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Critique of Cynical Reason

Peter Sloterdijk

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Foreword: The Return of Diogenes as Postmodern Intellectual
Andreas Huyssen

> *The entire kynical mode of life adopted by Diogenes was noth-*
> *ing more or less than a product of Athenian social life, and*
> *what determined it was the way of thinking against which his*
> *whole manner protested. Hence it was not independent of*
> *social conditions but simply their result; it was itself a rude*
> *product of luxury.*
> > Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right,* sec. 195

> *For the happiness of the animal, that thorough kynic, is the liv-*
> *ing proof of the truth of kynicism.*
> > Nietzsche, *Untimely Observations,* 2, sec. 1

> *Reduced to his smallest dimension, the thinker survived the*
> *storm.*
> > Brecht, *Das Badener Lehrstilck vom Einverstdndnis*

I

Some two hundred years after the publication of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), a polemically written philosophical essay of nearly 1,000 pages, disrespectfully entitled *Critique of Cynical Reason,* captured the imagination and the passions of readers in Germany. Contrary to Kant's philosophical treatise, which, over a hundred years after its appearance, still made Musil's Torless sweat with fear and nausea, Peter Sloterdijk's treatise became an immediate success offering German intellectuals a master lesson in the pleasures of the text. Within only a few months over 40,000 copies had been sold, and the liberal feuilletons outdid each other in heaping praise on the author by comparing him to Nietzsche, Spengler, Schopenhauer. Since much of this praise focused on Sloterdijk's critique of the Enlightenment, popular in West Germany since the conservative *Tendenzwende* of the 1970s, the Left responded by trying to relegate Sloterdijk's essay to the dustbin of history, as a rotten ware of late capitalist decline. Both readings sucked Sloterdijk's text back into the ideological and political confrontations of contemporary West German culture that Sloterdijk actually

proposed to sidestep, and thus they missed important aspects of the book's challenge to the status quo. Ironically, many of the negative responses were reminiscent of an earlier conservative German *Kulturkritik* that held that anything successful could not possibly be any good and required ponderous seriousness of anything to be taken seriously. Thus the tongue-in-cheek reference to Kant in the title was predictably turned against the *Critique of Cynical Reason,* and it was attacked as simplistic, faddish, and pretentious, anti-theoretical, regressively irrational, and politically reactionary. There was controversy, and controversy, as any cynical observer of the culture industry will be quick to note, is the sine qua non of critical success.

But the success of Sloterdijk's essay has deeper roots. It has a lot to do with the fact that despite the recent revival of conservatism in Western countries, the old dichotomies of Left vs. Right, progress vs. reaction, rationality vs. irrationality have lost much of their explanatory power, moral appeal, and political persuasiveness. In its focus on a new type of postenlightened schizocynicism that remains immune to traditional forms of ideology critique, Sloterdijk's book articulates the pervasive malaise and discontent in contemporary culture that despite differences in local traditions and politics, is as much a reality today in the United States as in West Germany or, for that matter, in France. First and foremost, the *Critique of Cynical Reason* should therefore be read as an attempt to theorize a central aspect of that culture we have come to call postmodern, as an intervention in the present aimed at opening up a new space for a cultural and political discourse.

What then is Sloterdijk's project? The dismissive comparison with Kant, voiced by some German critics, is as much beside the point as the facile elevation of Sloterdijk to a Nietzsche of the late twentieth century. While he is strongly indebted to a Nietzschean kind of *Kulturkritik* that focuses on the nexus of knowledge and power, he is not ready to forget the affinity between Nietzsche's subtle "cynicism of self-disinhibition" (chapter 3) and the brutal politics of imperialism, later fascism. Neither does he share Kant's intention to subject reason to critique in order to open up the way toward the final goal of all rational speculation, the advancement of science, progress, and emancipation. If anything, his posture is anti-Kantian in that it rejects all master narratives (with a Brechtian twist, Sloterdijk calls them *Grosstheorieri)* of reason of which Kant's idealism and metaphysics is certainly a major example. The title's reference to the Kantian critiques makes sense only as a critical gesture.

However, there is another sense of the Kantian project that Michel Foucault has emphasized in an attempt to posit Kant against the Cartesian tradition, and which might describe Sloterdijk's project quite accurately. In his essay "The Subject and Power," Foucault had this to say about Kant:

> When in 1784 Kant asked, Was heisst Aufklarung?, he meant, What's
> going on right now? What's happening to us? What is this world, this
> period, this precise moment in which we are living?
>
> Or in other words: What are we? as *Aujkldrer,* as part of the En-
> lightenment? Compare this with the Cartesian question: Who am I? I,
> as a unique but universal and unhistorical subject? I, for Descartes, is
> everyone, anywhere at any moment? But Kant asks something else:
> What are we? in a very precise moment of history. Kant's question ap-
> pears as an analysis of both us and our present.'

I think that we may read Sloterdijk with maximum benefit if we read him in the
same way Foucault read Kant's programmatic essay. What is at stake in the *Cri-
tique of Cynical Reason* is not a universal history of cynicism (as such the book
would be seriously flawed), but rather a more limited investigation of the role of
cynicism and its antagonist kynicism for contemporary critical intellectuals.
Sloterdijk sees cynicism as the dominant operating mode in contemporary cul-
ture, both on the personal and institutional levels, and he suggests reviving the
tradition of kynicism, from Diogenes to Schweik, as a counterstrategy, as the
only form of subversive reason left after the failures and broken promises of
ideology critique in the tradition of Western Marxism. By focusing on cynicism
as a central feature of the postmodern condition in the 1970s and 1980s and by
searching for strategies to resist it, Sloterdijk attempts to theorize that which has
often remained submerged in the recent debate about modernity and postmoder-
nity: the pervasive sense of political disillusionment in the wake of the 1960s and
the pained feeling of a lack of political and social alternatives in Western societies
today. After all, the 1960s in West Germany—against the arguments of Adorno
and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—were once labeled a second ex-
panded enlightenment that seemed to promise a major and long-lasting realign-
ment in the country's political culture based on what Sloterdijk calls, with a sense
of loss, the "public dispute about true living" (Preface). In the German context
where illiberalism and reaction are usually perceived to be responsible for the
march into fascist barbarism, the notion of *Aufklarung* carried a great potential
of Utopian hopes and illusions with it at that time, both in relation to radical social
and cultural change anticipated for the future and with regard to Germany's at-
tempts to come to terms with its fascist past. Cynicism and resignation are there-
fore indeed dangers for a generation that had its formative political experiences
in the 1960s and that has since then seen its hopes not so much dashed as crumble
and fade away. The situation is even worse for the subsequent generation, the no-
future kids and dropouts *(Aussteiger)* of the 1970s who were too young then to
feel anything but contempt today for the 1960s nostalgia of their elders who have
the jobs, while they face diminished opportunities and an increasingly bleak labor
market. While Sloterdijk's analysis is rooted in his perceptions of German cul-
ture, it seems fairly clear that the German case of political disillusionment, cyni-

cism, and an atrophied trust in the future has parallels in other Western countries today. In a certain sense, the growth of cynicism during the 1970s actually provided the cultural soil for the revival of the ideological conservatism of the 1980s, which has filled the void left by the post-1960s disillusionment with a simulacrum of homely old values.

Thus Sloterdijk perceives a universal, diffuse cynicism as the predominant mindset of the post-1960s era, and he takes the cynic not as the exception but rather as an average social character, fundamentally asocial, but fully integrated into the work-a-day world. Psychologically he defines him as a borderline melancholic able to channel the flow of depressive symptoms and to continue functioning in society despite constant nagging doubts about his pursuits. I suspect that Sloterdijk's cynicism is less widespread than he might want to claim. But as an analysis of the prevailing mindset of a generation of middle-aged male professionals and intellectuals, now in their late thirties to mid-forties and in increasingly influential positions, Sloterdijk's observations are perceptive and to the point. And who could resist the brilliance of an aphorism such as the following, which pinpoints this new unhappy sensibility:

> Cynicism is *enlightened false consciousness.* It is that modernized, unhappy consciousness, on which enlightenment has labored both successfully and unsuccessfully. It has learned its lessons in enlightenment, but it has not, and probably was not able to, put them into practice. Welloff and miserable at the same time, this consciousness no longer feels affected by any critique of ideology; its falseness is already reflexively buffered, (chapter 1)

Given this modernization of false consciousness, the old strategies of the Enlightenment—from the public exposure of lies to the benign correction of error to the triumphant unveiling of a structurally necessary false consciousness by ideology critique —will no longer do. They will no longer do not only because the false consciousness they attack is already reflexively buffered, nor simply because ideology critique in the Marxian tradition, that once most radical heir to the Enlightenment, has mutated into a theory of political legitimation in the Soviet bloc. Even more objectionable to Sloterdijk is the subjective side of ideology critique, which always rests on a problematic reification and depersonalization of the opponent in the first place: enlightenment as a war of consciousness aimed at annihilating the opponent. Thus the focus on the place of subjectivity in ideology critique reveals how the dialectic of domination and exclusion was always already inscribed into the enlightenment, vitiating its claims to universal emancipation. In this far-reaching critique of the deadly mechanisms of ideology critique, Sloterdijk actually continues in an important tradition of Western Marxism that reaches back to Marx himself: the critique of reification. However, he gives it a Nietzschean twist by focusing not on reification through the commodity form

(which he accepts in a weaker, nontotalizing version), but on reification of self and other in presumably enlightened discourse practices.

One of the consequences of Sloterdijk's concern with the subjective effects of cynical reason is that he attempts to address the creeping political disillusionment of the post-1960s era on an existential, subjective level rather than disembodying it into the realm of universal norms or agonistic, free-floating language games without subjects. One need not be fully convinced of Sloterdijk's somatic strategies for overcoming this enlightened false consciousness to see that his analysis of the post-1960s intellectual works as a productive irritant both against the defenders of a Habermasian modernity and against the advocates of a Nietzschean schizo-postmodernity. By addressing the problem of cynical disillusionment head-on and by articulating the basic intellectual problem of our time as that of an "enlightened false consciousness" rather than attacking or defending enlightened rationality, Sloterdijk's essay cuts across the false oppositions, accusations, and counteraccusations that have marred the modernity-postmodernity debate, pushing it ever deeper into a cul-de-sac. From an American perspective one might say that Sloterdijk offers us a sustained polemical reflection on a modernity gone sour and a postmodernity unable to stand on its own feet without constant groping back to what it ostensibly opposes. Rather than seeing enlightenment as the source of all evil in a perspective which became prevalent in France in the post-68 era or condemning the poststructuralist critique of reason as inescapably irrationalist and conservative, Sloterdijk engages the hostile camps in a dizzying dance in which frozen positions are productively set in motion and in which a new figuration of postmodernity emerges, a figuration that seems both more promising and less exclusive than most of the current accounts would seem to permit.

Sloterdijk's questions would then read something like this: How can intellectuals be *Aufklarer* at this precise moment in history? What has happened to enlightenment, to the ideal of rational discourse since the 1960s, and how do we evaluate the strong antirationalist impulse visible in all Western countries today? How does the political and cultural experience of the 1960s stack up against the catastrophic history of the earlier twentieth century? Was the New Left's belief in a regeneration of the enlightenment perhaps naive in the first place? How and in what form can the values of the Enlightenment tradition be sustained in an age that has become more and more disillusioned with me project of enlightened modernity? What forces do we have at hand against the power of instrumental reason and against the cynical reasoning of institutionalized power? How do we define the subject of *Aufklarung* today? How can one remain an *Aufklarer* if the Enlightenment project of disenchanting the world and freeing it from myth and superstition must indeed be turned against enlightened rationality itself? How can we reframe the problems of ideology critique and of subjectivity, falling neither for the armored ego of Kant's epistemological subject nor for the schizosubjectivity without identity, the free flow of libidinal energies proposed by Deleuze and

Guattari? Where in history do we find examples that would anticipate our intellectual dilemma? How can historical memory help us resist the spread of cynical amnesia that generates the simulacrum side of postmodern culture? How can we avoid paralysis, the feeling of history at a standstill that comes with Critical Theory's negative dialectic as much as with the positing of a carceral continuum that occupies central space in recent French accounts of *posthistoire?*

No doubt, Sloterdijk wants to be an *Aufklarer.* He advocates a type of enlightenment that is enlightened about itself. He rejects the new fundamentalism of conservatives and neoconservatives, *and* he criticizes the universalist claims of the classical Enlightenment. Thus he accepts certain important tenets of the poststructuralist critique of the Enlightenment, especially in its Foucaultian version. But he never falls for the facile and fashionable collapsing of reason and totalitarianism, nor for the obsessive French focus, since the 1970s, on incarceration and *le monde concentrationnaire,* the world as concentration camp. (In a curious way this concern of French intellectuals displays the same fixation on the past of which they accuse German Left intellectuals whose obsession with fascism allegedly blinds them to the threat posed by the Soviet Union and the world of the Gulag.) Just as Sloterdijk rejects the timeworn Lukacsian argument that all the roads of irrationality lead into fascism, he also disagrees with "the French position." He refuses to accept the surreptitiously teleological notion that all enlightenment ends in the Gulag or in a concentration camp, which is itself nothing but the reverse of the myth of revolution and emancipation that prevailed in the self-understanding of French intellectuals from Voltaire via Zola to Sartre. To the German critic who was nurtured on Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse in the 1960s, such a one-dimensional proposition could only appear as the dialectic of enlightenment revisited—except that contrary to much of the French Nietzscheanism of the 1970s, Horkheimer and Adorno always held on to a substantive notion of reason and truth that remained, in Kantian terms, the condition of possibility of Critical Theory itself.

