it. Thus, it is a temporality capable of stimulation or retardation. Indeed, how can one give any other name than "temporality" to the pure distension, lacking traces and contour, of a process? There is no room for instantaneity in it, just as there is no room for it in non-organic disaggregation, in organic growth, in the correlations or in the processes of the spirit. And while all these are no longer mere closures that open, they nevertheless represent their posterity and can give, with their temporality, the measure to the temporality of the closure that opens in itself.

The fact that temporality is something else, more concrete than the distension of empty time, can be shown, in the first case, by the unsuitability of the schemata used in the case of time. For time, the first image was that of common sense: the linearity which, with its character of no "linear" deviations, also meaning simple or naïve, betrays just how naïve is the straight line as a schema (and similarly just how invalid it is in nature and the organic, where helicoidal movement is that which commands, with the straight line being a limit case for it). It is naïve whether it is cut short (why should it be cut short?) or whether it extends unknowingly into the infinite. The second image and schema for time is more elaborate: circular motion; the return to the same point, as a new beginning, or its reoccurrence at a higher level, with the spiral. But the temporality of the closure that opens, however elementary, might say something more subtle than these schemata, which describe only the monotony of empty time.

Temporality cannot be linear, since it permanently doubles back upon the closure, pulsating; but nor is it cyclical, since the closure is not discovered simply, but rather through accumulations (if it were only extension, such as in a wave or number). Both images have an inner defect: repetitive regularity. Within the perspective they give, it is not possible to conceive the non-rhythmic temporality already mentioned, that of irregular pulsations, which ultimately make up the glory of creation at all levels (even at that of the material and organic), not to mention the creations of the spirit, themselves closures that open. The image and schema of temporality is rather to be provided by successive and connected horizons, as we have mentioned, or perhaps by a form of arborescence. Temporality is ramified and diffuse, but *connected* in its diffusion.

If the opening that closes is of itself a seed of Being, then Being, at least that in things, is measured – but not numbered – inherently through its temporality. As such, it will not be unlimited, like Time. Just as the soul, which is to the body the ultimate intrinsicality, vanishes along with it, the Being of a thing shares its time measure. Can momentary beings not also *be?* Historical beings, nature itself as natural history, but most of all the accomplishments of the individual and those of the communities, should they not attain a positive ontological status?

Not only can Being have a meaning within perishable things, but it is perhaps perishable things themselves that disclose the meanings and proceedings of Being. To reach a meaning of Being, it is probably best to listen to their ways of melting in temporality, rather than their being eternal in time. How do they cease to be? How do a tree, a nation, a thought end? How do gods die? Some vanish because their general meaning ends, others because their individual bringing-together comes to an end, others, finally, because neither their general meaning, not their individual embodiment can any longer bring about new determinations; it is then clear that these three types of dying were indeed three dimensions of Being, which can be found at the level of simple closure which opens, where, under the successive horizons of temporality, that opening might be covered, or lost, or the pulsations might cease to be.

A temporality of successive horizons, as it appears here, leaves no room for eternity. The latter is a problem for unique time; for temporality, on the other hand, it means nothing, or, in its vain repetition, only represents something going against the creative and fulfilling meaning of processuality. "The fullness of the time" is the fulfilment of temporality within things; and it is the fulfilment that is of interest, not the length of time.

13. The Closure that opens as Spatial Distension

Temporality was the pure pulsation of the closure that opens, without trace or contour; spatiality might be the trace and the contour of pulsations. Like an expanding universe, the closure that opens creates, in miniature, its own expansion and spatiality. Things were not in time, but temporality was in them; the same also goes for the spatiality in them.

The same distension that generated temporality also generates spatiality, making the former the isomorph of the latter and capable of transcription by means of it. For, by means of the same distension, temporality appears as an *opening* that closes in the present in order to reopen; spatiality, on the contrary, appears as a *closure* within a horizon, which opens in order to close once more.

The solidarity of temporality with spatiality (which in the modern variant will be that of space and time) has always been experienced by language but disavowed by thought, as if the two entities had no common root in something of the order of the closure that opens. To the extent that the latter represents the first index of Being in things, the solidarity of temporality with spatiality is also the first unexpected aspect of Being: the union of opposites. Being makes of opposites the distinct facets of the same primal situation.

Conceived as already given, as time and space are usually conceived, temporality and spatiality would be exterior one to the other, as they would also be exterior to things, and their relationship with each other would represent the long-condemned "spatialisation of time" (from Zeno to Bergson). Conceived as successive horizons, however, they are unitary, merely having something within them that is inverted: the temporally dynamic is evidently opposed to the spatially static. Being, however, unites the dynamic and the static, lending to things spatial temporality. The accumulations of time are the sediments of space. Just as it brings temporality and spatiality into solidarity, Being unites the continuous with the discrete and intension with extension. Language knows this, allowing some terms such as "distension" simultaneously to qualify the dynamic development of temporality and the static development of spatiality. The opposites arose beneath the same closure that opens, causing spatiality to be the trace of temporality.

Like the temporality that had to be distinguished from time, spatiality must be distinguished from space. According to the way it was conceived in its vastness, space is inert; spatiality, on the other hand, pulsates. In the second place, space, conceived as unique like time, represents the void; spatiality expresses, on the contrary, the full. Finally, space, again like time, posits boundaries from without, while spatiality posits them from within. Its boundaries as limitations from within lead to fulfilments, and that is why they cannot remain limitations that merely limit; but since they are limitations, they oppose the emp-

ty infinity which, according to common sense taken to the point of *aporia*, was imposed by physical time and physical space.

With a temporality and spatiality fixed in the concrete and providing the first forms of manifestation of Being in things, at the most insignificant material, organic or spiritual level, it can be said that any closure that opens creates its own spatio-temporality, even if it is one veiled by the more powerful spatio-temporality of the world in which it arises. Distinguished from unending time and unbounded space, which are preponderantly physical, temporality and spatiality will be able to devolve upon any domain of reality. It is right to speak of an organic, historical, psychological, creative and gestative temporality. It is also possible to speak of a logical temporality for the mechanical or for the thought connections between logical processes or operations. Likewise, it has been possible to speak of a spatiality beyond its physical sense, within any type of closure that opens. At first, it seems a figure of speech to invoke a chromatic spatiality, with three colour dimensions, from which the whole universe of colours is made, or else an acoustic or semantic spatiality, or a logical spatiality, such as the penta-dimensional space of Porphyry's voices or the deca-dimensional space of Aristotle's categories, whereby the precise "locus" of an individual reality can always be determined. (Is not "definition", with its proximate genus and specific difference, created by means of a two-dimensional spatiality?) But whereas space denotes a reality, spatiality, like temporality, denotes a situation, and the latter may be said, literally not figuratively, about any distension of a closure that opens.

Philosophical thought long ago brought into play an example – moreover, one that is dazzling – of non-physical spatiality, with the "intelligible place" of Plato, that "topos noêtos" in which the Ideas are situated. The misfortune of European culture, and of ontology in particular, has caused the space in which Plato's ideas subsist to be understood, albeit not quite physically, but in any case according to a physical model, as being "somewhere else". Hence too all the distortions that the Platonic theory of the Ideas has had to endure, with the dispute over the "universals" in the Middle Ages, or nowadays, when any doctrine, even a mathematical one, that would proclaim the subsistence of scientific theories and truths is labelled as "Platonic".[11]

---

11   Wilamowitz-Moellendorff declares (in *Plato*, 1918, ed. V. Berlin, 1959, p. 369) that it seems to him unintelligible how the expression "Platonic love" could have arisen. It is just as unintelligible and regrettable that the mean-

But it is no less true that the Platonic Idea refers, like all the achievements of the Greeks, to an incorruptible "spatiality". With the closure that opens – at any level –is created, on the other hand, a concrete spatiality, without an incorruptible character, as a *content* of the distension at every level. A language has its own content and spatiality, transcribed by the successive horizons of the language's affirmations, just as organic reality has its own spatiality, even beyond the fact of being localised in terrestrial space. We shall regard this concrete spatiality as a new manifestation of Being, which pulsates in real things, by means of temporal opening and spatial closure,.

Abstract and empty space, like abstract and empty time, would arouse from the outset the problem of Being and of infinity; but with temporality and spatiality, the idea of the infinite can be avoided, together with its attendant risks. Being is or can be in the limitation of things and itself in limitation. As to a limited temporality and spatiality, however, unlimited Being would not be able to answer. Moreover, it makes even less sense to be spatially limited than to be temporally limited. However, the example of Parmenides, who spoke of a limited Being, has not been followed by traditional thought.

Of course, Being is everywhere: in each existent has arisen its promise and from any of them a lesson on ontology can be received. But the infinity of dispersion does not also signify spatial infinity. On the one hand, just as Being pulsates, it everywhere expresses the measured nature of things. If, however, the fear of limit and limitation is inspired by the idea of constraint from without – and Being could not be constrained by anything from without, the same as space or time in principle – then the injustice done to Being by not seeking it in limited things is not an injustice to Being itself but rather to the idea of limitation. Aristotle well understood how to say that limitations can come from without, but that in reality they come from within. Such limitations will be the perfection of the thing, which gives itself outline precisely in order to be, like an island.

Nowhere more so than in the ancient school of the Eleatics does this double sense of limitation more clearly appear. Since he of course saw in limitation something imposed from without, Melissos the Eleatic considered that Being is infinite. But Parmenides reckoned contrariwise, that Being is finite and spherical. Of the former, Aristotle

ing of "Platonism" has arisen in Anglo-Saxon philosophy today, after Plato has been so well understood and examined.

said that his thinking was coarse. And nevertheless Parmenides' idea might seem just as coarse, with the image of Being like that of a huge boulder, however perfect it might be. However, beyond the refinement in its vision, or lack thereof, the pendulation of Eleatic thinking between the unlimited and the limited is apparent.

It would not be possible to escape from this pendulation unless another principle of contradiction were invoked, the aforementioned principle of unilateral contradiction: only limitation (not limit, for a distinction must be made between limit and limitation) can contradict non-limitation, not the latter the former. But beyond logical principles, this situation also occurs at the ontological level. We are reminded of it by the history of religions, where so many intuitions of profoundly speculative import are encountered. At its heart, the image of Being is an island, which rises from the depths of the ocean and enhances the reality of the world.

It is the very image of spatiality. Ontology has no material image better than that of the island. However, it perhaps has a better *meaning* than that found in the history of religions, and namely that of an island with a pulsating and increasing outline.

14. Temporality, Spatiality, Field. The Being in Things is Heterogenous

With temporal pulsations and spatial horizons, the Being in things appears, in a third representation, as a field. Spatio-temporal co-existence passes into existence. By means of a field, the spatio-temporality of the closure that opens is specified, becoming organised and oriented. A *semen entis* has developed to the point of being temporality, spatiality, field.

What may be named Being, at the first moment, are these three aspects all together. The Being in things presents itself as heterogeneous.

The same closure that opens which, with temporality and spatiality, brought the generic to the real, with the field also brings its specificity, just as "Being" means both something general and the Being of this particular thing (respectively secondary and primary substance, in Aristotelian terms). The closure that opens now reveals its particular mode of being. The germ of Being ends up giving itself determinations and contents, while the field is their aggregate.

Simple spatiality is not of itself field. Spatiality represents a lax, loosened content, while the field is organised content. On the other

hand, spatiality is defined by its limit, even if it is a moving limit; the field is defined by its content and lines of force. Combined with temporality, spatiality acquires only a *possible* orientation, while the field, beneath its temporality, has a determined orientation.

Through the field, the closure that opens emerges from indifference. Now it is a centre, or a bipolarity, or at least a matrix. It dissipates, in a diffusion that tends to be controlled, and within the framework of which each point, although possessing a different value, nevertheless reflects the field as a whole. Something plasmatic stands to take on embodiment as thing; and in each thing, Being makes its attempt, with its complete model.

Indeed, whoever seeks Being in things finds temporality, spatiality, field. Are these just three names? Are they three functions that we might name Being? Before seeing, during the course of the present essay, what these three moments of Being represent and how they are articulated, we must also perceive the fact that Being is not unitary but rather diverse, here threefold.

Just as it is not in distension, nor is Being homogenous, as traditional ontology might have it. In the case that it were homogenous, any material or spiritual entity of reality that attained the level of Being would dissolve in this homogeneity, instead of fulfilling itself. Thus, it is now not a matter of the diversity of the world and the connection between unitary Being and a diverse world, but rather of the inner diversity of Being. *At least* the Being in things, manifest as temporality, spatiality, field, has a nature more complex than might be suggested by the "fact of being" or Parmenides' idea that "Being is".

What is the nature of "to be"? While all entities – not to mention things – fully possess a composition, a complex nature, an inner fabric and ultimately a structure, Being would be homogenous and simple in its massivity, if the greater part of past ontology were to be believed. Time, space, life, the *logos* are not simple, each of them having a composition. Except that no mention is made of the inner composition of Being.

So assured does the homogeneity of Being seem that, in the vision of folklore, science and all too often philosophy, it has been possible effectively to describe "entry into Being" as a final dissolution, that is, into a state of undifferentiated unity. In Romanian folklore, for example, the Being of the paradisiacal world would abolish any differentiation: there will no longer be anything determinate then, not even

thought or speech, but "it will all be one day". But it might be said that
it is the same in the scientific visions of the likes of de Broglie, accord-
ing to whom everything was born from light and will return to it. In
philosophy, Indian thought speaks openly of the dissolution into the
Great All, while European thought, at its terminus with even the likes
of Heidegger, accords Being all the privileges, primarily that of a sim-
plicity that leaves no room for any articulated sense of it. Moreover,
is it not ontology that speaks about access to Being rather than its
nature?

At the initial level of the closure that opens, where we now find our-
selves, such final problems can not yet be posed. But henceforward,
it will be possible to say something about the nature of "to be": it is a
complex nature. Will it remain a complex nature even beyond things,
at the level of Being itself? What the present investigation presup-
poses is precisely the potential to obtain a meaning of Being in itself,
by setting out from the former, thus the chances that the image of the
Being in things might lead to an image of Being in itself. In principle,
the complexity of "marked" Being, the Being in things, might be re-
duced in simplicity to a final meaning of Being. But it is just as well to
conceive that the structure of Being remains the same in things and in
itself, accordingly, that non-unitary inner Being prefigures its superior
instance.

With the combination of temporality, spatiality and field, however,
the Being in things barely begins its career. "What is Being" further
becomes explicit. But does it become explicit as meaning or as Being?
Is diversity to be found in the meaning of Being, or is Being in itself
diverse?

"What is Being" might indeed mean, "what is the meaning of Being",
but it also means, "what is the Being of Being" (its manner of being, its
nature, its "is-ness" <estime>). It is the latter trial that we are going to
make, with the closure that opens, allowing the thing to speak through
it, rather than thought to speak about it. If the phenomenological term
has any meaning, it is that of attempting to describe the linked mani-
festations of the thing, not the links of thought about it. The closure
that opens was not a meaning *about* things, so much as the manifesta-
tion, or spectrum of their primal manifestation. Likewise, temporality,
spatiality and field, which have arisen in the distension of the closure
that opens, wish to reveal even the Being of things. At this level, the
three aspects are descriptions, and just as life would be described (and

not construed or deduced) on the basis of what is living, it is thus that Being is described, at a first level, on the basis of that which takes on Being.

If, however, we have not spoken about the "meaning" of Being but rather described the first emergence of Being in things, then we have described it in *all* things without any privileging of things. This would mean, at first sight, that what has been at stake, under the name of "Being", has not been a reality but an ontological ideality. However, that which appears to be ideality is in fact the *function* of Being in things, with its manner of being in them. Thus, what has been revealed, if it is a revelation, is Being's manner of being, not Being itself. You can seek, like Plato, beauty's, friendship's, the truth's manner of being (the "what it is" of each, their quiddity) and then, at the same time, you will declare: I am seeking the Being of beauty, the Being of friendship, the Being of the truth. Similarly, we seek Being's manner of being. But we shall henceforward say that while, for example, beauty's way of being exhausts the beautiful and is beauty itself. (If anything is still left for the beautiful, then it is precisely Being, and in this sense it has been possible to say that all the Ideas can be reduced to one, the Idea of Being.) On the other hand, Being's manner of being is not the same as Being, as the second part will show.

Being's manner of being, common to things, is not the same as things' manner of being, proper to each. On the other hand, the thing's manner of being is Being's manner of being; or it is to its model and according to its archetypal model. We shall not therefore say: Being is time, space, field. But the temporality, spatiality and field of each thing expresses Being at one of its first levels.

Heraclitus spoke of the "One differing in itself". Later ontology has almost never known how to see in Being the confrontation of the terms that makes up its inner diversity; it has steadfastly understood it along Parmenidian lines, as distended and homogenous. But at least as a model in the world and in all the shards of the world, Being is a One differing in itself.

15. The Being in things is a limitation but not one that limits

As it manifests itself in things, Being is not only heterogeneous; temporality, spatiality and the field simultaneously turn it into a form of limitation. Indeed, temporality does not mean infinite time, and spatiality is not infinite space; in itself, the field represents a limitation.

If we thus name Being the enstructuration of these three limited distensions of the closure that opens, then Being is, with its limitations, commensurate with things and might seem to remain commensurate.

Since we sought Being *in things*, it was natural that it should be commensurate with them. But it is not natural that it should remain commensurate with them. The situation of the closure that opens has offered itself to us, definitively, as one that is in the end explanatory for Being itself, just as we maintain that it is integrative for other visions about Being. However, how can one see Being in general or refer to it with a mere spatio-temporality transformed into field, whither the closure that opens has led? In a single way: if the limitation that has been arrived at is one that does not limit.

We might anticipate, saying that simple spatio-temporality transformed into field will lead to the ontological model, with *Individual-General-Determinations*; that the satisfaction of this model will refer to *becoming*; that becoming will prove possible only through *element*, which in the last instance is or has that which ought to be named becomance <*devenință*>; and that only at this level will it be possible to speak of full Being. But henceforward, with a first apparition of Being, this must in any case betray a distinct character, if it lays claim to a distinct career, and this distinct character is that of being a limitation that does not limit.

By no means distinct but rather resting beneath a tension, alien to eternity and non-limitation understood as infinity in time and space, by no means homogenous but rather heterogeneous, Being appears, in this presentation, as degraded to the level of a simple existent: a field, with its spatio-temporality. Nothing of its glory (of being one, transcendent and unchanging) has remained. However, one title alone, and this still at a scale other than that of the absolute, will suffice Being in order to give it the sense of an exception to the real, or of an exception that ought to be the rule for the real: limitation that does not limit.

Surprisingly, Parmenides spoke of a Being in limitation. But the spherical limitation of his Being was accompanied by all the perfections, itself being understood, perhaps, in a fittingly Greek way, as a perfection. On the other hand, in the modern spirit, infinity can no longer be eliminated; it is no longer taken as perfection, but rather as an integrating procedure in mathematics and a horizon for understanding for the remainder.

Between the infinite, infinity, the unlimited, the boundless and infinitude we shall have to choose the latter, because it is the only expression which, unlike the other denominations, renders the qualitative, not the quantitative, which is to say the measureless. Being brings the qualitative; it brings the qualitative as the density of the real, as the intensity of its opening and – with a term that has been used, and seems to us particularly suggestive – as an "infinity of co-penetration". If it places margins, with spatio-temporality having been transformed into field, then what is at stake are margins that are similarly "un-margins" <*nemargini*>[12], to use Eminescu's phrase. In the world of the margined what happens is that non-limitation (and with it the unlimited) appears. It is the sign of Being, or of its substitutes.

Bertrand Russell, a thinker one would have hoped at least to do metaphysics, said in his autobiography that only those human situations and things that have in them infinitude are good and redeem the real. Thus he too, the positivist, revealed the infinitude in finite situations and expressed, at the level of moral experience, the condition of Being as bringing a total opening, in the form of the "good". In its turn, the infinitude in the finite that has been obtained by mathematics, with its infinitesimal calculus, formally expresses the *density* of the Being of the real in substance, margined by a surface and as a given space. But this calculus is obtained by homogenising the differentials, while the density of Being lays claim to their heterogeneity, causing "differentials" to warrant their name.

Nature never ceases to posit in the world the same life, with its infinitude in the finite, which means that life *is*. Reason, in its turn, endlessly posits meanings in languages, or else even a particular language can render however many nuances of thought, which means that reason and languages *are*, in their domain of being <*fiinţare*>. Finally, the experiences of man may also have the density of Being, that is, its infinitude.

Shall we then say that values "are" not? That, for example, the beauty of an embodiment is not, because it is transient? In a way, Shakespeare's *Sonnets* say this, but at the same time, they deny it, if only because they accord to that beauty the meaning of archetype and because they would wish to modulate and differentiate it endlessly, in the

---

12   In the posthumously published poem "The Tale of the Star-Voyaging Mage", a philosophical fairy tale, in which Eminescu speaks of the "unmargins of the heavens" and the "unmargins of thought". – Translator's note.

descendants of the admired being. Something of the problematic of "Being" appears here, of that Being that is not eternal and still less can make transient things eternal, but which causes infinitude to appear, this time without the support of eternity, that is, of non-limitation in time. In fact, with each material, moral or spiritual reality, Being makes its attempt to inseminate infinitude in the world. Where infinitude finds its place, Being has also made its appearance.

Of a sudden, with infinitude, strangeness arises in the world, in the form of structures that link together, of species that evolve, of rudiments of nervous matter that concentrate and tend towards maximal cerebralisation – according to the fantastic but ontologically significant vision of Teilhard de Chardin. In the form of values, of creation that "enhances the nature at the heart of nature", or, in man, of wisdom. This strangeness of Being can be perceived, registered and understood by the spirit at any level of reality, but cannot truly be thought or grounded unless, through philosophic reason, Being and its terms are invoked.

In natural and human reality, which religious meditation deplores, just as great poetry envelops it in great sadness, the infinitude of Being is nevertheless inscribed. It has no need of another time and another space, of other substances ("the æther") and other determinations ("incorruptibility") in order to arise. It seemed to Plato that Being and its substitutes, primarily values, recall Being and the values of "elsewhere". But this too was a way of saying that "elsewhere" can be here, or that strangeness arises in ordinary transient things. Moreover, few ideas are more regrettable than the one according to which "everything is transient". Of course, it is transient; but the question is transient in what way: with or without a fulfilment?

But then what ontological status is possessed by the things that do not bear infinitude in them? They are non-fulfilments of Being. At the same time, they too should be understood in the regimen of Being; just as everything in the regimen of Being, as a possible transition of a thing into a limitation that does not limit, will have to be understood, and the Being of those things that have been. The limitation that does not limit is, in the untruth of the world, the truth of Being.

Excursus on the limitation that does not limit
Because the category of the limitation that does not limit is central to the development of the ideas here, we shall interrupt for a moment

the point by point exposition, in order to attempt better to bring into relief the category in question.

Inorganic matter rests beneath limitations: some hundred elements of a particular nature, of which the substance of the entire world is probably made up. Life too rests beneath limitations: some twenty amino acids, from which nature makes almost all that is organic substance. Thought, in its turn, rests beneath limitations: its truths, which integrate anterior truths, can themselves be integrated and even claim new integrations for themselves.

In the first two examples, the limitation was as though quantitative, in the last, that of "truths", it is qualitative. In fact, limitation in quantity (only *so many* elements) is one in quantity (only *such* elements) and limitation, as will be seen shortly, is a category of quality and not of quantity. This is why it will not be a matter of "the limitation of something by something else", of delimitation, nor of measure in space and in number, still less a matter of "limit" and the problem of limits as a spiritual experience of man.

Limitation is viewed here functionally, as a category. Indeed, category is named a universal predicate: something that may be said of anything. For example, unity is a category, as well as causality, for any thing is a unity and any thing becomes a cause, in the general interdependence. Likewise, everything is in limitation.

But the categories can change their function, preserving their names: necessity is *one thing* to the fatalist, another to the scientist; cause means one thing in determinism, another according to indeterminism.

There are limits that limit and limits that do not limit. Dogmas or "absolute truths" are essentially limitations that limit. The open, therefore relative, truths of today's knowledge are limitations that do not limit. Knowledge in general tends to transform limitations that limit (this stone, that reality) into meanings and laws, which are at least limitations of a *higher order*. The moral condition defeats evil, which has always been understood as a limitation, and puts good in its place, as a limitation that does not limit. The beautiful itself is a limitation in the concrete, but not one that limits. All human culture tends to transform limitations that limit into limitations that do not limit.

Is there any specific concept in this sense?

It can be discovered: it figures in the table of the Kantian categories, exactly under the name of "limitation". However, in Kant, it did not acquire a full significance and has not enjoyed a distinguished career, but

has remained a kind of Cinderella among the categories. Kant himself introduced it with a certain wariness, while many commentators do not even grant it the right to exist among the categories. Today, the concept of limitation is as if forgotten. How can one place it next to the major categories of causality or necessity, for example? Nevertheless, we shall claim that not only is limitation a category, it is, perhaps, the category of categories. Without this concept, thought would prove inoperative, just as the real without limitations would not have Being.

§

As is known, the Kantian table of categories is:

	Of quantity	
	Unity	
	Plurality	
	Totality	

Of quality	*Of relation*
Real (existence)	Substance
Negation (non-existence)	Causality
Limitation	Community

	Of modality	
	Possibility	
	Reality	
	Necessity	

The category of limitation thus appears as the last in the group of quality. Kant deduced the categories, as pure unities, from the functions of thought that are expressed by the judgements, functions clearly presented in the traditional table of the judgements. For the categories of quality, Kant takes as his base the affirmative and negative judgements. To the affirmative judgements will correspond, as a unity of thought, the category of the real, that is, the affirmation of existence; to the negative judgements will correspond the category of negation, an expression of non-existence. However, Kant sees here a lacuna in the traditional table of the judgements: there is lacking a type of judgement which at the same time affirms and negates, specifically to affirm a negation that does not abolish. Such judgements are uttered, he says, and must be validated logically; they are judgements

whose predicate is negative but which are in fact positive, such as: the soul is immortal.[13] They must be named "infinite judgements", since, just as the term infinite is apparently negative, but essentially only positive, these judgements with an "immortal" negative predicate make room for an infinity of determinations.

It has been objected that Kant introduces infinite judgements only from the formal need for symmetry, in order to obtain three types of judgement under the heading of quality, the same as everywhere else. In infinite judgements, it would be a question of a mere negation of negation (mortal, a term with a negative sense, which is negated), and formal logic knows full well that the negation of a negation leads to an affirmation: it suppresses a limit, abolishes a negation. Formal logic would therefore be correct, it is said, in sticking to the two types of judgement of quality, the affirmative and the negative. – Kant anticipates this, demonstrating that it is a necessity of thought to make an affirmation precisely through a negation and that only thus can thought bring to light the infinity of determinations, and for such a function of thought a specific type of judgement is required.

However things might stand with the judgement, what has resulted here for the categories? It results that a third category needs to be conceived, alongside the real and negation (or existence and non-existence), a category to express the positivity of the negative. It is known that Spinoza revealed the negativity of the positive, saying: "omnis determinatio est negatio". Kant reveals the opposite: the negation that does not negate but rather creates. He names such a category "limitation", but implies that it is a limitation that does not limit.

Therefore, there would exist limitations of the ordinary kind, limitations that limit, and beyond these Kant allows us to speak of limitations that are wholly unordinary in appearance, contradictions in terms, charged in any case with a special tension – limitations that do not limit. And here he stops.

As has happened on a number of occasions in the history of culture, a concept, at other times sterile, can suddenly acquire a fuller meaning. Let us trace the career of limitation at various levels.

1. Whence arises the need to introduce such a strange concept? In the reflection upon *quality*. Hence must begin the endeavour to justify the concept of the limitation that does not limit. Affirmation and ne-

---

13   Less sublime examples might be given: "He is immoral"; "This idea is unfortunate".

gation, the first two momenta of quality, do not say everything about it, they even say too little: affirmation shows that a quality can mean presence, negation that it can also be privation. Quality, however, carries in it much more than presence or absence, it brings something particular into the world, it is therefore more complex than is shown by the gross fact of being or not being. Every quality brings its own *qualis*, that is, its own way of being, thereby differentiating itself not only as a quality but also among other qualities. Its limitation in a specific nature is its defining character and therefore limitation must be incumbent upon at least one of the categories of quality, as a mark of it.

This is precisely why quality can be known, not just perceived sensibly: it has a measure. According to science, there is a "specific gravity" whereby the elements of matter differentiate themselves qualitatively, thus a limitation: or else there is a law of "definite proportions", according to which there are structures, numbers, constitutive forms, almost as the Pythagoreans said – all of them limitations. Man has sought to identify limitation even in qualities of a spiritual order, such as beauty or the good: the statue of Venus has been measured in order to see the just proportions of the beautiful, its limitation, while for Aristotle virtue is a just measure, a limitation between an excessive plus and an excessive minus. We may therefore equally speak of a limitation of a quantitative, which would result in quality, as well as of a qualitative limitation in the proper sense, the irreducible fact of being thus and not otherwise.

If, however, limitation is in the nature of quality, it will not be sufficient as such in order to take account of this. Quality becomes true and positive quality only *when it is lost*, with its specificity, in favour of the thing that expresses it. In blue, you must be able to see the colour, not the blue as such, and in the colour, the real that is in itself manifest. In the just proportions of the statue of Venus, the harmony of the feminine essence is revealed, and here the beauty of the human being and ultimately beauty pure and simple. The colour blue, like the just proportions of the female form, represent a limitation, but one which is capable of not limiting. Aphrodite has green eyes – this is a limitation. But it is one in the non-limitation of beauty.

All that is Being, in the end, has a way of being and of expressing itself as such, through a quality. How can quality conceal, beneath its limitation, the depths from which it proceeds? The limitation that

only limits will be precisely the proof of imperfection, in the case of quality. To the extent that it is "good", quality becomes more expressive for "*something else*", so that, in order to speak correctly, one can only say that, inasmuch as quality exists, it disappears. More is said by means of it than it in itself affirms.

Therefore, only in the third category of Kant's table, in the category of the limitation that does not limit, does quality reveal its true nature. Moreover, things occurred likewise with quantity too: only the third category (totality, which is unity in plurality, according to Kant) expresses its nature; since simple unity is not quantity, just as nor would simple, non-unified plurality be quantity. The synthesis alone between unity and plurality truly makes quantity. Likewise, the synthesis between affirmation and negation makes quality. One can say of a man that he "has qualities" (in the sense of distinct and isolated qualities), only when these have not blended into his unity as genuine man, thus when they do not fulfil their function of qualities of the human being as a whole. Only in its existential discretion does the quality acquire fulfilment. It has then become a limitation that does not limit.

Consequently, the category of limitation not only justifies its presence in the rank of the categories of quality, but also proves to be the only one capable of transposing the apparent irreducibility of quality on a logical scale. After it has won the right to be one of the categories, the limitation that does not limit raises, through its paradoxical character and its inner tension, the problem: how does it stand in relation to the other categories? It does not seem to be in the same family as the others, which are well-known concepts with a long tradition in the history of thought. Thereby solicited to linger upon it, thought ascertains that limitation is significant for more than the world of quality, it is significant even for categories in general. All the categories will appear, in their way, as limitations that do not limit, and to the extent that this signification will be definitive of them, the modest limitation of the beginning will be transformed into a category of the categories.

2. What, indeed, does *category* mean? It has been said that it denotes the most general concepts used in understanding; but this vague qualification cannot constitute a definition. In contemporary philosophy, the designation category is in any case extended to all kinds of concepts of a more general order. Aristotle permitted himself to invoke only ten categories, even if he does not logically justify that number;

Kant – twelve, this time rigorously deduced. Category can only denote something precise: a universal *predicate*. And such is limitation.

But it is precisely through limitation that one better understands the other categories. Indeed, any concept has the limitation of its content, and even if it has infinitely many applications, it cannot be a universal predicate. The concept of horse comprises present, past and future horses, real and imaginary horses, Achilles' horse and those drawn upon walls, and so on, thus horses however many and various, but nevertheless qualitatively limited in a way. (One can only name a horse a horse.) The limitation of horse also limits its "infinity"; it can be quantitatively infinite, but it is not non-limitation, which is qualitative. Even if one passes from real to abstract and conventional concepts – which should rather be named notions than concepts – one still comes up against an "infinity" in limitation. The notion of goodwill, for example, or that of divisibility both have an opening that is infinite and at the same time in limitation. In this sense, it might be said that any concept represents, through a unity of thought, a limitation that limits.

And nevertheless, among concepts there are a few whose limitation does not limit their capacity to be predicates: these are precisely the categories, although limited by their content, like any concept. Compared to the concept of horse or divisibility, unity, for example, not only has a greater generality but also a greater predicability. It cannot be said of just anything that it is a horse or that it is divisible, but it can be said that it is a unity; this can even be said of plurality and diversity. The categories may then be defined and recognised in a definite way: they are *only those concepts whose limitation in predicating does not limit*.

(Of course, the great problems provoked by the categories remain unsolved here: of what nature are these units of thought that, without being concepts of the real, are neither abstract nor conventional; how can a "deduction" of them be conceived and how many are there, if the table is not in some way open. Nevertheless, a defining criterion for them is obtained, and the category of "limitation", which it provides, can be viewed, in this sense, as the category that makes the categories possible.)

3. Here, therefore, is a second function which is fulfilled by the limitation that does not limit and, with this, its entry into the higher zones of logic. Here commences the presentiment of the *dialectic*, and limitation will have something to say about this. As is well known, it is in the

table of the categories that modern dialectics has its origin, in contra-distinction to the ancient dialectic, born from the suggestion of living dialogue. The categories began to enter into motion as soon as Kant gave them their interpretation, they linked together in threes and gen-erated that processuality which, with Fichte and then Hegel, was to place everything in flux. But here flux does not mean dissolution of thought and of its terms. On the contrary, it is precisely the dialectical movement that succeeds in throwing into relief the terms of thought, distinguished with final clarity by the contradiction in which they rest, or at the same time do not rest. The understanding always believes it can halt at these terms obtained so definitely; it seems natural that it should conclude and remain within the limits of the conquered truth. (Dialectics does not represent an exercise freely undertaken, an or-dered string of thoughts, followed for its own sake. Contradiction is a surprise for thinking, taking the form of the severance of thought from itself.) In the case of thought, each term tends to stiffen and fix-ate itself in its limitation– just as it tends also to stiffen within the order of the real. What occurs in order for it to be rescued from hence? What happens is that it produces its own contradiction and thereby an exit. What is named dialectics is the transformation of a limitation that tends to limit into the mere "moment" of a terminus and into the limitation that does not limit.

Without a more profound concept of limitation, dialectics has no meaning and would not be able to emerge from a condition scandalous to reason. Nevertheless, thinking is not usually capable of giving up the closed limitation, and this is why modern philosophy has felt the need to distinguish between reason and intellect, with the latter being the reason that limits, that separates and fixates, perceiving what has become, while the former is reason properly-speaking, which unites, develops and captures becoming. Such a kind of reason comes to life late on, in the evening of thought, as an expression of maturity and lucidity. It reveals that what seemed definitive was, in reality, provisory even at the level of logic.

When one reads Plato or Hegel, one has, with each grounding, the feeling that a conclusion can be reached: but the next page will come to refute the truth obtained. Was it then untruth? No, this can only be declared by the intellect, in which the principle of the excluded middle blindly operates: either it is the truth or it is not the truth. Reason does not say that it was an untruth, but merely that it was a moment

of the truth. But the moment is laden with all the riches of a limitation that carries in it non-limitation. (How little, for example, is said by the idea of the family, in its usual limitation that limits, compared to the limitation that does not limit, which the dialectical process reveals to it, in the chapter about man and woman, or about Antigone, in Hegel's *Phenomenology*!)

4. If the dialectical terms cannot be fully understood except as limitations that do not limit, it means that, with this category, something of the *act of thinking* is revealed to us. Indeed, beyond dialectics or prior to being organised in a dialectical development, thought undertakes its exercise under essentially the same schema. What does one do when one thinks except raise limitations, in things, referring them to laws, which are also, of course, limitations, albeit ones that are more open? We always begin to think as a result of wonder; but the wonder is that of seeing the mask fall from things and of glimpsing the other face in them. "This was therefore something else" – this is the beginning of meditation. At the logical level, this will mean: the understanding of the individual by means of the general, transition from the condition of a fact to the law. All of a sudden, the boundaries open and the field of infinite seeking looms before you. For the person who does not think, the boundaries of states of fact mean impassable barriers, genuine limitations that only limit. For the person who thinks, they are still limitations, but ones that are open. Thinking is to give them, with the new function, additional justification, but not refutation as limitations, as might seem.

Indeed, there is absolutely no justification for the accusation that is often levelled, that submersion in thought, that is, in the substance of the general, would lead to the abandonment of the individual, of states of fact and of the limits whereby things are defined. Only unripe thought does this. Mature thought, far from gliding over realities, draws its power from them. Schiller made the observation that, as you get older, you become more interested in facts than theory. But why do facts begin to interest you more? Precisely because they are more loaded with theory than mere theories. That which brought you to maturity was the capacity to see the embodied General, instead of the generality that hovers, like the spirit over the waters in the beginning. And not only has the Individual become a testimony to the General, incorporating it, but also it represents a source of new generalisations and possible theorisations. You theorise more with facts than

with theories at a given moment. A theory says nothing except what it says, while a fact can irradiate, with its virtualities, a far more extensive theoretical area.

This is why, as soon as thinking has learned to read from the Book of Facts, it leaves aside other books, just as Descartes did, preferring to read, as he said, in the book of the self and of nature. However, even he, and above all the whole modern world, which, like him, abandoned scholastic books in favour of experience, did not abandon theory and generality altogether. On the contrary, nature, experience and the earthly in man bore modern thought on towards the limitlessness of the idea, while the books of the "idea" buried thought in one or other single idea, when they did not void thought of ideas. In its turn, thought alone does justice to facts. In limitation, the power of thought is revealed and in the service of the real, the entire possibility of the latter is arrayed. Flight from the real proves to be guilty *before thought* prior to being guilty before the real.

5. It is therefore natural to move from the act of thinking to *culture*, in its sense of "nurturing" and moulding, then to knowledge, and to see how a new way of bringing into play the limitation that does not limit arises. There is something paradoxical in culture, with its attempt to model and give universality to one or other *historical* entity, inseparable from its particularity. But culture shows it its general face. Thus, any cultural subject, human or community yields to education through the medium of a language: but language, with its spirit, with its structure and its lexical possibilities, represents a restriction, which can easily be transformed into a limitation that limits. The cultural subject, on the other hand, belongs to a determined world, as well as to a particular historical moment, with tradition, manners and their spiritual profile. Moreover, as living being, the community and individual persons have their own complex of inclinations and resistances. From all these limitations, without crushing anything in them, but rather intensifying them, culture understands how to obtain the universal, moulding humans in time, as well as outside time, or elevating particular humans and communities up to the great confrontations at the core of the human.

If one now bends one's mind to the particular forms that culture adopts, one cannot help being struck by the dual character of each of them, or the dual cult, both of limitation and non-limitation. Thus, on the one hand, art places before one all kinds of realities, sometimes

realities of the most humble kind and increasingly so in the modern epoch (the subject matter of painting, musical themes, human lives in literature are seemingly chosen in order to affirm the primacy of the real, of any kind of reality, above idealisations). On the other hand, however, in such a reality, whose smallness would shame even reality itself, the artist contemplates and makes one contemplate the essence.

As for science, it represents, without any refutation, a veritable school of the humility of thought, both in the sense that it disciplines thought and by the fact that it chooses as its object any kind of reality. Modern science has not commenced, like the ancient treatises on nature, with the heavens and the "primal principles" of things, but with the stone that falls (Galileo), or the drop of mud flung from the turning wheel. Plato's provocative question, as to whether there is an Idea of the strand of hair or an Idea of mud, has received a comprehensive, organised and significant answer only in recent centuries. Science as a whole has developed around the immediate, often in the interests of the immediate.

But its horizon was not that of the immediate. It was not only that the falling stone or apple led to the law of universal gravity, or the flung-off drop of mud to the problem of tangents. Thus, not only was it that the immediate led further, but also from the beginning the need for a knowledge of things in the surrounding horizon brought in its wake the theoretical, with its non-limitation. One knows scientifically, that is, one identifies, in the limitation of certain facts, the limitlessness or wider limitation of a law. One can err, in the cognitive language one employs, about the true nature of the law, but one does not err as regards the enlarged horizon into which one penetrates.

At its terminus, one or another historical period of cultural and scientific creation survives on two levels: through museum values and through the values of civilisation. On the one hand the priceless creations of the past stand exhibited to the gaze of all, having become in time mere museum pieces that no longer fertilise, veritable limitations limited to their past fulfilment; on the other hand, there stand the accumulated products of civilisation. Are not the values of civilisation, in particular, limitations that merely limit?

6. With *material civilisation*, it would seem that there can no longer be a question of limitation that does not limit. We have seen the necessary function of this category in all its variety: with the final justification of quality, of the categorial, of the dialectical, with the act of

thinking, as well as with culture in general. But with civilisation? Now
one has doubled back from ideal values to things, to limitation; one
loves the limited for its own sake not for something deeper in it. Nor
can one see something deeper, we are told: civilisation (according to
Spengler, but not only him) would genuinely be the terminus of a cre-
ative historical period, an end of culture. The idea that had animated
your world and made it creative at every level has been extinguished;
exact and dry knowledge has been arrived at, which translate into the
utilitarian values of civilisation.

Whatever might be understood by material civilisation, whether
goods as such are understood, or whether it is the spirit in which they
are used, it is clear that its incrimination bears upon the limitation
that limits, at its core. For the greater part of Indian thought, matter
is evil; through it, the unity of the world is prevented from being re-
made, since matter brings and maintains individuation. The spiritual
techniques practised by man will then have to dominate and annul the
effects of his bodily nature, just as man's entire spiritual orientation
will have to lead him to detachment from material values and even
from action at the heart of the world.

But everything, in this vision, springs from the consideration of
matter as limitation and as a principle of limitation. What if, however,
matter is viewed as a limitation that does not limit? The entire picture
will then be different – and this is, or could be the case in the experi-
ence of life and thought for European man.

Satisfaction only in the immediate, with its limitation to the utili-
tarian valorisation of material means, is guilty in the first place be-
fore these means, whose non-limitation it does not see and does not
favour. European man, in his positive variant, attempts to enter into
alliance with material means, respectively with the machine, in order
to *enhance* his humanity, but not at all in order to refer it to limita-
tion. Just as ancient man sometimes saw the potential implantation
of the human into the animal (the centaur, the sphinx) as a means
to supplement the human and not a diminishment of it, likewise the
man of material civilisation dreams of enhancing the human condi-
tion through alliance with ever more refined artificial instruments and
computers.

At one point, such artificial organs and computers might enter into
such an intrinsic alliance with man that it will be said that he has been
implanted into the mechanical like the ancient was implanted in the

animal. Material civilisation will have thus proven capable of having brought into play the limitation that does not limit.

7. Moreover, what else is the human subject of civilisation if not the limitation that does not limit in the highest sense? With the human subject, the career made by the strange category of limitation, through concepts and realities, can effectively be concluded. All the examples above were, in fact, ideas and experiences of man, the being through whom the limitlessness of matter opens to new non-limitations. Even in his bodily being, there appears the non-limitation in limitation: an entity like the other higher organisms, man develops a central nervous system whose trajectory emerges, as has been said, from the path of evolution and passes onto that of auto-evolution. Just as, bound with all his fibres to the earth, he reserves the right to who knows what re-adjustments in outer space. Although he sometimes appears uncertain and worried, in contrast to the massive certainty of the rest of nature, he develops *consciousness*, the science of absent and far-off things, a prototype of the limitation that does not limit. He becomes lucid, and therefore he acquires another way of seeing, in the midst of the general blindness, even developing something much more than sight: reason – the organ of non-limitation – whereby he makes things transparent. Everything comes to consecrate him as Being with horizon, that horizon which, through its moving outline, provides the ideal schema for the limitation that does not limit.

Thus endowed with positive limitation, man sets out into wider existence, where he is stalked, in all shapes and forms, by negative limitation. Limitations that limit are called man's needs, while his freedoms are limitations that do not limit. Labour appears to man as a curse, when it is carried out exclusively under the first hypostasis; it becomes a blessing to him and the meaning of life when it is performed under the second. In man, everything is distributed in pairs: he lives in two kinds of time, one that wears away, another that builds up; he has two experiences of infinity, in its interminableness and in its plenitude; two kinds of respite, two kinds of learning – one that burdens the mind, another that unburdens it; two kinds of growing old and dying; two types of defeat; two types of submission, one that crushes, one that confirms. In man can therefore be seen how much concrete truth there is in an abstract category. Man can signify the same content of life according to one limitation or another. You are here, you are now, you are thus – limitations. You always find yourself caught up in them how-

ever brilliant your situation, you can experience them painfully, as an irreparable restriction, a condition of limited being, or, on the contrary, you can see in any situation all promise. Great poetry has often been the expression of human sadness before the limitation that limits; not only great poetry, but also the madness of a privileged few. The impotence to be anything else, anywhere else drives to despair. Shakespeare describes the son of Henry IV, himself a future king, who cannot accept the limitation of being prince and makes himself a highway robber, in order to see what it is like to be in another human condition. At other times, limitation is not experienced by the one who lives it except in the moment it is revealed to him by others. A noble asks Rousseau's advice. The latter opens his letter of reply saying: "Si j'avais le malheur d'être né prince…" This, before being an impertinence, expresses the disturbing truth that a human category which has been content to exist within a limitation that limits can no longer have access to the non-limitation of the human.

There is, finally, an ideal in which the exercise of the category of limitation at the core of human experience culminates. It is the ideal of freedom. Freedom appears as the exigency of a total lack of limitation, but it comes in itself to bring about endless limitation when it has not obtained its maturity. In the form of the freedom to possess there has been an endless source of limitation and mutilation. In the form of the freedom to be, it is blind, untamed limitlessness. Perhaps the freedom to do alone also has in it measure and the unmeasured. In the form of creation, it is man's ultimate limitation that does not limit.

16. The Being in things as expression of generality

Whoever seeks the Being in things accordingly finds: temporality, spatiality, field. If you wonder what the Being of a tree is, what appears as definitive of it is the combination of a temporality with a spatiality within a field. But things being thus, is it the Being of a tree? Or is it the Being of *the tree*?

The apprehension of the way in which Being appears will, firstly, be that of an aspect of *generality* in its nature. However much temporality, spatiality and field might have arisen from a certain closure that opens, Being (or the idea of Being) reveals this as "something else". And it is not something else extensive, in the sense that it represents a reality among realities (a tree among trees), but appears as something else in

itself. In it, there is something deeper than it. As soon as it has been constituted as such, a thing is more than it appears.

❦

The fact that a thing can be something else is known in its way – as Hegel said – by all living nature, proving it when it practises allotrophy, that is, when it nourishes itself with other things. The thinker thus asserted (in the *Encyclopaedia*, part I, paragraph 131), in connection with essence, that the world is appearance not only for the awareness but also in itself. But he adds: "We would perish from hunger, physically and spiritually, if things were not appearance". If a fruit were effectively only what it seems and not a nourishing sap concentrated in the appearance of a fruit, then how could we nourish ourselves with it? Hegel's idea suddenly puts real things in a different light, likening them to spiritual things. For the world of the spirit is precisely that in which everything can become something else; otherwise we would die of spiritual hunger, as Hegel says.

But the thing is something else *in* and through its being. Beneath the limitations of temporality, spatiality and the field, a thing has taken on Being. Because it has embodied itself, it has image, "eidos". Aristotle said that the *eidos* is distinct from the matter of the thing and that the latter only *is* at the moment in which the *eidos* is implanted in matter, when it in-forms it, when it provides it with form. But the thing makes its own form, when it has taken on Being qua thing. It has a law and is in its law. The Romanian expression "a fi în legea lui" <to be in its law> means to say about a thing that, being what it appears, it is nevertheless something else, or that it is by means of something else, by means of its law. Its law binds it; but like any law it is also an unbinding, a generality, as it is more comprehensive than the thing.

Accordingly, because it has taken on being, the thing has acquired an *identity*. But what is identity except its own generality? In the ceaseless distension of the closure that opens and in the variety of accumulations brought into its field by temporal and spatial pulsations, the status attained by a thing in order to be what it is preserves itself, however enriched. Identity reduces to its generalities the particular situations of the thing that has taken on being. Of course, in a sense, identity is a limitation, for it provides the thing with a specific status; but it is a limitation that does not limit. It educates the thing, it leads it out, drawing it out of itself and causing it or allowing it to transform

itself however much, because it holds it under its control. That which is rests beneath the school of its own generality, represented by identity.

However, in the thing that has taken on Being, it is not only identity that represents the aspect of generality, but also *interrelation*. That which is might seem a simple aggregate of accidents; essentially, however, it is a system of connections. What exactly a thing is can be read in the development connected to its temporality, in both the development and envelopment of its spatiality, as well as in the lines of force in the field which has thereby been created. Again, it is something of a general order, this time as a system of connections, that appears as deeper in the thing than that which it reveals itself to be. That which is situated in unravelling *is* not; but any system of connections possesses an ideality in it.

The ideality of Being in the reality of the thing is more than even a system of connections: it is an *organisation*, which genuinely causes the thing to be thing. Like the chance curve in the trajectories of the real or the curve traced by a human hand, which, however it might be, also has its equation, as Leibniz once said, likewise any thing that has taken on Being must somewhere have an equation of field. It cannot be rendered mathematically, but in the perspective of Being, it has an expression, which with its generality comes to complement the other two aspects of generality in the real thing.

To see that the thing *is* thus means – in the first place – to capture its identity, interrelation and organisation, and altogether these provide the aspect of generality in the Being of things, representing, before anything else, its *internal* generality. Accordingly, at a deeper first understanding of the thing, its Being is defined through its own generality, disintegrating through death into an inferior generality (the plant disintegrating into mineral, for example), when it is not assimilated by a higher generality (the plant assimilated by the animal).

Internal generality represents, therefore, an ontological moment. Let us name any ontological generality simply the "General". Many thinkers have refused to accept the presence and action of the General in the world, under the pretext that only the visible exists, respectively what can be perceived by the senses. The ancients, on the other hand, said that nevertheless species, which for them denoted a General, is visible (just as it is visible that an entity is a horse, that it belongs to the horse species). It might further be said that genus too is visible (I

see something animate and say that it is an animal, even if I cannot identify its species). However, while it can be admitted that genus and not even species – which here are ontological and by no means logical Generalia – might be invisible, just as the spirit of a language or a people are invisible to the normal eye, their action in the world of the visible still cannot be denied. Except that their action is within the framework of the *Being* in things and not as autonomous Generalia.

Invisible as they are and inert as they seem, these Generalia are in fact a living principle of the world. But before elevating ourselves, by means of them, to vaster realities, compared to which things, distinct among themselves, are indistinguishable (just as a living entity cannot be distinguished from life), let us return to the internal generality of each separate thing, which likewise is a living principle of their Being. It is as though, Platonically, each thing would be by means of its Idea, and at this level only its Idea. Each thing with *its* law, the Romanian language has long said, before the likes of Georg Simmel spoke of "das individuelle Gesetz".

Everybody, even nominalists, accepts the abstract General, the logical General, but not everybody accepts the General in the ontological sense, just as they do not accept the idea of generality proper. If we might speak of philosophical periods of culture, as we speak of a scientific one nowadays – and at certain moments of history philosophical periods seem to have existed, with Plato or Hegel, for example – then culture would rise to the Idea, to the objective spirit, that is, to the enlarged concreteness of the General. However it might be, even if it is only scientific, culture still rises to the General. Nothing remains as it is, from the perspective of the abstract or concrete Generalia that are identified by culture. The speck of dust does not settle on a wall by chance: the negative charge of one and the positive charge of the other make attraction possible. Nature is an unending confrontation of "Generalia": juices, fluids, energies activate all that is, as do forms, structures, and codes, populating the world with appearances of reality, which are resolved in their generality. In man, the Generalia are so active that it has been said that he turns the world "on his head".

Man consciously wishes to posit Being in the world, but he does not have the patience and suppleness of Being not to insert the reality of the General directly into matter, but rather to allow it to constitute itself on its own. At least as Homo Technicus for things and Homo Politicus for his peers, man has assumed the responsibility and free-

dom to undertake the manipulation of the General. But in doing so, he has too often brought historical non-being into the world instead of Being, while in his technical products, where he likewise directly incorporates the abstract, he risks bringing non-being, even an aggressive non-being. Essentially, it is precisely those who claim not to identify Generalia anywhere – such as the empiricists and nominalists – who, by invoking the Individual alone as real, can be accused of dealing only in the worst species of Generalia, namely empty Generalia.

However, whatever the nature of the General might be, even if it is only of the order of *internal* generality which is now at stake, it has no subsistence of its own and is nothing more than *one* aspect of Being. For Being, it is not good that the General should remain alone. From the beginning, the General did not prove apt to render by itself the Being of the world. For, if there is a meaning in the Biblical legend according to which the Creator saw that the male-human was good, in his way, but that it was not good for him to remain alone, then the ontological meaning of man (which as male-human bears in him rather an abstract general nature) could be to have to associate to himself the concrete General of feminine nature, accordingly something that would be closer to the Individual and individuation. The way to Being is opened by the General. But on its own it does not give Being.

17. The Being in things as expression of individuality

The General on its own does not provide the Being of the thing, in the sense of a definite Being; it does not reveal what is here, now and thus. But the same distensions of the closure that opens, the temporality, spatiality and field which provided the Being in things with its aspect of generality, with the identity and organisation of things, these same distensions will also give the aspect of individuality. After all, if it is possible for general space and time to have been reckoned "principles of individuation", since they give, at the same time as their generality, the *hic et nunc*, then concrete spatiality and temporality will, all the more so, reveal what is here and now, just as the field will give the how. The union of contraries at the core of temporality and spatiality, specifically the union between General and Individual – suggested perhaps best of all by the Romanian word "sinea" <the self>, which can refer both to the self of the whole world and the self of each thing – expresses the internal tension of the idea of Being.

That the General alone could not provide the full measure of Being and not even its image (the *eidos*, Aristotelian substantial form) is shown by the two great schools of the General, by mathematics for the abstract General and by religion for the concrete General.

In its purity, as it appears in mathematics, the General makes no reference to Being, and in modern mathematics it does not even genuinely set out from any intuition of the real that might be transformed into an "axiom". All is symbol or abstract structure, relation or formal system, lacking any substantiality. In mathematics, the only allusions to Being appear in terms of non-Being, such as the "accumulation point", which in its vicinity has an infinity of points, but which in itself does not exist as such, or such as the irrational number mentioned above, which as a mere "scission" nevertheless organises the numeric continuum. Does it not organise it by endlessly elevating its limits? Therefore, mathematical "Being" might, at this level, be the numeric continuum, which, however, can no longer be viewed as an abstract generality, but is rather something individual, just as "all people together" or "the universe of speech" equally represent something individual. Even in mathematics or logic, therefore, the generality which approached Being would at the same time combine with an individual meaning.

But in any case, in religions, this is what happens with generality pure and simple: the divine confers its ontological investment only when it individualises itself. And not only the supreme divinity, but also any level of the divine stands beneath the exigency of individualisation. For the world of angels, for example, it has been conceived, in desperation, that *each* angel is a species, not to mention the angelic "hosts". Accordingly, the angels are either non-individualised and have Being only through their class, or they are so individualised that they each become unique specimens. As for the rest, that is, the whole world, it does not posses "true Being" in itself, according to the religious vision.

In the cosmic and non-religious vision of Eminescu's "Lucifer"[14], albeit one that is still centred upon the general, what appears striking

14   Mihai Eminescu, *Luceafărul*, 1884. Luceafărul, in Romanian, is a common noun (evening/morning star) but here it is used by Eminescu to mean a proper noun, which can be translated into English as *Lucifer*, the fallen angel. In the poem *Luceafărul*, the princess Cătălina falls in love with the star Luceafărul ("Lucifer", elsewhere in the poem also named "Hyperion")

is not the withdrawal of the General before the real (its withdrawal even seems to be a defeat and a reversion to the condition of being "immortal and cold"), but rather its desire to acquire individualisation. If the poem were to be understood in terms of the worn-out opposition between immortal and mortal, then it would be platitude itself. But interpreted as the emergence of the General from the non-differentiation and non-limitation of "immortality", as a striving towards individuation and limitation (and the Demiurge will be capable of revealing to Lucifer that the entry into limitation is possible for a General, but within a limitation which does not limit, like those few that he enumerates), the poem becomes one of engagement and not detachment, just as it is one of Being, together with individuation, not one of the cold eternity in which the general shares when left to itself. Lucifer says he would wish to enter "your narrow round". But if he did so, then the "chance" that sifts you would fall, to be replaced with a form of necessity that would enlarge the circle. Through the descent of the General into an appropriate Individual, *Being would be fulfilled*. But the legend is one of non-fulfilment and the poet rendered it as such.

Thus, from the perspective of Being, "it is not good for the General to remain alone". It represents just a facet of Being, that which can raise limitations. This is why the General is good when it brings non-limitation, limitations *and all*. The limitations that are suppressed by the General are only those that fixate, not at all those that define. And in fact only after the General has manifested itself does the Individual discover its true limits: they are those that it can place *within* itself and which it no longer experiences as interdictions, but rather as fulfilments. The Individual, in the presence of the General which seems

---

and asks him to descend to the mortal world. He does so twice, but in a human incarnation that is inhumanly lifeless. Cătălina then asks him to renounce his immortality, so that they might live together as mortals. Luceafărul travels, like a streak of light, back to the beginning of time, where he asks the Creator of the universe to release him from his immortal state. The Demiurge tells him that of all things only this is impossible. Luceafărul returns to earth, only to find that Cătălina has been seduced by a mortal, a swain named Cătălina, whereupon, in the last strophe of the poem, Luceafărul says, "Living in your narrow round / You are sifted by chance, / But I in my world feel / Immortal and cold." The poem is a mixture of cosmogony and fairytale. At one level, it is an allegory of the isolation of genius. At another level, it dramatises the conflict of reality and transcendence. – Translator's note.

to abolish it, can now give itself definite contours. It brings configurations and embodiments not only for itself, but also for a General which, in its turn, might risk losing itself in its own fluidity and vaporousness. After all, it is the Individual that saves the General from disintegration. For the apparent disintegration that the latter brings to the Individual, raising any limitations to it, turns back against it. That Being is not lost in the evanescence of the General is only due to the Individual that returns it to limitation.

The individual is Apollonian, while Being too has an Apollonian aspect. The Apollonian was, to use the language of Nietzsche, that which also rescued the Dionysian, for only through the former does the blind chorus become illumined tragedy. The opposition between Apollonian and Dionysian contains the positive meaning of a contradiction that is not also a blockage; one of the terms (at least for the Greeks) must take precedence. Making available the Individual is one of the triumphs of the earthly but also of the Apollonian over the heavenly and the Dionysian. The human world emerges from the drunkenness of the General, like tragedy from Bacchic delirium, by virtue of the fact that the Individual endlessly gives measure to the non-limitations of the General. As for the claim of the moderns, according to Spengler, to have placed infinity (the "Faustian") before infinitude and the Greek Apollonian, it doubles back against them. If it is a question of the aspiration to infinity in cathedral spires, not to mention sky-scrapers, or losing oneself in musical infinity or the "transfinite" numbers of the mathematicians, then the modern infinity remains exposed, since it has lost Being. The Greeks knew how to conserve it locked up, with its infinity, in the limits of the Apollonian Individual.

But if the Individual is so decisive for Being, then *what* exactly can be named "Individual", be it the individual person or the individual situation? A reality with a simple limitation cannot be an Individual, since any thing, process or aspect of the real has a limitation from without and is a unity, when viewed also from without. A stone also has unity, from the same perspective. But the stone does not have an inner unity. We shall then view the Individual as that reality which possesses a *double limitation* in tension, a unity without and another within. It is true that a mechanism also has a double unity, one without and one within; all technical objects or human products are thus: a house has a unity both without and within. Except that all these things do not rest beneath an inner tension (they can be "dead iron", dead wall); they have

rested only beneath the tension of the human producer. Without such a tension, all technology represents a reality without Being, and even the products of art become thus. They are transformed into the waste product of Being (museum pieces).

The most significant Individual, and one that has always fascinated philosophers, with the promise of Being within it, has been the *organism*. Here, indeed, arises not only double limitation or unity, within as well as without, but at the same time the tension of inner unity, a unity that knows how to preserve itself, in the organism, while changing itself, that is, permanently suppressing its limitations. Except that however exemplary it might seem ontologically, the organism does not obtain from itself the full meaning of Being, with its limitation that does not limit, because it can fall, and in fact constantly does so (even organisms of a spiritual type), into self-repetition. The organic unity and the limitation that the organism places within itself, thus positively, can close upon themselves and begin to repeat themselves, as biological rhythms or as the great rhythmicity of the reproduction of one "single" organism at the heart of the species. Then, although unutterably more engaged in Being, thus more individualised than a mechanism or an artefact, organism can also, from one perspective, appear as a non-fulfilment of Being.

Even man himself is subject to the fate of non-fulfilment of Being, if his Individual has not obtained an inner unity open towards the General, but merely one of repetition at the heart of the given Generalia of society and the species. All reality, including human reality, is not only the occasion for but also the cemetery of Being. If, however, in the cemeteries of man the graves bear names, it is because – even in the absence of belief in personal survival – the Individual must be rescued in an ultimate form of its opening towards Being, specifically through *names*. In the name of a person are thus condensed, despairingly it might be said, not only the empty Individual ("here lies this person") but also the Individual with a final sense and possible access to the General ("everything is transient").

However, precisely from the perspective of Being, the fact that a name is given or preserved for dust and ashes is deeply significant. The reintegration of no longer living human being into the generality of the material elements is not sufficient in order to preserve Being; the *General* of the elements itself (the dust) "is" not, except with the

Individual. It must be coupled with something individual – be it even a mere name, in eternity.

18. The Being in things as an expression of determinations

The coupling of the General to an Individual does not yet render the Being in things. Something is still needed in order for Being to appear, namely the determinations of the field.

After all, the General and the Individual are always coupled, if it is not a case of logical generality (the only one opposed to the Individual), but of the ontological aspect or moment of generality, that is, of the General properly speaking. Temporality and spatiality brought generality and individuality at the same time, in the closure that opens, giving not only measure, as rhythm and horizon, but also measure as a laying of boundaries from within, accordingly as fulfilment. When the thing has taken on Being beneath a closure that opens, it always has one facet of individuality and one of its own generality. It might even be said that the General sooner appears in a thing under the regimen of temporality (identity demands time to affirm itself in transformation, the interrelations that lead to the "organisation" of the thing also necessarily develop within time), while the Individual appears under the regimen of spatiality, which steadfastly closes, in the end, and fixates. It is significant in this respect that the ancients had a god, Kronos, for time (as general temporality), whereas they had no deity for *general* spatiality, as space was always specific, from Gea, the primal, vast earth, to the nymphs of places.

But apart from the Individual and the General, coupled together as they are, Being does not appear in things without Determinations for the latter. As manifestations of things, determinations are brought by the field, with its specifications and polarities, or with its simple diversification into points which, although having different values, always reflect the entire field. It might thus be said that, altogether, the General, the Individual and Determinations render Being. And indeed these are the three terms that any philosophy invokes explicitly or implicitly, through them attempting a description of the world in essence: some thinkers have set out from the General, in order to account for phenomena and individual realities; others from the Individual, yet others from manifestations, phenomena, Determinations. Proof that the ontological terms are in *essence* these is given by dialectics and the fact that in broad terms there have only been three

kinds of dialectic. One is the Platonic dialectic, which sets out from immediate realities, from the Individual, and ascends via Determinations towards the General, towards the Ideas. Another is the Hegelian dialectic, which sets out from the General and arrives, in an organised fashion, via Determinations, at the Individual (the passage from substance to subject, as Hegel says). The third, the modern dialectic, sets out from Determinations, for example from forces of production, and passing via the General, relations of production, accounts for the real and the historical Individual.

The General, the Individual and Determinations represent the true heterogeneity of Being (which also appeared provisionally at the beginning as temporality, spatiality, field), and in their triplicity they would express the Being in things. And nevertheless *not even altogether* do they express it in themselves. For, indeed, what are the Determinations, which have appeared as manifestations of the thing that takes on Being? Of which are they: of the General? Of the Individual? And *when* are they Determinations of Being? Let us henceforward reply that, although coupled together, the General and the Individual each have their own Determinations and that the entire problem of Being will be: the positive encounter between the Determinations of the Individual and those of the General.

The generality "proper" to the thing, understood as identity, an interrelation and internal organisation, was not the only General in the thing. Any opening occurs in the world, or is a being-in-the-world, as is shown by Heidegger's *Dasein*, in the case in which we are right to see in his existential analysis the development of a particular closure that opens. Generality proper has in fact been obtained from the confrontation with the Generalia of the world, so that the General rests, with its augmented richness, in relation to the scarcity of the Individual.

But whatever the scarcity of the Individual might be, it is, like the General, an endless source of Determinations. A speaking individual person can express anything; in its turn, a language, as a generality of utterance, bears within it all the possible expressions. But the distinction is that the Determinations of the Individual are contingent and relate to the real, while those that are general are necessary and relate to ideality. Nevertheless, ideality can enter into resonance with reality without necessity, and then the Being of things is fulfilled, whereas the Individual left to itself and the General by itself are in deficiency. The Individual may, of course, obtain its own structures and configu-

rations, but under Generalia other than those which fulfil it; the General may have determinations (as free structures, let us say the species or properties that have not penetrated into the real), but they remain in their ideality.

In fact, nothing in the real is contingent in such a way as not to have a *necessary* tension, like those curves traced at random but which nevertheless have their translation in an equation of analytical geometry. Whatever free or even anarchic determinations the individual might give, their aggregate rests under a necessity (just as all the freedoms of man fall under statistics). This means that there are, in fact, two necessities and only two: one is of no direct ontological significance, while the other is of direct configurative as well as ontological significance.

In itself, the Individual is ontologically insignificant. The closure whereby it has arisen confers varied possibilities of opening, and it has an untamed infinity of determinations. The General, on the other hand, has a tamed, controlled infinity. *Infinity now stands before infinity*. Or rather: a bad infinity, that of the Individual ("yet another determination and yet another determination") stands before a good infinity, that of the General ("both this determination and the other"). Thus, for example, if we ascend to the human world, on the one hand, the Determinations that man gives himself or aspires to give himself for his fulfilment – for his "eudaimonia", as the Greeks said – stand face to face with, on the other hand, the equally endless Determinations that the individual person is offered by ideologies, which claim to guide individuals towards their own eudaimonia in a controlled manner, sometimes even against their will, in the immediate. Except that one string of determinations can remain alien to another, they develop in parallel, often indifferent to each other, at other times in confrontation, in a way that is distortional both for the Individual and the General. The insignificant necessity of the Individual is blind to Being, for it sees itself deprived of a general meaning and directs itself towards a waste of Being. And in the end, it is transformed into an inert and worn-out expedient of "generality" ("a human life" like so many others, for example), such as the matter taken as a prime and *ultimate* reality, such as blind destiny for things, or such as ultimate sense or nonsense, in the world of the spirit. The two strings of determinations do not correspond with each other, or else they have not entered into resonance.

When the two strings of determinations correspond to each other, they still bear two names. As they belong to the Individual, the Determinations have the names of their contingency in the real; but the same Determinations, from the perspective of the General, have the name of their necessary ideality – just as a plant has *one* name in folklore or ordinary speech and another in botany. The determinations which the individual person in society gives himself also bear a name, compared to the different name they have from the perspective of the historical General. But even in this case, that of the correspondence of determinations, the distinction does not remain merely one of name, in the reality caught in becoming and history, but the Determinations of a *reality* of the Individual are at any level – and especially at the human level, as I too have underlined, but too exclusively in existentialism – an endless provocation for the Determinations of the *ideality* of the General, which is obliged to enlarge its necessity in order also to contain them, that is, in order to be able to give them too the name of ideality and necessity. Truths too "educate" themselves.

For at the heart of reality, the two strings of determinations are never totally exposed, nor covered in such a way as to obtain a *stable* ontological equilibrium. The ideality of the Determinations of the General permanently trace, in the contingent real, lines of direction; but also, conversely, the reality of the Determinations of the Individual can invade and enlarge ideality. Like pendulums, which might move randomly in the first moment, but end up synchronising their oscillations, there thus appears, in the chaos of Determinations still not in tune with each other, a beginning of order and synchronicity, leading to common Determinations so ordered that they might steadfastly be perceived and then create a rational rhythmicity. Determinations may thus "invent" their Generalia (they may be "întru" <within> something as yet indeterminate, which, once arisen, might enlarge and educate. But as with the Determinations of the Individual that "creates" its General, the Determinations of the latter may endlessly create, with their concentrations, Individualia to preserve themselves as such. In the vast universe of Determinations, a systole and a diastole, a concentration and an expansion, an attraction and a repulsion, as Goethe saw everywhere, would seem to be vigorously active. Beneath such a relationship, the Individual and the General would represent the fundamental polarity.

However, from the ontological perspective here outlined, whether Determinations are viewed as manifestations of the Individual or the General, or whether *they* appear, as unitary Determinations, creative of opposite poles of General and Individual, it seems to us that we must speak of something other than distinct polarities and unities (like the Individual and the General), or about a monadological plurality of the Leibniz type, where each Individual, qua monad, is a General from the start. On the contrary, it must be underlined that the Determinations *together* form with the Individual and the General the trinitary aggregate of Being and, at the same time, in its plenitude and precariousness, the entire contents of reality.

If Being is reflected in man more than in any other reality, then in him these three moments of Being must appear still more accentuated. And indeed, in man the *individual* is affirmed to the point of the excess of separating him as an individual person from any framework and belonging. *Determinations*, likewise, are more varied in him than in any other existent, as they are the manifestations of his activity freed from the inertia of matter, from vegetative fixation and from animal restriction. But the *General*, in man, is not merely imposed, from without or from within, but is rather sought, in a proliferation that makes of man the true source of Generalia and their organ. The three ontological terms may rest in man, as in the remainder of the real, in tension or in relaxation, but it is predominantly in man that the Determinations of the Individual tend to synchronise themselves with those of the General.

The positive encounter between Determinations, or the entry of the Determinations of the Individual into the matrix of those of the General, will produce Being, which shall steadfastly preserve its threefold structure. But from the perspective of Being, everything is reversed: it is the General-Father and the Individual that proceed from Determinations rather than the latter from the former or from both. The world is a content of Determinations that bear in them, or release, the Individual and the General. If one of the terms of Being alone might represent it, with an appearance of autonomy, then it would not so much be accomplished by the ideal General, still less by the real Individual, as much as by the Determinations, namely those in which reality and ideality correspond and are correspondent.

From this perspective, as Hegel said, "all that is real is rational" remains exposed. Not all that is real is rational, because at any time or

place the Determinations of the Individual harmonise with those of the General. Being, even the Being of things, is made of a rarer metal: only "all that is real and rational *is*".

19. The ontological model: an Individual whose determinations are converted into those of the General

"Being" can be said in ten ways, declares Aristotle. No – we must venture to declare that "Being" can be said in a single way. In a place other than in the Treatise about the ten categories, Aristotle distinguished between 1) Being in the usual sense; 2) the Being of the categories; 3) truth/falsehood; 4) possible and real (*Metaphysics*, V, 7). But here too the sense provided by the categories was predominant. In general, Aristotle asserts that "being" is an equivocal term, as it can be said in many different ways. And it is true, in the ordinary language from which Aristotle in fact sets out, that there may be many different senses for Being. However, in the language of ontology, there can only be one.

In mediaeval times, they used to speak of a *ratio essendi*. By "ratio" we should understand ground and grounding. The ground of Being must be the same, wherever it reveals itself and in itself. There must be a cipher of Being, or a code. But it would be more fitting for us to say that there is a *model*, understood as an archetypal procedure. The "procedure" would clearly express the fact that Being is not something already fulfilled, but that, apart from its inner diversity, it also has a process of this diversity. More than a Being given in advance, it is possible to speak of an "entry into Being". Why does something acquire Being rather than remain in chaos? How does it acquire Being? And in what way is Being, in order for it to capture and contain things?

Being is not simple, but threefold. The Being of things is everywhere produced through a triplet. And it *is produced* – or else it is not produced, in contrast to the "all that is real is rational", or Plato's suggestion, in the *Parmenides*, that all that exists, even a strand of hair, even mud, must have an Idea. It is true that the model of Being will also prove to be active everywhere; but it will not be fulfilled everywhere. If, indeed, with three letters, which give the code of Being, the world *is*, it is no less true that the existent at the heart of reality can bring into play only two, under the condition, however, of opening towards a third.

But how can three things be one? The problem has been posed before in the history of our culture, at a highest level. Independently, however, of other answers, it can be said that Being defines itself precisely by the fact that in its framework *three things are one*. Whoever does not accept this condition of a diverse One, practices Arianism. A great deal of traditional ontology is Arian.

At first sight, the code of Being might seem too summary. In fact, given the absolute, even more summary, character of traditional Being, this model is too rich. The idea of absolute and unitary Being has laid waste not only to the world but also to Being. If the idea of Being now appears to imply a diversity, and even one that is active, it is because only accordingly can it render that manifold One (a One ceaselessly differing within itself, as Heraclitus said), to which everything lays claim. For, indeed, the three terms of Being have always been encountered by speculative thought. They reveal themselves – as three and as three only – in any philosophy. Their triumphantly "classic" development (which can be abbreviated as: from I through D to G) is in Platonic philosophy. They are, on the other hand, clearly brought to light by theological speculation, and still more clearly, since here they are precisely named, by Hegelian thought.

We had to recognise from the outset that the trinitary model of Being, outlined here, itself represents that positive orientation from the past on whose ground metaphysics is not merely metaphysics. Likewise, we had to recognise that the Hegelian dialectic is undertaken not along logical and falsifying lines, with thesis-synthesis-antithesis (which Hegel himself mentions extremely rarely, but which have been accredited to the point completely obnubilating the dialectical process), but rather along ontological lines: General, Determinations, Individual, or, to use Hegel's terms: *Allgemeinheit, Besonderheit, Einzelnheit*. If, for Hegel, everything can be captured in this triplicity – spirit, divinity, nature, humanity – it is because in the name of dialectics Hegel was in fact ontologising.

But equally we had to object that the model is, in Hegel, *developed* or only in development (weakening its ontological character and becoming merely dialectical-historical), rather the ontological terms revealing themselves enfolded in their structure and providing the archetypal model, which is *not* fulfilled everywhere, as it was forced to be in the Hegelian development. The second objection that must be brought against Hegelianism is that, even in the development of the

model, it brings into play a *single* possible modality, that which moves from General through Determinations to Individual, whereas in fact three dialectical developments must be spoken of, which are just as active in philosophical thought. One of them, moreover, is declared and manifest, namely the Platonic. If Hegel had retained from it more than the name, understanding it in its articulation and not just in its letter, then he would have seen that, in one sense, his dialectic, which sets out from the General, had rather a "Romantic" character, compared to the classical character of the ancient dialectic. However, in any of its versions, the dialectic *presupposes* the ontological model. It is bound to and develops bound only to that which "is".

What, then, is the model, manifest in things as well as in humans and, leaving open the question of whether it is not somehow manifest in itself, beyond things and human? It is that which is made up of a General, an Individual, a double series of Determinations, and a conversion. It may be rendered schematically thus:

The Individual
{
provides itself
however many
free or
contingent
Determinations
}
but
{
the same
Determinations
can depend on
a manifold
controlled by
}
the General
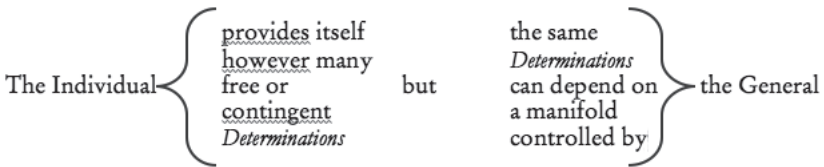
What must be highlighted in this model is, firstly, the fact that it does not give a static table, but rather has an internal dynamism: the conversion of Determinations into other Determinations. Secondly, the fact that such a conversion *may* or may not occur. If we name this conversion "anastrophe", then it must be said that the model at the same time authorises us to speak of ontological catastrophe, it even reveals how much ontological detritus there can be in things. On the other hand, the ontological anastrophe is their law, however much contested. Through the process of anastrophe can be obtained not only the re-baptism of things, which causes them to acquire another identity, but also their enrichment, one which is now controlled. The Individual was able to enhance its Determinations with yet another and another, according to the model of the bad infinity; now it enhances them with the positive infinity of the General.

But the General in its turn is educated and transformed through the Individual (as French existentialism saw only in the case of the human). The latter's Determinations can contest the General from the

outset, obliging it to enlarge and then redefine itself. Neither the In-
dividual that obtains new Determinations, not the General that rede-
fines itself beneath new Determinations, nor the Determinations that
exchange their contingent character for one that is necessary *have sta-
bility* in the ontological model. There is a disquietude of Being, which
mediaeval thinkers intuited when they said that Being is essentially
"act". But perhaps everything is distinct from this act of theirs, in the
ontological disquietude that has now been brought to light.

Three answers for the history of philosophy reveal themselves as
possible from the perspective of the model proposed above: 1) why
Aristotle asserted that Being can be said in ten different ways; 2) to
what extent the so-called *ratio essendi* can be argued also to be a *ratio
cognoscendi*; 3) what the Aristotelian syllogism means, from the onto-
logical perspective, and how it thus resists its supposed integration by
the formalism of the new logic.

1) Aristotle has a number of variants as regards Being. Let us leave
aside the "theological", according to his own words, thesis of absolute
Being understood as the "prime mover". Nor let us attempt the, albeit
possible, valorisation, in the sense of the ontological model, of the sub-
stance obtained through the implantation of "substantial form" into
matter. But let us merely analyse the table of the ten Categories.