While Sloterdijk takes freely from both Critical Theory and poststructuralism, his position remains crucially ambivalent in that he has as much trouble with the "truth" of Critical Theory as with the total dissolution of truth, reason, and subjectivity in certain radical forms of poststructuralism. His text oscillates provocatively between Frankfurt and Paris. At times it appears to blend Critical Theory with poststructuralism; at others it rather seems to operate like a collage of various theoretical *objets trouves.* At any rate, Sloterdijk's intention is to move beyond the propositions of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment, and* to evade the post-Nietzschean compulsion to collapse knowledge and power. In that aim—and *only* in the aim—he might be said to approach Habermas, whose model of consensus and free dialogue he accepts as a "heeling fiction" (chapter 2) but rejects as an adequate description of the post-1960s status quo. In an era of widespread diffuse cynicism in which the traditional subject of critical knowledge and all central per-

spectives of critique seem to have been pulverized, Sloterdijk constructs a new model of localized conflict that seeks literally to embody another reason, another enlightenment, another subjectivity. He proposes to turn the disillusionment with enlightened modernity away from melancholy and cynicism and to make lost illusions productive for an enlightened thought on anodier level. He wants to achieve this goal by reclaiming a tradition of rationality from which the modern scientific enlightenment, much to its detriment, has cut itself loose: the tradition of kynicism, embodied in Diogenes, who privileged satirical laughter, sensuality, the politics of the body, and a pleasure-oriented life as forms of resistance to the master narratives of Platonic idealism, the values of me polis, and the imperial claims of Alexander the Great.

II

Nevertheless, Sloterdijk's starting point remains Adorno and Horkheimer's pessimistic work and its radical critique of instrumental reason and identity metaphysics. The *Critique of Cynical Reason* could indeed be read as a postmodern pastiche of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* a pastiche, however, that retains me memory of the pain and anger of Adorno's melancholy science and that sympathizes with the rejection of a patriarchal world in which reason has become a strategic tool for the domination of inner and outer nature. If it is pastiche, however, it is not so in the sense that Jameson has defined as one of the major modes of postmodern cultural production.[2] Jameson sees pastiche as imitating a peculiar mask, as speech in a dead language, as a neutral practice of mimicry that has abandoned the satirical impulse still inherent in parody, that major stylistic strategy of modernism out of which pastiche is said to evolve. And he goes on to claim that producers of culture today "have nowhere to turn but to the past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global cultulre."[3] Jameson clearly sees postmodern pastiche negatively as a "random cannibalization of all styles of the past," and much of postmodernism can indeed be described in this way. In fact, even Sloterdijk could be said to cannibalize a number of different styles and modes of expression-the polished aphorism, the anecdote, the suggestive style of the feuilleton, satire, serious philosophical discourse, the discourses of literary and intellectual history-mixing mem in a kind of patchwork that prevents the emergence of a unitary style in the traditional modernist sense and that evades the requirements of a rigorous philosophical discourse.

But this is also the point where Sloterdijk's pastiche is no longer grasped by Jameson's characterizations. The *Critique of Cynical Reason* is not "blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs."[4] Sloterdijk's pastiche is endowed, from the very beginning, with a combative impulse, and his text asserts a notion of an embodied subjectivity. Memory and anamnesis keep it from going blind, and the

kynical impulse of *Frechheit* makes this pastiche come alive as self-assertive body. It is a philosophical pastiche that remains self-consciously satirical and never denies its substantive ties to the tradition of literary modernism and the historical avant-garde. Rather than postmodern in Jameson's sense, suspended, as it were, in the gap between signifier and signified, Sloterdijk's relationship to the discourses of various disciplines and media is Brechtian, even though without Brecht's Leninist politics, in that it has definite purposes, makes contingent arguments, and uses traditions critically to its own advantage. In this sense, Sloterdijk's work could be claimed for a critical and adversarial postmodernism, a postmodernism of resistance, as some critics have called it.

At the same time, Sloterdijk's text is postmodern in yet another sense. The *Critique of Cynical Reason* lacks the metaphysical backlighting that still hovers on the horizon of Adorno's critique of the metaphysics of reason, and that in general haunts much of literary and philosophical modernism. Thus in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* mat central text of philosophical high modernism, the struggle of reason against mythic nature that brings about the inescapably fatal reversal of reason into myth, of self-preservation into self-denial, is itself a metaphysical figure. Adorno's relation to metaphysics as the pretext of his critical work is as emphatically strong as Derrida's two decades later. Both Critical Theory and deconstruction, primarily through their readings of Nietzsche, actually ground a whole philosophy of history in their ideas about the rise and fall of metaphysics. But as Sloterdijk says, this notion of a breakdown, of a collapse, is today inadequate: "Metaphysical systems do not 'fall,' but fade, seep away, stagnate, become boring, old hat, unimportant, and improbable." (chapter 10, n. 16).

Instead of a totalizing unraveling of enlightenment and Western metaphysics (interpreted along the lines, say, of "phallogocentrism") or of an equally one-sided normative defense of enlightened modernity (interpreted along the lines of communicative reason), Sloterdijk gives us an account of the operations of enlightened reason in history as a series of combative constellations without ground, without beginning and without telos: enlightenment as the eternal return of the same. As he tries to avoid any teleological account of the history of enlightenment, he presents us with the ineradicable return of the struggle between opposing consciousnesses: the cynicism of power and its institutions (in the realms of politics, the military, religion, knowledge, sexuality, and medicine) vs. the kynical revolt from below, which responds to the cynicism of domination with satirical laughter, defiant body action, or strategic silence. Sloterdijk's description of cynicism and kynicism, repression and resistance, as a constant of history can be criticized as lacking historical specificity, but given the parameters of the current debate on postmodernity it has the advantage of making the fear of total closure suddenly appear to be as delusive and irrelevant as the hope for total emancipation, the first actually being nothing so much as a binary reversal of the latter, a reversal of the messianic millenarianisms of the early twentieth century into the

catastrophic dystopias of our own time. Sloterdijk would be the last to forget the experiences of twentieth-century totalitarianisms; after all, his thought is grounded in the tortured insights of Critical Theory and cannot be accused of amnesia. But he does refuse the metaphysics of totality that still characterizes so much of contemporary European thought, even if in the form of radical negation. He refuses it in order to salvage the discourse of emancipation, shorn of its universalist claims and brought down to a localizable human dimension. With Adorno, Sloterdijk insists that one of the main problems with the Enlightenment was its inability to include the body and the senses in its project of emancipation. He therefore attempts to reconstitute *Aujklarung* on the limited basis of what he calls physiognomic thought, embodied thought, arguing for enlightenment as *Selbsterfahrung* rather than self-denial. The mythic model for the kind of somatic anarchism he advocates is the Greek kynic Diogenes, the plebeian outsider inside the walls of the city who challenged state and community through loud satirical laughter and who lived an animalist philosophy of survival and happy refusal.

But let's make no mistake. We are not just facing a return of the tired existentialist notion of the individual vs. society, the outsider vs. the group, the margin vs. the center. Nor is Sloterdijk's resurrection of Diogenes merely a nostalgia for the protest strategies of the 1960s shorn of their collective dimension and reduced to a kind of Stirnerian philosophy of the individual, self-identical body. Sloterdijk fully grasps the dialectic of exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, body and power, and the reproach, often leveled against him, that he constructs a merely binary opposition between cynicism and kynicism simply misses the mark. After all, the cynic as disillusioned and pessimistic rationalist is as far beyond the belief in idealism, stable values, and human emancipation as the kynic is. Thus rather than positing a binary opposition of cynicism vs. kynicism, Sloterdijk postulates the split within the cynical phenomenon itself, which pits the cynical reason of domination and self-domination against the kynic revolt of self-assertion and self-realization. He mobilizes the kynical potential of the Diogenes tradition against a prevailing cynicism that successfully combines enlightenment with resignation and apathy. But it is precisely the moment of a disillusioned enlightenment in cynicism itself that-and this must be Sloterdijk's hope-might make it susceptible to the temptation of kynical self-assertion. Here it becomes clear that Sloterdijk's Diogenes strategy is directed primarily at those who still suffer, however subliminally, from enlightened false consciousness, not at the real cynics of domination or at those leaders of the contemporary world who mistake their own cynical politics for a return to old values, a form of unenlightened cynicism to which Sloterdijk pays scant attention. Sloterdijk is right in reminding us that the domination through instrumental or cynical reason can never be total and that the masochism of refusal or the melancholy about an irrevocable loss of happiness, that double heritage of Critical Theory, has today lost its offensive potential and reinforces the enlightened false consciousness it should help to dismantle.

Thus Sloterdijk answers Adorno's melancholy science with a kind of *Erheiterungsarbeit,* a "work that entertains" (Preface) and is based on what he calls the "embodying of reason" (Preface). He carnivalizes the frozen landscape of negative dialectics, and mobilizes the kynical body of Diogenes against the cunning of Odysseus, that master-cynic of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* who pays the price of self-denial in order to survive in his struggles with the mythic powers, the Cyclops and the Sirens. Where Adorno's Odysseus embodies what Sloterdijk calls "self-splitting in repression" (chapter 8), the ultimately unhappy consciousness of the modern cynic, Diogenes comes to represent the "self-embodiment in resistance" (chapter 8), an enlightened affirmation of a laughing, excreting, and masturbating body that actually undercuts the modern notion of a stable identity, attacks the armored, self-preserving, and rationalizing ego of capitalist culture, and dissolves its strict separations of inside and outside, private and public, self and other.

On one level Sloterdijk's return to the kynic body may appear as a merely adolescent and regressive gesture whose potential for effective resistance is a priori contained and even vitiated by the way in which sexuality, the body, the corporeal have been deployed, instrumentalized, and co-opted by the contemporary culture industry. If, as Sloterdijk would have to be the first to admit, the body itself is a historical construct, how can the mere impudence of the postmodern Diogenes hope to break through the layers of reification and power inscriptions which Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault have so cogently analyzed? And how would Sloterdijk counter a Foucaultian claim that the resistance of the self-conscious body is produced by the culture of cynicism itself as a regenerating and legitimating device? It is indeed questionable to what extent Diogenesian protest gestures could be more effective politically than traditional ideology critique combined with organized mass protests and group politics. Unless, of course, Diogenes's aim were to create a "counterpublic sphere," a kind of *Gegenöffentlichkeit* as Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge have theorized it. Precisely this broader dimension is absent from Diogenes's politics.

But the return to the body in Sloterdijk is never an end in itself, and we may have to look for its politics on another level. Enlightenment as *Selbsterfahrung* through the body tries to unearth a register of subjectivity buried in the civilizing process that produced the Western self-identical subject over the centuries. To that rational male subject, whose ultimate manifestation for Sloterdijk is the nuclear bomb and its identity of self-preservation and self-destruction, Sloterdijk opposes an alternative subjectivity, a vision of an actual softening and liquefying of subjects:

> Our true self-experience in original Nobodiness remains in this world buried under taboo and panic. Basically, however, no life has a name. The self-conscious Nobody in us—who acquires names and identities

only through its social birth—remains the living source of freedom. The living Nobody, in spite of the horror of socialization, remembers the energetic paradises beneath the personalities. Its life soil is the mentally alert body, which we should call not *nobody* but *yesbody* and which is able to develop in the course of individuation from an areflexive "narcissism" to a reflected "self-discovery in the world-cosmos." In this Nobody, the last enlightenment, as critique of the illusion of privacy and egoism, comes to an end. (chapter 3)

It is in the discussion of this self-conscious nobody that both Sloterdijk's closeness to and distance from Adorno become emblematically visible. He reinterprets the famous passage in Homer's *Odyssey* where Odysseus, in a lightning flash of foresight, answers the Cyclops's request for his name by saying: "Nobody is my name." This ruse saves Odysseus's and his companions' lives because the blinded Cyclops fails to get help from his peers when he tells them: "Friends, nobody slays me with cunning," thus causing them to walk away laughing and to ignore his predicament.