What do they express? They express the *Individual* as primary sub-
stance, the *General* as secondary substance (species and genus), which
together give the first category, that of substance, and the *Determina-
tions* with the other nine categories, namely the universal Determina-
tions that are received by substance. Being "can be said" in ten different
ways, therefore, because it can be understood as substance (where the
Individual and the General are always coupled together), or it can be
understood through *one* of the universal Determinations. How true –
in terms – is this tenfold way of describing Being was strikingly seen
after Aristotle, more than in his own time. For the Being of things was
reduced, by a certain scientism, to *quantity*; it was reduced at other
times to *quality* (of the atoms, of specific masses, of composition, or
was assigned by Hegel himself as determinate Being, under the head-
ing "quality"). It has been reduced by the entire new science to *relation*.
It can be understood through *time* and temporality, *space* and spatial-
ity, as well as through the modest category of *position*, redressed and
conveyed as far as ontological "situation". Being is sometimes to be un-
derstood as *action* (even as "pure act" for ultimate Being), as *influence*,

effect, passion or reaction, for the Being of things at least. Even the fi-
nal category, doubtfully Aristotelian, that of *possession*, might be "said"
about mundane Being. But all these are ways of nominating Being, or
what can "be said" about it. In itself, but for the moment as Being of
things, Being betrays, even from its categorial multiplication by ten,
its fundamental *triplicity*. Accordingly, it is the table of categories that
might be represented as one of the best illustrations of the triplicity of
Being.

2) As regards this triplicity in act as *ratio essendi*, the table of the
categories again authorises us to speak at the same time of a *ratio cog-
noscendi*. For, indeed, *between* ontology and logic, as they have always
been registered (or as ontological and logical alike), the categories have
functioned – and with the Kantian transcendental they did so explic-
itly – as forms of *knowing*. The terms of the ontological model, and
expressly the conversion at their heart, are the necessary and sufficient
condition of knowledge. One can say that the model is the thing that
explains, in fact, the act of knowing. For indeed, any problem of know-
ing and of elevation to law implies the conversion of the data regarding
a thing or process into an expression of their law. A substance can be
described with its properties and endless reaction; it is not, neverthe-
less, a substance except inasmuch as its properties and reactions are
captured by a law or, more widely, beneath a law-like structure. Cogni-
tive reason is everywhere the anastrophe that is brought into play by
the fulfilled model. But, in knowledge too a cata-strophe can occur.
Moreover, inasmuch as the process of anastrophe is never consum-
mated, knowledge registers great catastrophes and permanently cor-
rects itself anastrophically, with its successive integrations, which, in
the perspective here, are so many requalifications of particular data
through their conversion into Determinations of the General. Moreo-
ver, *ratio cognoscendi*, in humans, also refers to a veritable *ratio facendi*
or *creandi*, according to the same fundamental ontological process,
which is remade both by knowledge and creation.

3) That the chaos of determinations in an individual situation are
converted into the Determinations of a cosmotic General, or that this
process is repeated both by knowledge and by creation, might seem
to say nothing new – which is after all not at all inappropriate for
an ontological model. Nevertheless, some of its applications may be
new, in particular application to the syllogism. Inasmuch as the model
also represents a *ratio cognoscendi*, it must explain the syllogism, since

Aristotle reduces any demonstration and, ultimately, knowledge to it. Indeed, by removing the syllogism from beneath its travesty as three propositions, and even more so from beneath the modern malediction of being a single, conditional proposition ("If all men are mortal and all Greeks are men, then the Greeks are mortal"), we may view it as the *schema* of the ontological model. Thereby, we shall rediscover a key aspect of the syllogism, the function of the middle term, about which the moderns do not wish to know. In "all men are mortal", the first term is a General (man as such) while the second is its Determination. In "all Greeks are men", the first term, however much it might want to be a universal ("all"), in fact represents a historical and individual reality, since the collective might also be viewed as an Individual, while the second term is the General from the first proposition, upon which Individual reality is incumbent. In "all Greeks are mortal", an Individual is attributed with an essential Determination.

What then, in this respect, is the syllogism? It is a mediation within the model, and when the mediation is made by a *General*, the conclusion will be that the Individual has an essential determination. After all, this is also the act typical of cognitive judgement; and as it is obtained in figure I, to which the other two figures of the syllogism are reduced, it might be said that every syllogism reveals the way (namely through which General) in which it may be proven that a determination devolves upon an Individual. If we wish to preserve the other two figures as such, then it might be shown that in the second figure the determination performs the mediation, while in the third it is the Individual, each time reaching the typical relationship between I, D and G. But it must be acknowledged that the ideal relation is between Individual and Determination by means of the General.

Of course, these three answers or possible solutions do not provide the measure of the ontological model. For the time being, it represents only the terminus of the closure that opens, and in its turn it must further open, towards the deeper meaning of the Being in things and then in itself.

20. Deviations from the ontological model are the rule for the real

Before seeing to what exactly the fulfilment of the model leads, let us see what its non-fulfilment means. Perhaps non-fulfilment is wholly the lot of things and, to a larger extent, of man. But it still has an onto-

logical sense, and the model will provide us with its explanation in the various forms it takes.

All philosophical thought comes to say that the world is appearance, phenomenon, apparition, the veil of Maia, delusion, if not "fallen". But what does this mean? How can an indistinct veil be cast over the world?

The question is, in *what* does the ontological frailty of the world consist? Perhaps there are gradations between to be and not to be; or perhaps "to be" is in itself modulated, just as it is modulated in the Romanian language, itself giving, as a verb of the real, the forms of the possible. We speak of logical modalities: real, possible, contingent, necessary, impossible. But these are first of all ontological modalities, ways of being, and this is what is shown by the Romanian language with its strange self-configuration of the verb to be.

Now, however, with the ontological model, it is possible to read more clearly and to *distinguish* within the ontological frailty of the real. It is not enough to say that the real represents an enfeebled Being. There has to be a nuance: in what sense is Being enfeebled and in how many ways? The ontological precarities which follow are therefore an attempt to give a name and an outline to a condition that has been thought indistinctly. They are an attempt to diagnose the frailties of the real, in an ontology understood, in relation to the real, as a *medicina entis*. Reflected in humans, these precarities are the constitutive maladies of the spirit. But viewed as such, in man and higher or lower than man, they come to reveal, precisely in its deviations, the healthy, normal, ontic part of the real. If ontology is not, in the words of Aristotle and in the lay sense, "theology", then it must also decipher Being's state of non-fulfilment in the world, unitary perhaps with the Being's state of fulfilment in itself.

Every thing tends towards its own good, as the ancient writer said; towards its *being*, as we shall now say. But not every thing obtains its being.

It is not only man who is a precarious entity in the universe, rather everything rests beneath an ontological precariousness. From the perspective of Being, the world is much more in deviation than in order. Now, however, we are able to name the deviation, on the one hand, and to see in it, on the other hand, an ontological *stimulus*, instead of a decadence or anomaly.

The precariousness of the real resides in the fact that one of the terms may by inappropriate (in man it may even be repudiated), depending one whether it is preponderant or enfeebled. Both the General, with its inadequacy, as well as the Individual and Determinations with their inadequacies, create the precariousness of the real.

With a single term in the real, Being or the striving towards Being does not arise. All that has part in Being commences with two terms, thus through the coupling of two terms.

Two coupled terms and the opening towards a third give access to Being.

<div align="center">❦</div>

In all that is real, the model of Being is operational. But whereas, in the hands of man or in nature, a model is a schema for realisation that cannot tolerate deviations, the ontological model can tolerate them. A mechanism does not function if it has not been made in accordance with the indications of its schema. In their turn, birds are not born without wings. Every thing must be *entire*, otherwise it is mutilated. (Among the concepts in Book Five of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* also figures that of "mutilated".) Being, on the other hand, may be partial, without nevertheless being mutilated. It is partial *with* the opening towards completion, while of itself a mutilated thing is no longer complete. For Being in the real, it is accordingly possible to speak of a malady, but not in the sense of morbidity. Or else, it is possible to speak of a deficiency, but not in the sense of a lack, but in the sense of an ontological stimulus.

Deviations from the model are ontological solicitations of the real. If these solicitations can be identified – as it seems to be allowed by the table of the three terms brought into play by Being – then a commencement of order will appear in the jungle of reality's transformations. A genuine *medicina mundi* cannot become ontology, even if it must accept deviations and "maladies". However, it may become the art of determining what the ontological deficiencies of the real are and of fixing them by means of denomination.

The precariousness of the world could arouse the despair of Ecclesiastes, of the poet or the mystic, and this all the more so given that the world was not viewed with ontological goodness, but on the contrary, an absolute being, "wholly other" (Rudolf Otto's "das ganz Andere"), was quickly brought into opposition with the real, when it was not offered non-being. But the goodness of Being (*ens et bonum conver-*

tuntur) is to descend to the humblest realities, and its strength is to assume them too in its workings. It is the "law to which there are only exceptions", but it is still a law, and as such the world is made and remade in relation to *it*. The ontological model is not a structure in which all that is real tends to freeze; it is one through which it must qualify and confirm itself in its transformation.

It is thus a common prejudice of man about himself, as a higher being, that *he* does not find himself in order, while all other realities are in adequacy with themselves and the rest of the world. But, from the perspective of Being and its model, the rest of the world is to be found in a disorder that is even more serious than man's, except it is not conscious of it. For other entities, unlike man, do not have a organ for the General and the capacity to open to it, and thus they remain under the disorder of their uncontrolled Determinations, or allow themselves to be crushed by one or other common General, which dominates everything in them as in the case of inanimate matter, to the point that their Individuality is abolished. Nevertheless, both in the precarities that rest beneath man and in man himself, the disorder is of an ontological nature and depends either upon the unsuitability of one of the ontological terms or on its scarcity or excess. In one sense, the appearance of man's enhanced disorder is due to the excess brought by the freedom available to him, as man amplifies exceedingly one or other of the terms, for which he is not apt – if the disorder is not brought about by the rejection of one of the terms.

In fact, the world is therefore more in deviation than in order. However, far from having to direct itself in compensation towards a consummate Being, ontology is indebted to explore the non-consummation of the real, seeking its meanings. It is a Theodicy which, instead of trying to account for how a good divinity has made an evil world, must see how evil, respectively the deficiencies of the world make possible the affirmation of a good Being and *are*, in a way, its goodness. For Being restores health to the real, rather than condemning it.

In contrast to Indian thought, which says that the greatest (and perhaps the only) deviation of the world is individuation, thereby advocating a return for things and man to the great Unity, ontology sees, among other deviations, not only the excessive primacy of this Unity, which leaves no room for the Individual, either in man or in the great cosmic blockages (by definition, the fact of not being able to ascend to the point of Life can be reckoned a precariousness of mater). But

ontology also sees a deviation in the excess or at other times the defi-
ciency of Determinations. However, rather than *instantiating* a Being
– as is done by all traditional thought and even by Hegel, who also
sets out from a more valid, incorruptible Being, but one unfortunately
susceptible to development – the Spirit – ontology must seek it in the
precarities of the real.

Only by setting out from an *enfeebled* Being can one see what Be-
ing is. The enfeebled forms of Being may, according to the above, be
nominated according to the three ontological terms, identified and in
reality present in all philosophies. From the perspective of such an en-
feebled Being, the deficiencies of the real reside in the *non-satiation of
the ontological model*, in such a way that the appetency for Being in the
variety of all that is represents a tendency to satiate this model. Every
thing tends towards its being: when it rests beneath a powerful law, to
affirm its Individuality; when it has gone astray in its Individuality, to
seek its law; when it finds its law as Individual, to give itself the fitting
Determinations.

However, it is not possible to speak of true Being in the variant of
one alone of its hypostases. The empty Individual is clearly a form of
ontological morbidity. It was condemned not only by Indian think-
ing, but also from every perspective it has revealed itself as ontological
and, in man, spiritual futility. When biology today, with the likes of
Monod, in *Hasard et nécessité*, unveils the phenomenon of life as an
accidental individualisation on earth, and humanity as a whole as a
"nomad" astray in the cosmos, it merely gives expression, with positiv-
ist scientific arguments and with the appropriately categorical tone, to
the impotency of describing the being of life through one alone of its
hypostases, the Individual in the present case.

But nor is empty Generality, for all its potential prestige, capable of
expressing Being. The State of Being was not attained except with the
three terms together and with their articulation. However, in the form
of the divine, for example, Generality has too often wanted to be af-
firmed as an individual nature, in principle, or even without any kind
of Determinations. Man's ontological sense has then intuited that the
model of Being is injured and has sought, on a number of occasions, to
give that general order now an individual contour without Determina-
tions (a star, light, or a mere meteorite), then simple and strict deter-
minations (such as Plato's "Zeus does geometry"), until the religion
in which the model that acquired satiation arose: the Individual, in

the hypostasis of incarnation, acquired historical concretion, and even, with its human determinations, a full ontological signification. For the divine Being also realises the model, as Being, or else *it is* in itself the model, at least for its believers.

More so than empty Individuality or empty Generality, empty determinations would bring into the real, or rather they do bring, ontological disorder. Nowadays, man, with his *technical* demiurgy, has the image of the meaning of a world of Determinations without concentration in Individuality, on the one hand, and without the control of the general meaning, on the other: it would be a dispersion of pseudo-objects, within a pseudo-world that was at once indifferent and aggressive. It would be perfect guiltlessless, man's higher game, which might suddenly transform (just as today there is fear of automatic machines) into intolerance for any other form of existence than that of the artificially created object.

But the world is not, in fact, in deviation from the *exclusivity* of an ontological term. Only certain religious outlooks, which are excessive as regards Generality, only a despairing positivist understanding of Individuality, or excessive technical success through uncontrolled Determinations, can bring ontological morbidity. The precarities of Being in the real are not morbid, since they always couple *two* terms and can open to a third. From now on, however, Being reveals itself as a combination. It announces its appearance through the number two, with the tendency to find its equilibrium in a third term.

For if in the real, there is no equilibrium of Unity (it would otherwise be mere fixity, which nothing allows), then neither is there any simple dyad, even in the form of the duality which so many doctrines have invoked. The equilibrium of duality, like the blockage in contradiction, would be an untruth as great as "annulment" through contradiction. Equilibrium is brought by three-folding, as has always been intuited by philosophical thinking. (In the ancient thinking, the first number was three, the *step* of things, in three-time, which sets out from unity, enters into division from itself and then remakes itself as unity at another level – if we may speak in Hegelian terms. Or else it is the ontological model, where any of the terms can be the initial unity, any of the other two can bring tension, while the third brings (or does *not* bring) equilibrium and the entry into order.

Neither man nor things are in order, but in their ontological tension, whether it be external or, in man, internal. But they have taken

their step, they are on their path, which is towards Being. The opening towards Being takes place, in accordance with the ontological terms and their coupling, along *six* paths, which will be the six precarities described below. However, as we have said, when rationally organised, as dialectics, only three have ever arisen in history – in accordance with the "term" set out from – the other three paths being viewed merely as their variants. Specifically: the dialectical ascent ever commences from the Individual, as in Platonic dialectics, or from the General, as in Hegelian dialectics, or from Determinations, as in the new dialectics.

Through history too, dialectics come to reveal that which the terms of the ontological model seem to be able to bring to light: the variety of the paths for access to being. It is not only thus that ontology is indebted to assume – as it has not usually – and to signify these three versions of dialectic which have occurred in history. But ontology alone is capable of transcending the relativism of the philosophy of culture (which would claim that each culture has its own type of dialectic), showing why there have only been three.

There will remain three, this time *unitary*, in the vision of Being itself, beyond the Being of the real. At the moment Being in itself reveals itself to us as becoming within Being, all three will be possible and true. Common sense may ask: which of the three dialectical processes describes the truth? Philosophy replies, through ontology, its fundamental discipline, that *all* the three organised forms for elevation to Being are true together.

21. The precariousness of the Individual that gives itself Determinations. The Crisis of Generality*[15]

In a world of individual realities and entities (thus, in a world other than that of the beginnings) the most frequent ontological precariousness is bound to the crisis of Generality. Nothing that happens may make any "sense". The Individual provides itself or else acquires Determinations that ought to articulate with those of the General, but articulation might not occur or else might occur by means of relationship to an inadequate Generality. Thence the ontological "anecdotic" arises, which – beyond unexpected fulfilments, such as life in the vi-

---

15   In *Six Maladies of the Contemporary Spirit*, we named this precariousness, in the case of man, "catholitis", as depending on a crisis of Generality (*katholou*)

sion of some biologists, or else unidentified as fulfilments – dominates something of a general, ontologically significant order: the statistical.

For a reality to arise into *existence* (in distinction to the entry into Being) it is sufficient for two of the three ontological terms to appear in their coupling. Thereby, the real does not, of course, satisfy the model. Nevertheless, nor does it remain alien to it, and this might be the ultimate justification of the model: the fact that it gives an onto-logical status to all that *appears* in existence, not only to that which genuinely *is*.

The first coupling, which seems even to constitute the richness of natural and human reality, is that between Individual and Determina-tions *without* the assurance of the General. Indeed, the most frequent spectacle of any given world is that of manifestations that do not lead to anything subsistent, sometimes not even to their extension within something else: they are the expression of individual realities that give themselves Determinations in a void, or cata-strophically. The fact that Determinations appear without anastrophic subordination to the Determinations of the General thereby gives reality a character of permanent improvisation and exuberance. The positive side of such a non-correspondence between Determinations is provided by free plu-rality. The proliferation of manifestations at the core of the real may even appear something enchanted, in the existence of nature and of man.

But the non-correspondence between Determinations soon reveals its negative face. All the wealth of Determinations, as if freely impro-vised, leaves behind it an ontological void. Beneath such a precarious-ness, existence becomes anecdotical. The anecdotical (an-ek-dotic) may signify, in the present case, that the thing is not a "given", as it does not rest under any control or master. And nevertheless, this precarious aspect of existence, having come to light under the crisis of General-ity, makes the latter appear, with a full ontological sense, in one of the sciences of culture and society, however humble it might be regarded: statistics.

The ontological significance of statistics is exceptional, in speculative terms. As if in the name of the model of Being, statistics comes to show the limits of any "free" Determinations, bringing into play the General and thereby imposing order upon disorder. Even in their uncontrolled and blind freedom, Determinations prove to be controlled by regulari-ties and laws. The practical use of statistics was demanded (without

explicit justification, like everything that depends on the ontological substratum in human culture) by the implicit need to overcome the precariousness of the Individual that provides itself Determinations that are not assured by a Generality and to restore its sense of deviation, open but not inimical to Being. Perhaps not every statistic is in "Being", although any statistics is significant through its relation to an order. But in any case, the statistics of probability, that which reveals favourable causes within an aggregate of apparently free causes, is the agent of something of the order of Being. Determinations begin to pendulate between empty possibility and favourable case, or rather transform themselves from free case into probability.

Of course, Being is probably "weaker" than real or attained being. On the other hand, which is weaker at the core of the probable: the case predestined *not* to be realised, or that predestined to be realised? The former might seem the weaker, since it is not realised. Nevertheless, it ought to be reckoned the stronger, precisely because it has overcome the rule (just as in grammar we name irregular verbs "strong"). But, with statistics, what we now clearly know is that, from plurality, exuberance and the anecdotical, the cases shift into the uncertainty (into disquietude, for man) of being or not being in order, as in the disorderliness of dandelion fluff or pollen scattering in every direction. This statistics of probable cases places in order even that which has remained in disorder, unfavourable cases, while, for man, the "fear of God", i.e. of the order of law, might transform, as conscious being, precisely into the fear of falling into statistics: sometimes, in the sense that you are *not* chosen, that you are not the favourable case, at other times in the sense that you are, without really knowing how, chosen by a general sense, whereby you awake to find yourself objectively established, brought-into-being, but subjectively disestablished, taken-out-of-being, in your freedom. (What suicide, for example, knowing that he was included in a statistic – *so many* suicides per capita, at a given period in history – knowing, therefore, that he fell by means of statistics under the necessity of the most banal Generality, would still ascribe the determination of "free" to suicide?) When man understands that he is brought-into-being, even against his will, by a general sense which reveals him as a statistic, he reacts by no longer wanting to "fall into statistics" and, with his determinations, by opening himself towards a higher General of his own.

The precariousness of the Individual that gives itself Determinations may nevertheless also instantiate, apart from free realities (insofar as they are free) and those things that are necessarily statistical, realities to imitate the status of Being. There are realities that do not remain at the ontological elementary level of statistics, at other times they do not even reach the more elevated levels (just as man may not identify the General that he places in order, even when he might encounter it) and which continue to give themselves free determinations. Such realities, which are fulfilled in a way but which the demon of self-determination steadfastly extracts from their fulfilment, are evident in the case of man, and nevertheless not only in his case.

For example, there might effectively appear many disturbances in the laws that rule the world, just as there have been ascertained disturbances in the genetic code. However, although it is in disorder, the code transmits its commands further, and the respective organism displays manifestations that seem aberrant. Nonetheless, at the most insignificant level, such manifestations and determinations make perfect ontological sense. It may for a moment seem ridiculous to invoke in a treatise on ontology the strand of hair that grows in an inappropriate place on the human body and persists in growing there. But if one remembers Plato's question – "is there also an Idea for a strand of hair?" – one will venture to say that here too a manifestation of Being occurs, but in its precariousness (not as Idea), namely that of continuing to provide determinations, even when they fall short of the order of the whole. There is an ontological sense to non-fulfilment or negative fulfilment. There is still a sense in what has been named the "squandered means" brought into play by nature, just as there is such a sense in the human absurd, making that "nothing means anything" nevertheless mean something, from the perspective of the ontological model and the deviations from it. Everything has a consistency or at least a grounding, in the order as well as in the disorder of the real. And ontology, far from repudiating the real world beneath the idea of a Being detached from the poverty of the world, now comes to assume everything and to prepare meaning even in poverty or scarcity.

Moreover, not only disruptions of the law allow all kinds of "meaningless" determinations, but also the mere demonism of self-determinations (by demonism is understood: lack of restraint, the projection into the world of all possibilities at once) leads to existences and realities that emerge from their matrix. Creation never seems "concluded",

but at each level, excess arises, even after an eventual self-fulfilment, which is not fixative. Man, in particular, with his lack of restraint as rational being, indulges in precariousness in his individual nature in order to keep on giving itself determinations, reaching that spiritual situation which contemporary existentialism has described as the ceaseless "self-projection" of the individual person. And Camus' "rebel" says nothing other than that for him to whom possible fulfilment is not given (or him who cannot identify it) impossible paths are at his disposal, through revolt.

The precariousness of the individual that gives itself determinations in catastrophe may, however, in some cases, instantiate realities worthy of the name "mirabilia". In one or another corner of the world there sometimes arises an unforeseen fulfilment. Scientists like to speak of the "accident" of the emergence of life. But behind this contingency, there is a fulfilment of the model of Being, through the elevation of the real to a new level of its generality. That these *mirabilia* produced by free determinations remain far from the open determinations of the real depends on the fact that a certain level of fulfilment does not also represent its end-point. On the one hand, the exception is the rule, from the ontological perspective, and on the other hand, the rule re-enters into disorder and seeks its "exception", a rule, in fact, of a higher order. In man, for example, it is clear that he has "a law", but it is not clear namely what law. Perhaps he himself remains a surprising fulfil-ment of the Determinations of the world. For he is better settled than any other reality in the model of Being, about whose Generality he alone knows, but at the same time he may deviate all the more so from Being, crushing statistical Generalia beneath him and in him, in order to seek another above him, which, more often than not, he does not even know what to call.

22. The precariousness of Determinations that elevate themselves to Generality. The crisis of Individuality[16]

When Determinations take root under a Generality, without fulfil-ment in an Individuality or through loss of it, a new precariousness is created at the core of the real. The model of Being is not satisfied, and the Being of the real is found in uncertainty this time too. However, it

---

16   As a spiritual malady of man it corresponds, through the crisis of the Individual, to "todetitis" (from *tode ti* = this particular thing)

does not close, but rather continues to preserve its ontological ground-
ing and promise.

Such a situation is incumbent especially upon worlds at their be-
ginning, thus the young worlds of nature and of man. At that time, a
certain *ideality* takes precedence over the real, both in the one and the
other, creating a pre-instituted world, which in any case may never be
instituted.

But at the same time, the situation appears in mature worlds, rejuve-
nated or rather re-simplified by the remaking of the real by means of
the *laboratory* of reality. In fact, the laboratory never ceases to be active:
an ideal storeroom is permanently at the disposal of the world, a world
that is super-instituted. Being is thus more than a support for the real-
ity that is manifest or in the course and expectation of manifesting it-
self. It also provides the support for that which is not, but fits between
to be and not to be. In Romanian terms, the first precariousness was
one that "n-a fost să fie" <was not to be> since it lacked the General.
With this precariousness now appears "era să fie" <was going to be>,
but it has not arisen in the appropriate Individual.

A world such as this generalising one, in which determinations take
root in something general but which would no longer have in it the
appropriate individual or its control, proves to be just as precarious
as the one in which the General was lacking. Both are, however, the
lot of reality and of humans. For Determinations – in the larger sense
of phenomena and various manifestations – were indeed able, in the
first precariousness, to ignore the General, or at other times to open
towards it without discovering it. This time, however, they discover it
by entering into order thereby, but with the risk of losing the earth, re-
spectively the Individual. It even happens that the very Determinations
brought into play by an individual reality might liberate themselves
from the latter and pass wholly to the side of the General. Similarly,
so many founders and creations and ultimately all that is "adopted" by
humanity or nature as a good procedure or positive creation, often lose
the support of the individual and pass into the generality of the world.

Something therefore remains suspended and valid only "in princi-
ple", or only functionally, but without effective function, like a proce-
dure of nature which, although utilisable in itself, might no longer find
its real application. The Determinations adopted by a generality and
remaining in its patrimony may accordingly be thoroughly retained
by it, while other determinations, with an effective engagement in the

individuality of the real (in the given natural or historical conjuncture) come to take its place. A good deal of technical civilisation can be viewed in this way, as implicating itself in a coherent universe, but losing its basis in the real needs of society, as happens to the great artworks of the past. The latter all come under ontological precariousness, detached as they are from individual realities, becoming theoretical and at most museum pieces. They may quite simply no longer be rated on the ontological stock exchange and then their being, partial as it was, risks coming to an end. This is why they ceaselessly seek an individual basis, respectively a subject to embody them or to reflect them and re-interpret them.

In this sense, the precariousness which arose beneath the crisis of the Individual, like that arising under the crisis of the General, may be both a blessing and a threat. All that is not "in Being" is not in order. The first precariousness did not reveal namely which General came, or whether one came at all, to put things in order. Now, the crisis of the Individual leaves it unknown as to namely which individual would follow to bring integration and equilibrium. It may thus be said that such a universe of values, meanings and even inoperable objectifications, at the core of an operable universe, represents a threat to the positive equilibrium of the world. But Being, even if it is only partial, does not in itself endanger the world. It is endangered only by those partialities that are not recognised as partialities and do not seek their integration.

If a privileged time for the precariousness bound to the crisis of the individual must be sought then it is surely that of the beginning, on any plane. It is probable that it its initial phases (and relative "beginnings" ceaselessly occur everywhere), nature brings into play free states and processes, which may elevate themselves to general natures – matter at the heart of matter, life, rationality – without however embodying themselves in and as individual realities. They are like sprits floating over the waters, free clouds or fields. Vaster than individual units, media, fluids or swarms can completely fill the world, while the rough drafts of individual specimens are spectral, like a transient concentration of shadows.

There is thus a pre-instituted world, one suspended in the order of the General, and which nevertheless depends on the real world, in a good deal of the latter. It is not possible to speak philosophically about nature, nor perhaps scientifically, without mentioning and attempting to investigate, by any experimental means, whether in nature

or the laboratory, that which might be pre-instituted, under the heading of concrete generality. In any case, ontology, with no other means than the speculative, albeit nowadays with the additional suggestions given to it by scientific knowledge of nature and supposedly scientific knowledge of man, is confronted by regions and regimens of existence that have made it possible to speak of "regional ontology". However, if by regional ontology is meant the variety of ontological *situations* presented by the real, then the term might, in a discipline as fundamental as ontology, say something that is not often said except about the general nature of its object. The precarities reveal situations of Being in the real, which the Romanian language has described through formulations such as: *n-a fost să fie* <it was not to be>, *era să fie* <it was about to be>, *va fi fiind* <it will be being>…

The same as all the rest, the precariousness now described reappears in man, where there are particular individuals with their determinations, manifestations and passions, but at the same time there "exist" suspended events, orderings, laws, ideologies, problems and perfectly organised geometries, which nonetheless are not anchored in any individual reality. There is something that *is superabundant* at the heart of all reality. The inventiveness of the real, in the end, is proven to be vaster than what can effectively take root at its core. Even more so, it might be said that the inertia of the real hinders all that has acquired subsistence in it from also acquiring consistency.

Something of the order of *ideality* thus appears, at the same time as the determinations that take root in a generality. Insofar as ontology must take account of reality, it will also have to take into consideration the ideality that accompanies it and doubles it: it has both ideality and the status of Being. When the Individual gave itself Determinations that did not succeed in subordinating themselves to a general meaning, then it brought about entities and configurations that were thoroughly redundant *in the real*. When, however, Determinations succeed in subordinating themselves to a generality but lose or else do not find the earth of immediate reality, then they bring about states or modalities that are redundant *in the ideality of the world*, rather than definite configurations and entities. In this condition of excessive ideality can be found not only the world of the spirit, at the heart of which "knowledge" will unveil all kinds of idealities, such as geometries and as yet undeveloped demonstrations, but also the material universe, for example with its forms of *isotopy*, nowadays so well attested.

It has now been clearly registered that each element and material substance organises its intrinsic nature in a diverse fashion. Water is a unique substance, together, nevertheless, with its isotopes. Each element and unique substance is therefore "idealised", insofar as it allows its potentiality to take precedence over its reality.

It was only natural that this "instability" of nonetheless stable substances should operate to a greater extent during beginnings, when things have barely emerged from chaos and are seeking their identity. But even in a matured, later world, reality occurs as doubled by ideality. The exuberance of the real, which made itself evident at the general level of nature and humans, now betrays the existence of *projects for reality*, respectively Determinations well rooted in a general matrix and which await only the opportunity to generate the Individual. It is enough for a natural or human imbalance (a revolution) to take place for *other* countless forms of life to spurt up into reality, betraying, from the point of view of the Individual, a creative wealth that seemed to depend on no necessity and which nevertheless proves rigorous and completely structured. If everything were contingency and disorder, how then did the new order burst so suddenly upon the world? And where did it pre-exist? In which ontological zone?

It is as if reality has an ideal storeroom at its disposal. Leibniz's God had at His disposal many other *possible* worlds, i.e. other systems for organising the Determinations of the cosmos. Who knows what orderings and well-configured structures of nature have remained to one side up to now. Likewise, in man's knowledge of nature, the phenomenon of electricity, i.e. the organisation of *this* type of material world, remained insignificant, from Thales until the nineteenth century, only to burst upon reality with so much organised force that it has completely transformed the knowledge of nature. Likewise the life of society, and even the existence of the planet.

Compared to the world of the first precariousness, which was of pure and blind experience in nature, and of experience as adventure in man, this world of concrete generalities now represents organisation and placing in order, a world of the laboratory. The Being of the real, as partial and precarious as it is here, not being anchored in something individual, nevertheless possessed an assured ontological status, as it represents the laboratory of reality. The chance existences or manifestations of the first precariousness are now opposed by a world that is assured or in the course of being assured in the laboratory, with the

projects and prospects for reality that are now at the disposal of the "demiurge".

There are more orderings floating above the world than those contained by it. There are more truths in "books", i.e. in the storerooms of the real, than in the real – as we might reply to the famous line in Shakespeare. In nature, in man and also the presupposed order of the divine, *theory* is sometimes more powerful than a narrowly understood practice. Or else, it is precisely practice that unveils all the wealth of the theoretical. In this sense, it is not only man who is a theoretical being, but rather the whole of the real theorises, if, of course, a theoretical order other than the abstract is being invoked. In any case, one thing remains certain and easily articulated: the real still *elaborates* more than it constructs.

23. The precariousness of the General that embodies itself in an individuality. The crisis of determinations[17]

From the laboratory of the real, laws can be embodied in individual examples, structures or meanings which, although they are "realised" through individualisation, do not always attain full being. The determinations of the Individual thus dominated by the General may de deficient. What stood in the foreground, in the first precariousness, was the Individual that gave itself Determinations; in the second, the Determinations that attained their generality. Here, what stands in the foreground is the General that dominates the Individual. It creates a world of "va fi fiind" <it will be being>, but which, when it remains precarious, does not find the appropriate Determinations.

The direct domination of the Individual by the General, without the mediation of the Determinations of the former having been converted into those of the latter, can lead to the paralysis or blockage of Determinations, in the case of the inorganic, and to failure or the descent into automatism, in the case of the organic.

In man, such an ontological situation takes all these forms: paralysis and blockage due to the pressure of the General; ontological failure; automatism of Determinations; or, on the contrary and significantly, to their disturbance.

---

17   Through the disturbance of determinations, the corresponding spiritual malady in man is "horetitis".

But this, like any other precariousness, can also be an ontological stimulus, leading to a full affirmation of Being at the human level, for example with genius, which fully rests under its sign.

In the first case, the appropriate General could be lacking and, in the second case, the Individual. Now, it is Determinations that are deficient. Any ontological precariousness is, in a sense, a deformation *from* the perspective of the model, but at the same time, it is a transformation and formation of the real *in* the perspective of the model.

The deformation that now arises is brought about by the order of the General. As law or merely general meaning, order might be imposed in such a way that it leaves no margin of freedom to the Individual (or, in man, it exacerbates his freedom). As in a state where any individual is forced to act wholly in the spirit of the generality of the state – without having elevated himself of his own accord, through his natural Determinations, to that spirit and without his aspirations coinciding with the responsibilities given to and imposed upon him – individual realities may be encumbered by the *closure* beneath a General for which they are not apt. Perhaps Plato's renowned "republic" would have been thus. The Determinations of the Individual are no longer its own: this is the disorder, which from the perspective of the General is precisely order.

For this time it is the General that takes precedence, with its things and its strength, whereas in the first precariousness it was the things of the Individual that populated the world with realities, and in the second, the things and strength of Determinations. The General may appear "tyrannical", in this case, if in reality it did not betray, in humans and society at least, an impatience to "realise" itself", or in the case of nature, the ontological precipitation of a nature to place itself in precariousness. The ontological model must indicate not only the common presence and action of the three terms, not only the "conversion" of the Determinations of the Individual into General, therefore their correspondence with those of the General, but also – and what is certain is that no simple schema can be made – the measure and the harmony of the terms brought into play. None of them can take primacy in the applications of the model, which means in the entire content of reality, without the risk of compromising the fate of full Being and compromising itself. But only in privileged cases, when the excess of one of the terms intensifies and does not disrupt the things of the other two, thus when the excess remakes the rule and namely *at*

a higher level (as in the case of genius for humans), the deviation from the model of Being becomes a confirmation and an affirmation of it.

What usually compromises the direct realisation of the General is its subordination of the Individual and its Determinations, rather than its placing them in order. The intercession of Determinations between an Individual and a General has disappeared, but still more damaging for the equilibrium of Being is that sometimes *new* Determinations do not appear, or if they do, they are unnatural and inadequate. For the paralysis arising from blockage of the Determinations of the Individual – as far as the spiritual experience of man, so expressive for the situations of Being – there may be encountered possible illustrations even in the organic and inorganic.

Thus, inorganic nature, in particular mineral nature in all its massiveness, might be identified, from an ontological perspective, as the vast opus of pressure from the General. All that is inert in reality rests under a law, and the law is so well-determined in its self and such is its dominance of things that the latter are left with only a single determination: decomposition (like uranium, which also disintegrates, albeit over millions of years). Perhaps the metals also eminently illustrate the ontological situation in accordance with which the General paralyses and blocks any individual Determinations. Why should we see in metals a stage and a fulfilment of reality, rather than a blockage within it? A fluid universe, in continual processuality, apart from the mineral and the "metallic" in which we live, a universe with a consistency other than the mineral, can perfectly be conceived, with the same laws but not with the frozenness beneath them. Moreover, in this metallic universe of ours, it seems to us that we can detect, also in the inorganic, numerous instituted realities that break the law of the General or at other times achieved laws and structures which do not discover their Individual. This precariousness now comes merely alongside them, bringing about its frozen realities.

It sometimes brings them about in the organic. The paralysis and blockage of the Individual under the General (under a simplified General) occurs in existences such as the amoeba, which is known to be the oldest organic living structure and has remained the same for millions of years. *Amoebity*, as mediaeval thinkers would have said, has made any new Determinations impossible for the amoeba. But in the organic, most frequent are modalities of this precariousness, *failure* in the first place. There are species, i.e. Generalia, embodied in individual

specimens that have not been able to give themselves the Determinations appropriate for survival. Such a case was – and there have probably been many other similar cases – the species or genus of dinosaurs, which was no longer able to adapt and which, in reality, from the outset responded with a code, respectively a general mould that did not allow the specimens new Determinations. On the other hand, there are systems or Generalia vaster than the species, which have also not been able to attain "realisation" except at the price of numerous failures. Life, say the biologists, attempted to ascend to higher forms along the path of insects, but ended up blocked; its generality proved too powerful for those individual existences, which did not find Determinations appropriate to the more elevated level claimed by life. It was left for the latter to attempt along the line of the mammals what had remained blocked on the line of insects.

But together with the failure of Generalia to institute existences and realities apt to them, it is possible to speak of an ontological failure when they succeed, in the case in which we remain at their level of success. Also at stake is an ontological situation in which the General has all the initiatives, in the case of the species well-defined under a complex genus, not simple like the amoeba, where the specimens rest beneath a single command and, although they give themselves varied determinations, do not succeed in emerging from the stereotypy and automatism of the commanded determinations. At the more elevated levels of life, with the ant nest or beehive, the General prescribes all, even the disappearance of the individual specimens at the fitting moment. That such a success has been able to evoke the admiration of man is understandable. But that it has also been able to be the object of his envy would be inexplicable, if ontological situations other than the deficiency of Determinations did not themselves create often incurable sufferings.

But most inexplicable of all would be, in the case of man, the negative envy for success at the level of the superior natures that he himself has imagined, namely the angels. Here the pressure of the General genuinely reaches a climax. Nature does not know to the very end the embodiment of law in one or another unique specimen. If, in the Middle Ages, it could be imagined that the angels, as individual specimens, each represented a genuine species, then the pressure of the General had become absolute. It could be so powerful that it succeeded in embodying itself in a single individual and overwhelming it with its mas-

siveness, to the point of vain floating, without determinations, over the world.

To man it is given to display this precariousness otherwise, i.e. in *all* ways. At the moment when nature becomes cerebralised – if this fulfilment is the general meaning of life – and when the General accordingly realises itself in individual specimens with infinitely adaptable determinations; thus, at the moment when, with the human genus, the ontological model has been satisfied at a biological level, it may become once more only *partially* satisfied, at the superior level of the spirit. Man can fall under the tyranny specific to him. A meaning for life, for example, an organised and exclusive idea, a god, a commandment, can choose him and invest him with their demands, to the measure of which, nevertheless, he is unable to provide himself with Determinations. Entire societies, taken as greater individual realities, have been thus overwhelmed, collapsing beneath the weight of the General, just as simple individual persons have been crushed, whether by the pressure of the General imposed from without, whether beneath the autotyranny of one or another of the Generalia they have accepted.