For Adorno, it is all in the name. In the struggle of reason against the mythic powers of nature, the very act of physical self-preservation implies the sacrifice of the self. Identity appears as based on self-denial, an argument Adorno makes even more powerfully in his reading of the Siren episode in the *Odyssey*. For Sloterdijk, on the other hand, it is all in the conscious body. Rather than seeing Odysseus's denial of his identity as a fatal first step in the constitution of Western subjectivity, Sloterdijk emphasizes the positive aspect of physical survival, and in a Brechtian move he praises the discovery of nobodiness in the moment of danger as a welcome expansion of subjectivity: "The Utopia of conscious life was and remains a world in which we all have the right to be Odysseus and to let that Nobody live." (chapter 3) In emphasizing the importance of experiencing preindividual emptiness, the nobody, Sloterdijk moves toward a realm of non-Western mysticism that would have been quite foreign to Adorno's historically rooted reflection. At the same time it is significant that Sloterdijk does want to rescue Odysseus, that prototype of Western rationality, for the kind of alternative enlightenment that he has in mind. He advocates the expansion of the rational self into the body and through the body to a state of nondifferentiation that would, however, remain in constant tension with kynical self-assertion. Contrary to Buddhist asceticism, which aims at a transcendence of the individual body, contrary also to a Nietzschean negation of individuation, Sloterdijk maintains an affirmation of the body as "yesbody," and it is the permanent oscillation, as it were, between yesbody and nobody that undermines the pathology of identity and guarantees the expansion of the boundaries of subjectivity, Sloterdijk's central concern.

Sloterdijk's concept of a new, kynical subjectivity aims at nothing less than a new, postindustrial reality principle that contrary to the Deleuzian scheme of the schizobody would acknowledge the necessary and productive contradiction be-

tween a unified physical body and processes of psychic deterritorialization. In an age in which traditional rationality has revealed itself as the "principle of self-preservation gone wild" (chapter 9) and the political pathology of overkill presents itself as realism, Sloterdijk sees the only chance for survival in a reversal of the civilizing process itself, which has created the dominant Western mindset of "hard subjects, hard facts, hard politics, and hard business" (chapter 9). To the privileging of distance and objectification in the culture of modernity, Sloterdijk's physiognomic thought opposes a sense of warmth and intimacy, convivial knowledge, and a "libidinous closeness to the world that compensates for the objectifying drive toward the domination of things" (chapter 6). Here it becomes clear that his approach shares much common ground with critiques of Western rationality and patriarchy as they have been articulated in ecological, psychoanalytic, and feminist discourse. But this is also where a number of problems emerge. When Sloterdijk claims that *we* are the bomb, the fulfillment of the Western subject, he clearly has the reified, rational male subject in mind. The question of women's subjectivity and its relationship to the cynicism-kynicism constellation is never really explored, and the presentation of Phyllis and Xanthippe as female kynics is, to put it mildly, disappointing. What *are* women to do while Diogenes "pisses against the idealist wind," and how do they participate in or counteract the cynicism of domination? Is kynicism really the only possible way of acting and speaking in a different voice? I think Sloterdijk could have strengthened his case by focusing more thoroughly on the problem of gender and by asking himself to what extent his critique of male identity pathology might actually be indebted to feminist perspectives. A politics of a new subjectivity today makes sense only if gender difference is explored and theorized. Otherwise one runs the danger of reproducing the exclusionary strategies of the Enlightenment yet another time. Important as the argument for a new politics of subjectivity is, Sloterdijk's male kynicism remains ultimately unsatisfactory.

But then one might want to go further and ask whether the cynicism-kynicism constellation is not itself the problem. The very strength of Sloterdijk's construction—the fact that he avoids a merely binary opposition-may also imply a weakness. I am not only referring here to the fact that the kynical attack on the cynicism of domination itself has to rely inevitably on a heavy dose of cynicism. Such cynicism of the kynic is, of course, not in the service of domination. It nevertheless depends on the logic of hostility that the new reality principle of a softened, flexible subjectivity is supposed to overcome. It is difficult for me to imagine a nonhostile, nonobjectifying satirical laughter, and Sloterdijk never really addresses the question of what kynics actually do to the persons they laugh at. The question here would be whether Sloterdijk's immanent dialectic of cynicism-kynicism does not ultimately hold him captive to what he wants to overcome.

If that were the case, the possibility emerges that the kynic may himself be sim-

ply a cynic in disguise. Throughout his book, Sloterdijk describes Diogenes as something of a loner, and when he talks about his new physiognomic thought he praises the conviviality with things rather than that with human beings. The whole spectrum of what the Germans call *Beziehungsprobleme* (the politics of the personal), which has occupied so much space in the psychopolitics of the 1970s, seems strangely blocked out. What about cynicism and ways of overcoming it in the relations between lovers and friends, husbands and wives, children and parents? What about relations at the workplace, in institutions, in leisure activities? Instead of a plausible focus on intersubjective relations, the ultimate testing ground of any new subjectivity, we get Sloterdijk's odd suggestion that we should take the bomb as the Buddha of the West, the source of negative illuminations, of enlightening *Selbsterfahrung*. What the Cyclops was for Odysseus, so it seems, the bomb is for us: the moment of danger in which we find our own nobodiness, in which we understand what it would be like "to explode into the cosmos with a complete dissolution of the self (chapter 5). Here Sloterdijk's constructive project to transform the reality principle itself by abandoning the "armed subjectivity of our callousness *ratio* (chapter 9) and by creating a new subjectivity, a new reason, veers off into a well-known male fascination with the machinery of technological destruction. Sloterdijk's meditations on the bomb, which to him are pivotal to achieving the desired breakthrough to the new horizon of another enlightenment, turn the movement of his own thought back into the cold current of cynicism he had set out to escape, and he comes dangerously close to rewriting the romantic death wish in its postmodern form. When Sloterdijk approximates Diogenes' satirical laughter to the mocking smile of the bomb and talks about the "pandemonium and laughter . . . at the core of the igniting explosive mass" (chapter 5), the kynic can no longer be distinguished from the cynic. Is Sloterdijk displaying kynical strategies or cynical attitudes? It is anybody's guess.

If indeed the cosmic laughter of the nuclear holocaust were the ultimate chance for realizing the kynical nobody, then one might want to rely after all and against better insight on the precarious rationality of overkill and madness as a strategy of survival. Perhaps there was always already too much rather than too little nobodiness in the dominant Western forms of rationality and subjectivity. Perhaps Adorno was right after all when his terrified gaze saw nothing but destructive self-denial in Odysseus's tricksterism.

Ill

However, the *Critique of Cynical Reason* does not simply invalidate itself here as an effective critique of contemporary culture. Its analysis of postenlightened cynicism penetrates to the core of the contemporary malaise, and the new "gay science" Sloterdijk proposes is never so gay as to make us forget the wounds and

vulnerabilities from which it springs. Certainly, the critique of postmodern cyni-
cism as enlightened false consciousness can stand apart from the somatic strate-
gies of Diogenes' new gay science. It is striking though to see how Sloterdijk's
text oscillates strangely between an apocalyptic sensibility and a metaphysics of
disaster on the one hand and the hope for self-realization in a new enlightenment,
a philosophy of survival, on the other. In that oscillation Sloterdijk's text yields
to the pressures of the German culture of the missile crisis, the *Aussteiger*
(dropouts), and the antinuke movement of the early 1980s, a culture of an
apocalyptic consciousness which is quite reminiscent of certain apocalyptic
trends in Weimar culture and which, in typically German ways, takes Baudrillard
at his word when he claims that the real nuclear event has already taken place.[5]

Although the Diogenes in Sloterdijk ultimately keeps him from embracing a
postmodern aesthetics of collective suicide as the last chance of self-realization,[6]
his views on history come problematically close to the German prophecy of apoc-
alypse. This is true not only for his meditations on the bomb and the speculations
about the promises of the nobody, but more importantly for the ways in which
he interprets Weimar as the *Grunderzeit* of modern cynicism and strategically
places this "Historical Main Text", which comprises almost one-fourth of the total
work, at the very end of his book.

Ostensibly, Sloterdijk returns to Weimar because it was in those fourteen years
between the humiliations of a lost war resulting in Versailles and Hitler's ascent
to power that the cynical structure first emerged as culturally dominant. While
today's cynicism is bureaucratic and apathetic, anesthetized, as it were, to its own
pains, the culture of Weimar is still fully conscious of the losses and sufferings
that come with modernization. Nevertheless Sloterdijk speaks emphatically of a
"reconstructed proximity of experience" (chapter 12) between Weimar and the
present, and he argues that it needed the cynicism of our own time to read Weimar
culture as representing a "summit of cynical structures" (chapter 12). Sloterdijk
rejects both the nostalgic-archaeological approach to Weimar culture, which
played such a large role in the cultural constitution of the New Left in Germany,
and the apologetic political approach, which sees Weimar only as a temporal
prefascism, an "augury of political ethics" (chapter 12), only good to teach FRG
and GDR "Democrats" how to avoid the mistakes of the past. While Sloterdijk
sees those views of Weimar as projections, "images in a historical gallery of mir-
rors" (chapter 12), he claims to offer a historically more adequate account of Wei-
mar culture. I agree by and large with his critique of accounts of Weimar as
nostalgia and apologia, and I find his focus on Weimar cynicism fascinating,
novel in its insistence on the centrality of the phenomenon, and often brilliant.
It is hard to forget Sloterdijk's analyses of Heidegger's "Man" (Anyone) or of the
ambivalences of Dada and its semantic cynicism, his descriptions of the historical
and physical contingencies of Weimar subjectivities, the trauma of the trenches
and the reality of prostheses, the "cubist mentality" and the "cosmetic realism" of

the emerging *Angestelltenkultur* (white-collar culture) as Kracauer has called it. Weimar cynicism appears here as the result of a fundamental crisis of male identity after defeat, and Sloterdijk is certainly right in presenting (not unlike Klaus Theweleit) the major front formations on the Right and on the Left as attempts to restore masculinity, to shore up a sense of identity and boundaries, both psychologically and politically. He never discusses how Weimar women figure in this struggle, but for once the masculine inscriptions in cynicism and kynicism (e.g., the section on Brecht and sexual cynicism) are made quite explicit in the Weimar sections of the book.

And yet, one may want to ask whether there is not a hidden agenda to Sloterdijk's account of Weimar as well, whether we have not just entered another room in the same historical gallery of mirrors from which Sloterdijk wants us to escape. That in itself would not be a criticism so much as an acknowledgment that no historical narrative will ever be entirely free from the interests and pressures of the present. But it is die nature of the pressures that makes me skeptical about Sloterdijk's account. If indeed there is a tension in his writing between catastrophism and hope, which many of us would probably share in our own perceptions of the contemporary world, then this crucial chapter on Weimar cynicism would actually tend to obliterate that tension and lock us into the catastrophic mentality, abolishing all ambivalence and ultimately closing down the space for kynical resistance. Sloterdijk analyzes Weimar cynicism cogently as a symptom of cultural pathology, representative of times of declining class domination, of the "decadence and indiscriminate disinhibition of the ruling strata." Even if one does not espouse a teleological view of history, it is difficult to forget that Weimar cynicism *did* end in fascism and the holocaust. Sloterdijk himself is the first to admit that the cynical disposition of a whole culture is typically found in prewar periods in which neither intelligence nor good intentions may be enough to stop the race toward disaster. What good, then, can Diogenes do today? How would his satirical laughter differ from that hellish laughter of the apocalypse the chilling effects of which Thomas Mann invoked in *Doktor Faustus ?* Is Sloterdijk not again flirting with catastrophe? If Weimar were indeed the model for the present, would that not make our fate just as inescapable as today's prophets of nuclear disaster in Germany like to proclaim? After all, the holocaust already took place.

It seems to me that Sloterdijk's fascination with Weimar cynicism, to which we owe some of the best writing about Weimar in recent years, locks him into a teleological view of contemporary developments despite himself. Since he never elaborates in any detail on the implied historical comparison between Weimar and contemporary culture, it is difficult for the reader to escape the conclusion that our fate has already been sealed, with or without Diogenes. Only such a comparison could dispel the temptation of cultural despair and give us some indication whether Sloterdijk's critique of identity pathology and his project of developing a new reality principle is more than wishful thinking. But it is precisely

this project that poses a significant challenge to contemporary thought and politics in which the very real deconstructions of multinational capitalism and French theory face off with conservative attempts to reconstruct the basics in education, social life, and international politics. Unless critical intellectuals understand the *new* appeal of old values as new, rather than simply as a continuation of "bourgeois" identity formation and ideology, the genuine insights of poststructuralist theory will come to naught. The challenge posed by the *Critique of Cynical Reason* to deconstructionists and reconstructionists alike has been well put by Leslie Adelson in a very perceptive review of Sloterdijk's book. The central question is "how to relinquish the obsession with a fixed identity opposed to all Others *without* abandoning whatever identity is needed, first to perceive and then to end very real and institutionalized forms of oppression."[7] Sloterdijk hopes to achieve this with the help of Diogenes and a regeneration of the kynical impulse, a solution that may fall short of the forbidding complexities of the task. But however limited one may hold the Diogenes strategy to be in a broader political sense, Sloterdijk is not a renegade of the Enlightenment, and he does not simply advocate carnival on the volcano. In his concluding pages, he finally does reject the temptation of apocalypse, and he denounces the boom in disaster prophecies itself as an outflow of cynicism. It is here that he returns unabashedly to the Kant of "Was ist Aufklarung?" of 1784: "Sapere aude! remains the motto of an enlightenment that, even in the twilight of the most recent dangers, resists intimidation by catastrophe. Only out of its courage can a future still unfold that would be more than the expanded reproduction of the worst in the past" (Conclusion). This minimalism of hope in the face of maximal possible catastrophe renders an aspect of our postmodernity that it is as important to recognize and to nurture as it is to criticize that enlightened false consciousness that Sloterdijk impels us to acknowledge as one of the most dangerous symptoms of our culture. The historical truth content of Sloterdijk's book lies precisely in the tensions and oscillations between apocalypse and hope that the text refuses to reconcile.

Notes

1. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago, 1983), p. 216. It should be said that Foucault speaks only to a minor, if well-known text in Kant's oeuvre. The fact that Kant's subject is ultimately as unhistorical and universal as that of Descartes and partakes in the same problematic trajectory of the construction of Western rationality was already well worked out by Adorno and has recently been substantiated in new ways by Hartmut and Gernot Bohme in *Das Andere der Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983). Nevertheless, Foucault's brief observations here point to his own commitment to a form of enlightenment that has not severed all its ties to the by now notorious siecle des lumieres.

2. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146(July/August 1984):53-92.

3. *Ibid.,* p. 65.

4. *Ibid.*

5. In: *Der Tod der Moderne. Eine Diskussion* (Tubingen, 1983), p. 104.

6. For a critique of Baudrillard and Lyotard and their reception in West Germany, see Klaus R. Scherpe, "Dramatisierung und Entdramatisierung des Untergangs: Zum asthetischen Bewusstsein von Moderne und Postmoderne," in Andreas Huyssen and Klaus R. Scherpe, eds., *Postmoderne: Zeichen eines kulturellen Wandels* (Rowohlt, 1986), pp. 270-301. *American translation in Cultural Critique* 5 (Winter 1986-87).

7. Leslie A. Adelson, "Against the Enlightenment: A Theory with Teeth for the 1980s," *German Quarterly* 57(Fall 1984):631.

Preface

Beat the drum and have no fear
And kiss the camp follower!
That is the whole of science,
That is the deepest of books' meaning.
　　　　　Heinrich Heine, *Doktrin*

The great defect of German thinkers
is that they have no sense
for irony, cynicism, the grotesque,
contempt, and mockery.
　　Otto Flake, *Deutsch-Franzosisches*
　　　　　　　　(1912)

For a century now philosophy has been lying on its deathbed, but it cannot die because it has not fulfilled its task. Its farewell thus has been tortuously drawn out. Where it has not foundered in the mere administration of thoughts, it plods on in glittering agony, realizing what it forgot to say during its lifetime. Faced with its demise, it would like now to be honest and reveal its last secret. It confesses: The great themes, they were evasions and half-truths. Those futile, beautiful, soaring flights—God, Universe, Theory, Praxis, Subject, Object, Body, Spirit, Meaning, Nothingness — all that is nothing. They are nouns for young people, for outsiders, clerics, sociologists. "Words, words —nouns. They need only to open their wings, and millennia fall out of their flight." (Gottfried Benn, *Epilog und lyrisches Ich*).

The last philosophy, willing to confess, treats such things under a historical rubric—together with the sins of youth. Their time has come. In our thinking there is no longer any spark of the uplifting flight of concepts or of the ecstasies of understanding. We are enlightened, we are apathetic. No one talks anymore of a *love* of wisdom. There is no longer any knowledge whose friend *(philos)* one could be. It does not occur to us to love the kind of knowledge we have; rather we ask ourselves how we might contrive to live with it without becoming ossified.

What is presented here under a title that alludes to the great traditions is a meditation on the sentence "Knowledge is power." This is the sentence that dug the grave of philosophy in the nineteenth century. It sums up philosophy and is at the same time its first confession, with which the century-long agony begins. This sentence brings to an end the tradition of a knowledge that, as its name indicates,

was an erotic theory —the love of truth and the truth through love *(Lie-beswahrheii)*. From the corpse of philosophy arose the modern sciences and theories of power in the nineteenth century in the form of political science, theory of class struggle, technocracy, vitalism, and in every form armed to the teeth. "Knowledge is power *(Wissen ist Macht)."* This sentence fixed the course for the unavoidable politicization of thinking. Those who utter the sentence reveal the truth. However, with the utterance they want to achieve more than truth: They want to intervene in the game of power.

At the same time as Nietzsche began to expose a *will to power* behind every will to know, the old German social democracy exhorted its members to participate in the race for knowledge that is power. Where Nietzsche's insights were intended to be "dangerously" cold and without illusions, social democracy behaved pragmatically —and exhibited a middle-class joy in cultivation. Both spoke of power: Nietzsche by undermining bourgeois idealism with vitalism; the Social Democrats by seeking to gain access to the middle classes' opportunities for power through "cultivation." Nietzsche taught a realism that was supposed to make it easy for the upcoming generations of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois to take their farewell from idealistic absurdities, which curbed the will to power. Social democracy strove for participation in an idealism that to that point had carried the promise of power within itself. In Nietzsche the middle classes could study the subtleties and clever crassness of a will to power that had lost its ideals, while the workers' movement looked furtively at an idealism that better suited its still naive will to power.

Around 1900 the radical left wing had caught up with the right-wing cynicism of the masters. The race between the cynical-defensive consciousness of the old bearers of power and the Utopian-offensive consciousness of the new bearers created the political-moral drama of the twentieth century. In the race for the hardest awareness of hard facts, the Devil and Beelzebub trained one another. Out of the competition of consciousnesses arose that twilight characteristic of the present: the mutual spying out of ideologies, the assimilation of antagonisms, the modernization of fraud-in short, that situation that forces the philosopher into the void where liars call liars liars.

We detect a second aspect in Nietzsche that is relevant to contemporary times, after the first, Fascist, Nietzsche wave has ebbed. Once more it becomes clear how Western civilization has worn out its Christian costume. After the decades of reconstruction and the decade of Utopias and "alternatives," it is as if a naive elan had suddenly been lost. Catastrophies are conjured up, new values find ready markets, like all analgesics. However, the times are cynical and know: New values have short lives. Being concerned, caring about people, securing peace, feeling responsible, caring about the quality of life and about the environment-none of that really works. Just bide your time. Cynicism stands ready in the back-

Neo-"Cyniker." Nietzsche, the thinker of ambivalence.

ground, until the palaver has stopped and things take their course. Our lethargic
modernity certainly knows how to "think historically," but it has long doubted that
it lives in a meaningful history. "No need for world history."

The eternal recurrence of the Same, Nietzsche's most subversive thought —
cosmologically untenable, but culturally and morphologically fruitful —is an apt
description of a resurgence of "kynical" *("kynisch")*[1] motives that had developed
to conscious life especially during the time of the Roman emperors, but also to
some extent in the Renaissance. The Same: Those are the rappings of a sober,
pleasure-oriented life that has learned to live with circumstances. To be ready for

anything, that makes one invulnerably clever. Live in spite of history; existential reduction; socialization "as if; irony about politics; mistrust toward "plans." A new heathen culture that does not believe in life after death and so must seek life before death.

Nietzsche's decisive self-characterization, often overlooked, is that of a "cynic" *(Cyniker); with this* he became, next to Marx, the most momentous thinker of the century. Nietzsche's "cynicism" *(Cynismus)* offers a modified approach to "saying the truth": It is one of strategy and tactics, suspicion and disinhibition, pragmatics and instrumentalism—all this in the hands of a political ego that minks first and foremost about itself, an ego that is inwardly adroit and outwardly armored.

The violent, antirationalistic impulse in Western countries is reacting to an intellectual state of affairs in which all thinking has become strategy; this impulse shows a disgust for a certain form of self-preservation. It is a sensitive shivering from the cold breath of a reality where knowledge is power and power is knowledge. In writing, I have thought of readers, have wished for readers, who feel this way; this book, I think, could have something to say to them.

The old social democracy had announced the slogan Knowledge is Power as a practical and reasonable prescription. It did not think too much about it. The message was simply that one has to learn something real so that life will be better later. A petit-bourgeois belief in schooling had dictated the slogan. This belief is disintegrating today. Only for our cynical young medicos is there still a clear link between study and standard of living. Almost everyone else lives with the risk of learning without prospects. Those who do not seek power will also not want its knowledge, its knowledge-armaments, and those who reject both are secretly no longer citizens of this civilization. Countless numbers of people are no longer prepared to believe that one first has to "learn something" so that things will be better later. In these people, I believe, a suspicion is growing that was a certainty in ancient cynicism *(Kynismus):* that things must first be better before you can learn anything sensible. Socialization through schooling, as it takes place here, and in Western societies, in general, is a priori stupefaction, after which scarcely any learning offers a prospect that things sometime or other will improve. The inversion of the relation between life and learning is in the air: the end of the belief in education, the end of European Scholasticism. That is what conservatives as well as pragmatists, voyeurs of the decline as well as well-meaning individuals alike find so eerie. Basically, no one believes anymore that today's learning solves tomorrow's "problems"; it is almost certain rather that it causes them.

Why a "Critique of Cynical Reason"? How can I defend myself against the charge of having written a thick book at a time when even thinner books are considered impudent? As is proper, we should distinguish the occasion from the reason and the motive.

The Occasion

This year (1981) is the 200th anniversary of the publication of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*—a date in world history. Seldom has there been a jubilee as dull as this one. It is a sober celebration; the scholars keep to themselves. Six hundred Kant experts gathered in Mainz—that does not produce a carnival atmosphere, at most endless paper streamers. An imagination would be useful: to picture what would happen if the celebrated figure were to appear among the contemporaries . . . Is it not a sad festival where the invited guests secretly hope that the person being celebrated is prevented from appearing because those who constantly invoke him would have to be ashamed on his arrival? How would we look to the penetratingly human eye of the philosopher?

Who could bring himself to give Kant a summary of history since 1795, the year in which the philosopher published his essay *On Perpetual Peace?* Who would have the nerve to inform him about the state of the Enlightenment—the emancipation of humanity from "self-imposed dependency"? Who would be so frivolous as to explain to him Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach"? I imagine that Kant's splendid humor would help us out of our stunned state. He was, after all, an individual of the late eighteenth century, when even the rationalists were not yet as rigid as some today who pretend to be so free and easy.

Scarcely anyone has occupied himself with Kant without touching on the enigma of his physiognomy. Applying the Roman rule of thumb *mens sana in corpore sano*[2] does not help us grasp his appearance at all. If it is true that the "Spirit" seeks the appropriate body, in Kant's case it must have been a spirit who found pleasure in physiognomic ironies and psychosomatic paradoxes; a spirit who hid a great soul in a small, gaunt body, an upright stride under a bent back, and a gregarious, delicately cordial humor in a hypochondriacal, compulsive temperament, as if to play a joke on the later devotees of the vital and the athletic.