Each human subject, whether singularly or collectively, ultimately appears and develops beneath the tension to which the General subjects it – usually those elementary, not clearly identified Generalia behind it, if not those of a higher order – with the subject vowing for a moment to "realise" them in its subjectivity, which is also the prime reality in the domain of the spirit. But beneath the impact of the general meaning, at the moment when the latter no longer permits individual persons the free play of Determinations and the search for the self by means of them, subjects are transformed into *objects* of the spiritual type. Their being here too becomes precarious since without the affirmations of its own Determinations there can be no plenitude of the General and thus of Being. The precariousness appears stridently in the case of the man/object of the state with general meanings which are too categorical (such as Plato's Republic, or the Spartan city state, or so many others in more distant or recent history), where the modelling of the human individual, which itself wants to be formative, proves deforming. The same precariousness, with the transition of man into object, appeared in societies tyrannised by a religious idea. In the human world, therefore, it is possible to find all the deformations brought about by this precariousness in nature: the passivity and paralysis of spiritual being, the blockage of any renewing Determinations; the

failure of individual or collective existence, when Determinations are inadequate (how many religions have not remained inoperative down history?), or the entry of Determinations into automatism (people-robots, type-societies) at the moment when the General succeeds so well that it compromises its own success. Likewise, the creative idea compromises itself (in the artist, for example), which is often more powerful than its embodiment; and creators of all kinds, with their General that is received directly and for whose Determinations they ought to discover infinitely adequate Determinations, are overcome by their own ideas.

When, on the other hand, the individual specimen has the strength to support the General and thereby to give it Determinations apt to it, then a novelty of the order of fulfilled Being arises in the world. *Genius* is the name which has been given to this capacity to "prescribe laws", or in fact to give them, by means of the law it fully embodies, as new Determinations, valid or meaningful for others. In genius, at the spiritual level, the ontological model is remade, setting out from the precariousness brought by the pressure of the General and restoring health to the Being of the real, through the unexpected but genuine Determinations it gives them.

24. The precariousness of the Individual that integrates itself into the General. The suspension of Determinations[18]

The three precarities up to this point are now *reversed*, and their reversals appear in the real alongside the first three. It will not only be the Individual that gives itself Determinations but also the other way around; it is not only Determinations that will attain their generality but also the other way around. There now occurs a reversal of the previous precarities: instead of the General that possesses itself of an Individual, the Individual approximates its integration within a General. The Romanian formulation for such an approximation is "ar fi să fie" <it would be that it were>.

For a thing to be integrated by a General and for it to seek an integrating General for itself are not the same. In both the one case and the other, it may be blockage beneath a General, but in a different sense. And when it is not blockage, and when the respective precariousness has a positive sense, then the distinction emerges clearly: in the case in

---

18   The spiritual malady of man to which it corresponds through the inaptitude for determinations or in man their deliberate refusal is "ahoretia"

which the General takes precedence, the Determinations, which were lacking at the beginning, appear as an enrichment of the *Individual*, while through the elevation of the Individual to General, the Determinations will enrich the *General*.

Indeed, the elevation from individual case to law is like an induction, at any level of reality. But now the elevation does not take place through mediation, through the development of the Determinations of the Individual to correspond with those of the General, but rather without mediation (the same as the implantation of the General in the Individual occurred), from the Individual directly to the General. The Determinations are suspended, restricted or may even be rejected in man (ascesis); and when – in the case of the complete rediscovery of the ontological terms – Determinations occur, they will model the General, even if they are Determinations of the Individual.

Thereby, the integrant becomes a school for Generalia. All reality, including man, is educated or can be educated beneath this ontological precariousness. In man, the consciousness of education by Generalia is the integrating vision of culture, the latter clearly becoming one of "successive integrations".

Ontological precarities arise through the coupling of two terms, as the potential opening towards a third. If the opening does not come about or does not succeed, the precariousness remains mere precariousness, with its critical or, in man, clinical diagram. If the opening came about, the precariousness became the ontological stimulus, with its echo in the human (genius or knowledge, for example). However, the manner in which the terms can be coupled is not without importance. Just as the classical, Platonic dialectic, from Individual through Determinations to the General, symbolically I—D—G, is not the same as the Hegelian, G—D—I, which is its complete reversal, and nor is the Hegelian the same as the new dialectic, for example the Marxist dialectic of D—G—I, so its partial reversal, likewise any coupling, therefore any precariousness, depends on the arrangement of the terms (with the initial term possessing the ontological initiative), which causes there to arise six rather than three precarities. Although here I, D and G are only symbolic abbreviations, nothing forbids us from speaking of the "letters" of Being and its "code", which recalls the biological code.

In any case, it appears to us as though the shifting of one letter in the language of Being might change the real itself. To descend from

the General is not the same thing as to ascend to it, just as the metallic aspect of the real is not the same as its aspect of fusion, and, in man, dogma (or the decree) is not the same thing as the endeavour of integrating vision.[19]

In its turn, the integration of one of the precarities through Determinations, whether appropriate or not, is different to that of the other, even if the model of Being is satisfied, in the positive case. Whenever it identifies Being in the world, ontology ought to declare *by which path* the model has been fulfilled. And inasmuch as the risk of the precarities is that of remaining or falling back into their own precariousness, ontology ought to show that the access to Being is also the way to its recession, proving in effect how it becomes recessive Being, accordingly through what type of closed coupling it recedes back into one or other of its precarities.

The coupling of the General with the Individual consequently leads to distinct realities according to the way in which it takes place, even when, in both the one case and the other, Determinations are blocked. The distinction appears all the more so when the opening takes place through Determinations: if the General takes the initiative, everything is what happens to the Individual. If, however, as in integration here, the Individual has the initiative, then what happens regards the General. In the former case, the General risks being crushing for the Individual: it can paralyse it, as we have seen, it can deform it to the point of the failure to realise itself through it, or it can transform it into the automatism of law, when, in man, it does not give it the exacerbation of Determinations, experienced in the spiritual malady of "horetitis". In the latter case, the General is no longer oppressive but soothing. Here, it appears as a veritable absolution, or more so, things find their solution as well as their absolution through something of a general order, which is now requested rather than being imposed. The request is reflected perfectly in the knowing consciousness' freedom to choose, respectively in axiomatic choice. If we have the right to

---

19   In *The Dogmatic Aeon*, Lucian Blaga has described the process of knowledge in the modern world in terms of decree, knowledge which in fact takes place in terms of successive integrations. This is why, perhaps, such a remarkable work has not found its place in European culture. I have suggested elsewhere that the "dogmatic" aeon should be understood as one that is "axiomatic", as the author himself understands it in fact. Axioms integrate, rather than subjugate.

unite the endeavour of knowledge with certain endeavours in the real, on the grounds of the universal action of the ontological model, then what strikes us is the fact that the Generalia can be modified, just as systems of axioms can be modified. Of course, in man, the freedom to choose axioms, respectively the General, has been able to elevate itself to the point of arbitrariness. But, in fact, the General is always chosen due to necessity (what appears arbitrarily axiomatic occurs, in reality, inside an axiomatic *horizon*, the necessary) and all that the knowing consciousness does, in its freedom, is to shift the General from one form of arrangement to another, extracting it from stability and dogmatism.

The Individual's, or the major individual realities', request for the General no longer allows the latter to be tyrannical and rigid, as in the case of the imposition of the General. It modulates itself according to the tendencies inherent in the Individual, which is caught up in this in-duction towards the General. A metallic and mineral universe, in which only fission is possible, is now substituted with one of fusion; or one of given Generalia is substituted with one of approximate Generalia. It is true that, from the perspective of the Individual, things appear as an "abduction" of the latter by a general meaning, just as in nature a cosmic body might be abducted and turned into a satellite. But it seems even truer that the general order (planetary system) does not pre-exist the abduction but is rather created together with it. The integration of the Individual has modified, if not even generated, the General itself.

Perhaps the classic theory of evolution also comes to show that the *individual* specimen, through the struggle for survival and natural selection, imposes evolution on the species, i.e. the General. A widely accepted doctrine such as the theory of evolution would thereby show that there is a way to Being, or towards *one* level of Being, which is completely distinguished by the direct elevation of the Individual to the General, which will then give itself sound Determinations.

All the ontological precarities, understood as ways of access to Being, are properly incumbent upon man, as higher and diversely precarious existence. But the precariousness of integration has a heading that is lacking from the others: the direct encounter with the General, sought by man, rather than passively suffered by him. Man's integrations, from his seeking and endeavours to beyond the Generalia given to him (family, tradition, society, not to mention the meanings of the

species), which were to make him their object, all the openings as far
as who knows what ultimate ecstasy, for example aesthetic ecstasy or
the loss of self, represent man's self-affirmation. Compared with the
first three precarities we have described, those that are reversed, and
which begin with integration, have a deliberate character, in the spiri-
tual experience of man. You can live "at random" without the General,
or you can be lived by something else, of a general order, without your
knowing it, but you cannot aspire towards *another* General except un-
der you own deliberation.

Integration expresses man's aspiration to higher affirmation so
well that it sometimes arises, suggestively, precisely in his exaspera-
tion of not being able to affirm and integrate himself. Compared with
the infinity of the insignificant Determinations which one gives one-
self or which life occasions one, the human 'Me' sometimes ends up
in the condition of the "maddened self", as Indian thought terms it,
maddened after so many incarnations. It seeks the general order (the
"Great All") and does so lucidly. It especially has the lucidity to see
itself resting beneath Generalia which demand realisation in it, but
which it rejects, from the moment it understands that they do not fulfil
it at a higher human level. It seeks *something else* and is ready to adopt
that general sense which would give it its proper measure. It is then
that before it opens the double possibility brought into play by the
experience of integration: the general meaning sought is easily identi-
fied and integration in it takes place imperceptibly, like the "beautiful
soul" about which Goethe spoke. Or else, the general meaning cannot
be identified, but the need for integration nevertheless leads to one,
which falsifies man, refusing him the spiritual fruitfulness of full De-
terminations. Under that general meaning, he gives himself unnatural
Determinations, but most often he does not give himself any at all.
He has entered into ontological suspension and become blocked as a
spiritual being; he has been restricted beneath the precariousness of
integration.

Nevertheless, as in the preceding case, that of the pressure of the
General upon the Individual, where the reanimation of the Individual
through new Determinations could lead to the exceptional success of
creation and of genius, albeit one that is unclassifiable under the on-
tological model, so too in the case of integration the deliberate sup-
pression of a general meaning may lead to new Determinations, this
time to enrich and change the General itself. (Brahma does not exist

without me, which changes something in the nature of the divine.) The Individual can *renew* with its adhesion to the General, just as the exception may neither disprove nor prove but rather *enlarge* the rule.

Together with each ontological precariousness appeared one or other possible aspect of the world of beginnings. Now, with integration, the world can be imagined at the hour of the immaturity of the Generalia within it. With each endeavour of an as yet formless reality, there is an attempt to fixate within law and thus the assured determination of the latter. French existentialism was wrong to leave only human existence the fate of defining its own essence through its existence. It is a question of a precariousness with the positive sense of world, not just of man, and the theory of evolution would make no sense in the case in which what evolves does not bring about *new* Generalia. Generalia grow up, at the same time as Individualia are elevated to them.

In the latter case, the integration beneath a General becomes a collaboration with it, leading to that education of Generalia that corresponds, in our times, to the "education" of cognitive truths, about which the history of the sciences has talked. In contemporary science, it has clearly been seen that new truths do not refute the old, but rather integrate them. (Relativity does not refute classical mechanics, non-Euclidean geometry does not refute the Euclidean, but rather they adopt them as particular cases.) But thus it was at the beginning in the history of mathematics, just as it is the spiritual history of mankind and perhaps in history pure and simple.

Integration is itself the endeavour of *knowledge*, which always enlarges the General (theory) in order to comprise the old and the new both together. But also integrative is the endeavour of the spiritual life, which is enlarged through successive integrative horizons. Wherever there is direct recourse to the General – as in knowledge, according to the accumulation of individual data, as in the spiritual life according to the experience of the individual person and the 'Me' experienced as closed – an integrative is operational. While the realisant describes something, perhaps essential, about creation and genius, the integrative provides articulations to the act of knowing and the spiritual experience. Are they precarities of Being or precarities of spirit? But they are the reflection of the former in spirit, and when they are open precarities, they represent the model of Being rediscovered by spirit. For any meaning of things or of man ultimately depends upon or mirrors the meaning of Being.

The precariousness then changes its sign. It becomes an ontological stimulus. If integration beneath a Generality transforms into collaboration with it and can lead to assured Determinations, then it can become, in the experience of man, a spiritual technique. From the pressure of Generalia upon the world, only the creator, the genius can be freed. From the integration of the world into the General is born its wisdom.

25. The precariousness of the General that gives itself Determinations. Suspension of the Individual[20]

After integration comes the second reversed precariousness. Now, it is not Determinations that seek and attain a General for themselves (D—G), but the General that delimits itself through Determinations (G—D). It lacks the Individual, as in the first case, but while ideality and its laboratory were waiting only for the opportunity to implant themselves in the real, the General that gives itself Determinations delays giving itself a realising Individual and institutes a world of the General that seems self-sufficient. Everything "is to be" permanent, but in its precariousness is not really so.

The General that gives itself a wealth of delimitations creates in this way a world within itself, insofar as, for it, the real world becomes one of many possible worlds.

However, when this precariousness, as an ontological stimulus, attains its Individual and satisfies the model, the real world, thereby remade from top to bottom, acquires a surprising rational investiture, which brings to light aspects and meanings superior to it.

For man, this is the precariousness that leads to *culture*, where it is possible to linger indefinitely in the accentuation of Generalia, but where the risk of a guilty gratuity before Being persists. Culture and man himself then enter into evanescence. But everything occurs gently, whereas the exasperation of the theoretical in not finding its Individual, or the haste of the realised General to model it according to itself, can revolutionise the real. When, in spite of the inaptitude or even the denial of the Individual, the latter is discovered, the world is transfigured by a new light of the spirit.

It might seem that the reversal of the first three precarities, which had a natural movement (from Individual to Determinations, from

---

20   As a spiritual malady of man it corresponds, through inaptitude for of deliberate refusal of the Individual, to "atodetia".

Determinations to the General and from the latter back to the Individual), represents merely the work of man as the only being that is also capable of being *unnatural*. And indeed, the reversal of a situation more often than not represents a act of lucidity, which causes the last three precarities to characterise man, master of himself and lucid as he is, more profoundly than the first three, as the corresponding spiritual maladies – *ahoretia*, *atodetia* and *acatholia* – demonstrate. But, if it is not possible to speak of lucidity, in the case of natural reality, so much variety and richness have been detected in it that, in the absence of lucidity, nature can at least be attributed with fantasy, in relation to what we know about it. Ultimately, our sciences seek to discover the laws and necessity of nature, not its game. If, nevertheless, man can at some time emerge from beneath the empire of necessity, entering the era of freedom, why can we not believe that knowledge will not do the same?

When the sciences will have emerged from beneath the empire of necessity, mastering not only local laws, as nowadays, but also their aggregate order, they will be able to take their freedom to investigate other aspects and to bring to light the very limits of the game of the real. The strange idea put forward by some physicists at the end of the nineteenth century, when they declared that almost all there is to be known about nature is already known, will then appear presumptuous as well as offensive to the resources and possibilities of reality in its vastness. From now on, perhaps, scientists will detect a pure, cosmic or biological game, with laws that give all kinds of Determinations and nuances to the endless spectacle of possible worlds, literally without leading to any, i.e. without inscribing or disposing of new realities against the firmament of Being. Perhaps – to employ an example we have already mentioned –silicon, unlike carbon on earth, has nowhere led to organic realities. But attempts to do so cannot be excluded, a kind of pure experimentation in the cosmos may have resulted. Similarly, it must be accepted that, at many levels the Generalia present and active in nature create and un-create, in free play, like the clouds, realities that propose themselves for a moment as delimitations of the General and then withdraw from the heart of reality proper. And if the sciences, standing under the realm of necessity as they do, have not yet undertaken such an investigation, there are a few philosophers and religions which have assayed it, even without any other cover than the purely speculative.

For the precariousness at hand, moreover, there is no more need to seek illustrations at the philosophical level. There was one man who undertook the responsibility to illustrate it in all its animation and – inasmuch as it was possible, but without succeeding except in some cases – to overcome it as precariousness and take it to its limit, integrating it in the Individual: that man was Hegel. Once again it will be clear to us that past philosophies could to a large extent be represented as setting out from a precariousness: Hegel from a General that gives its own Individual; Plato from an Individual that seeks and attains its own General; Kant from an integration within the General that seeks and attains its own Determinations, the "phenomena" (since criticism is also a philosophy of phenomenality).

Hegel set out from the isolation of the General, of the Spirit, with its Determinations. Viewed in itself (as it had been published in 1812), his *Logic* is in fact a description of the world *without the Individual*, therefore a perfect vision of delimitation, with the world of Absolute Being, which gives itself, as empty Being, the Determinations of quality, of quantity and of measure, then the Determination of "essence", with the manifestations of the latter, and finally the Determination of "concept". Nothing individual occurs there. It is as if the General arose first on the stage of the world, with its delimitations; thus, as if the laws appeared of themselves, with all their specifications. Only later (the same as in Hegel's work, where it is not until the *Encyclopaedia* of 1817 that logic becomes only the first part, having been integrated by nature and then the philosophy of spirit) would nature arise, through the endeavour of the Hegelian General and of its delimitations of objectifying itself in a vast Individual that is nature. And much later still would appear or reappear the spirit, except in the variant of man, as a privileged Individual who will ascend towards the "self-awareness" of the Spirit.

This precariousness whereby the Hegelian vision opens (in terms of the *Logic*, however, not of the *Phenomenology*, which from the start satisfies the ontological model, giving it a special seductiveness compared to the first book) appears as a kind of Genesis, susceptible both of leading and not leading to a world, a world which "is to be", but might not be. The Individual might not appear; the spectacle of the world is also interesting without it, given it is a question of everything that happens to Pure Being, accordingly of what adventures and contradictions the Spirit enters into, of how the Laws clash and are reconciled.

It is a world apart, of the General and of its immediate posterity, which might seem perfectly able to be lacking from the real. Here, precariousness has reached, at the level of philosophy, a summit, and if, with the cosmic amplitude that is conferred upon it, it cannot spring from an act of lucidity, as it will in man, it is no less the expression of reason, of Reason itself. This is why Hegel himself names such a pure progression of the Spirit a "theology", respectively a logic of the divine.

The comparison that Hegel makes between his logic and a theology is perfectly legitimate, for in general religious ontologies are also founded upon a General that gives itself Determinations. The glory of religious ontologies is of always being in the sphere of the General, but their great drawback will be that of not being able to discover, as a rule, the world of individual realities. Nevertheless, as with religious ontologies, the precariousness at hand tends ultimately to overcome itself as precariousness (they have to provide a Genesis, they have to "materialise" themselves in something or even embody the divine, and they must even explain the evil of the world thus created). While Hegel nevertheless succeeds in a initial Generality that gives itself plausible Determinations, since the General invoked by him in the *Logic* is not in fact Being, which for him is also non-being, but rather becoming, which is capable of being the interminable Genesis of worlds, religions are not apt to do so. In religions, the act of "alienating" the General – the creation of the world for example – no longer has the necessity that Hegel confers on it, and remains "goodwill", respectively contingency. According to Romanian folklore, the world was created on a Tuesday.

— It is, however, the privilege of this precariousness, which brings into play a Generality cut into so many facets, to evince these unsuspected facets of the latter within individual reality also, when it at last descends to it. All the other precarities seek to dispose of too defaced a Generality. At the beginning, they seek it blindly, risking to discover their ontological repose and equilibrium in the first General they find, or in however many. The second enters, with Determinations, into the sufficiency of the General, and it only remains for it to find, in its ideality and its laboratory, the firm ground of the Individual. The precariousness of the realised General attempts to model and often disfigures the Individual in the name of an often far too summary General. The final precariousness, which follows, will no longer bring the General into play at all, and only the integration of the Individual in the Gen-

eral lingers over it, but more in order to enlarge its horizon and to educate it, as though the General were never mature and rich enough to integrate the real properly. Only the precariousness to hand does justice to the General; with religions, an even greater precariousness endangers ontological collaboration with the real. When you reach a world *deduced* from the General and from reason – since here it is a question of a deduction – the world appears more authentic, sometimes so much so that what Hegel said about everything real being rational becomes acceptable, with an unexpected rationality. After he had prepared and truly polished the General in every way, in his *Logic*, he made it implant itself – not as such, but endowed with numerous Determinations and delimitations – or rather objectify and "alienate" itself for a moment, only later to rediscover itself in this reality, for which it will have unveiled another facet of rationality. Perhaps Schelling, who brought into play the same precariousness, succeeded better in providing, respectively deducing, a philosophy of nature which would not be a deformation of the latter. And perhaps the image of both, of a cosmic scenario within the framework of which the General, whether divine or material, gives itself delimitations to the point of concentration within ever denser individual realities, is not a total scientific failure, as the philosophy of nature brought into play by the two great thinkers last century seemed. But what Hegel succeeded in doing in the third part of the *Encyclopaedia* with the philosophy of the spirit and especially with the "deduction" he obtained in his lectures did justice as never before to the deductive in thinking. Moreover, the schema here, G—D, with the permanent satisfaction of the ontological model through implantation in the Individuality of human history, worked for Hegel from the beginning, with that unique *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, leading him to make the dialectical model of G—D—I the dialectical procedure itself. In the above, we opposed it with two other dialectical models just as historically viable. Nevertheless, the Hegelian dialectical endeavour, born beneath the precariousness of the General that gives itself Determinations, remains a triumph of thought and perhaps an excellent illustration of the positive within the most negative precariousness for the real.

Under the sign of this ontological precariousness, religions themselves – whatever status they might be accorded today – have given profound meanings to the real, themselves confirming perhaps that any "meaning" ultimately depends on the ontological plenitude ob-

tained. It cannot be denied that the "reason" of religions has known in many cases how to enhance the meaning of the real. And whereas, for the reality of nature, the Indian religions, for example, have been more expressive than the Christian, where only the likes of a Saint Francis enriched the understanding of nature, on the other hand, for human reality, almost all the great religions, but especially the Christian, have thrown into relief human truths above which not only the heart but not even the mind can pass, however changed historical worlds might be.

— An ontological malady, if we may name it thus, of the Generality that gives itself Determinations but leaves Individuality suspended, it better reveals its double face through man and through what man sets forth: culture. But it gives its measure precisely as an agent of Being, and whenever culture, which ought to be a higher form of human "nurture", forgets Being or denies one or other of its terms, the Individual in question, it leaves man himself in precariousness, to the point of evanescence.

Culture is, indeed, the empire of Generalia. Hegel has a vision in the spirit of culture, with the unsparing primacy of the General, while Plato had a vision in the spirit of nature, with the innocent primacy of the Individual that ascends towards the Idea. Human culture is profoundly one of unanchored delimitations. Its risk is to arrive at the Individual too late or no longer to want to arrive at all, leading to pure development, of the order of the contemplative, with the nuances and modulations of the General. As in the case of the laboratory world of the second precariousness, what is now created is a world of the possible, which exerts an impact upon the real, when it does not succeed or when it refuses to enter into harmony with it. But the impact of scientific knowledge proves more threatening to reality (if only through its technical applications) than that of contemplative and speculative culture. This is why, at a time such as today, when scientific knowledge has brought so many "possibilities" before reality, the possibility brought into play by contemplation (the delight in seeing how nuances and inflexions can be given to the General) is gentler and may heal the wounds inflicted on the spirit by the furore of exact knowledge. For better or worse, culture is not revolutionary. Hegel was not a revolutionary.

But if it remains a form of escape from the real and if it does not "cultivate" man by re-implanting him in the real, as music today has

not succeeded in doing, then culture remains exposed. Its escape is, ultimately, an evasion of its ontological responsibility. In this sense, culture offers one of the clearest lessons about *Being*. In principle, culture does not evoke Being at all. It makes consciousness take precedence, and even believes that it should only concern itself with the General, with essences, with values. "All we know is the General," as Aristotle said. But setting out from the delimitations of the General, either we end up discovering the Individual, or we experience the guilt of not discovering it. And the guilt is not an aesthetic guilt; it is metaphysical. The beautiful, truth, and the culture of them cannot be good to the very end unless they have brought about order within us and an enhancement of order in things. All that does not reflect Being disfigures the world.

However, when culture arrives, unwittingly and sometimes unwillingly, at the Individual, however late it might do so, then something of the Hegelian miracle occurs: the General takes account of the humblest things and reason elevates all the apparent vanity of the real to significance. If humanity allows scientific knowledge to progress into its unknown with the risks that accompany it, it cannot refuse humanist culture to convey man however much further in his escape from the real. Only Being is injured by culture (by pure culture, beyond civilisation), not the existence of man or nature, and Being forgives deviations from it, standing ready to reinvest even that which forgets it or denies it.

26. The precariousness of the Determinations that particularise themselves within an Individuality. The suspension of the General[21]

All the precarities up to now preserved within them the closure that opens. The final, particularising precariousness is the opposite, however. It is an opening that closes. It does not bear a general meaning in it, since everywhere the presence of the General, or at least the search for it, had left the precarities open. It is the only precariousness that ir-

---

21   As a spiritual malady of man, I have named it "acatholia". It may be connected, together with the other precarities, to a modulation of Being within the Romanian language "a fost să fie" <it was to be>, if this means recognition of a simple state of fact. But the expression has behind it the muffled echo of the *de jure* state, of the immanent Generality, just as the one who denies the General still encounters it *in the end*.

remediably preserves its precariousness, as it does not tend to remake the ontological model.

Given that it is thus, it can only be incumbent upon man. All the others have been viewed as being incumbent upon things, animate or inanimate, even if they too were better thrown into relief by man, with his "maladies". Since what was active in all five was the general order (even in its absence), insofar as everything that exists rests beneath laws and does not have the strength to suspend Generalia. The precariousness of Determinations that particularise themselves appears only in man, the only existent who, through consciousness, may suspend the General. Otherwise, for nature, what could we invoke? The clouds (like Determinations) that condense into rain? The primal cosmic cloud, which condensed into planetary systems? But everything there too must rest beneath laws, while man alone can be lawless. Moreover, the meaning of lawlessness is perfectly neutral, at the first moment, and has the positive side of representing a stimulus, for the man who has suspended the General, making him a creator along the lines of civilisation. But the precariousness, together with human civilisation, risks, in its partiality, having another, darker side.

§

Compared with the first deviation from the model, that of the Individuality that gives itself Determinations corresponding to the General (I—D), the precariousness now under discussion is the reverse (D—I). The first had in it something natural, even elevating itself, with ontological naivety, by means of its various determinations, to general meanings and fulfilments which it most often ignores, whereas its reversal has in it a doubly unnatural character: firstly, that of being a reversal and, secondly, that of preserving the real as real, without the natural opening to ideality.

What takes precedence, in the Determinations that simply particularise themselves, is the need for fixity and certainty: exactitude. It is not the truth of Being that penetrates now, but the exactitude of the fact or of its knowledge, and together with exactitude, its possible manoeuvring: civilisation. Thereby is created another world at the heart of the world, but one which, in its excess, can become an un-world. As there is no anastrophe towards the General at stake, the catastrophic sense is possible at any time.

Whereas the precarities can be named ontic maladies, in this case there occurs the only malady of the Being of the real that does not tend

to restore it to health. The others depended on the insufficiency and non-saturation of Being in things, whereas this depends on the *sufficiency* of the shortcoming and its claim to explain everything through states of fact and their local laws. Such a positivist mentality must always have been operative, if not as a constituted doctrine then at least as a way of perceiving things. It is evident that, from the positivist perspective too, phenomena and things have connections and form organised aggregates, with their laws. But the "explanation" translates into realities – mathematical-type relations at the limit – destined to stretch across all natural and human reality. And from this perspective, mathematics does not at all represent a camouflaged general meaning, but rather a mere language, through which states of fact are expressed. Nothing further than facts, nothing closer than facts, as a mathematical ideality of some Reason or other. What transcends the phenomena described and explained ought not to become the object of a new problem. Everything *closes* in such particularisations, whose meaning is to remain, with their law and all, in their untravestied positivity.

Classic positivism to a certain degree and, in any case, neo-positivism and all the forms for accepting states of fact as the final instance do not identify their deviation and regard as "normal" the perception of the Individual qua Individual in the spirit, since there is no Generality. All the precarities, naturally, are in deviation before the ontological model, since full Being is, for them, like "the law before which there are no exceptions". But there is a distinction between the exception turned back *towards* the law, as first five precarities were or ended up being, and the exception turned *away* from the law, as is the last.

We are thus in a world of states of fact, which we can completely control, without any higher interdiction. An extraordinary power and responsibility are thereby awakened in the conscious existent. Unlike in any of the other five worlds, where the presence or approximation of the General unbalanced the real rather than leading it to positive equilibrium, now there appear: exactitude, certainty, efficiency and potential rationalisation. Here it is much more than a vision of the world: it is a world superimposed upon the given world and tending to substitute it. If the Middle Ages, in their contemplativeness, said: *entia non sunt multiplicanda*, the modern world, on the other hand, under the empire of the final precariousness, has said: *entia* sunt *multiplicanda*, at any scale.

The positive character of civilisation has always been to attain more than knowledge of the real and its practical use. It has been to *amplify* the real, conferring on human being too a corresponding "strength of character". A tenacity both of things (instead of nature's stone, today's cement) and of creative man has thereby been arrived at, all the more assertive for not taming the Generality invoked. Instead of the law there now appear laws, schemata, decisions – and in culture, assured formulations. There is no need to speak about what cannot positively be known and what does not entail a direct answer. That it is possible, in the name of definite meaning, to arrive at nonsense is something that appears only later. Until the point of potential failure, and in fact almost "inexplicable" for civilised man, he senses all its investitures. Hence, the dissemination of the state of civilisation and its acceptance by all, with utilitarianism and ultimately its technology, but in human nature detached from the General, there appears the primacy of the Individual, personal dignity, individual freedoms, self-respect and respect for others.

Moreover, the world of civilisation has appeared steadfastly during the course of history. Rome did not conquer the world with its gods; it conquered it with roads, aqueducts and the title of Roman citizen. Indifferent to any general order and gathering from the Greek city states the elements of the juridical code it needed in order to regulate relationships between individuals (whereas their descendants in spirit, the Anglo-Saxons, will do without even this final recourse to the General), the Romans demonstrated more than anyone else how much historical plenitude there can be in a world constructed under an ontological precariousness.

This precariousness transmits its echo – in order to pass from usual history to one more unusual – into the life of words pure and simple. In all languages, words too become "civilised": they fix their various meanings and determinations within one in particular, becoming univocal, as neo-positivism demands. But just as historians do not wish to see an ontological meaning (that of incorporating a precariousness of Being), it is self-evident that, in the civilisations I am describing, no linguist would admit to seeing a good illustration for a page from metaphysics in the "positivisation" and semantic civilisation of words. Except that in any civilised society, by ending up expressing something only "exact", words cease to be something "true", as they can be transformed by the linguistic positivist into mere interchangeable signs of

communication, and at the extreme are unique within the framework of a universal language. Nevertheless, any linguist or man of culture must have perceived with astonishment the process of impoverishment of the life of the spirit, through the civilisation of words, in exchange for accentuation of simple efficacy. If at the moment there no longer appear great works of literature and thought, bringing back the *General* into the heart of this precariousness that has fixated words all too well (as strikingly happened with the Latin language), then languages will give up the ghost. Might not even death appear as a rumour of Being in these realities that seem so alien to any ontology?

Once again, we shall say: any meaning – in the present case, the meaning of history and the fate of languages – ultimately depends upon or mirrors that of Being. That for the world of civilisation everything might be illustrated with technology is natural. This time, in contrast to words that became impoverished and perished, civilisation brings forward apparent wealth with *entia sunt multiplicanda*, under the same precariousness (which is perfectly characteristic of the machine: determinations that close within a mechanism). But wealth may also be poverty, when it is in prolonged deviation.

Being cannot be "forgotten", nor its steadfast re-creation from precarities, in the name of empty knowledge and its applications. Shall we remain silent as regards the things about which nothing certain can be said? This is what Wittgenstein said, but with an almost tragic note, whereas the positivists who followed him uttered it with a shameful sufficiency typical of the precariousness that suspends the General. For it is the things about which "we cannot speak" that end up speaking in us. And if we turn our gaze from them, we are left with worn-out certainty and nonsense.

Being allows the precarities in the real (where it is also to be sought), but it does not allow them to be made *absolute*. With all its potential successes, the precariousness that suspends the General represents a desertion before being. After all, no one can betray Being more thoroughly than man. Perhaps this is what Heideggerr says in connection with the European spirit, accusing it of forgetfulness of Being. But he accuses the same European spirit of having led, since Plato and Aristotle, to forgetfulness of Being *in itself* by seeking the Being of existent realities, which has ended up at the *primacy* of existent realities.

We might be tempted to say contrariwise: it was precisely ontology in the positive, traditional spirit of Plato if not also Aristotle (but not

in the spirit of sublime Being, as Heidegger ultimately seems to think) that would have made the emphasis fall upon Being and not empty realities. Forgetfulness is of Being in the world, not of great Being, which allows things to be discovered. In the even the most unworthy thing, a precariousness of *Being* makes its essay.

Note regarding precarities

The precarious situations of Being in the real might cause it to be thought that the decisive term in the model of Being is the General, whose presence might open towards full Being, in the first five precarities, and whose absence might lead to catastrophe in the last. In fact, however, if any of the three terms ought to be privileged, then it can only be the case of Determinations, which are of the General and of the Individual alike, they alone implying the entire ontological model. It is Determinations that give the reality content of the six precarities:

- in the Individual that gives itself Determination (I—D) ,they are in search of the General
- with Determinations that are elevated to the General (D—G), they are in search of the Individual
- with the General that is embodied in the Individual (G—I), Determinations are accentuated to the point of excess by the General
- with the Individual that is embodied in a General (I—G), they are attenuated to the point of extinction by an Individual
- with the General that gives itself Determinations (G—D), they are modelled by a General with no Individual
- with Determinations that are particularised (D—I), they are captured by an Individual without a General.

Determinations are the substance and reality of the ontological model; it is they that will give the *element*, beneath whose image Being appears in the real, as well as in itself.

In the life of the spirit, which reflects the precarities of ontology and the aspiration towards full Being, the precarities will cover the entire register of spiritual manifestations.

I—D will give apparition, indication, statement, *narration*, as the original phenomenon of communication and communion.

D—G will give myth, ideality, theory, to the point of scientific *knowledge*.

G—I will give *creation*, on all the planes of craft and art alike.

I—G will give spiritual technique, integration, *contemplative and speculative knowledge*.

G—D will give *culture*, detached from its spiritual or material applications.

D—I will give *civilisation*, with its material applications and moral implications.

27. Being in things as internal model

The ontological precarities show that the realities of the world, inclusively of the human world can be understood as forgetfulness of Being. But they may just as well be understood, in terms of Platonic thinking, as a *reminiscence* of it.

The model of Being is not outside things. And given it is in things, it is much more than *functional*. While it does not have an independent reality, nevertheless it represents, in things, that which is more profoundly real in them than themselves. The drawback of both philosophical and theological speculative thought has all too often been that of describing the interiority of Being in terms of *exteriority*. Hence a number of the speculative perplexities that have shaken individual minds as well as the history of culture, particularly European culture.

In spite of the concessions made to the mythological, Greek thinking was closer to understanding the Being of things as an internal model, as it had no need of the religious idea of "creation". When, with Hegel, the internal model was rediscovered, it was validated only through progress, that is, through history. But it is not history that invests Being, but rather the latter (as becoming within Being) that invests history.

From the perspective of any ontology, whether it be one of sublime Being, or whether it be one only of real existences from which the meaning of Being may result, all reality, and not just human reality with its freedoms and aberrations, indeed appears as a forgetfulness of Being, just as Plato's world was a forgetfulness of the Idea. But, when the world is not buried in its closures, reminiscence is everywhere possible. However, even if, like its ancient counterpart, it will not signify the rediscovery of particular cognitions, which are as if buried in our memories (as in the example of Meno's slave, who "recalls" a geometrical proof), or even if it will not signify the rediscovery and identification of values (as in the example from the *Phaedrus*, where something is identified as beautiful because the Idea of beauty is in us,

respectively, it has been contemplated in one of our other existences), this time it is reminiscence of Being itself. We recall Being because we carry it within us. Even other realities can "recall" it, figuratively, of course, at the moment when the threat of falling into non-being makes them protect themselves, makes them adapt and, in the final instance, reactivate an ontological model of which they are the embodiment, however modest they might be. For, these realities of the world *open*, then, and many times succeed, even if they have not attained limitless opening to Being, in crossing their own ontological thresholds and in the attempt to endure, to give themselves new "states" in their coming-into-being.

But in man, as the questioning existent, the openings of things in the wider world become questions for the latter. What demonstrated the above analysis of the ontological model and its articulations, in particular its action in the real, was the fact that human questioning and interrogativity in general, if it is possible to identify such a thing anywhere other than in humans, are not indeterminate but *specific*, in the end: questions refer now to the General (or rest beneath the sign of the General), then to the Individual, then to Determinations, aspiring to remake the model. In this sense, it might be said that the analysis of the ontological model unveils the wealth of interrogation, compared with its unilaterality even in one or another dialectical process, not to mention the simplifications of ordinary interrogativity, within the bounds of which we do not clearly know that our questions are of cognitively varied types. In Platonism, as in *one* of the possible dialectics, the question always refers to the General. It is that which Socrates, as dialectical interlocutor, always explicitly states ("do not speak to me of virtues in particular, talk to me about virtue in general"). Likewise, with Hegel, the question bears on Determinations and in the end their condensation in the Individual (the transformation of substance into subject), and not at all on the General, which for him is given in advance. With any dialectic, it must occur thus, while with ontology, which absorbs into itself dialecticity, the array of questions fans out more widely, along three lines. Inside itself, an existent might posit all these three forms of potential question, when it elevates itself to Being; and the model of Being operates from inside, as the Platonic Idea or the Hegelian Spirit must also be understood to operate. As soon as Being is understood as a model – only at the second stage going on to be described as "reality" – everything changes: a living model is

not outside things, and Being qua model makes things possible inside themselves and must effectively be understood as their "being made possible", just as the Platonic Idea must also be understood in its own way. Given this, the ontological model, as well as the properly understood Idea, do not have a *transcendent* character, as they do not represent the exemplary reality of Being beyond the world. The model of Being should rather possess a *transcendental* character, as in the major distinction made by Kant (albeit one that is not always maintained by him in his terms) between what is beyond phenomena, making them possible as the thing-in-itself, with its matter, and what is hither of phenomena, making them genuinely possible through forms a priori.