The physiognomic enigma of Kant is scarcely solved through his personality but rather through his position in the history of ideas and of sensuousness. The Age of the Enlightenment pushed the dialectic of understanding and sensuousness to the breaking point. The traces of such tensions run through the whole of Kant's work. The language of his main works reveals the violence that the process of thinking—especially in a German mind—inflicts on the sensuous. The fact that a poet like Gottfried Benn, himself stamped by the spirit of the century of natural science, could strike back against such violence by rebuking the philosopher for being a "violator of the intellect" shows how modern cynicism can become the sounding board for cogent insights against the erstwhile greatness of Knowing *(Erkenntnis)* that aims at the notoriously broken relation between intellect and sensuousness. Robert Musil, surely a guarantor of rationality even beyond the limits in which it feels secure, has captured the experience of a reading of Kant in a memorable passage of his *Confusions of the Pupil Torless.*

In fact, Torless that very morning had bought the Reclam edition of that volume that he had seen at his professor's and used the first recess to begin reading it. However, because of the profusion of brackets and footnotes he didn't understand a single word, and, when he conscientiously followed the sentences with his eyes, it was as if an old bony hand were slowly screwing his brain out of his head.

When he stopped in exhaustion after about half an hour, he had only reached the second page, and sweat stood on his brow.

But then he gritted his teeth and read again one page further, until the recess was over.

By evening, however, he did not even want to touch the book. Fear? Repulsion? He didn't quite know. Only one thing tortured him with burning clarity, that the professor, this person, who didn't look like much, had the book lying around openly in his room, as if it were for him a daily conversation, (pp. 84-85)

The delicate empiricism of this sketch awakens understanding of two things: the fascination of the book and the pain it inflicts on sensitive young readers. Does not an ingenuous contact with Kantian thinking, with philosophical thinking in general, contain the risk of exposing a young consciousness to a violent and sudden aging? What of a youthful will to know is preserved in a philosophy that makes one dizzy with its bony spiraling turns of the screw? Is what we want to know found at the top end of the screw? Are we ourselves not perhaps so twisted at the head of the screw that we will be satisfied with what we now think we know? And what does it mean that people for whom Kantian thinking is "daily conversation" don't "look like much"? Does it mean that philosophy no longer leaves any trace in life and that reality is one thing and philosophy is something hopelessly different?

From die style of philosophers physiognomic forms look out at us, forms in which reason has hidden aspects of its essential character. To be "reasonable" means to put oneself into a special, rarely happy relation to the sensuous. "Be reasonable" means, practically speaking, do not trust your impulses, do not listen to your body, learn control, starting with your own sensuousness. But intellect and sensuousness are inseparable. Torless's outbreak of sweating after two pages of the *Critique of Pure Reason* contains as much truth as the whole of Kantianism. The understood mutual interaction of physis and logos is philosophy, not what is spoken. In the future, only a physiognomist can be a philosopher who does not lie. Physiognomic thinking offers a chance to escape from the regime of disembodied and tiierefore evil minds. To announce a new critique of reason also means to have a philosophical physiognomy in mind; that is not, as with Adorno, "aesthetic theory," but a theory of consciousness with flesh and blood (and teeth).

As things are, there are grounds not for a celebratory writing *(Festschrift)* but rather for a writing celebration *(Schriftfest)* that makes a long detour around the

celebrated person out of a liking for the author. "I don't want to say how things lie. /I want to show you how the matter stands" (Erich Kastner).

The Reason

If it is discontent in our culture that provokes criticism, there would be no age quite so disposed to criticism as ours. Yet the critical impulse has never been more strongly inclined to let itself be overpowered by a sour temperament. The tension between what wants to "criticize" and what should be "criticized" is so taut that our thinking is becoming much more morose than precise. No capacity of thought keeps pace with what is problematic. Hence the self-abdication of critique. In the utter indifference toward all problems lies the ultimate premonition of how it would be to be their equal. Because everything has become problematic, everything is also somehow a matter of indifference. This thread should be followed. It leads to a place where one can speak of cynicism and "cynical reason."

To speak of cynicism means to expose a spiritual, a moral scandal to critique; following that, the conditions for the possibility of the scandalous are unraveled. "Critique" undergoes a movement that at first fully lives out its positive and negative interest in the object, only in the end to run up against elementary structures of moral consciousness that are brought to expression "beyond good and evil." The times are cynical everywhere you turn, and it is time to develop the connection between cynicism and realism from first principles. What did Oscar Wilde mean by his blase statement: "I am not at all cynical, I am only experienced— that's pretty much the same thing"? Or Anton Chekov, who gloomily remarked: "No cynicism can outdo life"?

In the course of reflection, the well-known ambiguity in the concept of critique breaks down; at first it means to make and substantiate judgments, to judge, to condemn; then to investigate the foundations for the formation of judgments. However, if one is talking about cynical "reason," then *initially* this formula completely takes cover behind irony.

What can *critique* achieve today? What can it still hope for in a time that is so sick of theory? Let us first hear Walter Benjamin's answer:

> Fools, who complain about the demise of critique. For its time has long since run out. Critique is a matter of proper distance. It is at home in a world where perspectives and prospects are important and where it was still possible to assume a point of view. In the meantime, things have become much too close for comfort for human society. "Disinterested-ness," the "unbiased perspective," have become lies, if not the completely naive expression of plain incompetence. *{Einbahnstrasse* [1928] 1969, p. 95)

In a system that feels like a cross between prison and chaos, there is no standpoint for a description, no central perspective for a compelling critique.

In the shattered world of multiple perspectives, the "grand views" of the whole, in fact, belong more to simple souls than to those who are enlightened and educated by the given order of things. No enlightenment can occur without destroying the effect, thinking-from-a-point-of-view, and without dissolving conventional morals. Psychologically this goes hand in hand with a scattering of the ego, literarily and philosophically, with the demise of critique.

But how is the contradiction to be explained that the most important renaissance of critique in the twentieth century is connected with the name of Walter Benjamin, who, on the one hand, convincingly demonstrated that critique's hour had come, and, on the other hand, participated with such far-reaching impact in the school of Critical Theory? It is impossible, so he says, to assume a "standpoint" because things have become much too close for comfort for us. But from a standpoint of having no standpoint, which has still to be more closely defined, critique has made impressive progress. From where, then, does critique speak? From what perspectives? In whose name?

I believe that Critical Theory has found a provisional ego for critique and a "standpoint" that provides it with perspectives for a truly incisive critique-a standpoint that conventional epistemology does not consider. I am inclined to call it *a priori pain.* It is not the basis of elevated, distanced critique that achieves grand overviews but a stance of extreme closeness—micrology.

If things have become too close for comfort for us, a critique must arise that expresses this discomfort. It is not a matter of proper distance but of proper proximity. The success of the word "concernedness" *(Betroffenheit)* grows from this soil; it is the seed of Critical Theory that germinates in new forms today, even among those who have scarcely heard of it. Regarding the "concerned," would it not be fascinating to find out where they get their critical model? Anyway, in the manner of their "being concerned," the defects of the forgotten source reappear.

Because the sovereignty of minds *(Kopfe)* is always false, the new critique prepares to slip from the mind into the whole body. Enlightenment tries to move from top to bottom —politico-culturally as well as psychosomatically. To discover the living body as a sensor of the world is to secure a realistic foundation for philosophical knowledge of the world. This is what Critical Theory had begun to do, hesitatingly, often aesthetically encoded, hidden in all kinds of squeamishness.

Critical Theory was based on the presupposition that we know this world a priori, through *Weltschmerz.* What we perceive of the world can be ordered in psychosomatic coordinates of pain and pleasure. Critique is possible inasmuch as pain tells us what is "true" and what is "false." In holding this view, Critical Theory makes the usual "elitist" assumption of an intact sensibility. This characterizes its strength and its weakness; it establishes its truth and restricts the scope of its

validity. One must, in fact, be able to muster so much elitist sensibility. It is nourished by an aversion to the deadly poison of normality in a country of hard heads and armored souls. One should not even try to convince certain opponents; there is a generality of "truth" that is an alibi for lack of understanding. Where the capacity for reason is not based on sensitive self-reflection, no argumentation, not even one based on the most solid theory of communication, will be able to bring it about.

On this "sensitive" point, Critical Theory was never able to get along well with the logicians among its opponents. To be sure, there are thinkers whose minds *(Kopfe)* are so energetic, whose nervous structures are so hardened, that to them, the entire approach of Critical Theory must seem lachrymose. "Sensitive" theory is suspect. In fact, its founders, especially Adorno, had an exclusively narrow concept of the Sensitive —a presupposition of the highest spiritual irascibility and aesthetic schooling that could never be rationalized; its aesthetics ran just along the threshold of nausea toward everything and anything. There was scarcely anything that took place in the "practical" world that did not inflict pain on it or was spared being suspected of brutality. For it, everything was somehow chained like an accomplice to "false living" in which there is "no true living." Above all, it suspected everything that seemed to be pleasure and consent as being swindle, relapse, and "false" relief. It was inevitable that Critical Theory, particularly in the person of Adorno, came to feel the backlash of its exaggerations. The embodying of reason for which it had prepared the ground with the highest sensibility could not stop at the limits within which it was constrained by its initiators. What is happening today shows how many faces critique issuing from bodily vitality can assume.

Adorno belonged to the pioneers of a renewed critique of cognition that assumes an emotional a priori. In his theory the motifs of a crypto-Buddhist spirit are at work. Those who suffer without becoming hardened will understand; those who can *hear* music in moments of clarity see across to the other side of the world. The conviction that the real is written in the hand of suffering, coldness, and hardness determines the way this philosophy approaches the world. Although it scarcely believed in a change for the better, it did not give in to the temptation to desensitize itself or to get used to the given order of things. To remain sensitive was, as it were, a Utopian stance —to keep the senses sharpened for a happiness that will not come, a stance that nevertheless, by being prepared for happiness, protects us from the worst kind of brutalizations.

Politically, and in its nerve endings, this aesthetic, this "sensitive" theory, is based on a reproachful attitude, composed of suffering, contempt, and rage against everything that has *power*. It makes itself into a mirror of the evil in the world, of bourgeois coldness, of the principle of domination, of dirty business and its profit motive. It is the masculine world that it categorically rejects. It is inspired by an archaic *No* to the world of the fathers, legislators, and profiteers.

Its basic prejudice is that only evil power against the living can come from this world. That is the reason for the stagnation of Critical Theory. The offensive maneuver of refusing to collaborate has long been ineffective. The masochistic element has outdone the creative element. The impulse of Critical Theory is becoming mature enough to burst open the strictures of negativism. In its heyday, Critical Theory found its adherents among those who could instinctively share their a priori pain with it. Still, in a generation that began to discover what its parents had done or approved, there were many such people. And because they were many, there was once again in the mid-sixties in Germany a thin thread of political culture —public dispute about true living.

The revival of the great impulse depends on a self-reflection by the intelligentsia that was once inspired by it. In this sensitive critique, there is a paralyzing resentment. The refusal nourishes itself on an archaic rage against "masculinity," that cynical sense for facts exhibited by political as well as scientific positivists. Adorno's theory revolted against the collaborative traits embedded in the "practical attitude." His theory tried, by means of a conceptual balancing act, to construe a knowledge that would not be power. It took refuge in the realm of the mother, in the arts, and encoded longings. "Pictures prohibited"—do not tread with the whole foot. Defensive thinking characterizes its style-the attempt to defend a reserve where memories of happiness are bound exclusively with a Utopia of the feminine. In an early work, Adorno once disclosed his emotional-epistemological secret almost without camouflage. In a few heartrending lines he wrote about crying in response to Schubert's music, about how tears and knowing *(Erkenntnis)* are connected. This music makes us cry because we are not like it, not something complete, which turns toward the lost sweetness of life like a distant quotation.

Happiness can only be thought of as something lost, as a *beautiful alien.* It cannot be anything more than a premonition that we approach with tears in our eyes without ever reaching it. Everything else belongs to "false living" anyway. What dominates is the world of the fathers, who are always appallingly in agreement with the granite of abstractions, now solidified into a system. With Adorno, the denial of the masculine went so far that he retained only one letter from his father's name, *W.* The path to the meadow *(Wiesengrund),*[3] however, does not exactly have to be the wrong one *(Holzweg).*

Since the dissolution of the student movement we have been experiencing a lull in theory. There is, it is true, more erudition and sophistication than ever before, but the inspirations are sterile. The optimism of "those days," that vital interests could be combined with efforts in social theory, has pretty much died out. Without this optimism it becomes quickly apparent how boring sociology can be. For those in the enlightenment camp, after the debacle of leftist actionism, terror, and its intensification in antiterror, the world turned topsy-turvy. The enlighten-

ment camp wanted to make it possible for everyone to mourn German history but ended in its own melancholy. Critique seems to have become even more impossible than Benjamin thought. The critical "attitude" turns nostalgically inward to a kind of philological gardening where Benjaminian irises, Pasolinian flowers of evil, and Freudian deadly nightshade are cultivated.