Kant, as is well known, makes less and less use of the thing-in-itself, allowing it to remain a limited concept. But since in the last instance, the thing-in-itself provides the material of the world, criticism in its entirety, absorbed as it is with opening the transcendental with the fourteen forms a priori (two of sensibility – time and space – and twelve of the intellect – the categories), becomes a kind of laboratory for phenomenal realities, respectively for experience, as Kant says, giving an admirable and strictly organised or "deduced" aggregate of active schemata, which are nevertheless predestined to remain a *formalism* of the real, as was clearly made felt on the occasion of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the second *Critique* (where ethical formalism was capable of stirring the uneasiness of the most well-versed commentators, such as Max Scheler), but which could be perceived even in the first *Critique*. Moreover, Kant himself conceived of his *Critiques* as being merely a formal enterprise, the analytical groundwork to enable the construction of a philosophical system (only the *Critique of the Faculty of Judgement* surpassed this strictly critical condition, and this is why it influenced subsequent thinkers, primarily Hegel, the most profoundly), which caused him ever to maintain that after he had given a critique of reason he had also to give a "doctrine". He even attempted to do so in his later years, in the unfinished pages of the *Opus posthumum*, which, even if it did not win anyone over, nevertheless remains significant, as the need to cross from the *formal* to the real.

However, while the Kantian transcendental remains formal and has a merely functional character (albeit one that is so complete and profound that it has been valid in itself, as a crucial moment in the history of thought), the transcendental of a model of Being, such as the one proposed, claims for itself a character that is much more than

functional. It is to be conceived not as a schematic that might operate everywhere with the precision of a code, but as a foundation, active in all things. In a way, the ontological model becomes the intrinsicality of the real and more real than the real itself, the same as the Platonic Idea. Such an intrinsicality, which, for literary reasons, Plato was sometimes forced to describe in terms of exteriority, but only in order to show its strength, represents the habitation of Being in things.

In the past, ontology has, indeed, done the same as Plato, but without his grace: *it has described the interiority of Being in terms of exteriority*. Plato spoke of an "intelligible place" in which the Ideas are situated. And in saying this, nothing prevented, or perhaps everything rather obliged that strangely named place not to be sought as a spatial habitation and above all one beyond things, but precisely in things, as their law, as long as it was a matter of "intelligibility". However, interpreters have liked to understand the special habitation of the Ideas as a super-habitation, so that since then, "Platonic realism" has meant the accordance of a transcendental reality, for the Idea, of such a nature as that it is astonishing to ascertain that even today's mathematicians talk in *this* sense about Platonic realism, and even regard themselves as Platonists. One must be capable of opposing this exaggeration of the Platonic concept and, in the end, its disfigurement and degradation, in order to understand that whenever Plato speaks of a side beyond, what is at stake is something this side of the Idea, or that its exteriority is a mere metaphor for a more *profound* interiority.

Likewise, the interiorisation of Being is more profound. Of course, there is no need to reveal what the precarities of Being are in order to demonstrate that Being is *in* things, as the ancient Greeks saw it. But they were necessary in order to demonstrate that Being is embodied in all that is most humble. The exteriority of Being, with its evanescence, is surely the reason why modern thinking has brought mere becoming to the fore, in contrast to the Greeks, who brought Being to the fore. However, the precarities of Being show that all reality participates in Being and that it is not necessary to choose between a withdrawn Being and a world of lowly but real becoming.

This is what Hegel saw better than anyone since the ancients, albeit in his own way. He did not wish to see Being as a "soul" of things, he saw only the ensouledness of things. Hegel left Being somewhere behind, as that ghostly but terribly active Spirit. Not even the latter *is* at the end of the road, road and all. The idea is admirable for the

reconstruction of past history, but remains exposed before future history, as has been seen since Hegel, and in any case is left without the cover of Being. And if nevertheless history and the consciousness that "everything is history" (as Marx once wrote but then erased) will make the juncture with ontology, this thing will not happen along the line of simple becoming, but of becoming within Being, thus not until Being will have shown its full "nature" and will have been invested in history, instead of being invested by it.

28. Being in things as model in realisation

Enfolded in things, in aggregates of things and in all history, as Hegel wished it to be (developed), the model of Being makes its essay in each of them.

But Being has adversities. It has no opposites – as perfect Being becomes imperfect precisely because it *has* opposites – but in exchange, inside the thing it has opposites in its realisation.

In broad terms, there are five adversities of Being, which must be confronted by its model in things, with each ontological term, and which must be integrated by it in order for it to realise itself:

being and nothingness;
being and temporality;
being and appearance;
being and consciousness;
being and becoming.

In becoming, all the adversities of Being will be concentrated, and Being's integration of becoming will signify its affirmation through that which it seemed to reject.

The Being in things is not to be sought in the transcendent, and nor in the transcendental, if this is a simple schematic and not a foundation, but rather in things in themselves. In a thing, the transcendent coincides with the transcendental. Indeed, through that which makes it possible in the formal and its matter, that is, through the transcendental, the thing permanently surpasses itself and refers beyond itself: it transcends itself. It always seems to have been thus for the great thinkers of the past (even if the distinction between transcendent and transcendental was not invoked before Kant), but sometimes their expression and others' resumption of their idea have been betrayed by the thought (they spoke of a "beyond"), just as the real with its transformations betrays or, in man, forgets Being. When, nevertheless,

the model "is remembered" inside things, then in the same real thing resides also its intensification, the Platonic Idea (its a priori in act, the transcendental), as well as its potential to transcend its own ontological thresholds, also the Idea, in its double role.

This is otherwise expressed perfectly by the "possible", with its double opening. There is a possible prior to the reality of the thing and another *in* its very reality. When we commonly speak of the "possibility of a thing", we express ourselves with a positive equivocation, which is precisely that of the coincidence of the transcendental and the transcendent. We speak at the same time about the possibility that the thing might be, as well as about its possibility (possibilities), qua the thing that it is, of being something other than and beyond that which it is.

But the double "possible" with which the real is charged will also be that which provokes adversities in the path to its fulfilment within Being. The real is either not very well "grounded", as if due to ontological haste, or it is not very open towards the surpassing of its primary condition. It is precisely this that is shown by the precarities, with their negative face. On the other hand, their positive face will reveal the way in which the possibility of the thing, as its potentiation, becomes a second rank possibility, that of its opening. The precarities are as many *paths* to the realisation of Being through its model. We might therefore speak about six paths to realisation; but like the dialectics of history, which were only three, according to the ontological term with which they opened, we ought broadly to see three paths, this time according to the three terms left within the "possible" of the thing. Except that the possible qua General, the possible qua Individual and the possible qua Determinations raises adversities for Being not through the terms themselves, which belong to Being, but through the nature of the possible.

From the diversity of the possible we shall retain, as consecrated by speculative thought, five modalities: the possible as nothingness, as temporality, as appearance, as possibility of consciousness and as possibility of becoming. These adversities are encountered by the model of Being, in its realisation along the three paths, and, as oppositions to Being but not opposites of Being, it will have to confront them and integrate them.

The possible, which arouses the adversities of Being, first takes the form of *nothingness*. And there is a nothingness of the Individual, one

of the General and another of Determinations. Being "is not" three times over, it might be said: firstly as Super-emptiness, when the Individual has not yet appeared, then as possible law, when the General has not yet appeared, and lastly as the consummate and consummated thing, when from it nothing remains except *one* determination, like the name on a tombstone. In the place of this nothingness that is always *specifically along three lines*, "non-being", which is the opposite of Being, has been invoked. But non-being is nothing but a name (non-being like non-person). This is why we shall leave "non-being", with its hollow note, to one side, and we shall speak about this nothingness specifically as adversity to Being.

At the same stage of adversity, even, it is possible to put the question: does nothingness ultimately remain a form of adversity towards Being? But at all levels – not only, as here, at the speculative – nothingness has proven to be a collaborator with Being. At the level of *logic*, the non-identification of A, namely non-A, does not represent merely a zero-A, it also represents an anti-A, a minus-A, even the complement of A, that is, a huge ontological positivity. At the *mathematical* level, we have spoken of the non-existent "point of accumulation", and the irrational numbers (not to mention the "imaginary" number), which are themselves mere "scissions", therefore voids. At the level of physics, it is well known that the "void" has been set to work, and that a rocket's motion through the void is possible in the sense that it is not supported by anything, that is, in fact, it is supported by *nothing*. At the *moral* level, there exists the common experience of modelling oneself upon what one is not. Thus, there everywhere exists an ontological function of nothingness, in the sense that things also come-into-being through that which does not exist.

A second adversity, one which is experienced by the common consciousness (as the first could be experienced, in the form of nothingness, if there was a meditative consciousness) stands in the path of Being: it is the adversity of a nothingness that is itself active, with the transmission into nothing that it brings about. Because time is that which "annihilates" things, Being is opposed to destruction in time, to *transience*. For the common consciousness, Being would be permanence, endurance, not in the profound sense of the creation of new states, in that of persistence in the face of that which permanently crumbles out of existence. All things had the *potential* to be and they have disintegrated; or else they have the potential and are in potential,

but time will bring it to pass that they too will be undone. And not only individual realities are transient, with their momentary determinations. According to the common consciousness, general things too, with their habitations, purposes and laws, are proven to be transient. Everything passes. – But if Being could alloy to itself the inert nothing for its things, then all the more so will it be able to alloy to itself the passing. That which arises for a moment and then passes nonetheless *arises*, and its arising has come about according to the model of Being. Something has appeared, and even if it is illusory, it has nevertheless arisen in a world with the strength of appearances.

Now, the Being of those things that are is in opposition to the Being of the apparent, to *appearance*. The possible took the form of appearance. The common consciousness named all these stages by means of the nothing, vanity, transience, now through illusoriness, but at the last stage, that of appearance, it gives way to a philosophical consciousness, one of "reflection", both literally and figuratively, as it is one that mirrors. Something richer still now opposes the riches of Being: appearance, which also possesses the image of a thing, even offering varied images, but erasing them one by one and in the end is itself extinguished, even if the world of appearances for a moment possessed consistency. Behind this world of appearances there *is* something; or if there is nothing at all, then everything has been as if in a mirror. Empty appearance (the "mirror of the world", as common sense says) is at least a mirroring. And if Hegel spoke about the reflection of Being in itself which thereby becomes for him essence, it might just as well be said of the mirroring of something that is not and remains a mere play of mirror images. And now, in order to prove that Being integrates appearance, it is needless to say: "if it were not it would not be mirrored". It is enough to see that the world as a game of mirrors (like the veil of Maia) is also a *world*, a comprising together, at which the possible arrives after having passed through its forms of nothing and through its ways of arising. Such a pure mirroring, which is not the mirroring of something, or even a mirroring *for* some one, nevertheless exists in the real world: it is consciousness.

Being and nothingness, Being and temporality, Being and appearance give way to the more profound opposition between Being and *consciousness*. It is possible to speak of a kind of con-science in the case of any mirroring and reflection, even in the case of mirroring in water, if by conscience be understood the perception together and retention

of things as an imprint in matter and its memorisation of states and processes within a content. Matter too has a memory, of the order of the retention together of the impress of things. But human consciousness, with its power to mirror not only what is imprinted upon it but also *that which it imprints upon itself*, truly places it in opposition to Being, in a way other than the Maia veils of things can be opposed to it. Now what is at stake is free and sovereign mirroring. That consciousness too "is" in some way (and from the fact that it is, from the *cogito*, it has been possible to attempt the remaking of Being) does not brook opposition. Being had won everything against nothingness and even more so against transience and appearance, only now to risk its plenitude in the face of consciousness and thought, which not only dilute it, shift it into "form" or place it in fluidity, but also quite simply double it with their fictions.

The consciousness is the principal agent of the possible. Not only did the possible not become disciplined on attaining consciousness and thought, but also, on the contrary it entered into the most extraordinary liberation of self. Nothingness is docile before Being, in comparison with the ontological rebellion of the consciousness. The consciousness can propose *anything*, as a challenge to Being.

Let us straight away take what is, perhaps, one of the most serious challenges ever brought against Being, that of the Romanian folktale formula "if it were not, it would not be told". As it seems to us, there is no self-projection of the possible, or even of the "impossible possible" of which mediaeval thinkers spoke, no inverted world, no anti-world and no kind of chimera ever imagined by consciousness and thought that can call into question the titles and solidity of Being as much as can this saying. What it proposes does not depend upon the randomness of fantasy and its empty freedom, which cannot shake the solidity of Being, but upon a perfectly grounded *order*, which the Romanian saying indirectly opposes to the order of Being. Indeed, what is at stake is the order of the utterance ("it would not be *told*"), thought organised into word, into *mythos*, into storytelling, consciousness itself. Consciousness now stands before Being, saying: it is I who makes all these things hold, in my utterance, and because they hold together, they must find their place in the content of Being; if not, then all the worse for Being. And for the Being of classic ontology it is all the worse, for it can only repudiate the saying in the Romanian folktale as nonsense. How could everything that is told be?

Being must respond to this challenge. And it has responded, at least in one version of ontology: that of the Romanian philosophical sensibility, which laid down the challenge. Our ontology brings about not only a different image of Being than the fossilised or sacral image; it brings about a Being that percolates into all the hollows of the real. All that is told *is* – proclaims the Romanian sensibility's vision of Being – because to be also means something other than "is" in its classic sense. It will also mean *va fi fiind* <will be being>, *ar fi să fie* <it would be that it were>, *era să fie* <it was going to be>, *a fost să fie* <it was to be> and even *n-a fost să fie* <it was not to be> (but it tried).

There is no need to make recourse to the Romanian formulations as regards Being. We can turn back to the precarities described above, seeing in them, at *another* level than that of idiomatic utterances, the modalities of Being that might cover the entire ontological scale reclaimed by a saying such as "if it were not then it would not be told". Indeed, all that has room in the organised description of a story that holds, one with sound utterance, with a positive *logos*, must also possess the reason to be, in one or another of the precarities. It may describe something in which either the Individual, or the Determinations or the General are not attained or do not reside in good order; it may thus describe something that is not situated in the region of full Being. But in *one* region of the precarity of Being it is, so that it would not be told if it were not. All that is told has ontological subsistence somewhere. The liar (with his ontology) is the one who does not believe, as the folktale also says.

The opposition between Being and consciousness, which seemed to us the most radical of all the oppositions, is thereby elevated to Being. The possible had managed, through consciousness, to give itself a larger margin of freedom; nevertheless, it can be captured at any point by a certain equation of Being, as in the free play of curves traced upon a plane surface, about which Leibniz spoke. These free curves of the real now give a final sense to the possible, that of becomings, and under the image of becoming, the real attempts one last adversity against Being.

In *becoming* all the opposites of Being are re-gathered: nothingness (the non-being of which Hegel, for whom becoming was a combination of being and non-being, spoke at the beginning of the *Logic*); then transience, which is the time of becoming itself; the appearance and illusoriness of all that find room in the becoming of transformations;

finally, consciousness, in its wider sense of ceaselessly mobile mirroring. In truth, a con-science, beyond the human (but eminently with it) is necessary for any becoming, for, without a form of perception and memory, without a holding together of things, there is no room for becoming, but only blind creation or transformation. Becoming lays claim to the consistency of the thing or process caught up in it; it does not unravel the real, but carries it, as an obtained and preserved content, towards new embodiments. In this sense, the becomings of the things beneath man, which lack any veritable consciousness, will all break off somewhere, or will enter into the almost static circle of repetition. With man, becoming might be different, and if Being assumes all becomings, then all the more so will it assume the ascendant becomings of man.

In fact, however, Being does not "assume" becomings, unlike it assumes and integrates the other oppositions; it *is* becoming, in its first instance as Being. We may now leave aside that image of becoming in which Greek antiquity (but not during the great period of its philosophy) saw the world of the corruptible, the same becoming in which the modern world wishes to see the very essence of reality, this time as becoming without Being. Being *is* becoming, we shall say, just as the fulfilment of the ontological model, which is presupposed by becoming, will show.

Thus, Being, which integrates its own oppositions, is confirmed through what seemed to contradict it. If Hegel is right in saying the same thing about "concept", that it is confirmed by that which contradicts it (as in one of his examples, with the divine, which is confirmed precisely because it resisted its contradiction in the human and incarnation), then Being is the concept itself. It might be said that Hegel saw in various "concepts" that which is incumbent only upon the Being in them, such as in the case of the above example of the divine, which *qua Being* is confirmed in its apparent contradiction. In this sense, the entire philosophy of Hegel becomes an ontology once more, where that which is incumbent only upon being is assigned to any concept and "logic".

Or else, otherwise: just as Spinoza's *Ethics* began with the definition of substance, only then to say that, according to this definition, there is only *one* substance, *Deus sive Natura*, so Hegel begins, at least implicitly, with the definition of the concept, in such a way that he ought to have continued: there is only *one* concept, that of Being. Except that

he understood how to perform logic and ontology at the same time, then performing only logic. Yet he was not satisfied to leave it at that but had to go on to dialectics, *unfolding* the dialectical model in such a way that, when he had to prove his dialectic, he was obliged to move on to *history*. Thus, he was only able to make his system convincing indirectly, a system in which history is predestined to found ontology inversely.

It is necessary to set out from ontology, for any meaning (and concept) is sustained by that of Being. But in order truly to do so, it is necessary that Hegel's *Logic*, about which he confessed that he would have liked to rewrite it seventy-seven times, should be rewritten once, in its hidden order. If philosophy does not disappear from human culture, it is probable that one day it will be rewritten.

29. Being in things as realised model: becoming

When the model of Being in things overcomes its positions and fulfils itself, things do not enter into the repose of equilibrium. It is only now that they enter into becoming. The first answer to the question "what is Being?" will be: in the *first* instance, Being is its apparent opposite, becoming.

Becoming is not unique, in things. The Being in them is a bundle of various becomings. With becoming, time appears as the horizon for the manifestation of Being. But the extent of Being is not given by the infinity of time but by the unlimited opening of becoming.

Becoming is the *mature* modality of the real. A closure has to have taken place; the closure, once taken place, must hold; it must nonetheless open and the opening must be towards or at the heart of something general, in order that the opening proper might appear. The latter is the progression, assured within certain limits, of a reality that *has satisfied its interior model*. A well determined "multiple One", albeit always different – the idea of philosophers since Heraclitus – is manifest in any becoming. On realisation of the interior ontological model, the thing, respectively the process, acquires a form of consistency that allows it, through the becoming into which it enters, to affirm its Being.

Until the ontological model is satisfied, it is not possible to speak of becoming proper. In what we have named the "precarities" of Being, becoming was not yet active. Like any closure that opens, the precarities could be openings towards something (we may now say: towards

a Generality, an Individuality or towards Determinations). They could therefore be transformations oriented towards something, but not at the same time *organised* transformations (not *întru* <within> something, with the formulation that shows a thing is simultaneously *in* and tending *towards* what it also is), insofar as they lacked precisely internal constitution. In precariousness, the transformation was constitutive for realities, while within any becoming transformation is one of constituted realities.

Becoming thus also represents a closure that opens, but one of a secondary type, one that is organised. This is why, in the ordinary sciences, there is no talk of "becoming", where precisely what is *sought* is the organisation of a domain, and the starting point is not at all something already organised. It might be possible to speak of becoming in the natural sciences, but there the term "evolution" is preferred, which will also prove, up to a point, to be distinct from becoming, insofar as the latter nonetheless remains open, compared to evolution's closure within a formative orientation. On the other hand, it is not at all possible to speak of becoming in mathematics, or even about the becoming of a demonstration, where there is nonetheless an intensive processuality at stake. It is possible to speak of it only in history, inasmuch as the latter presents organised wholes, whether real or illusory, whose becoming might be traced (peoples, cultures). But once the idea of "historical becoming" has been arrived at, then there has been a transition to the philosophy of history, that is, to philosophy pure and simple.

Thinkers who hasten to say that the (metaphysical) philosophical reflection arises in the face of the ceaseless *transformation* of the world elevate, in reality, simple transformation to becoming. When Indian thinking takes into consideration only transformation and the maddening passing of all things, then it does not manage to arrive at philosophical reflection and crosses wholly into religious meditation as well as the latter's extreme solutions. It is to be asked whether, in Indian culture, a clear distinction is made between transformation and becoming. In European culture, it has been possible only once, namely at its beginnings, to philosophise in the face of the spectacle of the world as simple transformation: with the Presocratics, who precisely in the face of transformation sought to establish their "element" or unique principle. But this is why the Presocratics – although they are so impressive as a philosophical occurrence – betray their nature as

scientists. It was with a sound philosophical instinct that historians la-belled them pre-Socratics, leaving it to be understood that philosophy begins within Socrates, respectively Plato (however much Nietzsche and even Heidegger might wish to see in the latter a "decadence"), by the simple fact that the great Athenians no longer philosophised un-der the spectacle of the universal but simple transformation of the world, but under the spectacle of an *organised* world, that of values and of moral or cognitive realities. What troubled them was not the absence and inconstancy of the good or of truth, but precisely the fact that their effective presence and action, in good human natures and in cognitive minds, cannot be explained without deeper philosophical thought.

Given this, becoming must be decided as distinct from transforma-tion and change (the changes of the weather, the transformations of the seasons and of nature) and, all the more so, from the flux and passing of things (the river does not become, neither do passing lives become), while Heraclitus is not the "philosopher of becoming" because he is supposed to have seen only this in things. Insofar as evolution, as we have said, is understood as having a formative sense, becoming ought to be distinguished from it – even if it is inscribed in evolutionary pro-cesses – as long as there can exist a becoming that is also "corruption", not just modelling. At most, it would be possible to speak of becoming in the transformations of art, specifically in those of movement (music, the arts of utterance, dance). Becoming is something of the order of the establishment and disestablishment of sound, setting out from a system of organised sound. Or, something of the order of progressive utterance, beginning with poetic and ending up at dialectical utter-ance. Or, in the end, in its pure form, becoming has its perfect image in dance. This, indeed, manifests itself from the organisation brought by walking, or even more so, from the displacement of an entity that is freely moving and in mastery of its steps, to artistic becoming, which does not necessarily tend to be "within Being", that is, to deify though art something with durable meaning and plenitude, but develops in its purity. Whoever desires a image for Being as becoming might find it in dance, as it is becoming in a world which constantly totters and seeks its balance, the passage to equilibrium, *obtained* through walking, in a superior form of equilibrium, one that still moves, but is supra mun-dane in the midst of the world. When Being makes its appearance in

the real, then rhythms, grace, concatenation and establishment, albeit only provisory, have also appeared.

That becoming is a first form of Being and thus distinct from the blind processes that have not yet been constituted into ontological precarities, or even that it is distinct from the precarities themselves, is shown by the fact that it has the distinctive character of Being, which is infinitude: the limitation that does not limit. Transformations, transmutations, processes of every kind, do not carry within them infinitude, for they naturally tend to have *a terminus*: lower transformations have as their term their constitution in precarities, through the coupling of two ontological terms. And, in their turn, the transformations at the heart of the precarities have as their terminus precisely the satisfaction of the model and in this way their emergence, as transformations, from the precarious condition beneath which they were manifest. No kind of necessary transformations can claim infinitude for themselves, as long as they are limitations that limit. Becoming, on the other hand, designates, in the real, the arising of a limitation that does not limit.

Nowadays, when so many philosophical concepts have become "scientific", the question ought to have been put: why has becoming remained to the lot of philosophy, not tempting any science (and least of all the modern science of logic) to deepen and define the concept rigorously? However, it is perhaps clear: because becoming is of the order of Being. Philosophy, which has retreated from so many speculative positions in order to be able to survive, successively attempting to be a theory of knowledge, a psychology, a sociology, an anthropology, a philosophy of culture, an axiology, is specifically left with *ontology*, by means of which all the disciplines enumerated, including logic, might preserve a philosophical character, or one that is also philosophical, in the face of the legitimate extension of the scientific spirit. Insofar as Being remains unassailed and unassailable in the scientific spirit, whose nature it tends to make transparent and "takes-out-of-being", philosophy at least has a concept in the proper sense. And because Being *is* in the first instance becoming, the philosophical privilege of the concept of Being rises above becoming itself. *To philosophise means to think and speak about becoming.*

So intrinsic is the concept of becoming to philosophy that through it might be rethought all that has seemed most characteristic (and elevated) in terms of philosophical speculation: the ontological argu-

ment, that proclaimed by Anselm in the Middle Ages and opposed by Kant, who caused philosophy to become a theory of cognition to the detriment of ontology, and reaffirmed by Hegel, who, in his own way, tended to rethink ontology. Indeed, the ontological argument – which upheld that a perfect being, by the mere fact that it is conceived must also exist, since it would not be perfect without existence – can, as Hegel wished, be the touchstone of ontology. The argument would correspond at the speculative level to "if it were not, it would not be told" (that is, everything that is told about Being is), whose strength we have signalled above. But it is not along these lines that we shall here invoke, in connection with becoming (for, "if it were not, it would not be told" referred not to the plenitude of Being, as the ontological argument would wish, but to its precarities), but rather along the lines of another suggestion made above, which is in perfect consonance with Anselm's argument. Ultimately, the mediaeval thinker did not at all uphold that "*all* that is told is" and that the idea of any perfection (a perfect island, as a thinker contemporary with him objected) also participates in reality. He said that *a single* idea of perfection, that of perfect being, also causes it to exist. But likewise, above we have tried to show, contrary to the (at least "literal") affirmation of Hegel about a concept that confirms itself through its contradiction, how there is *a single concept* in this sense, namely the concept of Being. At most, we added: only by means of it do other concepts, such as the divine, acquire the strength to integrate their opposites.

The ontological argument becomes, in this version, nothing other than that perfect Being must also have existence. It would say: Being is of such a nature as that it must also be in its opposites. It is not so much a *perfectio* as a *factio*. Being is the only concept (as regards the sole "reality") which is confirmed by that which contradicts it: by the totalising contrary of opposites – becoming. In its variant at the heart of reality, Being is becoming. In this sense, compared to the classic ontological argument, which said that perfect being also has existence, and thereby did not refer to any new examination but left everything to theology, the ontological argument by means of which Being *is* its own opposites, respectively their summation – becoming – at once creates the obligation to examine the more rarefied or denser presence of Being within the sphere of becoming.

All the realities that have acquired identity, through their closure that opens and maintains itself as opening towards or at the heart of

something general, all these realities *are*, in the sense that they become. Not only autonomously individualised embodiments, as distinct real units, participate in Being when they have realised their internal model, but also, it might be said, in the "being" of the units they make up. A biological cell is also an individual reality, with Determinations rooted in a general nature. It too has a becoming, not just the organism. But it is more fitting that the character of Being should be reserved for *autonomous* units in becoming, however relative their autonomy might be, in the last instance.

In a way, therefore, Being is a bundling: units in which the model of Being have achieved their saturation, at a given stage of reality, are comprised in other units, with their broader becoming. Being qua becoming, having descended into the humbleness of the real, will be capable of rediscovering *here* its sense of unique becoming; but in the first instance, Being populates the world with becomings, in the plural. Thus, the plurality of the world acquires ontological investiture as *plurality*.

But not only the immediate realities of the *known* world acquire ontological status with their plurality. Today, under the pretext that we are talking about "being", we can no longer turn our heads away from the cosmological image of the real; not even in the name of the spirit can we do so. For, spirit or reason might occur in other planetary systems, and in any case, with or without the spirit, unknown or half-known worlds also *exist-in-being* in their way. But Being qua becoming naturally also represents the ontological status of the realities that we do not know (they too may "become"), and the model of Being makes sense even at their level. With becoming, which may equally scale the heavens or invest molecules, Being also approaches its horizon of becoming, which is time. In any ontological vision of the *real*, thus whenever a beginning is made with the being of the existent, time appears as the real wave most proximate to Being, or the "wave front" beneath whose displacement the being of things may appear. This is not the place for us to wonder how Heidegger could have abandoned the problematic of time, after having invoked it so completely, going so far as historical time and laying claim to it in this sense from Dilthey. It is sufficient to reveal that, once he had abandoned time, the great thinker, who promised the restoration of philosophy through the re-setting of Being at its core, remained blocked in the face of the other, sacral Being.

But inasmuch as time is nothing but a schema of becoming – not acquiring its ontological sense except, perhaps, at the level of becoming within Being – we shall say that, rather than determining Being, at the level of the real, by means of time, which brings about only one of the intrinsic oppositions of Being (transience), we shall prefer to do so by means of becoming, which brings about them all. The problem of time, moreover, will reappear in Being itself. With becoming, there appears that infinitude that is much more than schematic infinity (linear, circular, spiral or volumetric, together with the wave front) of time: there appears infinity as progression of something subsistent in temporal infinity. Perhaps the great contemporary thinker failed, in the analysis of Being, not because he abandoned time but because he did not tackle becoming, in consonance with the German philosophical tradition.

Beneath the sign of becoming, infinitude itself (the limitation that does not limit), as the measure of the presence of Being, is liberated from the spectre of the infinite and of eternity, as well as from that gigantism that has ever been the curse of ontology. In the immensity as well as smallness of the world, Being is structurally the same. Our transient human day may have "being", while the cosmic day is nothing but blind transformation. Who knows, accordingly, whether there is not more Being in an ephemeral entity than in the entire universe, which might be merely a precarity with no exit, even an eternal one.

30. Becoming as a first instance of Being

Being is becoming but becoming is not Being. Specifically, Being is becoming at the heart of the real, but becoming is not this independent becoming, even if it is not alien to the immediate real. The problem of Being is posed once more, this time as secondary Being.

While becoming is not being in the sense of secondary Being, it still makes this sense possible, perhaps. Between the Being of things (qua becoming) and Being in itself there must exist *continuity*. And only after the Being proper to things has come to light will it be possible to pose the problem of Being in itself, as something that envelops their being.

The nature common to the Being of the real and to Being in itself appears directly in ancient thinking, where it was conceived under the sign of Being. It appears only indirectly in modern thinking, which

has conceived it under the sign of the spirit and at most of becoming, ending up by leaving it without ontological cover.

If Being is the soul of things (the anima, the principle, their active model), then things must "give up the ghost", in the literal sense, offer it up and reveal it, so that Being might also have meaning without them.

What might be named Being in the real, what might be named Being in itself – these were the two major, unified themes of ontology. For the most part, however, one alone has remained, in the name of ontology, but then, as things were simplified, the problem of ontology in fact perished (as has happened historically, now that ontology is no longer written). When, for example, only the Being of the real is taken into consideration, then doctrines such as nominalism are arrived at, within which it is excessive and even ridiculous to attempt ontology. For, in this case, full Being only possesses individual realities – this tree, this man – so that one pretentiously theorises something that common sense has known and declared from the very start, in its commodious restriction. When, on the other hand, only Being in itself is taken into consideration, then sublime Being is arrived at, mentioned as being vacuous a number of times above, or else nothingness is arrived at (silence, in Heidegger, nothingness in Indian thinking). Whenever the two themes of ontology have not been confronted as *unified*, philosophising has existed in the absence of the main subject of philosophy.

That there are two instances of Being, a primary and a secondary Being, is best shown by Aristotle's "substance". While it is not rightly speaking Being – although it bears its name, *ousia* – it nevertheless perfectly reflects it, with its dual face. When he places substance at the head of the categories, whose table itself has ontological signification, Aristotle cannot name but a single substance: he names *two*, a primal substance, which is supposed to be individual reality, and a "secondary" substance, representing species and genus. Here there is an equivocation that the ancient thinker left unresolved, to the despair of posterity.

In order to escape from this equivocation, it might be upheld that the secondary substance or substances are as many "dimensions" of the primal substance qua existent-in-being par excellence. This has best been illustrated by Porphyry's "voices" (posited as *Eisagogê*, that is, as an introduction, at the head of the *Organon*), which make up, as genus, species, differentiae, proper character and accidental character, a kind

of ontological space with *five* co-ordinates, capable of capturing and fixing any individual reality. Likewise, in the space of analytical geometry, with two or three co-ordinate axes, any point, curve or solid, in a plane or in space, can be placed into form. Thus, primary substance would, as individual reality, seem genuinely to be the privileged object of Aristotelian ontology. Moreover, along this line of framing and capturing the individual, Aristotle was closer than Plato to the modern world, with its nominalist realism, which has always opposed the so-called "realism" of the Platonic ideas.

But, as long as the ancient thinker reckons any knowledge as merely of a "General", it might just as well be upheld that the prime substance is in subordination to the secondary and that it serves only as a particular case for the advancement of the latter. What then is Being, one wonders. That of the always already individuated real, or the secondary Being of the always already General? Before the answer, or two answers, that we shall discover in Aristotelianism, the profoundly significant fact remains that Being, or its substitute, substance, has a *double* form. The entire problem will be whether or not the prime Being will also be able to open to the secondary; whether that which can be named Being in the real also provides meanings for Being in itself.

All too often in the past, philosophy has refused to see the two thematics of Being and, above all, the continuity between them. If, however, the real does not exist in the full sense of Being, it at least *pre-exists*, that is, it is open before Being, therefore not alien to it. Secondary Being cannot be *das ganz Andere*, something entirely different to primary Being. In the version of ontology that we hereby propose, it is true that the structure of Being has detached itself not from above, from the Spirit or absolute Being, but from below, from the modesty of the corruptible world. But does this not somehow also provide the structure of Being in itself? If the latter, as high as it has been situated in the past, could not explain Being in the real, then might not the latter, inversely, be able to explain Being in itself? In this case, the genealogy of becoming, attempted above, would turn into a genealogy of Being.

Indeed, the real qua becoming has brought to light the *terms* of Being, their organisation and the dynamism of the structure obtained. The model of Being was everywhere active, in the non-fulfilments of the real, in its junctures and precarities, in the fulfilled real as satisfaction of the model. At the last stage, Being appears as becoming. But it only *appears*, that is, it reveals its image in the real. It is not possible to

think of a Being beyond the real without falling into the impossibility of explaining it. But nor can it be said that the real, at whatever stage of fulfilment, however advanced, gives the measure of Being, since it is precisely Being that must give the measure of the real. Moreover, the real has come to show that, at its heart, the model of Being, although one, makes its appearance in six different ways. The mere fact that there are six ontological precarities in the real proves that the latter does not directly express Being, although nor is it alien to it. When, on the other hand, it emerges from precariousness, does it obtain Being? However, with becoming, it has done nothing more than to enter into its *order*.

It therefore remains to suggest that the order Being posits in things is also order (with the same terms and the same organisation of them) in Being in itself. We may attempt the proof *along two paths*: systematically, through the open perspective of becoming as such, independently of real becomings; and historically, by means of what was almost always said during antiquity about Being in itself.

Systematically speaking, when the ontological model was realised, there was no fixation in the real, but a liberation from it, under a new rhythm and with a now organised concatenation, as in the arts of movement, as in dance, which we mentioned as describing pure becoming. A *semen entis* has been transformed into an organised reality, into becoming. But this means something other than the dissolution into a whole (or into the Great All): it means that, by means of fulfilment of the model in the real, a new closure has appeared, which this time opens at a higher level, that of becoming qua order of Being. With the new Individuality, the ontological scenario is *resumed*: an Individual gives itself Determinations, which are now assured, not random, for they are organised by the General proper. But in their turn, the new Determinations may or may not inscribe themselves within the other order, that of Being in itself, rather than their own Being. (Again, it is as in the creations of the above-mentioned arts, where utterances and steps must aspire, through works, to the stage of the *exemplary* utterance and the exemplary step.) If the ontological scenario has been resumed, it now progresses beyond the immediate. Let us say that it crosses from its own General into the universal, understood as Being in itself. Just as the model of Being was approximate in the real, *Being in itself is approximated in becoming*. Not every becoming is also becoming within Being, as we shall finally say.

In Part II, we shall attempt precisely to show what kind of subsistence Being has independent of the immediate real, "universal Being". That it *has* a subsistence and one with the same terms we have encountered in the real is what all philosophies, particularly ancient philosophy, have said indirectly – and this will be the *historical* proof of the continuity between the Being in things and Being in itself. When it has not concerned itself directly with Being, philosophy has nevertheless brought into play its terms, as all philosophies are ultimately variants of the model. When it has directly concerned itself with Being in itself, with the ontologies of the sublime, philosophy has – without knowing it with the clarity Christian theology has known it – hypostasised the model. When, on the other hand, it has confronted ontology with its dual thematic (Being in the real and Being in itself), then it has even given names to the terms, as in Hegel. But what Being in itself looks like, or by what path it can be pursued setting out from the Being of things, has been said best by the ancient philosophers, explicitly by Aristotle.

In general, ancient thought, which thinks under the sign of Being, showed that Being in itself is not of a nature other than the Being of the real. In Plato, perhaps, the two instances of Being are so naturally interwoven that it is no longer possible to distinguish clearly when he is speaking of the Being of the real (the Idea and the advancement to it) and when he is speaking of Being in itself (the Ideas as such, as in *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*, or in the unification of the Ideas through the Idea of the Good, mentioned by ancient sources). On the other hand, in Aristotle, the theme of Being in itself appears three times: in the *Categories*, in the *Physics* and in the *Metaphysics*, while in the first two cases it is even as the model.

The *aporiai* of the latter work do not allow any conclusion regarding "being qua being", except perhaps in the sense of "theological" Being, as the author himself said, thus in the sense of the sublime. We shall find out more from the first two invocations of Being in itself, and if the one in the *Categories* is not usually revealed – since, in general, only the "ontological" significance of the categories is spoken of – ontology is nonetheless intact here, with the *model* suggested above. Let us review what was said above, in the chapter on the "Ontological Model". What were, in fact, the primary and secondary substance, which Aristotle was forced to set side by side, if not the *Individual* and the *General*, now viewed, however, categorically in themselves and not in the real?

They are unified, for primary substance (this man) would not be substance unless it had a General in it (man), and nor would secondary substance be substance, but rather essence, unless it implied the Individual. But it is significant that even the Aristotelian table of the categories thereby posits the *entire* ontological model, which is thus common to Being in the real and to Being in itself. For, after the ontological juncture of the Individual and the General, in the first category, there follow, with the other nine categories, the *determinations* (the philosopher calls them "accidents") of substance, which means that we have, in the Aristotelian table, the ontological model in itself *at the level of supra-reality*. In the history of philosophy, few illustrations, apart from the three dialectics mentioned above, allow the ontological model to be seen in its plenitude so clearly.

But because here, in the *Categories*, the model appears in its *relaxation*, for it is a matter only of a description and designation of the ontological terms, Aristotle will have to resume it in another version, and therein, in the "anastrophic" tension by which the model is characterised. Namely, he will resume it in the well known version of substantial form entering into tension with indeterminate matter and leading, both together, to substance proper, which will be individual substance. However, indeterminate and amorphous matter might be understood as the elementary "generality", which is shaped by the determinations of substantial form, until they provide together the substance of an individual reality. Or perhaps substantial form can be understood better still as a General, which is determined by means of matter (marble as determination and with its determinations), in order to provide an Individual. In any case, the three terms are present, even more so, they are active beneath the tension of the model. And what must be reiterated is that, both in the *Categories* and in the *Physics*, it is no longer a matter of Being in itself. No modern thinker, not even Hegel himself, who effectively names the three ontological terms, will speak so directly about Being in itself. This is also why Hegel, together with modern thought, loses so much ontological correspondence, and is left to seek the correspondence of history for his dialectics.

But the loss of ontology must be paid for. No meaning truly holds without those of ontology. Modern thought, which has so many cognitions, has lost the way towards meanings, inasmuch as it no longer wishes to deal with ontology. When, on the other hand, the hope arises that today's world will lead to a great new philosophical vision, a re-

ligious one according to some, in order to regain control of knowledge and over the demonism of technology – with the risk of otherwise caving into the unknown of history -- it is said only that an *ontological* vision must be rediscovered.

Should be rediscovered where? In the heavens? In the abysses and *aporiai* of empty speculation? But the things of the world are *here*, with their message, which is the code of Being, and not even hidden, as long as the thinking of the past has revealed it so many times. And if the immediate gives us a number for Being, this number can be detached from the immediate real. It is as if Being in itself made the Being in things possible, in order to seek itself in them. Not otherwise did Hegel speak, when he declared that the Spirit, through alienation in the real, tends to take cognisance of itself. In their turn, the religions have not believed otherwise, proclaiming that the divine creates the world in order to receive its sacrifices and recognition! But Being in itself demands more. It is not content with its recognition as Being, with that "you are", supposed to have figured on the temple at Delphi; nor does it reveal itself through itself, through its dialectically concatenated manifestations. It puts all realities to the test, as being something else *in* them, even if it is nothing other than them or anywhere else.

This is why, tested by Being, the real alone refers beyond itself. At their terminus, a modification takes place in things and humans. Each man ought to say, at the end of his life, what he wanted, or what existence and Being sought through him. Each thing too must give itself, and does give itself, in closing itself, a meaning. Things and humans perish in their *element*. But this does not mean that they perish into the dust from which they were created, but that they give themselves or deliver unto themselves a soul, that is, they reveal their element.

BEING IN THE SECOND INSTANCE

THE ELEMENT

31. Becoming and the second instance of Being

Being does not represent the only instance of Being, insofar as the things that become survive themselves, when they perish.

Any form of survival (super-vival) is an endeavour to enter into second instance Being. Those who allow only first instance Being (like the nominalists) refuse to read anything into the decease of things, after they have seen in their existence a mere precariousness of Being, namely the ultimate, particularising precariousness. But even common sense, which they believe they represent and theorise, says more than they do.

When things perish, they return to what they *were*, to the reality in which they were, which is to say in whose heart they became. They return to their element. But if, in perishing, things do *not* release Being, or they release one that is *beneath* their level of existence, then they are a waste product, a reject of secondary Being.

They all *are* in fact (they were and they survive) in their element. This was intuited as early as the beginnings of speculative thinking (in its three forms of speculation: religious, philosophical, scientific), with the Presocratics, and then resumed by philosophy in each of its versions. Without a secondary Being, and its concrete universal, philosophy would have nothing to oppose to scientific explanation, and its abstract universal.

Both things and we ourselves disappear. But it might be possible to reintegrate ourselves in something else, and then this means that from the outset we have been rooted in or defined by something else, into which we are in the end transformed. Throughout history, it has been demanded of youth that it "give its life" for the city, it has thus been told that it exists only in the element of the city. Likewise with things: they are different to what they seem. Accordingly, it might be said of any thing that in perishing it "gives up its ghost", that is, it reveals it, proving what it was in reality. However, while in things the reintegration is made by means of the decomposition "into the parts from which they were made up" and thus into elements *below* their level of

organisation and reality, in humans there has always existed the illusion that they might reintegrate themselves into a reality of a higher order, passing from the immediate level of Being into an existence of the second instance. The mere fact that there were always cemeteries in the past contradicts those who declare that ontology must bear only on immediate Being.

But if, through the fact of the institution of cemeteries, the infused philosophic sensibility of common thinking contradicts the philosophy of immediate Being, this does not mean that it proclaims distant and absolute Being. The cult of the dead did not necessarily arise as the result of a religious vision linked to absolute Being; it may certainly have taken up such visions, but it existed and exists just as well independently of the latter. The second instance of Being may have been mere "social Being": the reality of the family, the reality of the city, of the "fame" of the Greeks and, in general, the being of the community that has become conscious of itself.

Not to recognise at least this opening towards secondary Being and to turn one's head from a funeral cortege (as Goethe did, not so much from psychological aversion, which he would have had the strength to overcome, as much as from the metaphysical reason active in him as the apologist of empty becoming) means to offend the permanent common aspiration towards a second instance of Being. In any case, it is presumptuous to declare categorically, as nominalism does, that we and existent things are the ultimate truth, just as it is presumptuous to uphold, like Pascal, that we are untruth itself ("Dieu seul est véritable, l'homme est menteur", as he says somewhere, clearly falling into the paradox of the liar: for if man is a liar, how truthfully can he speak of himself and of the divine?). Philosophy cannot end so simply with a second instance of Being.

In fact, philosophy stands or falls precisely with secondary Being. In the first instance of Being, in becoming, it is possible also to raise the scientific vision, at its positively speculative hour, as it was with the theory of evolution (which Goethe himself anticipated) and as it steadfastly is with "historical becoming". The second instance, on the other hand, is exclusively of the domain of philosophy. Not only does philosophy nonetheless read something into the decease of things, extending the "cult of the dead" over everything that is a reality, but also, in so doing, it much enlarges the area of possible survival, conceived of by common sense for man (with the exception of religious survival,

which it cannot assume), and overturns things, attempting to show that only through second instance Being is Being in the immediate possible.

Philosophy sees what things really *are* in their manner of perishing, thus in their "great transition" towards something else; and only thus do the words of Socrates, that everything is a preparation for death, make sense both in the case of man as well as all the rest. Each reality passes away, qua individual reality, and returns to the element that made it possible. Those things contained in inanimate matter decompose into a less organised level of inanimate matter (into lead, like uranium, or into cosmic dust and waves). Those things comprised by animate matter wither and die through procreation or in the service of procreation, thus preserving themselves at the same level, which is that of their "element" and truth: the species. Man, on the other hand, dies or can die in spirit, that is, at a *higher* level, if he has managed to elevate himself to it. The element in which they have all existed is that which validated them. Because the element of inanimate matter is more "disaggregated" than its embodiments, ancient thought permitted itself to say that matter is non-being – we would say, the non-fulfilment of being – while regarding animate things, which preserve their level of existence, it had to admit that their true being is their species (if not the *eidos*, the Idea, as in Plato), that is, also according to ancient thinking, the ultimate "visible" thing. As for higher animate things, such as man and, beyond him, the stars and the incorruptible world, ancient thought permitted itself to say that their being is something that can no longer be seen: their "soul". The true Being is always of the second instance.

This is the historical origin of philosophical reflection: the invocation of second instance Being, and with it – we shall argue – consideration of the ontological model. Philosophy appeared when the Presocratics advanced to the "principle" of things, be it in a specifically material form, such as water, air, or fire, be it in a generic material form, with Anaximander's *Apeiron* or Indeterminate, and perhaps even Parmenides' Being, or be it in an immaterial form, such as Pythagoras' number or Anaxagoras' *nous*. In itself, the principle is not the General but the "element", even in the designations of the Presocratics (but with the clarification that follows in the "Excursus on element"), in which all things appear and disappear. It is not until the element that there will be a separation of the General as law, on the one hand, and

the Individual as reality, on the other. (In Heraclitus, for example, fire, conflict, and war represent the element, while the *logos* is the General.) But at the first moment, and in the face of individual realities, the element functions as something of a general order (and they even implicitly bear in them the General), and it remained for the Presocratics to show how the Determinations of the Individual correspond to those of the General (which is perhaps what they did in their non-extant works) in order to rediscover the model of the whole.

The problem of second instance Being was also posited from the beginning by the religions, but from Being they took only the General, which in itself is so little active that in almost all religions the great gods become "otiose". A General by means of whose Determinations individual realities might become possible, or one to which these realities might elevate themselves by means of their Determinations, appears only in philosophical thought. The Presocratics were the first to bring all the ontological terms into play, and, in contrast to Plato and Aristotle, with whom pure philosophical speculation commences, they posit these terms for immediate reality, that is, in terms of becoming, while secondary Being explains, for them, the first instance. For, although it is reckoned that only Heraclitus brought becoming into play, it is, at least implicitly, nonetheless the novelty brought by the Presocratics (with the exception of Parmenides), that is to say by philosophical reason. If you posit water, air, fire, the *apeiron* or number as the *arkhê*, you implicitly say that their becoming makes the world possible, or that the becoming of the world is within them. The philosophical proclamations of the Presocratics might otherwise not have deepened the process of becoming at all; nevertheless, the world was created and thereby *was*. For, their *arkhê* was no longer a simple and absolute General, as in religion. Precisely because it was a material principle, or for the most part matter-like, it was active in things. Water could not be worshipped as a god, but nor was it otiose like a god. It had to do a job, the same as air, the *apeiron* or number, which also had no divine biography. This is why such principles, once invoked, emerge from the condition of simple Generalia and become Determinations that condense, like Anaximenes' air, into Individualia. The Presocratics philosophised, therefore, because they established the becoming of the element or the becoming at the heart of the element, and together with it, the model of Being.

But if philosophy arose when the Being in things was conceived as becoming, it corrected itself when it understood that it could not posit becoming as such as Being; that there was something else to be thought in the problem of Being, precisely the Being of the second instance. Only by means of the latter, that is, through the "element" they invoked, could the Presocratics succeed in explaining Being of the first instance. Except that they did not consider the element *in itself*, thereby allowing their philosophical reflection to blend with the problematic of science, responsibility for which they assumed. One Presocratic alone undertook philosophical speculation in its perfect purity: Parmenides retained only the General from the structure of Being, which he projected into the absolute as Being itself. (In our times, Heidegger was to do what Parmenides openly claimed to do.) But in doing so, these two did not fall back into Being of the religious type, but made it obligatory for philosophy to think Being in itself, independently of the Being of the existent, that in things.

In antiquity, two thinkers managed to posit the problem of Being in its entirety: Plato at the bottom of things and Aristotle in terminology. This is why it has been possible to say that philosophy in fact begins with them, whereas Heidegger, the Parmenidian, declares that it ceases with them. But perhaps because he himself, like Parmenides, conceived Being as the sole, not just the ultimate, element, he was to end up – together with the ancient thinker – at mute contemplation ("hearkening"). Both gave to philosophy its own meaning (the pursuit of second instance Being), but in the excess of its purity.

Philosophical thought, with Being as the sole problem, thereby discovers in fact a new variety, with the elements, but of a power other than that of the real. In any case, philosophy has its own domain, the world of the elements, through which it makes its historic beginning. We shall not linger on the elements that have appeared in the history of thought and whose progression makes up the very history of thought: the Platonic Ideas, the Aristotelian substantial forms, Stoic reason, the Mediaeval entities as denatured elements, the Leibnizian monad, the Kantian transcendental, in one sense, and in any case the Hegelian objective spirit (the spirit of a people, of an epoch, of a language), as far as the elements of production in Marxism, which are themselves a typical example of element, since the individuals of a given society also appear beneath given relations of production. Let us merely underline that, through its determinism and reductionism, the

19th Century, which seemed unphilosophical and in any case lacking in any metaphysical horizon, involuntarily created a metaphysics by invoking a secondary Being and bringing to light, by means of "reduction" to it, elements more varied than the empty speculation of the past had ever known. And let us reveal that today, as at the beginning, philosophy makes sense only through consideration of secondary being, of the element, which may be an ultimate element (Being in itself, as in Heidegger) or may be a variety of elements. The latter case is illustrated best in our times by the theory of archetypes.

In fact, the theory of archetypes did not, in spite of the vision of a "collective unconscious", lead to a true philosophy, but remained within the psychological, with the "dark" part of the unconscious. Yet if precisely for this reason the archetypes do not correspond all the way with the Platonic Ideas, which are luminous, on the other hand, when they are considered in the full light of history, as Mircea Eliade does in the investigation of the religious structures and symbols of all times, then they become a promise of philosophy, for they appear as true elements, at least in the order of the human. With the "element", one de-subjectivises the archetype and extracts it from the psychological, shifting it into the *ontological*. This is expressed by the latter author, when he speaks of man's "thirst for Being", through elevation to the archetype. Perhaps philosophy will be capable of adopting the theory of archetypes, in the future, above all in its luminous version, as it will adopt other "elements" brought into play by varied kinds of determinism, opposing a world of concrete Generalia, such as the archetypes, with the abstract Generlia established by the sciences.

This is where the separation can genuinely be made: there are two types of Generalia, of which the second, the concrete, is in Being, while the first is only in law. All philosophy, including that of Spinoza, opposes the chance remark of the latter: the concept of dog does not bark. There is, however, a "concept" of a dog that barks at the Idea of dog. If it is a matter of the *scientific* concept of dog, which explains the manifestations of the latter, then naturally the philosopher is right (but then he has ceased for a moment to be a philosopher). If, on the other hand, it is a matter of the *Idea* of a reality, that is, of its element, then the latter adopts all the manifestations of reality, which it displaces into Being. For, ordinary realities are not; at most, they become. That which *is* in them tends toward Being of the second instance.

Excursus on Element

In a memorable book, which I mentioned above, whose title has, however, endured longer than the book itself (*Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*, 1910), Ernst Cassirer opposes the modern concept of function to the ancient one of substance. It is not what a thing is, but rather the way that it is, its inner fabric, its structure that concerns modern thinkers, and in many domains, concrete objects no longer exist for cognition, but only functions. It is as if things vanish, giving way to relations.

It is an obvious fact that things disappear, but perhaps into something as yet subsistent, the element, and not into something as evanescent as relations. Indeed, we must give the name "element" to this order of reality in which things are implanted and which cause them to *be*. Between the concepts of substance and of function, a new concept compels recognition, one which preserves substantiality and, without dissolving into function, manifests functionality. Units more inclusive than immediate realities appear to secondary perception and the inner eye, residing at the limit or rather in the interval between the sensible and the intelligent world. There is an entire world here, in the too sudden logical leap that we make from the concrete to the abstract, a world about which we do not usually speak. But ontologically, *this* might be the world that gives things Being and opens towards a Being other than that of things. It is a world of *media*, in a dual sense: both because it mediates between the condition of things and an eventual higher ontological condition, and because it always provides a medium in which things may appear.

Ontology's field of investigation therefore changes, passing from immediate things and realities to elements as mediating realities and as media proper. In every field of research, such media appear from time to time, as realities more powerfully ontological than individual embodiments. The eighteenth century naturalist Buffon said: "Les espèces sont les seuls *êtres* de la nature." Likewise, Plato would have said that the Ideas are reality's only beings. The biologists of today have not exactly confirmed the subsistence of species, but nor have they been able to disprove it. The same as Idea, at least in the reconceived sense, species is a provisionally good example of what we will designate "element".

In ancient thought, particularly in Aristotle, species was *substance*, "formal substance" in his terms, namely secondary substance. He

lacked only the matter to give it an individual reality, that is, a primary substance. In contemporary thought, on the other hand, since Darwin, species is no longer a substance properly speaking: it has development. It is simple "variety" at the beginning and thence enters, even as established species, into the process of evolution. We might therefore be tempted to say that, in modern and contemporary thought, species has acquired a functional rather than a substantial character; Except that while it has betrayed a functional character, species has not entirely lost its substantial character. A form of substantiality, or at least of subsistence, survives in it, and everything that is alive proves to be *within* a species, which, without pre-existing the individual – at least in the initial phase – nevertheless models it, as an actively organising reality or, as it is now called, a "system of adjustment", itself in the course of determination by means of the specimens it determines. How else may we then designate such entities, which are neither substances nor functions, but are both substantial and functional, *giving* Being to things and *taking* it from them, than "elements"?

Elements exist <fiinţează> everywhere. Even when, in the field of the investigation of nature, species has been accepted only as a working hypothesis, it had to resort to other, more comprehensive forms of unit at the heart of the real: the ecological unity, the *oikos*, the community of natural life and the medium that makes individual existence possible, and populations. Similarly, the study of history oscillated between givens overly bound to immediate reality and the overly broad horizons of ideality, until sociology and the philosophy of culture indicated the common structures and media that appear in history, if not one or another real world, *oikumenê*. Psychology, caught as it is between concrete and abstract or between individual reality and general function, encountered in the psychology of the unconscious a world of elements, of archetypes. While the medium (qua element, as will be seen, and not as mere ambience) can also be identified at the level of matter, among as fields among other things, the real kingdom of elements is offered by the human world, where being has chances of appearing other than as simple becoming. With humans, the elements may not only increase by however much, but also they prove how, in distinction to individual realities, they interpenetrate, they intersect, subsume each other and form hierarchies.

We are in the element of Being only in the *final* instance. However, everywhere and in everything we dwell among almost invisible ele-

ments, not at all among visible realities. The child is clearly in the element of maternity and passes successively through others. Just as we are in the element of species and of society, so we are, in the moral life, in the diversified element of the family (beneath its shaping power and ontological consistency), we are in the element of friendship, of love, of language, of a profession, of knowledge and culture, of the city, of the objective spirit. Thus, ultimately, we are wholly within elements. In his turn, a simple individual person is not the simple individual person of another, but a bundle of possibilities, a general state, something enveloping, like a medium: it is potential joy, positive communication, the bearer of the new, potential credit, in order to descend to some Balzacian hero or other; it is the mirroring of self, adversity or the elated principle. Humans realise only at exceptional hours what the element is: sometimes at the price of revealing to themselves that essentially they are lived and do not really live as subjects; that their lives are known in advance and that someone has "told them off by heart", at other times they perceive the element in the external world, just as happens at some solemn hour in the community, for example in the description of the funeral of Queen Victoria in *The Forsyte Saga*, or the description of the burial of Victor Hugo in Barrès' novel or – more dramatically for us – the burial of Eminescu.[22] Whenever something reveals or gives up its "ghost", the secondary being in us and around us emerges.

In one sense, the *element* exists first of all and from it are detached individual realities on the one hand and abstract laws on the other: Except that this "first of all" should not always be regarded as anteriority in time, just as Kant's a priori is not prior in time, but as the foundation of cognition. Or, just as Plato's Idea is not really subsistent or prior in time, but only the foundation of existence. – Nevertheless, in certain verifiable cases, of elements that have a well-defined historical and natural outline, it is even possible to speak of the anteriority of the element in time. Thus, the "primordial soup", of which today's biologists speak, did not yet contain the laws of the species, let alone individuals: it was from it that the laws of life detached themselves on

---

22 The funeral was attended by Prime Minister Lascăr Catargiu and other Romanian cultural and political luminaries, including Mihail Kogălniceanu, Titu Maiorescu, and Theodor Rosetti. The cult of Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889) as Romanian national poet grew steadily thereafter. – Translator's note.

the one hand (leading to the establishment of species, as better determined elements than the primordial soup), and individuals on the other.

Or to give some historical examples: within collective, for example revolutionary, enthusiasm, neither heroes nor historical meanings are as yet well defined – they appear precisely from the historical "element" of this collective enthusiasm. Or else, even more exactly verifiable historically: Bacchic intoxication and the Dionysian chorus preceded, as element, the tragic hero and the tragic author, on the one hand, and the laws of tragedy, on the other. Conversely, in the Middle Ages, the element of the "mystery plays" did not manage to produce well individualised works of art, and even less so the laws of a literary genre which might have compelled recognition; the element remained an empty element. Finally, another example: in all traditional cultures, the folkloric element preceded folkloric works. People dwelled in that element until it condensed in works of art. In an appropriate sense, the work of spinning, the festival in general, preceded the song, just as the literary salon, as a kind of element, preceded the French moralists – before it set La Rochefoucauld to work writing maxims to order – as well as the laws of the respective genre, insofar as it is possible to speak of laws in this case.

For, the aggregate reality of the element is that which makes entities possible, on the one hand, and laws, on the other, since *laws too are born*. From the moment the element is set up as the most profound ontological reality, rather than individuals or abstract laws, thus from the moment another perspective onto reality is opened, together with the elements, it is no longer an outrage to reason to say that laws are not given but born. Substance, which is individual, and function, which is general, are ontologically organised in element. All that is outside us, at the same time as *with* us, is invested by means of these *concrete generalia* which only philosophical reflection can identify.

Thus, if it is true that philosophy has been left with a single problem, that of Being, we may now say that it possesses, with Being, all the ontological variety of the *elements* and that it is nothing more than a vast theory – when it is not also a spiritual technique, leading to "wisdom" – along the line of the elements. (For example, apart from the Platonic Ideas, all Hegel's world of the "objective spirit" is, it seems to us, a theory of the element.) And only philosophy has meaning for the elements.

Today, our historical world is in the element of *rationality*, on the one hand, and that of applied rationality, of *technology*, on the other. For, these two elements also, while they were for a moment mere expressions of modern man's subjectivity of consciousness and creativity, have become objective, even something with the strength of nature.

The philosophy of history reveals other "elements" active in the past or probable in the future. The philosophy of culture implants communities in the element of one or another structure, or even "idea". The theory of systems, or structuralism, does nothing more than to theorise and formalise the element. Cybernetics, in its turn, presents individual realities themselves as systems of adjustment and control, projecting the perspective of the element onto any reality organised in act. Philosophical linguistics, epistemology, ethics and aesthetics also theorise and formalise elements. But it remains up to ontology to release philosophical reflection from the seduction of the immediate and regional elements, in order to investigate the ultimate elements. In the proposition "the tree is green", said Hegel, one might be interested in the meaning of "tree", or the meaning of the attribute "green", but the philosopher must be interested in the meaning of "is".

When we are told that there are languages which do not possess the verb "to be" and that ontology can be reduced to speculation on the basis of European languages, it is well that we remember once more that in the latter languages "is" may very well disappear (as in Russian) and has sometimes begun to disappear, just as Being disappears beneath a non-philosophic gaze. But precisely this is the meaning of philosophy, and of ontology in particular: the *remembrance* of Being. If other languages and cultures do not wish to remember, it is the duty of European culture, which has now awakened other cultures to reason and freedom (the latter themselves being "values" of Being) in order to restore the meaning of Being as such and of the elements invested by it.

However, while ontology has not always "remembered" the world of the elements, the arts often do so (in a pure form in music), particularly literature. One of the constants of literature, however realist it might wish to be, is the tendency to "the fantastic". Literature was born of the fascination with myth and was folktale at its first hour, both of them bringing into play planes of reality other than and more powerful than the given plane. Even when it became cultured creation, literature rediscovered the fantastic, as a displacement into another, somehow

more real, world. Is the unconscious striving to be displaced into the world of the elements not to be found here? Any "reintegration" is such a displacement, and we understand fantastic literature as an ascension towards element, as if towards a form of subsistence in which things no longer rest beneath the precariousness of the real, but *are*. In any case, if the fantastic is not concerned with deconstruction and loss, as was sometimes the case in Romanticism and Surrealism, but imposes upon them a metaphysical responsibility, then they give their fantastic literary expression of a need to reconstruct things at archetypal levels. Perhaps science-fiction literature ought to be understood thus, in the world of the elements: the "other" world or cosmic rearrangements they invoke are so many new orders, in whose element people might or even will have to live. Ultimately, what does the novel do, as a literary genre? Thinking that they describe people and events, authors render or establish elements. When the French novelist speaks of being "in search of lost time", he is perhaps searching for the lost *element*.

While, in its way, literature recalls the world of the element, philosophy nevertheless continues to prepare for its rediscovery, be it even without direct invocation of the element. From Kant to Husserl, and perhaps Heidegger, it would be possible to trace tendencies to rediscover metaphysics in philosophical thought, not along lines of the finitude of man, as the later would want in the case of Kant, but through a characteristic orientation towards subjectivism understood as internal *medium*. Modern subjectivism (as well as the entire problematic of the Me) does not at all represent a restriction and blind immersion in the Me, except along the degraded line of the individualism of the nineteenth century. Just as the individual is no longer a simple individual – and precisely for this reason it can be invoked – the Me of modern thought is a novelty in comparison to Greek thinking, just as it is compared to Pascal's "le moi haïssable". With Kant's "Ich denke", as the Originary synthetic unity of apperception – upon which all critical philosophy is founded – or with Fichte's "I am I", which left any individual Me behind, modern thinking has imposed the primacy of the subjective, or of a subjectivity of such a nature as to be able to refer as far as the absolute. It is from Kant, with his transcendental, that this extraordinary conversion begins, turning "subject" into world. In Schelling, the absolute itself is subjectivity. In Hegel, the great instance, the Spirit, passes through the stages of subjective, objective and absolute in order to refashion itself in subjectivity. Finally, Hus-

serl roots everything within a "transcendental ego". However many re-actions such a primacy of the subjective has been able to provoke, it says something unusual, which seems also to have been reflected in the science of physics: that the subjective is interwoven with the objec-tive and that the subject *is* a world. What this means at an ontological level can be put simply: that the world is one of elements, not things; and that the human world is still one of elements and not individual consciousnesses.

<div align="center">§</div>

A definition of element may now be attempted: we thus name it as *any external medium that might become an internal medium.*

    The Indian king who demanded that carpets be strewn wherever he trod was shown by a wise man that it was better to put the carpets on his feet, in the form of shoes. The external medium thereby became, if not internal, then at least one that was intrinsic and entered into the element of civilisation. But there is an even more suggestive example, this time of veritable internalisation. It has been said that the blood of living creatures is the external medium of the nutritive seas after hav-ing entered the internal medium, which also moistens and nourishes the whole body, like the primordial seas, and even shapes and makes possible the body itself. Perhaps this assertion is not exact, but it is true: something from outside has to be transformed into an internal medium, in order for the living embodiment to take on Being.

    In this sense, the element is the "blood" of reality, as it is literally blood in the case of the reproduction of life, which gives "consanguine-ous" realities, as has been claimed, while at the level of the spirit, the element that is the blood nourishes and gives life in spirit. Thus, cul-ture, which initially represented the perfect external medium, with its universe of cognitions that had to be learnt and documents that had to be consulted, becomes, in the end, an internal medium, in the case of those implanted in it and who elevate themselves to its power. Or else, community, external and enveloping by means of fellow men and society's meanings for life, becomes internal for the one who can raise his being to its power and perhaps for any genuine human being, in accordance with the distinction that has been made between isolation, which is a detachment from the world without having a world, and loneliness, as a detachment from the world together with the world. Common laws, which are wholly external and constrain or even re-strict the individual person in all kinds of ways, may become internal

norms, just as the social code, as an external "it is or is not fitting", becomes subjective/objective moral conscience. Everything in the spiritual life has the same motion from external to internal medium (from substance to subject, as Hegel said). Only the genius proceeds in the opposite direction, in the end: he imposes an internal medium as the external medium for others. But he succeeds in doing so because he has made the external medium pass more profoundly into his interiority than others.

If, however, the external medium can pass into internal medium, and inversely in privileged cases, then this means that interiority and exteriority, subjectivity and objectivity, embodiment and element cannot be separated. The element represents all that is more deeply in the thing than the thing itself. The Platonic Idea and the Hegelian objective spirit steadfastly pass from without to within and it is *when* they thus vibrate that they have philosophical meaning. In this respect, it has seemed to us that the most unphilosophical thing is that which "cuts" and separates, like the scalpel of Aristotle, the son of a physician, by whom the Idea was separated from the real. And the most philosophical thing is that which brings about the internalisation of the external: we have elsewhere suggested, using an object that is also technical, like the scalpel, that it is the caterpillar track, respectively the tank, which transfers the exteriority of the road onto the vehicle and thereby attains that miraculous paradigm, worthy of the Chinese Tao, of the vehicle road and all.

With this defining criterion for element, the external converted into internal medium, it is possible to determine a beginning of order in the universe of the elements. We have enumerated physical, biological, spiritual and moral elements all together, broadening the sphere of element way beyond that which has usually been named thus. But the defining criterion also brings about a restriction, or in any case a clarification in content. This can primarily be seen in the elements of a physical order, which are spatial and genuinely create *external* media. Light, in its pure exteriority, can no longer be named an "element". Likewise, nor can the classic elements of Empedocles: earth, water, air, and fire. They are only external media, therefore not an element. Nevertheless, in Thales, water *was* an element, since it passed into the interiority of each thing, the same as Anaximenes' air and Heraclitus' fire. Even earth, the external medium in the highest sense, will also be able to be understood as an internal medium insofar as man, once

displaced into the cosmos, will have assumed within himself the prin-
cipal attributes of the Earth and its "earthliness". But at the level of
physics, electromagnetic waves, in their eventual concentration, must
be named elements, and only in this sense shall we be able to speak of
the element of matter.

For elements other than matter, which have no direct spatiality, no
exteriority, but rather an enveloping spatiality that is often unidenti-
fied and unrecognised, the difficulty is precisely to separate the ele-
ment from entities and objectivity from subjectivity (as Plato strove to
separate the Idea from things). In the case of Life, the separation can be
identified by any one at all, and life is otherwise the privileged example
for element. For, life is not a mere concept, just as the species of a living
thing is not the same as the concept of living thing. And life on earth
as a whole, or perhaps in other cosmic zones, has a subsistence, even if
not a consistency, as it is real without having the configuration of a real
aggregate. But for the element of reason, lacking in discernible reality
as it is, philosophy is indebted to bear witness. Philosophy might be
named the identification of reason as an element of the world.

Therefore, we shall claim that there are three original elements:
the fields of matter, life, and reason. The first element possesses sen-
sible reality. The second also possesses reality, but one indiscernible
as a whole, and otherwise only identifiable in the earthly variant. The
third, reason, also identified in a single variant, does not possess real-
ity, but an identity in self-realisation. If, under a cosmic rationality,
immanent laws are attributed also to matter, then the final element
revolves around the first, as well as the second. If, on the other hand,
an evolutionary concept is invoked, then the elements imply one an-
other, as they are all anchored in the final element, that of Being. But
what must be brought to light now is that each element specifies itself
in subordinate elements and that, in distinction to the first instance of
Being, which is becoming, its second instance, the element, shows that
Being *multiplies itself*. In the face of that *entia non sunt multiplicanda* of
mediaeval thought, we shall claim that, on the contrary, *entia* sunt *mul-
tiplicanda*, and this shows that they really are *entia* and not concepts.
Creativity is in the nature of Being.

This can be seen in human existence, where simple becoming will be
capable of transforming into becoming within Being, therefore where
the real is not only in the closest proximity with being (through utter-
ance, as Heidegger said), but is also most saturated by it. First instance

Being – becoming – unveiled the structure of Being but not its nature. Second instance Being, reveals it as it is – enhancing.

In this respect, the third element, reason, with the spiritual universe it brings about, provides the privileged image for secondary Being. Within the horizon of the spirit, everything enhances. But in order to enhance "in Being", it is necessary that something external should change into an internal medium. This is what Hegel's objective spirit does (the spirit of a language, of an epoch and culture, of a community, with all its elements – family, profession, customs, myths, archetypes). This is what the Platonic Idea sometimes does, when it remains an idea of spiritual values and senses, but not when it is an idea of *any given* thing, as it then risks falling into simple concept. This is what the moral elements do, for all their provisional status and contingency, as elements under whose envelopment other men appear to man, bringing mirroring, adversity, love, communication or collective enthusiasm, spiritual structures, *arkhai*. How can our sense of life not be reckoned an element if it envelops us as a medium external to us, at the beginning, and then transforms itself even more profoundly into our internal medium?

Of course, the latter elements, which we named moral, are quasi-elements, for they have only circumstantial subsistence. We might therefore say that there are original elements which have reality and permanence, if we accord permanence to material fields. That there are original elements, but lacking permanence (such as life, which might disappear and then reappear). That there are original elements beyond the problem of duration (such as reason, which might disappear with rational beings, but is, in itself, without duration); provisory elements, such as the meanings of historical communities; and quasi-elements, such as the moral elements in the immediately human space.

But while the elements can possess degrees of subsistence in time and reality, the strength of Being is everywhere. For, its strength is that of making a medium the "self" of a reality and thereby giving self to man and to the world.

32. The structure of the element

Being has appeared to us in two guises, as becoming and as element, just as – if the comparison can be allowed – appears in two guises, as body and as soul. Becoming is like the body of things; the element is their soul once they have arrived at becoming. But they will

be one, like body and soul in man, and that which unites them is the ontological model. The model produced becoming in things; the same model will provide the element *without things*.

With the element, the world has opened. Ontology no longer regards things, unfulfilled or at most fulfilled in becoming; it regards more inclusive units: media or breathings <*suflări*>, as they say in Romanian. And in contradistinction to things, which arose beneath the closure that opens, the element is an *opening* that closes (an external medium that has become internal). The closure of the element occurs, however, in becoming, and in its turn, becoming, which is within element, will penetrate and transform – just as the body transforms the soul – the way in which the element manifests itself. Prior to the combination of becoming and element, let us see what the element looks like independent of things.

In things, Being appeared only as a model, accordingly with a functional sense. As element, and accordingly as medium, it has a more than functional sense, one of real subsistence. Being now appears as a diffusion, or as a universe of phenomena and manifestations that can close their opening or else remain suspended above the world and in it. The model has taken on reality; the schema of Being has acquired subsistence. The element is thus the ontological model in its free subsistence before things, but pre-eminently in a model of determinations that bear the rest. It is not yet the ontological model *uncovered* in the Individual and its General, but the *covered* model, respectively the medium made up of Determinations generative of the Individual and General. Secondary Being has no guise properly speaking (an individuality) and this is why it is not directly perceptible. Nor is it law, and this is why it is not scientifically intelligible. It is the covering medium that can become the covered medium.

A number of examples have shown how free determinations subsist: as energy, which can become mass; as life, which can produce living things; as the spirit of a world, which can give examples of the latter; as speech, which can be enclosed in a language; as *logos* and rationality, which are enclosed in reason. But how the *entire* model freely subsists by means of the simple subsistence of determinations is shown by the fact that the latter imply and make possible the Individual and the General, that is, the entire model.

In the schematic image of the model up to now, the Individual received Determinations $(d_1, d_2 \ldots d_n)$, which were or were not able to

correspond with the determinations the General gave itself $(D_1, D_2 \ldots D_n)$. When the determinations of the one corresponded with those of the other, the model of Being was fulfilled and the real attained the first instance of Being, becoming (for, only that which has entered into order becomes; otherwise it is merely transformed). The schema in the first part was:

$$
I \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} d_1 \\ d_2 \\ \vdots \\ d_n \end{array} \right. \quad \text{taken up by:} \quad \left. \begin{array}{r} D1 \\ D_2 \\ \vdots \\ D_n \end{array} \right\} G
$$

It is not the Individual and the General that endow Determinations with the field or fields, but the free medium of Determinations common to the Individual and the General (here noted with a Δ) is that from which both the Individual and the General can be detached, however diversified they may be. The model is therefore whole, at the same time as the double reference of the Δ's.

MEDIUM
(Element)
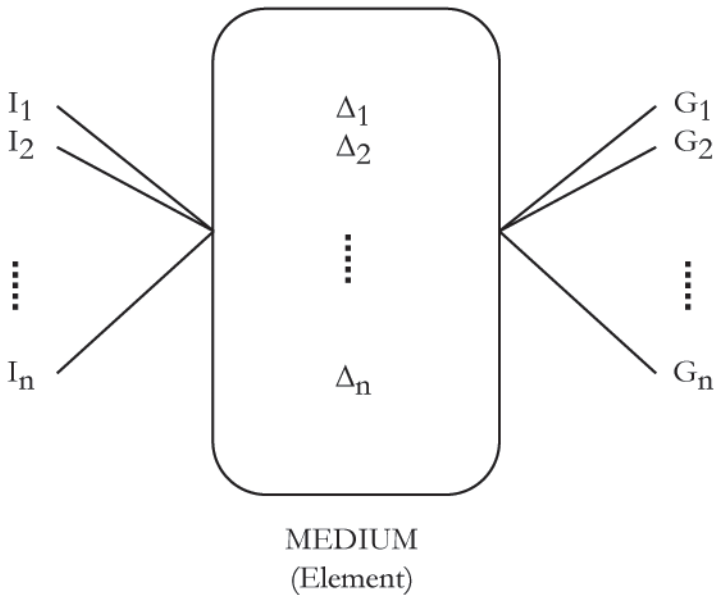
Naturally, the Individualia that detach themselves from element are realities in becoming, not punctual realities; the Generalia that detach themselves are genuine orders, not simple laws. But the ontological model maintains its structure; and we name element (concrete General) this world of Determinations established within a medium which, changing into internal medium, will also produce both individual realities and aggregate laws.

In order better to bring to light the meaning of a real element, qua second instance Being, it is enough to compare it with an artificial one. Man has brought into the world a simulacrum of second instance Being, with the element of technology and the technological medium he has created. It is, indeed, like an element, a universe of autonomous Determinations (of organised manifestations, systems, procedures, mechanisms) without anything individual, on the one hand, and without any general meaning, on the other. But precisely because the Determinations of technology are genuinely autonomous and artificial, *necessarily* unrelated to anything individual or any aggregate order, they represent an ontological untruth: a mutilated ontological model. Specifically, technology is not *generative*, unlike Being. In element, as an expression of secondary Being and of the "soul" of things, everything is doubly oriented, towards Individual and General. However, that which does not generate realities, or any aggregate order, "is" not.

It might nevertheless be thought that the element is the product of real things, insofar as the latter, with their internal medium, would establish the external medium: energy would be the sum of internal energies, life would be the totality of all living things, community would be the sum of all individual persons. But the internal medium is a *medium*, that is to say, it is from the outset much more than the individual specimen, just as the blood is much more, in living things, or the spirit of the community and of culture is, in man. Now, from the perspective of secondary Being, things are reversed: the element is not *made* by means of the works of the Individual and the General to which the Individual has been able to elevate itself, but rather it is *unmade* in them. Individual realities, like laws, are born and die, each on their own scale. Being alone, now as element, persists, beyond individual embodiments and laws. Compared to the individual person and laws, the Being of the element even seems eternal. Nevertheless, neither the elements in which it is made specific (such as life in species) nor the element itself (such as life itself in the cosmos) are eternal. Thus, even

at a second instance, Being persists only as long as Determinations can form a medium. When Determinations no longer hold together as a medium and can no longer generate Individualia and aggregate laws, secondary Being gives way to chaos. In chaos, not only do individual and law not appear but not even Determinations form. Nothing of the ontological model survives in chaos.

As an active medium, as a matrix in which singular realities appear and disappear without the medium being consumed (for, life is not exhausted through the extinction of singular creatures, and nor reason), the elements are something other than the "categories", even the historical and "stylistic" categories. The latter do not represent active media and do not, in themselves, have formative power; while those of the intellect are empty frameworks. Time and space – if we rank them as categories – are horizons of elements, as temporality and spatiality, not elements; and the other categories are only sometimes provisory modalities of secondary Being. The ontological function of the categories, on the basis of which Aristotle saw Being distributed in ten modalities, according to the ten categories, is adopted by elements. That Being which, according to Aristotle could be expressed in as many ways as there are categories was *spectral* Being. On the other hand, Being can be expressed in as many ways as there are *original* elements, just as functionally it can be expressed in an infinity of ways, according to the infinity (in the world of the spirit) of the elements. Even in the quasi-elements of man – in his sense of life, for example, or in the varied elements of the moral life – second instance Being has reality in act.

Otherwise, what kind of Being would it be, if at its heart nothing occurred? The model of Being *in things* seemed to close Being in a local fulfilment, but as an active medium of Determinations permanently generative of the Individual and General, it no longer leaves room for stable fulfilment and the statuary "is". With its second instance, Being likewise emerges from the condition of an eternal present. Parmenides' affirmation that "Being alone is" says, in its absolute sense, *too little*.