Critique, in any sense of the word, is experiencing gloomy days. Once again, a period of pseudocritique has begun, in which critical stances are subordinated to professional roles. Criticism with limited liability, petty enlightenment as a factor in success —a stance at the junction of new conformisms and old ambitions. Already in Kurt Tucholsky's work, "in those days," the hollowness of a critique that tried to drown out its own disillusionment could be felt. Such a critique realizes that having success is a long way from having an effect. It writes brilliantly but in vain, and that can be heard through everything. From these almost universal experiences, the latent cynicisms of present-day enlighteners are nourished.

Pasolini spiced up the dull pseudocritique a bit in that he at least designed a convincing costume: that of the *buccaneer*—pirate writings. The intellectual as buccaneer—not a bad dream. We have scarcely ever seen ourselves that way. A homosexual gave the warning signal against the effeminization of critique. Like Douglas Fairbanks leaping around in the cultural rigging, with drawn sword, sometimes the conqueror and sometimes the conquered, knocked about unpredictably on the seas of social alienation. The blows fall on all sides. Because the costume is amoral, it fits morally like a second skin. The buccaneer cannot assume fixed standpoints because he is constantly moving between changing fronts. Perhaps Pasolini's image of the pirate intellect can reflect light on Brecht, I mean on the young, bad Brecht, not the Brecht who believed he had to conduct classes on the Communist galley.

The offensive posture in the myth of the buccaneer is inviting. One reservation might be the illusion that the intelligentsia is based on brawling as such. In fact, Pasolini is a beaten person, like Adorno. It is the a priori pain —it makes even the simplest things in life difficult for a person—that opens his eyes critically. There is no significant critique without significant defects. It is the critically wounded in a culture who, with great effort, find something healing, who continue to turn the wheel of critique. Adorno dedicated a well-known essay to Heinrich Heine, *Die Wunde Heine {The sore, Heine).* This sore is nothing other than the one that bores away in any significant critique. Among the great critical achievements in modern times, sores open up everywhere: the sore, Rousseau; the sore, Schelling; the sore, Heine; the sore, Marx; the sore, Kierkegaard; the sore, Nietzsche; the sore, Spengler; the sore, Heidegger; the sore, Theodor Lessing; the sore, Freud; the sore, Adorno: Out of the self-healing of deep sores come critiques that serve epochs as rallying points for self-knowledge. Every critique is pioneering work on the pain of the times *(Zeitschmerz)* and a piece of exemplary healing.

It is not my ambition to enlarge this honorable infirmary of critical theories. It is time for a new critique of temperaments. Where enlightenment appears as a "melancholy science" (Adorno-Trans), it unintentionally furthers melancholic stagnation. Thus, the critique of cynical reason hopes to achieve more from a work that cheers us up, whereby it is understood from the beginning that it is not so much a matter of work but rather of relaxation.

The Motive

It will already have been noticed that the justification is a bit too deliberate to be quite true. I realize that I might be giving the impression that I am trying to save "enlightenment" and Critical Theory. The paradoxes of the rescue method will ensure that this first impression does not last.

It might seem at first that enlightenment necessarily ends in cynical disillusionment, but the page is soon turned and the investigation of cynicism becomes the foundation for a healthy freedom from illusions. Enlightenment was always disillusionment in the positive sense, and the more it advances, the closer the moment approaches when reason tells us to attempt an affirmation. A philosophy in the spirit of Yes also includes the Yes to the No. This is neither a cynical positivism nor an "affirmative" attitude. The Yes I mean is not the Yes of the defeated. If there is a trace of obedience in this Yes, it is of the only kind of obedience that can be expected from enlightened people, namely, the obedience to their own experience.

European neurosis sees happiness as its goal and an effort of reason as a way to achieve it. This compulsion has to be overcome. The critical addiction to making things better has to be given up—for the sake of the good, from which one so easily distances oneself on long marches. Ironically, the aim of the most critical effort is the most ingenuous release.

Shortly before Adorno died there was a scene in a lecture hall at Frankfurt University that fits like a key into the analysis of cynicism begun here. The philosopher was just about to begin his lecture when a group of demonstrators prevented him from mounting the podium. Such scenes were not unusual in 1969. On this occasion something happened that required a closer look. Among the disrupters were some female students who, in protest, attracted attention to themselves by exposing their breasts to the thinker. Here, on one side, stood naked flesh, exercising "critique"; there, on the other side, stood the bitterly disappointed man without whom scarcely any of those present would have known what critique meant-cynicism in action. It was not naked force that reduced the philosopher to muteness, but the force of the naked.[4] Right and wrong, truth and falsity were inextricably mixed in this scene in a way that is quite typical for cynicisms. Cyni-

cism ventures forth with naked truths that, in the way they are presented, contain something false.

Wherever deceptions are constitutive for a culture, wherever life in society succumbs to a compulsion for lying, there really speaking the truth has an element of aggression, an unwelcome exposure. Nevertheless the instinct for disclosure is stronger in the long run. Only a radical nakedness and bringing things out in the open can free us from the compulsion for mistrustful imputations. Wanting to get to the "naked truth" is one motive for a desperate sensuousness, which wants to tear through the veil of conventions, lies, abstractions, and discretions in order to get *to the bottom* of things. I want to pursue this theme. A mixture of cynicism, sexism, "matter-of-factness," and psychologism constitutes the mood of the superstructure in the West, a twilight mood, good for owls and philosophy.[5]

At the bottom of my motivations is a childlike veneration for what, in the Greek sense, was called philosophy - for which, moreover, a family tradition of reverence is partly responsible. My grandmother, a teacher's daughter from an idealistic home, often recounted proudly and respectfully that it was Kant who wrote *Critique of Pure Reason* and Schopenhauer *The World as Will and Representation.* And perhaps there are even more such magical books in the world that we cannot read because they are too difficult, but which we must admire from the outside like something from someone very great.

Is there no philosophy that does not screw our brains from our heads with its "old bony hand"? The dream that I pursue is to see the dying tree of philosophy bloom once again, in a blossoming without disillusionment, abundant with bizarre thought-flowers, red, blue, and white, shimmering in the colors of the beginning, as in the Greek dawn, when *theoria* was beginning and when, inconceivably and suddenly, like everything clear, understanding found its language. Are we really culturally too old to repeat such experiences?

The reader is invited to sit for a while under this tree, which, strictly speaking, cannot exist. I promise to promise nothing, above all, no New Values. The critique of cynical reason, to quote Heinrich Heine's characterization of the Aristophanean comedies, endeavors to pursue the "deep idea of world annihilation" on which the Gay Science is based, "which from there, like a fantastically ironic magic tree, shoots up with blossoming thought-ornaments, singing nightingale nests and clambering monkeys" *{Die Bdder von Lucca)*[6]

Munich, Summer 1981

Notes

1. *[Zynismus* and *Kynismus* are alternative spellings of "cynicism," to which the author has given systematic conceptual meaning. I render *Kynismus,* the cheeky, positive side of cynicism, as "kynicism," etc.-Trans.]

2. [A healthy mind in a healthy body-Trans.]

3. [This is a pun on Adorno's father's name, Weisengrund. *Wiesengrund,* literally translated, means "meadowland."—Trans.]

4. I will return to this in chapter 5 ("Bourgeois NeoKynicism: The Arts").

5. [See the closing lines of the preface to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right-Trans.]*

6. Heine, *Samtliche Schriften,* ed. Klaus Briegleb (Munich, 1969), vol. II, p. 466.

Acknowledgments

Because I owe a work on the problem of cynicism more than a mere note can make clear, I especially want to refer to the best study of the history of ideas on this subject: Heinrich Niehues-Probsting, *Der Kynismus des Diogenes und der Begriff des Zynismus* (Munich, 1979), which offers, in addition, helpful bibliographic orientations. Moreover, the basic elements of theses for a new interpretation of Nietzsche that are strewn throughout the present work can be compared with an article by the same author: "Der 'Kurze Weg': Nietzsches 'Cynismus'," in *Archiv fur Begriffsgeschichte,* vol. 24, no. 1 (Bonn, 1980), pp. 103ff.

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Finally, I want to thank my friends who, with their encouragement and objections, their support and criticism, are present in and between the lines of this book.

Theory and History of Literature

Part One
Sightings: Five Preliminary Reflections

Chapter 1
Cynicism: The Twilight of
False Consciousness

> *And indeed no longer was anyone to be seen who stood behind*
> *everything. Everything turned continually about itself. Interests*
> *changed from hour to hour. Nowhere was there a goal any-*
> *more. . . . The leaders lost their heads. They were drained to*
> *the dregs and calcified. . . . Everyone in the land began to no-*
> *tice that things didn't work anymore. . . . Postponing the col-*
> *lapse left one path open.*
>
> Franz Jung, *Die Eroberung der Maschinen* (1921)

The discontent in our culture[1] has assumed a new quality: It appears as a univer-sal, diffuse cynicism. The traditional critique of ideology stands at a loss before this cynicism. It does not know what button to push in this cynically keen con-sciousness to get enlightenment going. Modern cynicism presents itself as that state of consciousness that follows after naive ideologies and their enlightenment. In it, the obvious exhaustion of ideology critique has its real ground. This critique has remained more naive than the consciousness it wanted to expose; in its well-mannered rationality, it did not keep up with the twists and turns of modern con-sciousness to a cunning multiple realism. The formal sequence of false conscious-ness up to now—lies, errors, ideology—is incomplete; the current mentality requires the addition of a fourth structure: the phenomenon of cynicism. To speak of cynicism means trying to enter the old building of ideology critique through a new entrance.

It violates normal usage to describe cynicism as a universal and diffuse phenomenon; as it is commonly conceived, cynicism is not diffuse but striking, not universal but peripheral and highly individual. The unusual epithets describe something of its new manifestation, which renders it both explosive and unas-sailable.

The ancient world knows the cynic (better: kynic) as a lone owl and as a provocative, stubborn moralist. Diogenes in the tub is the archetype of this figure. In the picture book of social characters he has always appeared as a distance-creating mocker, as a biting and malicious individualist who acts as though he needs nobody and who is loved by nobody because nobody escapes his crude un-

masking gaze uninjured. Socially he is an urban figure who maintains his cutting edge in the goings-on of the ancient metropolises. He could be characterized as the earliest example of declassed or plebeian intelligence. His "cynical" turn against the arrogance and the moral trade secrets of higher civilization presupposes the city, together with its successes and shadows. Only in the city, as its negative profile, can the figure of the cynic crystallize in its full sharpness, under the pressure of public gossip and universal love-hate. And only the city can assimilate the cynic, who ostentatiously turns his back on it, into the group of its outstanding individuals, on whom its liking for unique, urbane personalities depends.

The fertile ground for cynicism in modern times is to be found not only in urban culture but also in the courtly sphere. Both are dies of pernicious realism through which human beings learn the crooked smile of open immorality. Here, as there, a sophisticated knowledge accumulates in informed, intelligent minds, a knowledge that moves elegantly back and forth between naked facts and conventional facades. From the very bottom, from the declassed, urban intelligentsia, and from the very top, from the summits of statesmanly consciousness, signals penetrate serious thinking, signals that provide evidence of a radical, ironic treatment *(Ironisierung)* of ethics and of social conventions, as if universal laws existed only for the stupid, while that fatally clever smile plays on the lips of those in the know. More precisely, it is the powerful who smile this way, while the kynical plebeians let out a satirical laugh. In the great hall of cynical knowledge the extremes meet: Eulenspiegel meets Richelieu; Machiavelli meets Rameau's nephew; the loud Condottieri of the Renaissance meet the elegant cynics of the rococo; unscrupulous entrepreneurs meet disillusioned outsiders; and jaded systems strategists meet conscientious objectors without ideals.