33. The workings and nature of the element

The workings of the element, as an external medium that can change into an internal medium, is that of distributing itself in however many internal media. But the element *distributes itself without dividing itself*.

The element is a unit of the world other than individual realities on the one hand, and laws, on the other. In the case of the former, it is not possible to speak of any self-distribution, while laws usually remain external and coercive for those situated in their "medium". Only when the law operates on the inside, for example inside individual consciousnesses in society, does it distribute itself indivisibly; and it is then that it has become an internal norm, that is, precisely an element.

In general, to rectify the first impression, not everything that is dispersed without changing is also distributed without being divided. Light, which falls equally, "on the righteous and the unrighteous alike", or the waves that disperse in every direction while preserving their frequency, wavelength and amplitude, are not really distributed or else possess no internal distribution. They remain an *external* medium (a thing is in the medium of light, not in the latter's element), just as at the spiritual level, culture often remains an external medium, distributing itself everywhere but not always becoming an internal medium. Only the concept, at its logical and abstract scale, is distributed without being divided, since logic is the spectrum or restoration to the spectrum of ontology, if it is capable of being something other than the exercise of empty exactitudes. And when Hegel made concept the hypostasis of the Spirit, which is distributed concretely without being divided and thereby the intrinsicality of things (we might say their "souls"), he transformed concept into the element of the world in the highest sense.

We have encountered the element *among* substance and function. While function is merely distributed, since it has no subsistence other than nominally, so that it cannot be a case of division or mutilation, a diminution of self; and while substance is merely divided, without being able to be distributed, and its division is, in fact, a diminution of self, a mutilation (according to that otherwise strange concept of "mutilation" in Book Four of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*), element is distributed without being divided, or, if one prefers: it is divided without being mutilated (diminished). Without the concept of "element", thinking falls, and has fallen, into the substance/function binary, which leads to the double blockage of ontology: ancient ontology in the substantial wholeness of Being, modern ontology in its functional emptiness. Nowhere does there appear a concrete indivisible distribution.

This character of something that is indivisibly distributed is easily shown in the case of "goods" (as the problem of good is not, perhaps,

alien to that of Being, insofar as Being might be understood as the supreme good, in the sense of *ens et bonum convertuntur*). A material good is divided in being distributed, as a rule: a loaf of bread is divided, the land is divided in order to be worked, industrial goods are divided. But then, if they remain distinct units even when divided, they are divided among themselves to those to whom they are due, as they are only able to be due *either* to one or another. Money is that which is divided in the highest sense (it has "sub-divisions"), like that which divides or separates possessors among themselves. All things are consumer goods. But there are also *summation* goods, which are not divisible and do not divide their possessors among themselves. Whereas a loaf of bread is distributed through division, a song or a truth are distributed without being divided.

All spiritual goods are of this type, but not only. For, matter itself is, at *bottom*, of the same nature as the goods that are distributed without being divided, as it appeared as energy and fields, or as it then appeared as life. The element, with its indivisible distribution, descends as far as the ultimate level of reality – the same as the concept descends, in Hegel, as far as the ultimate aspect of nature – allowing Being, as secondary Being, not to be suspended above the world, nor even its external medium, with its intrinsicality.

Although indivisible in distribution, the element is not individuated: it has no outline or any kind of consistency, although it is or possesses subsistence. Individuation appears only in the meaning of the elements. In spite of the fact that these elements are not pure generality, with no form of specificity, they have a *particular* subsistence, just as certain concepts that reflect them are particular, without having any individualisation. Rather, it would be possible to speak about an *individual* sense of the universal whole, not about a sense of the "elements" it comprises. And insofar as the individual does not of itself have Being, while the elements are Being in its secondary variant, we shall arrive at the assertion, strange only in appearance, that the universe as a whole might not "be" (might be chaos), while the elements it comprises have ontological truth and *are*.

Qua particular substance, albeit one without consistence, the element might still be viewed as a whole. But it is a whole without parts. (A living reality is not a "part" of life, just as a language is not a part of the *logos*.) Neither the stable outline nor fluidity express its nature, when it is a case of material element (such as energy), and when spir-

itual elements are at stake, they can be represented rather as Platonic Ideas: formless forms. In its dispersion or diffusion, the element, without parts as it is, preserves a qualitative unity, only in this sense being a "whole".

In broad terms, the unity of a typical whole can be of three kinds:

- The unity of a plurality, when it is a case of homogenous parts;
- The unity of a diversity, when the parts are heterogeneous but have convergence;
- Unity pure and simple, which nevertheless (as has been proven in the case of sub-atomic particles) can decompose into parts from which it was never constituted.

But there is a *fourth* type of unity, precisely that of the element. While the first two types of unity are in fact "unifications", the third, with all its novelty in the history of thought (since it comes to change the simplistic but classic meaning of "analysis" and "synthesis") is close to the idea of the multiple-One, which has always been conceived by speculative reflection. But is this object that decomposes into parts non-constitutive of itself really a multiple-One? It releases the multiple violently (with the bombardment of particles), not from itself. It is a perfect unity, without any multiplicity in it, and when it decomposes it is perfect multiplicity without unity. It might represent an illustration of the One *and* the Multiple, but not of the multiple-One of philosophy.

The element, on the other hand, genuinely has the character of the multiple-One. Its qualitative unity is preserved in however many distributions (with its simulacrum of Being, technology does the same: it produces however many objects in the "element" of an invention). And just as quality appeared to us at the *logical* level, in the "Excursus on Limitation", as a prime example of the limitation that does not limit, the element qua concrete general is, at the *ontological* level, the prime example for the One that can be numbered, that is, becomes "countless". Unity of this fourth type, the unity of the element, ultimately unifies all the other types of unity. It is also the unity of homogenes (since, for example, all living beings have the *same* life); and of diversities (since the same life is in different living things); and of the decomposable uncomposed (since living things have not created life, which is nevertheless distributed in them). Or, in other words, the life-element is at the same time a One of homogenes, as it is the same in all that is alive. It is a One of heterogenes, as it integrates in itself, in the form of

the active medium, the different determinations of the living; a non-decomposable One, but present, through its distribution into parts that have not constituted it.

Distributed but without division, generative of embodiments, but without embodiment, formative of the real as well as the formal, but lacking form and the formality of law, sometimes hyletic, at other times noetic, the elements have no fixity in space and time. They make their own spatiality and temporality, as active media, but they do so for realities and laws that arise at their heart, not for themselves. The same as there were wholes without parts, the elements are non-spatial spatialities (what could the space of life be?) and atemporal temporalities. If, in the last respect, they possess eternity compared to individual realities and even general orders arising at their heart, then what, on the other hand, is eternal in them? With a different organisation of matter or of the spirit, they might disappear as such; with the passage of the world into chaos, Being in itself would disappear. And nevertheless, the elements and Being itself – if there is any meaning beyond them – are not alien to eternity. It might be said that they are in aeviternity, as the mediaeval expression for secular existence put it, if the Being upon which all things depend were not that in which eternity, time and aeviternity made sense and dissolved their sense.

34. The relations between the elements

The elements' subsistence without consistency enables them to interpenetrate one another, in contrast to the traditional "entities". While what they have in common with the latter is the capacity to increase numerically, what they have in common with the categories is the formative capacity.

Thus, the elements do not only co-exist: they interpenetrate, they intersect, they form and bundle together, but at the same time, they are subordinated. Hence results their double co-existence, one that is in profundity, through subordination and inter-penetration, another that is enveloped, in concentration.

In the *real*, secondary Being is a "bundling" of elements, to put it more loosely. Nothing is within a single element, but within a bundling of elements. Becoming, obtained together with first instance Being, occurs at the heart of an element, respectively at the heart of a bundling of elements.

In its more profound Being (more profound than becoming), the real is n-dimensional: an intersection of elements regarded as dimensions of it. When it "gives up the ghost", the real does not reveal a single element, but rather a multiplicity bundled within it.

But the higher, spiritual realities tend to dissolve into a unique element, or to create a new one, also unique.

The things at the heart of the real did not interpenetrate; they were impenetrable. The tree remains a tree, the horse a horse. Likewise, "entities" do not interpenetrate. At most, they become equivalent, as mediaeval thought said of *ens, bonum et verum*, or ancient thinking about *bonum et pulchrum*. On the other hand, the elements interpenetrate. If we think of the primordial elements, life interpenetrates with energy, and the spirit with both. Or else, for the elements of the objective spirit: the spirit of a language interpenetrates with that of a people and with that of a historic epoch, with that of the level of civilisation and relations of production, just as it interpenetrates with the spirit of other languages.

It may, for a moment, have seemed that the "elements" revive the mediaeval entities. But the latter are abstract, while the elements are concrete; the entities are static, the elements active and productive; the entities depend on essence, the elements on existence. The latter always create a medium an *oikumenê*, a world, while the entities are suspended above world. In the final instance, the distinction is that the entities have the rigidity and the isolation of the subject (not only the ultimate entities, such as *ens, verum, bonum, pulchrum*, but also the mediaeval personifications, specifically those in *Le Roman de la rose*: Jealousy, Friendship, Hospitality etc.). The entities are thus subjective, while the elements, preserving their substantiality, nonetheless have an attributive and predicative character.

In the latter sense, they will resemble the categories, with their functional character, and like them will be able to enter into formation, proving once more that, in general, a third modality between substance and function needs to be conceived, and that this third modality, with simultaneously substantial and functional characters, is that which genuinely acquires ontological significance, beyond the unilateral ontology – be it monist (Spinoza), be it pluralist (Leibniz) – of substance. With the elements, something is preserved from the meaning of Empedocles' thinking about Love and Strife, as "materials" of the world. A certain materiality, a reality or real substance with an

active and functional character, clearly distinguishes the element from abstract entity and category, on the one hand, and from overly abstract and allegedly real substance, on the other, as well as from overly indeterminate and allegedly formal function.

If, however, the element is distinct from entity in that, like category, it can enter into composition, it resembles entity in that it can be in proliferation. From the outset, the elements did not appear as numbered, unlike the categories. They can arise in the world of nature at any moment (did not "cerebrality" represent a new element when it was obtained by living being?), and do not cease to appear in the world of the spirit. In human exceptionality (which ought to be its rule), a man who has not ended up by having a dram of genius, by being an "element" for others, that is, a meaning for life, a specific value, a human tonality, a human prototype, has not genuinely lived. For, the spirit defines itself, not so much through its objectifications in products, but through its power to irradiate and shape, that is, through the element that stirs it to life. Genuine human beings are much more than a work, they become a life-principle. The elements of the world increase, together with its becoming and historical becoming. In their abstraction, entities also increased; and the mediaeval warning for existent realities, that *entia non sunt multiplicanda*, opposed the fact that abstract entities endlessly multiplied themselves.

This problem of the composition or blending of Ideas, as Plato said, is essential, both logically and ontologically. If the Ideas did not compose and did not remain isolated from substantives, it would not be possible to say anything about them, or at most, one single thing might be said about one single thing. Equally, in ontological terms, if they did not compose, the world would be one of statues, not of living realities in becoming. Therefore, contrary to "Parmenides the father", Plato says that we must admit that the Ideas modulate, emerging from their isolation and combining with others. He demonstrates this in *The Sophist* for the five fundamental ideas: Being, state, movement, identity, alterity.

It would seem that, in *The Sophist*, we have a first historical suggestion for the inter-penetration of the elements. But in fact, with the five Platonic ideas, it may still be a question of genuine elements. If the elements are of the order of Palto's Ideas, it does not mean that every Platonic Idea is an element. Among the five in *The Sophist*, with the exception of Being, which is the ultimate element, the other four

are in fact simple *categorial* entities, which, precisely for this reason, naturally enter into composition. Formally, they too are substantives, but a special kind of substantive, namely verbal ("state", "movement", identity, that is, the fact of *remaining* the same, activity = the fact of *changing* into something else). This is why we name them categorial or predicative entities, which in their verbal nature do not usually explain anything substantial, as it is impossible to speak of the "element of movement" or that of "standing still". Likewise, other Ideas, such as "likeness" in the *Parmenides* or equal and unequal in the *Phaedo*, are not genuine elements, but this time, rather relational Ideas. For the mixture of Ideas in Plato, as a combination of elements, there are illustrations other than those in *The Sophist* – even if the ancient thinker does not present them as mixtures. Namely, examples from the rank of the *moral* elements that he especially comments upon: friendship, investigated in one dialogue, can combine with piety, investigated in another (it too susceptible of becoming an "element", as has always been proven with pietism, literally in the protestant case). Just as it combines with the value of wisdom, it too is susceptible of becoming a life-meaning, or with any other moral value. But the bundling of elements occurs not only in the moral being of man, but also in his psycho-physical being – the same as occurs in all the rest of the real.

This bundling concentration integrates with one of subordination of elements, in which case inter-penetration becomes an integration by stages, as in Porphyry's tree, where one species subordinates another. For example, the element of life subordinates that of vegetativity and animality, with their sub-elements. Likewise, in the world of the spirit or the moral world, sub-ordinations of elements (such as the element of culture, which subordinates the element of self-cognition, which in its turn subordinates the element of life-meaning) are just as natural as their concentrations. Specified in elements, Being allows them to bundle together and order themselves, just as they might betray, on their level, the tendency to rediscover the unity from which they have separated.

Second instance Being thus appears in the real as a bundling of elements. If, in its model, that is, in essence, Being proved not to be unitary and homogenous, but heterogeneous, now, in its *existence*, it proves to be multiple. This is how it indeed appears at the deeper ontological level of the real. When the real enters into order by satisfying the model, it obtains becoming, as a first instance of Being; and

becoming could not occur except inside the element, which had functioned as the General adequate to the respective Individual and which offered it its horizon for manifestation. But the element at stake is not isolated. Let us take the case of the man who, by elevating himself to the level of a general meaning, has thereby entered into order and becoming. Within what does he become? Within that sense, naturally, and within his horizon. However, his element (since the life-meaning has become an active medium, a reality, a material stronger than the life of the individual person, which it models) is bundled not only together with lower, psycho-physical elements, but also with numerous other spiritual elements: with the objective spirit of a community, with the historical level of a period, with the genius of a language by means of which the life-meaning formulates itself and seeks self-consistency, with the element of the human person. *This* bundle of elements now represents the Being of the real, in such a way that nothing is left to assert itself ontologically within a single element; every reality is caught up within a complex.

At the first level, with its functional image, Being was becoming and as such simple. Now, with its substantial image, at the level of secondary Being, it is multiple, with its integuments of enfolded elements, just as atoms have been represented with their orbits, fields, nebulae, integuments of electrons around a nucleus. Except that while the physical nucleus has a reality that is in effect central, the uncertain and vanishing Individual, which might seem to be the centre of the bundling of elements, possesses a simple centrality without nuclearity, and Being itself, with its integuments, is more like the above-mentioned reality, whose periphery is everywhere and centre nowhere.

Nevertheless, although it may be a vanishing or a mere "scission" in the continuum of Being in itself, the given real will, for a moment, be the bearer of Being or its concentrations. The mediaeval thesis regarding the *individuum ineffabile* is perhaps meaningless. On the contrary, the entire problematic of Being as well as of all cognition of the General tends to determine and fixate precisely the individual real. As a place of intersection for the elements, which creates for it, as a kind of dimensionality, an *ontological space*, the real is n-dimensional.

We have seen in the case of Porphyry's "voices" how they could be understood as forming a five-dimensional *logical* space, by means of which the Individual might be determined with exactitude. Every reality defined and localised itself with precision by means of its genus,

species, difference, proper character and accidental character. But also in the service of the individual real, or of primary substance, as Aristotle names it, stand his categories, which would now create a ten-dimensional logical space. Indeed, primary substance is determined by means of secondary substance (genus and species), whose specimen it is, as well as by its determinations, quantity, quality, relation, temporality, spatiality, position, action, passivity and possession.

We have named logical space both that of Porphyry and that of Aristotle proper. However, inasmuch as the individual real would here be Being (with the nominalist aspect of Aristotelian thinking, it might be said that they are not just logical but also *ontological* spaces). In fact, however, Aristotle does not remain a nominalist, but leaves room for a Being of another order, with the "substantial forms", even positing the problem of Being qua Being. Let us preserve, therefore, the sense of logical space for the ancient schemata and name ontological space that which opens onto secondary Being, as occurs in the present case of elements concentrated into a subject of reality. On this occasion, the precise determination of the subject of reality – merely a place of intersection as it is – proposes itself as only *one* of the problems of ontology. One might ask, indeed, what a subject of reality is at bottom, upon what elements it depends, in a word, what ontological focalisation occurs in this point of reality, in order to provide it with the status of Being it has. But one might also ask what occurs, by means of this composition of the elements, in Being itself, not just in the immediate real.

Through the concentration and above all the subordination of the elements, Being gives itself different *densities*. One may see, for example, through what elemental subordinations and compositions the element of a matrix is constituted, by natural or historical existence. Something *happens* in Being itself. If the ontological exploration of the real cannot be achieved except by setting out from above, from elements, the exploration of the elements and of Being itself is not, on the other hand, to be undertaken except in the æther of speculation, but rather by setting our from below, from the real in which Being is wrapped. This is why ontology needs to be able to know how to read not only how much Being there is in the present existence of things but also what wrapping of Being is released, together with their "soul".

Things *are* by means of a concurrence of elements and decompose into these elements. In the Book of Death, it is possible to read as

many as in that of Life. But Being in itself is not truer in the concentration and concurrence of elements than it would be in the duration of just one alone and in its affirmation. This is apparent from the way in which, at a higher level of the real, in particular at the level of the spirit, one or another element takes precedence among the others, in the affirmation of Being itself.

In the history of the world, it is striking what precedence has been taken by the element of life, which initially appeared in isolation, through the confrontation and combination of elements given by the physical-chemical fields, only then to disperse over the entire earth and, with its ontological promise, to take control of the other elements, seemingly assuming responsibility, as far as man, for all the headings of Being in its terrestrial variant.

As man, Being discovers its appropriate instrument, in such a way that a thinker such as Heidegger was able to say that human language is the shepherd of Being. The social, moral and spiritual life of man leads to a proliferation of the elements, each at the level of the respective regional ontology, while culture represents a veritable demographic explosion as regards the elements (climates, historical media, ideatic structures), but one which does not at all threaten the life of the spirit with overpopulation.

And nevertheless, in spite of the wealth of the elements, it is precisely in man that one or another spiritual element might become predominant, with higher communities and specimens tending to fulfil themselves beneath the becoming of a *single* element (a single shaping "idea"), which more often than not represents the novelty of historical being.

Just as nature led to the element of life, humanity as a whole has concentrated its ontological endowment and capacity in the *element of rationality*. From the perspective of the historical period in which we live, the predominance of this element does not always seem to bear with it the goodness of Being. But from the ontological perspective, it expresses the *truth*, and it must always be reckoned of the truth that it ends up by being good. Otherwise, as humans, we would not be shepherds of Being, but falsifiers of it.

35. What a world of elements looks like

If realities are the point of intersection for a fascicle of elements, or else they can appear as simple scission in the continuum of an element,

then Being is no longer to be sought in the punctuality or even in the emptiness of things. It is to be sought in element and in the world of elements, as within a plenitude, not one initially identified.

But thereby, the entire problem has shifted (with Part II) from the immediate real into something more intrinsic, not at all distant or transcendent. Access to Being, pursued, as a rule, exclusively through the intelligible as opposed to the sensible, is obtained rather by means of an expanded sensibility (which will not be opposed to reason, as it was opposed to the intellect), as well as by means of the perception of wholes and by means of the immersion within a primordial order, simultaneously real and laden with possibility. In the universe of individuation in which we find ourselves, the world of the elements comes to represent itself as one that is elementary, in the literal sense.

But what then does a world of the elements look like? Is it not somehow a world more degraded than that of things?

By means of the element, we have rediscovered the primordial. Being can be sought only in the primordial, since it has been proven not to be "beyond". While at the beginning they detached themselves as distinct units and entities, things now tend to recreate, at another level, something of the order of the "primordial indistinction". The poverty of lowly creation, of the animal or the mineral, is not that of not having individual outline, but rather that of not being able to transcend it, once attained; it does not reintegrate itself without total disintegration. In the case of man, on the other hand, the striving and potential for reintegration in an ontological modality other than the strictly individual clearly appears at every level – with the consciousness that opens towards world, with the Me that enlarges itself towards a more inclusive self, with love, with reason. Mere communication is a beginning of communion. In the secondary solidarity into which the existent, fulfilled as existent, tends to enter, everything becomes one again.

Into what kind of "one"? As a form of One, more than of mere unity or unification. The distinction between One and unity is well known: the One is devoid of potential repetition, while unity repeats itself. (In the *Parmenides*, Plato could not speak of units and multiples, since in itself unity multiplies itself; he spoke of One and multiple.) But if the One allows or even leads to the formation of distinct units, their reintegration into One will have to modify its nature. Just as the life prior to the production of the units of life, that is, of living creatures, is not the same as the mature modality of life in which these units

reintegrate themselves or can be reintegrated; just as the Word prior to the formation of languages is not the same as that which envelops achieved languages, none of the element's forms of being is to be exactly rediscovered in its original. The latter will also become a *secondary* original. The General, Individual and Determinations become one again, but in a One that is now differentiated. And the "element", which was the General for the distinct Individual and distinct Determinations, must now end up being now General, then Determinations, then Individual.

Let us take an example. Communication with a being from the cosmos means, for us: *firstly*, the possibility of communication, the *logos*, the pure generality of rational expression; *then*, it means a particular code, the individuality of that logos; and *finally* it will be or will be capable of being, with language in act, the Determinations of that code, depending on the dialogue engaged in. We shall thereby "regress" linguistically towards the primordial, entering into a relationship of *elementary* communication and communion, in which we shall have to provide ourselves with an alphabet and christen concepts, realities, well known and named processes anew. But this regress will not lead us to the primitivism of speech, since the linguistic "element" here is clearly one that is secondary. We shall thereby have rediscovered the element of speech (of communication and communion together) *with* the entire experience of the natural languages, of the scientific languages and of the concepts that have arisen, as so many distinct units in the matrix of speech. In *this* sense, we may say that the elements restore the primordial.

The experience of the forced rediscovery of the element as regards the *logos*/language, under the demands of eventual contact from outer space, is in fact the unconfessed experience of languages – themselves an element, an objective spirit – when they rise, on the scale of their spiritual existence, to the more inclusive element of the *logos* itself. For, each natural way of communication and communion might tend to become, in its development, the primordial communication and communion itself. But the same example of the reintegration of speech within an "elementary" situation seems to us illustrative also for the elevation of any reality to element. The same as the "objective spirit" of Hegel (for example, the spirit of the family, of a community, of a culture and religion), which arises in his *Phenomenology* after consciousness and then self-consciousness and reason have manifested

themselves, but in fact – as Hegel says – preceded them, since they all exerted themselves at the heart of the spirit, likewise in the present case, the element precedes and enables the realities that tend towards it. For, the element is more real than its entities or avatars. To rise to element as to a stage towards Being may thereby appear as a mere rediscovery of the primordial. Indeed, for man, at first sight, the world of the elements appears closer to the animal than the human world, as overflowing with *distinct* realities as the latter is. And it is in effect a matter of rediscovering an "animal" condition, but *at a human level*. We have invoked the potential rediscovery of the element of speech qua element. It was one of a spiritual order. But it too bore upon our animality (sensibility), with the sound wave or the written word. In any case, tomorrow, everything might be transformed into speech or communication by means of captive emanations from the cerebral cortex. If, however, instead of this element of a spiritual order, we directly invoked the perception of material elements for the elevation to Being – as man's potential to perceive new types of waves, or to live in the element of other ponderabilities – then the need to refine human sensibility would be evident. With these "elements" which one may sometimes perceive as fluids or emanations, the consciousness would find itself in a universe of odours or one full of chemical messengers, as biology has named them. Subsistences of a vaster order would then have taken the place of individual subsistences. The male insect is called over vast distances by the female using chemical messengers, in the contents of the "element" that constitutes their species. But even the cosmic object launched into space, even the cosmonaut, who in principle might possess rational independence, are constantly controlled and guided by signals, within the artificial element, that is, within the active medium man has created, deliberately finding a new level of reality. The thought, on the other hand, that rationally controlled human society leads to a superior form of animality, of an ant-heap or bee hive type, is legitimate, but naturally not in its condamnatory sense. For, if spiritual as well as natural realities rest beneath the action of the elements and not of individual agents, it was natural that in his artificial attainments too man would elevate himself to secondary order realities, beneath the tyranny of which the animal lives and in the *freedom* of which man might situate himself.

　　Perhaps in the world of tomorrow, whether it be one that is cosmic or one that is an "aggregation of consciousnesses", as Teilhard de Char-

din imagines, it is not supplementary soul that man will require, according to Bergson, but supplementary sensibility, respectively *supplementary body* and positive animality, which in the final instance would also give us supplementary soul.

But the "elementariness" of a world of elements is not necessarily animalic, its only perception reminiscent of animal perception. The elementary is also purely human, if we think that the spiritual and mental experience of man occurs in fact among elements, not things. The child does not perceive an individual being in its mother, but rather maternity. But also the friend sees in the other rather friendship, the man of culture the element of culture, just as the criminal sees in the accuser the element of civic justice. Such a direct experience of realities of *another* order dominates the life of the consciousness, and it awakens a *sentiment* of existence prior to being a consciousness, which in most cases it never becomes. And because the experience of the elements is not conscious, this experience, which is nevertheless a stage towards Being, represents at the first moment a form of obscuration rather than revelation. Before they are logical, relationships with the world of elements may be instinctual, intuitive and irrational. The usual vision of man had removed him from the elementary, in favour of a differentiated world, so that any return now disquiets him. But the more profound idea shows that the encounter with the elements is not a regression to the instinctual, and not a submersion in the irrational, and not at all a mystical experience, but rather a positive regress towards the primordial, which the consciousness has to undertake in its aspiration towards Being. If piety in the face of the immediate real could open a way towards Being (as was demonstrated in the first part of this work), piety in the face of the elements is an appropriate school for it.

Everything aspires towards Being (as is expressed by the law and instinct of conservation, blind Will, the instinct for power and, best of all, the ancient "every thing tends towards its good"). But the path towards Being leads through the elements, and the encounter with the world of the elements nevertheless has a regressive character. To man, every reintegration seems, at the beginning, a dissolution, for example, of the person. Can this be progress towards Being?

Not only is it progress towards Being, but it is *progress* pure and simple. In its more profound sense, the formula "progress towards Being" is tautological. Any progress is towards additional Being and perhaps

ontology alone is apt to give a full meaning to the expression "progress", which in the usual sense has no sure determination: progress towards what? Within what? But even at the elementary biological stage, the infant "grows", fulfilling, "actualising", in the Aristotelian sense, the Being in it. And the youth progresses in knowledge, that is, in his human and spiritual being, just as the sportsman progresses by entering "into form" (an admirable expression, unknown to ontology), that is, attaining the plenitude of his bodily being. So too moral progress, scientific progress, the progress of civilisation, the progress of communities and humanity are – the same as in animate or inanimate nature – stages of affirmation of their own being and of consolidation in Being pure and simple. Distributed everywhere, Being qua element places everything in form, actuality and plenitude, and this process, perceived by man outside himself and with his own being, has been named progress. Except that the rediscovery of the element given that it is progress always has a character of regress towards an origin.

Such a regressive aspect, initially hard to accept, has nonetheless been consistently been perceived, albeit not without surprise, in the history of culture. Any progress – apart from technical progress, which has the character of artificial invention – has been capable of seeming at the beginning a reprehensible simplification. Mythological thinking was, by definition, ineffably more subtle than the Presocratics. The pagan religions, as their enlightened contemporaries sensed, with Julian the Apostate at their head, were much richer in meanings and answers than the early Christian religion. Later, the Aristotelian explanations were more complex and wiser than the far too worn method or "simple natures" of Descartes. Today, however, at a time when so many truths of the pre-modern world have been demystified, any one can feel this as progress. It might even be said, if the schema of simplification is valid, that we are – beyond the "progress" of technology – on the threshold of a huge human progress, with the rediscovery of the elementary which we have attained, even if, perhaps, not every return to the elementary is necessarily progress. But the Presocratics indeed brought about a progress, when they proposed the elementary, with their literal "elements", in place of the luxuriance of myths. Christianity did the same, in history, when it situated everything in the simple element of love, or later, at another level, Cartesianism, when it rethought everything through the element and in the medium of the mechanism.

With a single new element, or otherwise with the preponderance of one element among those structured in the real, nature and man enter into progress. "Simplification" is simultaneously real and apparent. Compared to the complexity in which they had become blocked, before entering into progress, the realities, rooted in more and more richly dimensioned "spaces," everything indeed becomes simpler. But just as in scientific knowledge, the reduction of an integrative explanatory principle (such as the reduction of physical phenomena to the element of electromagnetic fields) does not have the degraded meaning of simplification, likewise no transition of a reality from a regimen of paralysing complexity into the regimen of integration of *an* element can be a lowering of level. Everything ascends by regressing.

This means, in school terms: the transcendence of Being makes way for its transcendental. From Kant onwards, when the mediaeval term "transcendental" no longer corresponded with that which is beyond realities but expressed what is hither of them, revealing their foundations and the way in which they are possible, progress at every level has proven its solidarity with one or other specific form of regression. The philosophical transcendental itself made German idealism possible and with it Marxism, then phenomenology and Heidegger's fundamental ontology. The deepening of foundations in mathematical analysis, then of axioms in axiomatics and finally the theory of sets (of that simple and even simplistic notion of set) renewed mathematics. Likewise, the investigation of the atom and its particles renewed physics, genetics, biology, and the perspective of history, that is, literal regression, renewed the humanities. But culture and the life of the spirit only cause the ways towards Being to be reflected. For, indeed, what would culture mean if it were not, with its demographic explosion as regards elements, the aggregate of modalities for access to Being attempted by man?

This is why man has attempted by any means to gain access to Being: with the ultimate principles of knowledge, with all-integrating scientific laws, with artistic or religious ecstasy, he has always experienced the encounter with Being, or its illusion, as the self-rediscovery of the spirit in a primordial medium of the order of light. Perhaps folklore has described this reintegration most suggestively, when it imagined that in Heaven there will be neither pain, nor love, nor speech, nor time, but everything will be " a day".

But the rediscovery is not of a simple external medium, such as light, but of an external medium that may become internal. This is why all the "encounters" with Being, specific to the laws of integration or ecstasy, have not brought about ontological foundations, but have remained simple *discourses* about the encounter with Being.

36. The categories of the element

The elevation to Being through elements must bring to light other categories of reality, or about reality, other than the classic categories. The latter regarded given things: they were the predicates of nature in general in Plato (the *Sophist*), of inanimate and animate nature in Aristotle, of nature reflected and framed by the consciousness in Kant.

A reality of a different order than things, the element retains only a few of the old categories, otherwise conceived. In any case, the category that seemed to be of maximal generality, that of the "thing", has no meaning for element from the very start.

In fact, a single genuinely new category will be sufficient in order to provide the measure of the reality changed in comparison to things: the category of the *multiple One*, on the basis of indivisible distribution. It expresses the nature of Being, as well as of any element in which it specifies itself, to distribute itself – in contrast to things – without being divided. Although the theme of the multiple One may have always been invoked by traditional thought, it was lacking in any concrete criterion, thereby being situated too high, like Being in itself, instead of being encountered everywhere, with the elements.

Something is always "said" of any thing; things have possible predicates. In a traditional sense – and this has remained the utilisable sense – the most general thing said of things is named a "category", thus the class or broadest classes of possible predicates. This is why from the outset the category was named, in scholastic terms: *predicament*.

While the predicate may devolve upon a singular thing or phenomenon, the predicament regards a *domain* of things. For any domain investigated categories can be detached or established. This is what modern thought has done, which has spoken about categories in the investigation of nature and society, or about grammatical, stylistic, aesthetic and ethical categories. The idea of category has been expanded overly much, since almost nowhere has it been possible any longer to provide – as in traditional philosophy – the *concluded* system of the

categories. But in itself, the idea of category has not been invalidated. It has remained to express the largest class of possible predicates in a given domain.

Except that in traditional thinking, the categories did not regard a given domain, but the aggregate of real things. (Everywhere, in any domain, unity, plurality or causality can be invoked.) This is also why their traditional table is concluded, and the distinction between the three variants we have signalled, the Platonic, Aristotelian and Kantian, can, of course, be explained by means of the perspective from which the categories were established: in Plato, with state, movement, identity and alterity, the physical aspect was categorially fixed with the first two, that of internal chemistry with the last two (all things have identity and alterity, with things thus being viewed from the perspective of general states, as kinds of inorganic realities). – In Aristotle, it is not general states but the real situations in which things are rooted that gave the categorial perspective, with real situations being those in which the real subject is necessarily located, that is, the primary substance (any primary substance or individual reality has quantity, quality and relations, temporality, spatiality and position, action, sufferance and endowment), which causes there to be only *nine* categories, since primary substance cannot be predicated of anything but rather everything is predicated of it; or at most ten categories, with *secondary* substance. – Lastly, Kant's table also refers to things, not to their general states, or their concrete situations, but to the way in which they are framed and "categorised" by the intellect.

Therefore, the traditional categories indicate: what is said of things in general, what is said in particular, what is said of them in a reflected form.

From the start, it may be seen for what reason the categories of things cannot be referred exactly to the elements: the latter are not things. The concept of thing, with its meaning that is so lax that its seems no longer to have a content but only a sphere, nevertheless possesses a few distinctive notes: the note of unity (a thing has a unity), the note of limitation (a thing is nothing except what it is), of impenetrability (it does not interpenetrate with other things), the note of particularity (in distinction to the universal), of abstraction (in distinction to concrete generality). The element cannot be named a "thing" and, indeed, it is not a question of energy, or life, or reason, as in the "things" of the world. The element possesses uniqueness and is

One, not at all a unity; the element has limits that do not limit, with one element capable of being all. On the other hand, compared to the rigidity and unreceptive consistency of the thing, which causes it to have only "contacts" with other things, the element has a fluidity by means of which it can fuse and compound with other elements. Or else, while the thing as such brings about the fixation of an element, if not the bundling of a number of them in a particular case, the element preserves its universality. Except that a "thing" is in fact an abstract generality, while the element is one of an always concrete generality.

Since they are not things, elements form a different kind of universe, which nonetheless is not "somewhere else", or alien to things. The aberrant meaning given to the Platonic Ideas, facilitated, unfortunately, by the language of Plato himself, namely that of representing "another" world", superimposed upon this world, does not at all affect the element. The perspective of things is not also that of the elements, and the categories of the one are not those of the other.

Plato demanded other eyes in order to see the Idea. Is there not a requirement for other eyes in order to perceive the elements? Not at all, when it is a case of the material elements, and perhaps not even always for the spiritual elements, since in both cases the principal character for the identification of the elements is the possibility that they may be distributed without being divided. And this is *visible* even when it is a case of the spirit. Any spiritual good, ending up in a truth, is distributed to all while remaining what it is. We directly perceive, with common sensibility, that such goods do not disintegrate but rather, preserving themselves in their giving of themselves, unite together and include those who consume them and who do not exclusively possess them, nor abolish them through consumption. All moral reformers have preached in favour of the goods of inclusion, without giving them the metaphysical investiture of "elements". While they have not durably imposed them, humans have nevertheless *identified* them as goods and values in the real.

But what "has been said" about such realities and values which are distributed without being divided? Accordingly, what is the "category" under which they have been ordered? Although it may not have been said outright, it has been self-evident: they are always a *multiple* One. It may be curious that the idea of the multiple One, which occurs as early as the Presocratics and dominates, at least as an aspiration (in the case of "intellectual intuition", for example), all philosophical thought,

did not become a category of reality. But for as long as the element was not perceived as such (but only in its manifestations, apparently of exception and excellence), the theme of the multiple One remained an "ideal", at once moral and cognitive. However, from the moment one identifies the element at the heart of reality, one also establishes its category, transforming an exception into a unit of thinking and reality, that is, into a category.

In the horizon of the multiple One, there arise from the start two categorial *aspects*, which perhaps do not deserve to be elevated to the rank of categories, but must be mentioned, precisely in order better to throw into relief the category of the multiple One.

The first categorial aspect is that of *situation*. Situation (recalling the unrecked category of "position" in the Aristotelian table, but expressing much more than external position, the same as there) is the general condition of reality, at the moment the object as such loses its autonomy and even consistency. It is no longer possible to speak of an object – it has been claimed – and not even the atom exists, as everything is more a question of "order and symmetry". Even more so, it is possible to say, from the perspective of the element, that what is at stake is not objects, but situation, of which order and symmetry are its particular case. Situation is a categorial aspect for element, insofar as the latter, as multiple One, is to be found *only* in its distribution. One does not encounter the *logos* but rather its languages. In every language there is a (phonetic, grammatical, semantic) situation in the face of the *logos*, or else every language is in itself a situation of the *logos*. In "situation", quality, quantity and relation are together. Fundamentally, situation is expressed by the fact that the distributed is into/within <*intru*> and not in element. The categorial aspect of situation therefore indicates an interior exteriority (like symmetry and order, ultimately), respectively the way in which the multiple is situated inside the One.

A second categorial aspect implied by the multiple One is that of the *whole-part*. Distribution of the One, of the element in particular, ought to be a part; but in fact, no division has taken place, so that each part is whole, just as each language is, in its modality and situation, entirely the *logos*. In distinction to mathematical-type sets, the medium which has been distributed as an element is of such a nature that the part does not "belong" to the whole, but is raised to its power (as happens only in infinite sets, in mathematics). At the qualitative level, it has been possible to speak of a part, in some cases, as a "totality of each

instant". And indeed, the multiple One must be conceived as the ag-
gregate of the multiple totalities of the One.

That such a category of the multiple One may alone take the place of
an entire categorial table, for the reality of the elements, will be shown
by the enumeration of the other category it may devolve upon. None
of the Platonic or Aristotelian categories devolved upon the element,
precisely because they make no reference to the multiple One. *State*
does not devolve upon it, because it renders at most the aspect of One;
movement, the aspect of multitude; identity, again the aspect of One;
alterity, only that of multiple.

The elements are just as alien to the Aristotelian categories. Primary
substance was not a category, and secondary substance was the ele-
ment itself, that is, the reality for which we are now seeking categories,
in place of those of primary substance. *Quantity* does not devolve upon
them. The latter, according to Aristotle himself, is either discrete or
continuous, while the element is neither one nor the other, as it is a
distributed continuum, that is, discrete, which contravenes quantity
and is expressed by the multiple One. The element is prior to quan-
tity. It is likewise prior to *quality*, which in Aristotle is divided (form,
disposition, affection and capacity), with none of the modes, again,
qualifying the element, just as it is not qualified by the following cat-
egory, *relation*. *Temporality* and *spatiality* alone bear in them a form
of the multiple One and might accordingly seem appropriate to the
element. However, the latter does not rest beneath them but rather
itself establishes them, the same as it establishes *position*, respectively
the situation inside it, or the same as it exerts *action* and imposes *pas-
sivity*, without having, qua element, relations of interaction, but only
inter-penetration. The final Aristotelian category, possession, remains
in the meagreness and restriction of "things". The elements, qua speci-
fied Being, *are*; they do not possess anything.

It falls upon the Kantian categories to provide the only prefigura-
tions for the categories of the element. It is significant that precise-
ly the modern table, more elaborate and reflected than the first two
("consciousness in general"), can refer to categories of the element oth-
er than the multiple One. This may be understood, insofar as modern
thought has conceived a category the ancients lacked: that of totality.
Through totality – in all its meanings, however, not just the quantita-
tive – the multiple One can be discovered, and it may even acquire

modulations, which will be so many supplementary categories of the element.

The Kantian table opens with the concept of *quantity*. But it is not quantity itself that now appears as a category, but rather it gives us its specifications – unity, plurality, totality. The element was not conceivable as unity, but only as One. And this One has been accepted by modern thought – even without recourse to metaphysics, to theology or to Plato's *Parmenides* – as has happened with the theory of sets (with the idea of "complementary" that exhausts a universe) or in logic, where the universe of discourse is spoken of. Just as these universes are not units, nor too is the element a simple unity. – But nor is it a plurality, although it makes this possible together with the units (specimens) that occur in it. Plurality is either repetitive and self-multiplying or divisive; but the One does not enter into self-repetition and its division is distribution. On the other hand, plurality as such is the expression of a metaphysical weakness that does not encumber the element. It is sufficient unto itself. – On the other hand, the category of *totality* has a meaning for element, whose principal category was the multiple One; however, not as quantitative totality, but as a whole. The element does not leave room for any totalisation, as it is endlessly susceptible to expansion: who can speak of the totality of life or of the formulations of a language? Even energy increases together with the organisation of matter and with the spirit. On the other hand, under the heading *open totality* and possessing at the same time a qualitative as well as a relational sense, as we shall see immediately, the category of totality is one of the possible modulations of the multiple One.

What does the element look like in comparison with the group of *quality*? Here, Kant again takes into consideration its specifications: affirmation (of reality), negation, limitation. In order to be an "affirmation" of reality, the element ought to appear as something determinate; but it is, qua enveloping medium, in complete non-determination, remaining thus even when it allows, by means of distribution, the appearance of units at its heart. A given life does not cause life itself to be determinate, and the living thing may even increase, with its novelty, its non-determination. At most, it can be said that the element has a global affirmation (transferring totality from the quantitative to the qualitative), while it is in itself in non-limitation. – But at the same time, the element is not a "negation" of reality, since it is through it that the affirmations of the real arise. The specimens that have arisen

through element, it is true, end up negating themselves, as they are not apt for the element; the latter, however, confers on them as much reality as they can receive and remains, in its non-determination, a reality beyond positive and negative. – On the other hand, with the third category of quality, with limitation, a potential category for element emerges. Indeed, element *is* a form of limitation, as it is not anything else (energy is not speech, just as the Eros is not reason). But it is a limitation that does not limit. Any of its distributions is permanently beyond itself. A thing is what it is, while "a part" of an element is itself plus everything the element bears in it. Once again, for the element, as in the case of totality, the hint of infinity appears, by means of which no limit is also a limitation. While open totality was one category, the area of the multiple One, the limitation that does not limit, is another.

In their turn, the first two categories in the group of *relation* also remain alien to element. The category of substance with attributes is inadequate here, as the element has no attributes. It has been defined as a substantiality without substance. Perhaps at most, in the variant of secondary substance, it might fit the category of substance. But, in the presentation of the table of the *Categories* at least, the Aristotelian secondary substance was a predicate, not a subject of reality, as it would have to be as substance and as the element itself is, with its subsistence without consistency. – On the other hand, as it is a medium for cause and effects, the element is neither cause nor effect. The *logos* does not have languages as its effect, but *is* languages. When we say that the effect of life on earth is the biosphere, we are saying that life has been established within a given medium, in which afterwards there have taken place concatenations of cause and effect. (Theology rejected the idea of cause, when it claimed that the One was "born" not "made", but of any element it may be said that which Plotinus, as well as the Stoics, declares of the divine in *Ennead* III, 2, that it has no need of artifices, like craftsmen; it creates naturally, like natural production, and the world emerges as if from a seed.) And this time, the third category, that of autonomous community, would fit the nature of the element, even if not as a "reciprocal action" among specimens or attributes, as Kant's community appears. Here, with the element, there is a communal medium, thus, not a simple albeit real relation, but an effective reality. In its autonomy, the element does not come under relations, but is. For, indeed, autonomy ought here to take precedence, in the third Kantian category of relation, and for the multiple One,

where any relation with the other has vanished and there remains only self-relation, autonomy might be the adequate category.

While from the first three Kantian groups only the final categories have been retained, as integrations or determinations of the multiple One, the final group, that of *modality*, constitutes in its entirety a category for element: reality—possibility—necessity. The element is a reality distinct from that of the things for which, in fact, the Kantian category of reality had been conceived: it is never realised but, as a "medium for realisation", it bears within it all the possible. However, there is no possible without reality, for the element was from the start a subsistence; there is no possible after reality, as in things, which once having arisen can become something else. There is the possible *qua* reality, for which a category of real—possible—necessary ought to be conceived.

The categories of the element are, therefore:

The multiple One
Open totality
The limitation that does not limit
Autonomous community
Real—possible—necessary

The first category commands the others (in contrast to the traditional tables, where the categories have an as if axiomatic independence) and transforms them into modulations of itself. If, however, we view them as autonomous categories, then all four possess a perfect "deduction" from the first. It is not a "transcendental" deduction, since there can be no question of a transcendental subject in ontology, but rather it is one that is literally "metaphysical", and namely:

The multiple One, manifested and specified, is: an open totality from the perspective of exteriority; a limitation that does not limit from the perspective of interiority; autonomy from the perspective of external conditioning; real—possible—necessity from the perspective of internal conditioning.

BEING IN ITSELF

37. Element and becoming

The problem of Being is twofold: firstly, what can be named "being" in things, thus what is the being of a stone, of a tree, of a horse, of a man, of a historical occurrence, of a true utterance; secondly, what can be named Being in itself. Consequently, Being has appeared in two hypostases: as the being of things, becoming, and as second instance Being, element.

Through revelation of the *function* of the ontological model in any immediate reality, Being as the becoming of things, in the case of their entry into order on satisfaction of the model, became apparent; since becoming, in distinction to transformation and other modes of processuality, presupposes the stage of attained order. Now, with the revelation of the *substantiality* of the model, we have obtained secondary Being qua element, defining and describing the elements in their nature, in their manner of co-existing and of interpenetrating, in the world that they form and, in the end, in the categories upon which they depend.

What becoming and the element have in common is the ontological model. But becoming is not one with the element. At most, we might say that it occurs at the heart of the element.

In the first place, becoming is not element and does not have the element's manner of being because it is not a *medium*. It lacks any content that might envelop things, just as it lacks its own subsistence distinct from things. It represents things in their organised processuality, after their ontological maturation, and we might say of becoming that it is the *factio* subsequent to the *perfectio* of the thing. Such a *factio* has neither measure nor outline in itself. The measure is given by the real that becomes, and all that can be brought by becoming, in the absence of its own horizon, is its development as a reality along the line of the *possibility* in it. (Rather than a combination between being and non-being, as Heidegger would have it, becoming would be the combination between real and possible.) But becoming thereby reveals the intinsicality of things, without enveloping them.

For, in the second place, since it is not a medium that might change into an internal medium, becoming will not be the intrinsicality and

"soul" of things, qua element. It is the *trace* of the Being in things, its corporeal trajectory, or the body that has obtained its soul. Just as it has been possible to say that it is not the soul that is in the body but the body in and within the soul – if they might be viewed as distinct for a moment – likewise, becoming is always in and within element, the same as living creation is situated in and organisationally transformed into the element of life and mental saying into the element of language. And the elements are those that are distributed without being divided in the things that become, while their becomings are only distribution.

Lastly, becoming is not an element because it cannot receive any of the categories of the element. It is not a "multiple One", inasmuch as it remains in the non-distinction of processuality, without even being a unitary process. If it is possible to confer upon it the character of corporeality of *Being*, it is to the extent that it bears in it the fulfilment in the real of a model that refers the real beyond itself, the same as the body refers beyond itself. Nothing is one in becoming, nothing is multiple, but rather everything represents a pure continuity, susceptible to break off at any moment or to prolong itself for however long. – Becoming thereby does not have the character of an open totality, the second category of the element. If it is open, it does not succeed in being a totality; if it closes in the already-become <*devenit*> and transforms itself into a totality, it is no longer open. In fact, its open character is possible only at the heart of and through an element, without which becoming would close after its first pulsation (how many things and existences do not attempt to enter into becoming, only to fall into mere transformation?), passing into the blind change of states, under the pressure of agents alien to the thing. – Perhaps less than any other category, the limitation that does not limit does not devolve upon becoming. About such a category, it is possible to speak only in the case in which limitations exist. Becoming, however, does not have and does not establish limitations. And if we distinguish between limit and limitation, then the thing that becomes is limited (bounded from without, and not the bounding from within that would give it a limitation) and through becoming something given at most shifts its limits, but never oversteps them. – An autonomous community or a form of autonomy, with the fourth category of the element, does not at all represent becoming. It might seem the community of the successive states of a thing, but the states are left behind and perish through becoming; it might be the developing autonomy of the thing,

but this is beneath heteronomy, specifically beneath the autonomy of the element. – At most, the fifth category of the element, real—possible—necessary, might seem to devolve upon becoming, which had to be understood as a combination of real and possible. But where does necessity occur in becoming? Nothing is predictable in it, as would happen if it were a matter of necessity. When, in the face of a consummated becoming (such as the historical, for example) one tries to see its necessity, one discovers only one of the branches of necessity, in the arborescence of possible becomings, each of them "necessary", even if unrealised. However interesting an arborescent necessity might be, the margin of freedom in the choice of one of the becomings is too wide to allow a balanced sense of necessity and to apply it to future becoming.

Becoming is thus not an element and rests in subordination to the latter, like the world of bodies to that of souls. And nevertheless – to continue the comparison – to the same extent that the body modifies and shapes the soul, becoming, in turn, shapes the element at the heart of which it develops and makes it, in its secondary Being, open, perhaps, towards a new and ultimate hypostasis of Being. We shall say that *becoming represents the great ontological promise of the world*, while the element is ontological reality situated within an order.

But precisely because ontology begins by taking into consideration becoming and is resumed with becoming after the description of the elements, it cannot be satisfied with the worn-out idea of becoming as it appears in things and above all with the neutrality or "guiltlessness" of becoming, as Goethe and Nietzsche said unphilosophically. On the contrary, becoming emerges from the neutrality in which are to be found transformation and mere changes of state, as it has a permanent relation to Being and provides forms for its fulfilment and for opening towards it, or on the contrary forms for collapse out of Being and for stagnation before it. This is why becoming refers beyond the immediate real, on the one hand, and is everywhere present in the real, on the other. Even where it does not appear, namely in the ontological precarities (which possess merely transformations but not yet becoming), its manner of being *absent* is that which provides the ontological measure of the real. Therefore, a number of modalities of becoming must be distinguished, in their possible hierarchy, comprising: subreality, reality as such and, finally, that which might be named ontological supra-reality.

In fact, the modalities of becoming are themselves planes of reality or ontological modalities of the real. *Prior to* becoming – both broadly, with the cosmological, and narrowly, with each reality-situation – there can only be: chaos and the ontological precarities. However, the same ontological model whose fulfilment led to a first form of Being takes account of chaos and precarities, and in this sense it is possible to say, as above, that even the absence of becoming provides the ontological measure of the world, starting from chaos.

And what indeed may be named chaos – with the claim to saying something about its content as well, not just about its lack of form – is that state of things in which Individualia, Determinations and Generalia are distinct, respectively *disjecta* ("*disjecta membra*"), and in which nowhere do they couple themselves together and thereby take hold in such a way as for becoming to be possible. Chaos would therefore be the content, whether material or spiritual, in which Generalia are not Individualia, Individualia cannot be general, and Determinations provide no Generalia/laws or orders, and nor Individualia/entities. Better still, it might be said that chaos is the state in which becoming or at least its tendency cannot appear. As in the Brownian motion of particles of matter, or as in social revolt that does not attain the stage of revolution, no coupling of terms has taken place.

The real begins to "establish" itself out of chaos only by means of the primordial ontological situation and the coupling of terms, that is, through the *ontological precarities*. Arising in six ways, as was described in the first part of the book, the precarities have the positive facet of extracting the world (respectively one or other world, more narrowly) out of chaos, but the negative facet of not elevating it as far as becoming. To the extent that the precarities nonetheless can *open* towards becoming, through the integration of the two terms in the couple with a third, they are as many *semina entis*.

The precarities give *the first ontological level*, which is otherwise the broadest: an immense part of the unconstituted material world (in the inorganic and organic), as well as the vastness of the unfulfilled human world, both individual and social, rest beneath the precarities. However, with the emergence from beneath the precarities qua becoming, the levels of reality will fully be modalities of becoming, and namely *the becoming that perishes*, then *blocked becoming, becoming within becoming* and *becoming within Being*.

At each superior level, thus with each new modality of becoming, the inferior modalities and levels are preserved, in such a way that, in the ever more consistent world of becoming, there is a large share of as though inconsistent world. For example, at the human level, where becoming within Being appears, not only are the precarities preserved – with man resting, in general, under one or more of the six maladies of the spirit – but also, even when they enter into order, man can fall from becoming (losing, for example, the sense of the General), he can become frozen in the already-become (blocking himself in the General), he can enter into becoming within becoming (referring the unfulfilled General further). We shall look at in turn these stages of becoming, and thus of reality. And we shall finish by projecting becoming, which is not element, onto the element itself.

Excursus on becoming

Becoming, the most representative concept for modern thought, is also its least analysed. Assimilated with mere the transformation and flow of things, Becoming is usually represented as unitary. However, it has stages.

a) *Becoming that declines*. The first stage is that at which achieved Becoming may not be maintained. The world everywhere provides (or conceals) examples of realities which have entered for a moment into order and thus into Becoming, but which, because they have not inscribed themselves into a medium suitable for subsistence, decline from within it, reverting to ontological precarity or chaos. It is too often given to man not to inscribe his Becoming in any orbit, or to inscribe it in impossible orbits. Henceforward, it can be seen that the satisfied ontological model requires a medium for the development of the becoming obtained, and this medium will be the element adequate to the respective reality. It might be said – from this perspective, according to which secondary Being is that which invests primary Being – that the real that has entered into the becoming that declines has integrated itself into a false element, degrading itself, just as so many substances have disintegrated, unidentified precisely because they have disappeared, or just as some of the living realities established for a moment in the element are extinguished from it. The real has effectively entered into a totality, but not one that is *open*, thereby negating the first category of the genuine element.

b) *The becoming that leads to the already-become.* At a second stage of becoming, the obtained organisation of the real is maintained. It has been said of the organisation of matter and of life that these represent an accident. But once obtained, the accident confirms itself as the rule, in comparison with which non-fulfilment, however extensive, becomes an accident. Nevertheless, it is not merely a metaphor to say that the effort of arriving at becoming might not be extended beyond its attainment. The second level of becoming is thus the becoming that does not decline, but which is transformed into the already-become. At this level, becoming is preserved, but negates its nature as already-become. At first, it negated the fact that it was; now, it negates it manner of being. And at first, only the category of closed totality appeared; now, only the limitation that limits.

Thus, it is sufficient to remove the crust from things – for example, the crust of vegetation and its residues cover the earth – in order to see from what a geological tumult of becoming they have been born. In the mineral or inorganic realm in general, the traces of past becoming are preserved. However, the share of already-become, of "minerality", stretches much farther into the mineral world (any atom is a blockage of electrons in their orbit) as well as beyond it. In higher forms of life and then rationality, becoming will preserve the already-become even more so: plants, animals and humans have, in effect, apart from the minerality in their bodies, a large share of the already-become in reflexes, instincts, sentiments and even in thought, in all of which it has been possible to read past becoming. Society too lives, to a large extent, beneath the most varied forms of the already-become. Historic monuments and ruins are the "mineral" part of a society, the same as traditions, wisdom and invariables are the already-become. At a given moment, even, societies tend to reduce everything that is historical becoming to the already-become, under the prestige of sedimentary history. Creative limitations have come into play; but they have ended up as limitations that only limit. Nature and humans hasten, seemingly, to attain Being in this degradation of it, which is the already-become. Becoming, however, is more shaping and more "rational" than its already-become can reveal. When "to be" was manifested through becoming, it gave the latter a wider horizon than "has been", with its limitation that only limits.

c) *Becoming within becoming.* With this, first instance Being, once obtained, is no longer lost, as in the first modality, and nor is it blocked,

as in the second. It maintains itself in its suitable element. Now, the categories of the element are confirmed: the totality of becoming is open, its limitation no longer limits, and the real also satisfies the third category of the element, autonomy. Indeed, the organic now appears, with the autonomous entities of the vegetal and animal realms. (In fact, their autonomy is relative: full autonomy will be that of the element in which examples of their species occur, as they disappear in its service.)

Prior to a becoming within becoming through reproduction and repetition of self, it might seem possible to speak of a becoming within free becoming, without the re-creation of the real according to a stable code. It would be a becoming within itself a becoming, lacking any rigour but preserving itself as becoming. The most telling example would be provided by *historical* becoming (and a history might also be conceived for nature), in which nothing is necessarily resumed. There is a Course of the World, as it has been named, one that eternally brings about novelties, without constructing anything. – But, either the Course of the World is a vast transformation, and then the order of becoming has not genuinely been obtained, or this Course has a history, with laws and an organised development, and then becoming within further becoming will acquire a meaning only for becoming within Being.

There remains becoming within becoming as a self-re-creation of the real, thus the level of organic reality, and its equivalent in humans in the areas of the spirit. It is a becoming within the *same* becoming, repetition being its form of organisation as reproduction. If becoming is still not oriented towards superior forms of existence, it nevertheless does not decline into inferior forms, as in the first two modalities of becoming. And in, in humans, there will be able to occur a becoming within Being as *exit* from the monotonous chain of self-repetition, the submersion in repetition has also in humans sometimes led to the exaltation of the interminable becoming of repetition, which Goethe and Nietzsche understood to substitute Being itself. The things *below* humans, on the other hand, do not rest under the either the joy or the burden of becoming. They *are*, through becoming within becoming, which brings with it the first direct and durable manifestation, in the midst of first instance Being, of the second instance, the element.

This is why the organic has always been a miracle for thought: it directly offered *form*, structure, the idea of the real, having become entity

and recreating itself as entity. The organism, as a whole that is sure of itself, reducing everything to itself, determined in such a way as to recreate itself through its mere definition (through its code) has been able even to provide the image of the universe itself, or of the "spiritual body" in religions. – But the organic, with its law, which is becoming within becoming, in fact reflects Being at one of its inferior levels, which is visible in the way in which it brings the categories of the element into play. Totality is open with becoming within becoming, but it is linearly open, not on every side, like that of a horizon; the limitation does not limit, but by means of simple repetition; the autonomy of organic creation and of its becoming exists, but it is not one accompanied by freedom; and if something of the final category, namely the possible/real, is fully a category of the organic, it does not also associate its necessity, since the apparition of the real organic is contingent and of the ideal organic also historically contingent. Reason alone brings about a *necessary* possible/real and genuinely open categories. But reason will be the consciousness of the becoming within Being.

d) *Becoming within Being.* In becoming within becoming the real was sustained by element, as Being in itself, but it was not *one with it* (just as the specimen is not one with the species). On the other hand, the ultimate form of the becoming of the real is Being in itself: the becoming to which it has elevated itself corresponds with second instance Being, at the heart of which (and not *beneath* which as in the organic) becoming takes place. Until now, becoming might fail, might freeze, might lead to mere self-repetition, and in affirming Being it always contradicted it, successively: as nothingness, as total blockage, or with becoming within becoming as total fluidity. But Being did not contradict itself: even in nothingness, there are traces of Being (nothingness is the nothingness of *something*); the blockage in the already-become bore the spectral seal of Being; and the fluidity of becoming, as self-repetition, expresses its unrest. How great a part of unrest can there be in Being? If Being cannot be total rest (Parmenides' Being of repose ultimately had to be understood as a material, one might say mineral, sphere), nor can it endlessly remain in unrest, as in the becoming within becoming. Being is, in its correspondence with the real, *becoming* within Being.

In fact, this is perhaps how Being has always been understood: as becoming within the Being of the number, of the principle, of the Idea, for the ancients, as becoming within the Being of the Spirit, for the

moderns, for Hegel in particular. Everywhere it is a question of *becoming within the Being of the element*. However, it only appears openly in humans (even if it will not remain within the limits of human existence). For, humans, in contrast to the rest, bring about *consciousness* of the becoming within an element as secondary Being, and the consciousness of the becoming within Being is conscious becoming within Being. With reason thereby understood as consciousness of becoming within Being, there occurs that ontic *increase* which is the criterion for manifestation of Being. Being increases the real at the heart of the real, just as it has been said that genius increases nature at the heart of nature.

There are four forms of becoming within Being, of which the first three devolve upon man:

The subjective becoming within Being of man as a person

The objective becoming of human communities

The absolute becoming of humanity as a whole

The becoming within Being of humanity along with all the rest.

As soon as the element of reason appears, Being itself appears. For, although reason arose in the element of life, it can double back upon life and upon all the other elements, dominating them and shaping them. If reason is not necessarily only human but also infuses the world with laws to organise it, then the final type of becoming within becoming might also make sense, within a final vision of Being.

Now it is possible to see the place and the way in which secondary Being, the element, encounters primary Being, becoming, making the latter possible. The levels of reality, with or without the primordial level of chaos, were:

Chaos

The ontological precarities

The becoming that declines

Becoming blocked in the already-become

Becoming within becoming

Becoming within Being.

At the first two levels, the element does not appear, and its *lack* consecrates chaos qua chaos and the precarities qua precarities. In the two inceptive forms of becoming, the element is inadequate, or the real does not have the strength to elevate itself to the limitation that does *not* limit of the element. Only with the last two types of becoming does the element bring-into-being <*în-fiinţează*>.

Therefore, in one sense, the *second* instance of Being rests at the beginning. Or better still, the Being of things develops in something (as in the "become what you are" evident in the case of humans). The element makes possible that which makes it possible in the real, element, Idea, species, objective spirit, concrete generality. Ontology must oppose the appearance of things as particular causes of an abstract generality, which is the law, against their emergence (as the sciences of the spirit effectively demonstrate, at least in the case of man) at the heart of a *concrete* generality, which is the element.

Nevertheless, not just any opening towards the General leads to Being. In itself, the General is like a negation of the Individual, and the negation can invalidate or, on the contrary, validate things. As in the Hegelian example, a seed can be "negated" in many ways, but only its negation through cultivation shifts it into the generality of the plant, beneath whose element it is situated. Likewise, any real rests beneath various Generalia, whose particular case it represents; but it "is" not and does not become except through a *particular* concrete general, whose Determinations correspond with its own. So it is with humans: not just any idea, engagements or opening place them into becoming, but one in particular. However, all that increases a thing is together with it.

Such an augmentation of Being emerges with *becoming* within Being. If physics speaks less to ontology than life and the spirit, it is because it cannot evoke, except within certain limits, *augmentative* becoming. This is why biology and the sciences of the spirit have been able to say more to ontology. Nevertheless, even within the limits of the physical universe, where the first forms of organisation and bringing-into-being <*în-fiinţează*> appear, first instance Being arises through the "elements" of matter. The world becomes, that is, it is, through that which genuinely is: through element.

38. Becoming as element: becomance <*deveninţă*>

Becoming is not element. But do the elements not also have (or are they not) a form of becoming? Are these tranquil ontological settlements, which are not distinct embodiments either on this side or the other of things, but *are* in a way on this side and the other of them, making possible the coincidence of the transcendent and the transcendental, to remain steadfastly equal to themselves?

If we think of the primordial elements: perhaps energy is not merely conserved but also becomes; perhaps life as a whole becomes; reason, in man together with the reason infused in the real, becomes. Just as transformation was not becoming but becoming was a form of transformation, becoming in its turn is not an element but the element can be a form of becoming. This means that Being in its "corporeal" sense, becoming, penetrates and activates Being in its "spiritual" sense, the element. But the becoming of the latter must be one of a distinct order, one that is secondary. It no longer takes place within something else, unlike ordinary becoming at the heart of the element, but *within itself*. We shall name it: *becomance <deveninţă>*.

The opposition between Being and becoming proved a speculative mistake. The genealogy of becoming was provided by the ontological model itself, and the same model whose fulfilment in things led to becoming was, in its free subsistence, secondary Being, the element. Except that of the three ontological terms, the element actualised and drew together, as a medium, determinations alone, while the Individual (realities) and the General (laws and orders) remained virtual.

It might be thought, for a moment, that the process of becoming in element is the *actualisation* of that which has still remained intrinsic and enveloped in it; that the element is a envelopment that develops, something in consonance with the first arising of Being in things, the closure that opens. But the actualisation and development, in this sense of self-evidentiation in the real, does not genuinely represent the becoming of the element as a whole, but only its creation or simple application in the real. Becomance will say more; it regards the element in itself, at the level of secondary Being, at which the real is one with the possible.

Any of the modalities of becoming, even the inceptive ones – all the more so the first three types of becoming within Being, those of the human – occurred *through* the Being of the element and, in the last instance, within it. But with the fourth type of becoming within Being, which is now extracted from the series of the modalities of becoming and named "becomance", becoming is stationary, it is within itself. Not the actualisation of the element in the real, through the embodiments and laws in which it is objectified, is at stake, but its actualisation in its *own* real/possible. For example, not that which results as individual entities and general orders from life this time, nor only those other forms of embodiment and laws that might henceforward appear at

its heart, under changed conditions, but the becoming of life qua life. There are also other forms of energy in the universe, just as there are probably other forms of life and of reason; but they too will be in becomance, that is, in the continual augmentation of the real/possible in them, as in a stationary becoming.

Ultimately, do not the Ideas, the objective spirit, the *arkhai*, the archetypes "become" in their real/possible? If we take an example closer to us than that of the primordial elements (where ultimate uncertainty might leave things beneath a question mark), for example one from the world of the objective spirit in the content of history, then we might directly illustrate what is to be understood by becomance. The subjective spirit in history may become objective spirit, just as we recalled that the genius can become an "element" of a historical world. Homer was accordingly elevated to the level of the objective spirit of the Greek world and the element of European culture. But does Homer still possess any becoming in these worlds? Of course, in the usual sense, he possesses none. And nevertheless, it cannot be said that he is a museum piece and completely devoid of becoming; he has becomance.

Up until becomance, the higher modality was human becoming within Being. Everything was in fact becoming within Being: becoming within becoming is an unfulfilled becoming within Being (organic nature), just as blocked becoming (inorganic nature) is in its turn unfulfilled becoming within becoming. This does not mean that everything tends towards man, in whom becoming within Being arises, but only that man is situated at a more elevated ontological level than all other realities and which implies all the others.

But nor is the final type of becoming within Being, which we have named becomance, any longer one of man as such, but rather it is of the element of reason along with the rest of the elements. It is rationality with all its elements of a spiritual order, together with the becoming of the element of life, of the element of nature, energy, material. In this sense, it might be said, figuratively, that becomance is the medium of all the elements (they are all enveloped and caught up by it). But in the literal sense, it is their *internal* medium, which causes them, like blood in living creatures, to be permanently beyond them, to be an open totality in accordance with the categories of the element, a limitation that does not limit, autonomous and at the same time real, both possible and necessary. Becomance is the intrisicality of the element (just as the element in general was the instrinsicality of things); it is

the soul of these *animi*, the Being that distributes itself without being
divided. It is, as such, the unique element, and not one among others.
When we spoke of secondary Being, that of the elements, we ought to
have said: becomance with its dispersions. And as long as becoming
occurs within an element, it now has to be said that any becoming is
within becomance.

Only now, at the level of becomance, is it possible to pose the prob-
lem of *time*, beyond the temporality or temporalities already invoked.
It is a stationary flux in the horizon of a stationary becoming, be-
comance. If the elements were secondary Being, then the unique ele-
ment, becomance, is Being, which time, at this level, would seem to
disclose. But it does not, in reality, disclose it, and attempts to under-
stand Being by means of time, such as that of Heidegger, have failed,
perhaps because they were not undertaken along the line of becoming.
Being-becoming is much more than time: it is the intrinsic rationality
of the elements in its real-possible.

Under a different name than becoming, of course, the intrinsic ra-
tionality of the world has been understood in two ways: theologically
and dialectically. Theology– in all its versions, even in its philosophical
variant, insofar as philosophy has proclaimed a divine principle – has
upheld that everything rests beneath the conscious reason of absolute
Being. Dialectics, in its turn, whether it be the Platonic with the ulti-
mate Idea of the Good, or whether it be the Hegelian with the Spirit,
have spoken of an intrinsic reason, to which human reason can elevate
itself methodically in the first case, and which develops methodically
of itself in the second case, in Hegel. If it had to choose, then any
philosophical thinking would prefer the dialectical. But the question is
whether dialectics somehow expresses the course and the duration of
Being, *prior* to identifying it.

It is towards this that ontology tends, to the identification of Being.
It firstly identifies its spectrum in things, as model, then it sees it as a
subsistent model, in the second instance Being of the elements, and
finally it sees it in the unique element of becomance. But do the ele-
ments in any way enter into becomance as things enter into becoming?
Or *are* they always a specific modality of becomance?

We understand this last idea to uphold that all the elements *are*
modalities of the becoming within Being that is becomance. An in-
trinsic reason, that of the ontological model, causes the element to be
in permanent transit towards individual embodiments that are both

real and *possible*, on the one hand, and towards real-possible general orders, on the other. It is reason that causes matter, life, and the spirit, understood as elements, to be stationary (compared to the realities beneath them they are as though an unmoving movement, or a "respiration of the unmoving", as Plotinus said), as well as in transformation, as they are situated in becoming within self. Becomance is thus simultaneously the expression of a state and of a process; an expression of rationality, that is, of the "purposefulness" <*rostului*>, of the internal code or codes; an expression of the elements' productive capacity, with the potentialities in them; and lastly, an expression of their Being.

With the Romanian term "deveniță" <*becomance*> (perhaps "Werdenheit" in German) are suggested these *four* characters: 1) becoming, but one that is stationary, since the verbal substantive "devenire" <*becoming*> has passed into the effective state of the substantive, becomance; 2) rationality, purposefulness, the categorial character[23]; 3) possibility or the real-possible, since "devenință" <*becomance*>, from "devenire" <*becoming*> is, through the suffix "ință," unitary with "putință"[24] <*potentiality*> from "putere" <*potency*>; 4), finally, "ființă" <*Being*> (which is in fact "fientia", from the verb *fieri*, to become) is suggested, through the very formation of the word becoming. In mediaeval terms, it might be said that becomance bears in it, with its four natures: a *ratio fiendi*, of becoming; a *ratio formandi*, of structuration; a *ratio producendi*, of creation; and a *ratio essendi*, of existence <*ființării*>.

Is becomance then the last instance of Being?

Having come thus far, the present ontology can no longer speak except *analogously*, after always having attempted a phenomenological (that is, one that was descriptive in essence) and a rational way of speaking. A third instance of Being may be conceived, beyond the element of becomance which is distributed in elements; but one that is *of the same being* as becomance. If becomance is distributed in however many elements and the elements also have however many distribu-

---

23   As Cantemir attempted with *ceință* <*whatness*> (what it is), *cîtință* <*howmuchness*> (how much it is), *feldein\ă* <*kindofness*> (the kind of being), that is, substance, quantity, quality.

24   The etymon of the Romanian *putință* is the Latin *potentia*, which derives from *potens*, an adjective formed from the verb *possum* (<*potis sum*>). The suffix *-ință*, which Noica employs to coin the term *devenință*, may therefore be said to be related to the Late Latin noun *ens, entis*, a calque of the Greek *ousia* = "Being". – Translator's note.

tions, then ultimate Being makes no sense except as having a *single distribution*.

This surprising ontological idea must now be brought into play at the very end: namely the idea that ultimate Being has a single replica of itself. Within such an idea, which has not sufficiently been the object of philosophical reflection, the *extreme* condition of the meaning of Being is comprised. At any stage and instance of it, Being must be distributed, for it is the One that differs from itself. But its privilege, at the supreme instance, would be that of having only a single distribution *which does not differ from itself*.

What is this unique distribution of the One? It is a metaphysical idea that neither Heraclitus nor Plato's *Parrmenides* understood how to invoke. It is the idea that the *most elevated multiple One* is that in which the *multiple itself is in fact one*.

But then the one-One and the one-Multiple are in effect of the same Being. And just as that which would necessarily give itself a unique response is neither proven nor true except by means of a response, so too Being is neither proven nor true except through becomance.

Ontology hereby culminates, through a speculative idea which can, up to a point, do justice to the ontologies of the past, after having always criticised them. "Absolute" Being makes sense, only if it is denied as an absolute by means of embodiment in becomance; thus, if it can express all possible embodiments by means of a single embodiment; all the possible elements by means of a single element, just as it has been said that by means of a single human being all humanity can be expressed.

With such an idea, ontology naturally claims a privilege of thought and a concession. The mediaeval ontological argument demanded a privilege, that of maintaining that it could conceive of perfect Being. Hegel arrived also to claim the same privilege, not for the concept of the divine, but rather for the concept pure and simple, naturally the metaphysical and not just logical concept. Now, however, a privilege can be claimed, which is not at all for the concept of divinity or the metaphysical concept, but for Being, which is to say for the ultimate meaning of Being: that of having a single, indivisible distribution, becomance.

Is it as abusive as in the case of Anselm or Hegel? But it should not be said, as they did, that divine existence or the rationality of the real can be *proven*. All that can be permitted is to say that this is how

ultimate Being has, implicitly, always been conceived. This is why the above ontology has attempted nothing more than to bring to light what we think and what *has been* thought, when speculation about Being has been taken to its limit.

Accordingly, if becomance is the core and the truth of Being, then what is left for Being qua Being? It is the One offered to existence through becomance (or through something of its order) and regathered from existence also by becomance (or through something of its order).

39. Becoming, Becomance, Being

There are three levels of Being: firstly, the Being of things, becoming, then the Being of elements, becomance, and finally, Being as Being. If the latter has any rational meaning, its privilege is that of *not* having existence as such, but only possible embodiment. It is as if the spirit of Being, while becomance seemed to us the soul of Being and becoming its body.

With a body, a soul and a spirit of Being, just like the levels of human existence, do we not fall into ontological anthropomorphism? Naturally, this accusation may be brought, which would then come to annul everything. But we shall dare to say the opposite, that *man is according to the image and the likeness of Being*, and this will mean much more than that the purpose of man is "warden" of Being and something much more organised than that the meaning of Being is to be sought in man, as has been said.

That Being qua Being is distributed similarly says much more than the mediaeval ontological argument, which demanded "existence" only for the supreme being. But it was also mediaeval thought that suggested something more profound about what it named the divine: it said that it is not this that is Being, but rather its love. If by love may speculatively be understood the universal principle of unification, then the idea makes sense. And if by "diffusion" of this principle, as was said then, we may understand its distribution, then we broadly find the ideas given above. But with a clarification: the principle of unification is not simple, like the act of love, but possesses the four natures of becomance, namely those of becoming within self, of intrinsic reason, of limitless potentiality for bringing-into-being <*înfiinţare*> and of itself being in effective being <*fiinţare*>.

Such an ontological grounding might seem to fall beneath the accusation that has been brought to all ontologies, that they speak of the existent and the being of the existent, not about Being in itself. But the condemnation has turned back upon itself, blocking thinking (Heidegger). It is possible to respond:

Firstly, the problem of ontology is at once the inversion of the theme: what is the Being of the existent. There has also been the theme: what is the existence of Being. Not only the entire ontology condemned by Heidegger has sought the existence of Being, erring perhaps only when it sought an incorruptible existence for an incorruptible being. Not only the ontological argument has seen in existence the glory of abstract Being. The Presocratics themselves, primarily Parmenides, who has been invoked as exemplary, proclaimed that "Being is".

In the second place, it has to be said that "existence" has too often been conceived at the level of the Individual, as even the Eleatic sphere (or Spinoza's substance) is a total individual or an individual totality. If, on the other hand, existence is taken at the level of Determinations, which is to say the element, accordingly as *internal medium*, as Idea, objective spirit, archetype, then existence approaches the nature of Being, and at the ultimate stage, that of becomance, it is one with Being, or on the same footing as it.

In the third place, insofar as the Aristotelian theme of Being as Being may be rescued from its *aporiai*, an answer or the suggestion of an answer might be given precisely by the ontological model, which is in things but can also be conceived of in itself. In any case, Being as Being would remain a name, if it were not the *opening*, by means of the model, to becomance. Everything in the real is within element, ultimately within becomance, but becomance is within Being, which nevertheless *is* not except through it, through becomance.

It is not the loss and forgetting of the central theme of Being as Being, as has been claimed, that condemns most of the ontologies of the past, but their access to Being: they sought Being as Being in a *direct*, not a mediated way. And they sought it as the sublime Being that degrades everything instead of investing everything. And then, when Heidegger attempts to discover the access to Being in itself, he seeks it only in that which *questions* Being, that is, in man, not in the permanent question that is becoming. From things with their closures that open (the first form of question) to becoming, from becoming to

element, from element to becomance, there might be a way to access Being in itself.

Is not Being in "itself" because it has made itself becomance? But it is just as inappropriately put to affirm that supreme Being is not supreme because it has been made man. Hegel was able to reply: it is precisely then that the concept verifies its strength, when it is confirmed through that which negates it. But in his turn, Hegel did not obtain and neither sought access to Being and identification of it – as any ontology ought – but rather he merely gave the course and the duration of the Spirit-being.

This is why, we shall say, there has always lacked a *criterion* for Being. How does one identify Being? Where is it to be found? The whole of ontology, from Parmenides to Heidegger, has proven cruel to the real and the world, denying the immediacy of Being or situating it in an elusive immediacy.

It may well be that the entire ontological construct above is null. But something has to remain from it: *the criterion of Being*. Being is manifested – openly and not cryptically – everywhere in that which is distributed without being divided. At any level, Being is expressed through indivisible distribution: Being as Being is distributed without being divided in a single distribution, becomance; it is distributed without being divided, with becomance, in endless elements; it is distributed without being divided, as element, in endless real becomings.

Being can therefore be identified at *any* level. All that has indivisible distribution in internal media *is*. There is a *verticality* of Being that refers it downwards, from Being as Being to the humblest situations of matter or man. And here, below, greater Being can be threatened in its uniqueness. In Indian mythosophy there is a legend of two brothers who loved each other so much – who thereby obtained an indivisible distribution of the spirit in them that was so perfect – that the gods above felt threatened in their power. Brahma then decided to mould a creature more beautiful than anything men or gods had ever seen before, which he send to earth and which separated the two brothers.

The individual self, through its simple but full union in another individual self, may hold in balance the self of the universe, the heavens, Being as Being. It *is* the being here below. And ontology has vanished from human culture whenever it has turned its head from the world.

INDEX