Since bourgeois society began to build a bridge between the knowledge of those at the very top and those at the very bottom and announced its ambition to ground its worldview completely on *realism,* the extremes have dissolved into each other. Today the cynic appears as a mass figure: an average social character in the upper echelons of the elevated superstructure. It is a mass figure not only because advanced industrial civilization produces the bitter loner as a mass phenomenon. Rather, the cities themselves have become diffuse clumps whose power to create generally accepted *public characters* has been lost. The pressure toward individualization has lessened in the modern urban and media climate. Thus modern cynics —and there have been mass numbers of them in Germany, especially since the First World War —are no longer outsiders. But less than ever do they appear as a tangibly developed type. Modern mass cynics lose their individual sting and refrain from the risk of letting themselves be put on display. They have long since ceased to expose themselves as eccentrics to the attention and mockery of others. The person with the clear, "evil gaze" has disappeared into the crowd; anonymity now becomes the domain for cynical deviation. Mod-

em cynics are integrated, asocial characters who, on the score of subliminal illusionlessness, are a match for any hippie. They do not see their clear, evil gaze as a personal defect or an amoral quirk that needs to be privately justified. Instinctively, they no longer understand their way of existing as something that has to do with being evil, but as participation in a collective, realistically attuned way of seeing things. It is the universally widespread way in which enlightened people see to it that they are not taken for suckers. There even seems to be something healthy in this attitude, which, after all, the will to self-preservation generally supports. It is the stance of people who realize that the times of naivete are gone.

Psychologically, present-day cynics can be understood as borderline melancholies, who can keep their symptoms of depression under control and can remain more or less able to work. Indeed, this is the essential point in modern cynicism: the ability of its bearers to work—in spite of anything that might happen, and especially, after anything that might happen. The key social positions in boards, parliaments, commissions, executive councils, *publishing companies,* practices, faculties, and lawyers' and editors' offices have long since become a part of this diffuse cynicism. A certain chic bitterness provides an undertone to its activity. For cynics are not dumb, and every now and then they certainly see the nothingness to which everything leads. Their psychic *(seelisch)* apparatus has become elastic enough to incorporate as a survival factor a permanent doubt about their own activities. They know what they are doing, but they do it because, in the short run, the force of circumstances and the instinct for self-preservation are speaking the same language, and they are telling them that it has to be so. Others would do it anyway, perhaps worse. Thus, the new, integrated cynicism even has the understandable feeling about itself of being a victim and of making sacrifices. Behind the capable, collaborative, hard facade, it covers up a mass of offensive unhappiness and the need to cry. In this, there is something of the mourning for a "lost innocence," of the mourning for better knowledge, against which all action and labor are directed.

Thus, we come to our first definition: Cynicism is *enlightened false consciousness.* It is that modernized, unhappy consciousness,[3] on which enlightenment has labored both successfully and in vain. It has learned its lessons in enlightenment, but it has not, and probably was not able to, put them into practice. Well-off and miserable at the same time, this consciousness no longer feels affected by any critique of ideology; its falseness is already reflexively buffered.

"Enlightened false consciousness": To choose such a formulation seems to be a blow against the tradition of enlightenment. The sentence itself is cynicism in a crystalline state. Nonetheless, it claims an objective *(sachlich)* validity; its content and its necessity are developed in the present essay. Logically it is a paradox, for how could enlightened consciousness still be false? This is precisely the issue here.

To act against better knowledge is today the global situation in the superstructure; it knows itself to be without illusions and yet to have been dragged down by the "power of things." Thus what is regarded in logic as a paradox and in literature as a joke appears in reality as the actual state of affairs. Thus emerges a new attitude of consciousness toward "objectivity."

"Enlightened false consciousness": This formulation should be regarded not as an incidental phrase but as a systematic approach, as a diagnostic model. It thus commits itself to a revision of enlightenment; it must clarify its relation to what is traditionally called "false consciousness"; further, it must review the course of enlightenment and the labor of ideology critique, in whose development it was possible for "false consciousness" to reabsorb enlightenment. If this essay had historical intentions, it would be to describe the modernization of false consciousness. But the intention here on the whole is not historical but physiognomic: The focus is on the structure of a reflexively buffered false consciousness. Nevertheless, I want to show that this structure cannot be grasped without localizing it in a political history of polemical reflections.[4]

There can be no healthy relation of modern-day enlightenment to its own history without sarcasm. We have to choose between a pessimism that remains "loyal" to its origins and reminds one of decadence and a lighthearted disrespect in the continuation of the original tasks. As things stand, the only loyalty to enlightenment consists in disloyalty. This can be partly understood from the position of its heirs, who look back on the "heroic" times and are necessarily more skeptical of the results. To be an heir always carries a certain "status cynicism"[5] with it, as is well known from stories about the inheritance of family capital. The retrospective position alone, however, does not explain the particular tone of modern cynicism. Disillusionment with enlightenment is by no means only a sign that epigones can and must be more critical than the founders. The characteristic odor of modern cynicism is of a more fundamental nature-a constitution of consciousness afflicted with enlightenment that, having learned from historical experience, refuses cheap optimism. New values? No thanks! With the passing of defiant hopes, the listlessness of egoisms pervades. In the new cynicism, a detached negativity comes through that scarcely allows itself any hope, at most a little irony and pity.

In the final analysis, it is a matter of the social and existential limits of enlightenment. The compulsion to survive and desire to assert itself have demoralized enlightened consciousness. It is afflicted with the compulsion to put up with preestablished relations that it finds dubious, to accommodate itself to them, and finally even to carry out their business.

In order to survive, one must be schooled in reality. Of course. Those who mean well call it growing up, and there is a grain of truth to that. But that is not all. Always a bit unsettled and irritable, collaborating consciousness looks around

for its lost naivete, to which there is no way back, because consciousness-raising is irreversible.

Gottfried Benn, himself one of the prominent speakers on the structure of modern cynicism, has probably provided the formulation of the century for cynicism, lucid and unabashed: "To be dumb and have a job, that's happiness." But it is the converse of the sentence that really reveals its full content: "To be intelligent and still perform one's work, that is unhappy consciousness in its modernized form, afflicted with enlightenment. Such consciousness cannot become dumb and trust again; innocence cannot be regained. It persists in its belief in the gravitational pull of the relations to which it is bound by its instinct for self-preservation. In for a penny, in for a pound. At two thousand marks net a month, counterenlightenment quietly begins; it banks on the fact that all those who have something to lose come to terms privately with their unhappy consciousness or cover it over with "engagements."

The new cynicism, precisely because it is lived as a private disposition that absorbs the world situation, does not glaringly draw attention to itself in a way that would correspond to the concept itself. It envelops itself in discretion —as we will soon see, this is a key word for charmingly mediated alienation.[6] The self-cognizant accommodation, which has sacrificed its better judgment to "compulsions," no longer sees any reason to expose itself aggressively and spectacularly. There is a nakedness that no longer has an unmasking effect and in which no "naked fact" appears on whose grounds one could position oneself with serene realism. There is something lamentable about the neocynical accommodation to given circumstances; it is no longer self-confidently naked. For this reason it is also methodologically quite difficult to bring this diffuse, murky cynicism to expression. It has withdrawn into a mournful detachment that internalizes its knowledge as though it were something to be ashamed of, and as a consequence, it is rendered useless for taking the offensive. The great offensive parades of cynical impudence have become a rarity; ill-humor has taken its place, and there is no energy left for sarcasm. Gehlen even thought that today not even the English can be cutting any more because their reserves of dissatisfaction have been consumed and the rationing of stocks has begun. The discontent that follows offensives does not open its mouth wide enough for enlightenment to gain anything.

That is one of the reasons why, in later chapters, a disproportionate amount of "cynical material" from the Weimar Republic is cited-in addition to older documents that are also given attention. In the introduction to Part V, I attempt a physiognomy of an epoch. Here a decade is characterized whose first descendant was fascism and whose second descendant is us.

To speak of the Weimar Republic means, as it always has, to immerse oneself in social consciousness-raising. For reasons that can be enumerated, Weimar culture was cynically disposed like scarcely any previous culture; it gave birth to an

abundance of brilliantly articulated cynicisms, which read like textbook examples. It experienced the pain of modernization more violently and expressed its disillusionment more coldly and more sharply than the present could ever do. We discover in it superb formulations of modern unhappy consciousness, crucially relevant even today; indeed, their general validity is perhaps only today really comprehensible.

A critique of cynical reason would remain an academic glass bead game if it did not pursue the connection between the problem of survival and the danger of fascism. In fact, the question of "survival," of self-preservation and self-assertion, to which all cynicisms provide answers, touches on the central problem of holding the fort and planning for the future in modern nation-states. Through various approaches, I attempt to fix the logical locus of German fascism in the convolutions of modern, self-reflective cynicism. This much can be said in advance: In German fascism the typically modern dynamics of psychocultural fear of disintegration, regressive self-assertion, and objective, cold rationality combines with a time-honored strain of military cynicism that on German, and especially Prussian, soil enjoys an equally macabre and deep-rooted tradition.

Perhaps these considerations about cynicism, as the fourth configuration of false consciousness, will help to overcome the characteristic speechlessness of genuinely philosophical critique regarding so-called Fascist ideology. Philosophy as a "discipline" has no real thesis about "theoretical fascism" because it basically considers the latter to be beneath all critique. The explanations of fascism as nihilism (Rauschning et al.) or as the product of "totalitarian thinking" remain diffuse and imprecise. The "inauthentic," patchwork character of Fascist ideology has already been sufficiently emphasized, and everything it wanted to represent as substantial statements has long since been radically criticized by the individual sciences: psychology, political science, sociology, historiography. For philosophy, the programmatic statements of fascism do not even rate as a serious, substantial ideology over which a reflective critique would really have to toil. But herein lies the weak point-of critique. It remains fixated on "serious opponents," and with this attitude it neglects the task of comprehending the ideological template of "unserious," shallow "systems." To this day critique has thus not been a match for this modern blend of opinion and cynicism. But since questions of social and individual self-preservation are discussed precisely in such blends, there are good reasons for concerning oneself with their composition. Questions of self-preservation must be approached in the same language as those of self-destruction *(Selbstvernichtung)*. The same logic in the repudiation of morality seems to operate in them. I call it the logic of the "cynical structure," that is, of the self-repudiation of refined ethics. Elucidating this structure will clarify what it would mean to opt for life.

Notes

1. [This alludes to the work by Freud.-Trans.]
2. The first movement *(Aufhebung)* of this definition takes place in chapter 5, the second in Part II.
3. [This refers to a subchapter in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit.* —Trans.]
4. See the six cardinal cynicisms, chapter 8.
5. [A cynicism deriving from social status *(Positionszynismus).* —Trans.]
6. See the second critique of religion, chapter 3.

Chapter 2
Enlightenment as Dialogue: Critique of Ideology as Continuation of the Miscarried Dialogue through Other Means

Those who speak of cynicism will recall the limits of enlightenment. In this respect, focusing on the salient features of Weimar cynicism, apart from the advantage of making things clearer, also promises to be fruitful for the philosophy of history. The Weimar Republic represents in the course of German history not only a product of delayed development to nation-state-heavily burdened by the Wilhelminian legacy, the spirit of a cynically illiberal political system—but also a paradigm for "enlightenment miscarried."

It has often been shown how and why the early champions of republican enlightenment at that time could not have been anything else but a desperately well intentioned minority of representatives of reason against almost insurmountable odds: massive currents of antienlightenment and hatred for the intelligentsia; an array of antidemocratic and authoritarian ideologies that knew how to effectively organize the public sphere; an aggressive nationalism with a desire for revenge; an unenlightenable confusion of stubborn conservatisms, displaced petty bourgeois, messianic religious sects, apocalyptic political views, and equally realistic and psychopathological rejections of the demands of a disagreeable modernity. The wounds of the war kept getting infected in the smoldering crisis; Nietzscheanism continued to be rampant—as the most prominent style of thinking for the German-narcissistic sulkiness and for the moody, arrogant, "protestant" relationship to a "bad reality." The climate of crisislike agitation produced a penetrating psychopolitical oscillation between fear of the future and resentment, unstable pseudorealisms and psychic makeshifts. If ever an epoch called for a historical

psychopathology, it is the decade and a half between the fall of the empire and the establishment of national socialism.

The first impression turns out to be right here: Those who sought to promote enlightenment in such a society fought a losing battle. The powers of enlightenment were too weak for a precise number of reasons. Enlightenment was never able to ally itself effectively with the mass media, and individual self-determination was never an ideal for industrial monopolies and their organizations. How could it have been?

Obviously enlightenment is fragmented through the resistance of powers opposed to it. It would be wrong, however, to regard this only as a question of power arithmetic. For enlightenment is fragmented equally by a *qualitative* resistance in the opponent's consciousness. The latter fiercely resists the invitation to discussion and the undermining talk about truth; even talking itself is resented because through it conventional views, values, and forms of self-assertion are brought into question. The interpretation of this resistance as a basic principle of ideology has become one of the main motifs of enlightenment.

It is not only in modern times that enlightenment has had to deal with an opposed consciousness that has increasingly entrenched itself in impregnable positions. In principle, the front can be traced back to the days of the Inquisition. If it is true that knowledge is power, as taught by the workers' movement, it is also true that not all knowledge is welcomed with open arms. Because there are no truths that can be taken possession of without a struggle, and because all knowledge must choose a place in the configuration of hegemonic and oppositional forces, the means of establishing knowledge seem to be almost more important than the knowledge itself. In modern times, enlightenment shows itself to be a tactical complex. The demand to universalize the rational draws it into the vortex of politics, pedagogy, and propaganda. With this, enlightenment consciously represses the harsh realism of older precepts of wisdom, for which there was no question that the masses are foolish and that reason is to be found only among the few. Modern elitism has to encode itself democratically.

It is not our task to give a historical account of the waning of enlightenment. We know that, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in spite of considerable resistance and many contradictions, it succeeded for the most part, with its sights set on its own achievements and plans, in dealing productively and progressively with the ferment of self-doubt. In spite of all hardships and setbacks to its development, it could still believe it had the law of progress on its side. Great names of that time bring to mind great achievements: Watt, Pasteur, Koch, Siemens. One can reject their achievements with disgruntlement, but that would be a gesture of mood, not of fairness. The press, the railroads, social welfare, penicillin—who could deny that these are remarkable innovations in the "garden of humanity"? However, since the technological atrocities of the twentieth century, from Verdun to the Gulag, from Auschwitz to Hiroshima, experience
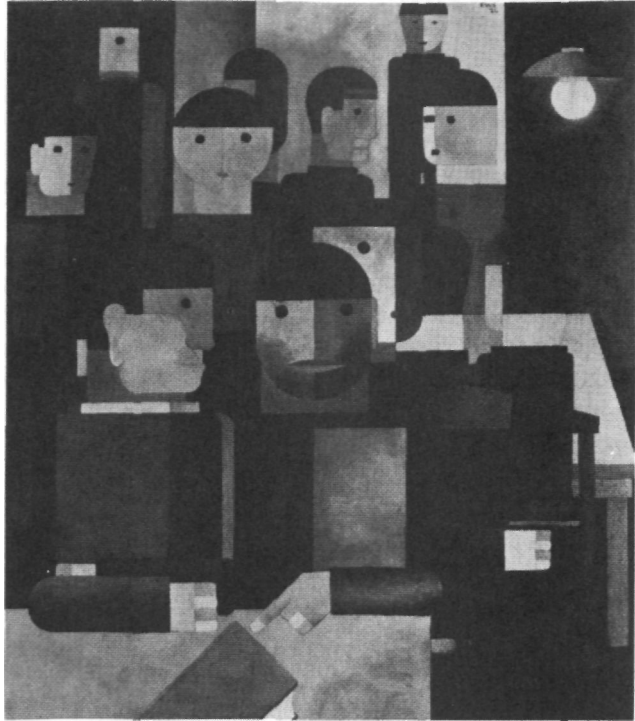
Franz Wilhelm Seiwert, *Discussion,* 1926.

scorns all optimism. Historical consciousness and pessimism seem to amount to the same thing. And the catastrophes that have not yet happened, which are waiting in the wings, nurture the ever-present doubt about civilization. The late twentieth century rides on a wave of negative futurism. "The worst was already expected," it just has "not yet" happened.

First, I want to restrict the theme of *dissatisfied enlightenment* to one point: the question concerning the means of power available to enlightenment confronted by an opposed consciousness. To inquire about "means of power" is already in a certain way incorrect, since enlightenment is essentially a matter of free consent. It is that "doctrine" that does not want to attribute its *success* to any pressure other than reason. One of its axes is reason; the other is the free dialogue of those striving for reason. Its methodological core and its moral ideal at one and the same time are *voluntary* consensus. By this is meant that the opposed consciousness does not change its position under any influence other than that of convincing argumentation.

It is a matter of a sublimely peaceful event, where, under the impact of plausible reasons, old, now untenable opinions are given up. Enlightenment thus con-

tains within itself, so to speak, a Utopian archaic scene—an epistemological idyll of peace, a beautiful and academic vision: that of the free dialogue of those who, under no external compulsion, are interested in knowledge. Here, dispassionate individuals, not enslaved to their own consciousness and not repressed by social ties, come together for a dialogue directed at truth under the laws of reason. The truth enlighteners want to disseminate arises through a noncoerced, but compelling,' acceptance of stronger arguments. The protagonist or discoverer of an enlightened thought has taken this step only a short time earlier, usually by surrendering an earlier opinion.

The procedure of enlightenment accordingly has two aspects: the acceptance of the better position and the discarding of the previous opinion. This gives rise to an ambivalence of feelings: a gain and a pain. The Utopia of a gentle, critical dialogue foresees this difficulty. The pain becomes bearable in consciousness so that it can be voluntarily accepted among colleagues as the price of commonality. The "losers" can view themselves as the real winners. Thus, the dialogue of enlightenment is essentially nothing other than a laborious wrestling with opinions and an exploratory dialogue among persons who submit a priori to rules of peace because they emerge from the confrontation only as winners, winners in knowledge and solidarity. For this reason, it is assumed that parting from previous opinions can be overcome.

An academic idyll, as I have said —at the same time the regulative idea of any enlightenment that does not want to give up its hope for reconciliation. That things proceed differently in reality will surprise no one. In the confrontations of enlightenment with preceding stances of consciousness, everything but truth is at stake: hegemonic positions, class interests, established doctrines, desires, passions, and the defense of "identities." These impediments so strongly remold the dialogue of enlightenment that it would be more appropriate to talk of a war of consciousness than a dialogue of peace. The opponents do not submit themselves to a previously agreed upon peace treaty; rather they confront each other in a competition directed at banishment and annihilation; and they are not free in relation to the powers that force their consciousness to speak just so, and in no other way.

Faced with these sober facts, the discourse model reacts in a consciously unrealistic way. It allows the archpragmatic statement *primum vivere, deinde philosophari* to hold only conditionally; for it knows at least this much: Situations will recur repeatedly where "philosophizing" is the only thing that can help life along.

It is tempting to poke fun at the "methodological antirealism" of the dialogue 'dea, and part of this book indeed tries to help the derisive laughter about every 'orm of foolish idealism get its due. However, when all contradictions have been taken into account, one will return here to the beginning, of course with a con-

sciousness that has gone through all the hells of realism. To preserve the healing fiction of a free dialogue is one of the last tasks of philosophy.

Of course, enlightenment itself is the first to notice that it will not "pull through" with rational and verbal dialogue alone. No one can feel the faltering, the distorted assumptions about life, the ruptures, the miscarriage of the dialogue more keenly than it. At the beginning of ideology critique there is also astonishment because the opponent is so hard of hearing —an astonishment that quickly gives way to a realistic awakening. Whoever does not want to hear, lets others come to feel. Enlightenment is reminded how easily speaking openly can lead to camps and prisons. *Hegemonic powers*[2] cannot be addressed so easily; they do not come voluntarily to the negotiating table with their opponents, whom they would prefer to have behind bars. But even *tradition,* if one is allowed to speak allegorically about it, initially has no interest in granting equal rights of speech to enlighteners. From the dawn of time, human sentiment has regarded the old as the true, the new always as something questionable. This "archaic" feeling for truth had to be subdued by enlightenment, before we could see the new as the true. Earlier, one took for granted that political and spiritual hegemonic powers were allied in a conservative front, disinclined to all innovations. Wherever spiritual reforms took place (I have in mind, above all, the monastic movements of the Middle Ages and the religious upheavals of the sixteenth century), they saw themselves as "conservative revolutions" obeying a call for a return to the roots. Finally, in addition to hegemonic powers and traditions, people's minds, already too full, constitute a third authority that does not really care to listen to the spirit of enlightened innovation. They counter enlightenment with the resistance of ingrained habits and established attitudes that firmly occupy the space of consciousness and that can be brought to listen to a reason other than conventional wisdom only in exceptional circumstances. However, the vessel of knowledge cannot be filled twice. Enlightenment as critique recognizes in everything that is "already there" in people's minds its inner archenemy; it gives this enemy a contemptuous name: *prejudices.*

The threefold polemic in a critique of power, in the struggle against tradition, and in a war against prejudices is part of the traditional image of enlightenment. All three imply a struggle with opponents disinclined to dialogue. Enlightenment wants to talk to them about things that hegemonic powers and traditions prefer to keep quiet about: reason, justice, equality, freedom, truth, research. Through silence, the status quo is more likely to remain secure. Through talk, one is pursuing an uncertain future. Enlightenment enters this dialogue virtually emptyhanded; it has only the fragile offer of free consent to the better argument. If it could gain acceptance by force, it would be not enlightenment but a variation of a free consciousness. Thus, it is true: As a rule, people stick to their positions for anything but "rational" reasons. What can be done?

Enlightenment has tried to make the best of this situation. Since nothing was

freely given to it, it developed almost from the beginning —besides the friendly invitation to a conversation-a second, combative stance. It receives blows, so it returns them. Some exchanges are so old that it would be senseless to ask who started them. The history of ideology critique comprises to a large extent the history of this second, polemical gesture, the history of a great counteroffensive. Such critique, as *theory of struggle,* serves enlightenment in a twofold way: as a weapon against a hardened, conservative-complacent consciousness, and as an instrument for practice and gaining inner strength. The refusal of the opponents to engage in dialogue for enlightenment is of such enormous significance that it becomes a theoretical issue. Those who do not want to participate in enlightenment must have their reasons, and they are probably not the alleged reasons. Resistance itself becomes a topic in enlightenment. The opponents thus necessarily become "cases," their consciousness an object. Because they do not want to talk with us, we have to talk about them. But as in every combative attitude, the opponents are from then on thought of not as egos but as apparatuses in which, partly openly, partly secretly, a mechanism of resistance is at work that renders them unfree and leads them to errors and illusions.

Ideology critique means the polemical continuation of the miscarried dialogue through other means. It declares a war on consciousness, even when it pretends to be so serious and "nonpolemical." The rules for peace are in substance rescinded. At this point it becomes clear that there is no intersubjectivity that could not equally well be interobjectivity. In hitting and being hit, both parties become subjective objects for each other. Strictly speaking, ideology critique wants not merely to "hit," but to operate with precision, in the surgical and military sense: to outflank and expose opponents, to reveal the opponents' intentions. Exposing implies laying out the mechanism of false and unfree consciousness.

In principle, enlightenment knows only two grounds for falsity: *error* and /// *will*. At best, only the latter can possess the dignity of a subject, for only when opponents consciously lie does the "wrong opinion" possess an ego. If one assumes error, the wrong opinion rests not on an ego but on a mechanism that falsifies the right opinion. Only a lie bears responsibility for itself, whereas an error, because it is mechanical, remains in relative "innocence." Error, however, quickly splits into two different phenomena: the simple error (which is based on logical or perceptual delusion and can be corrected relatively easily) and the persistent, systematic error (which clings to its own conditions of existence and is called *ideology).* Thus arise the classic series of forms of false consciousness: *lie, error, ideology.*

bvery struggle leads necessarily to a reciprocal reification of subjects. Because -niightenment cannot give up its claim of imposing better insights against a self-structing consciousness, it must basically "operate" *behind* the opponent's con-lousness. Thus, ideology critique acquires a cruel aspect that, if it ever really mits to being cruel, claims to be nothing more than a reaction to the cruelties
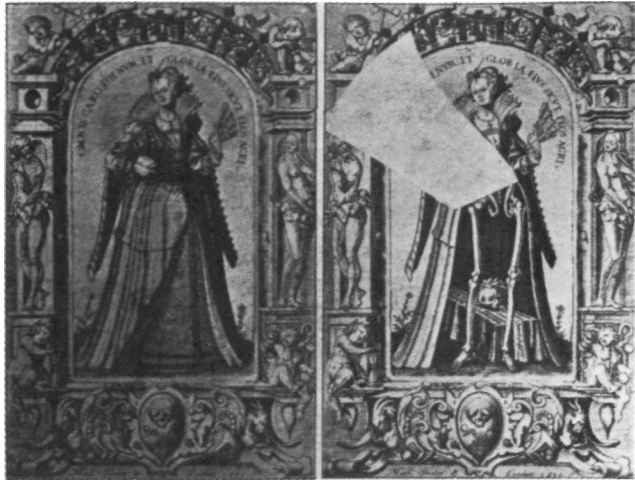
Matthias Greutzer, Model of *Vanity* (the second picture shows the view with raised skirt), 1596.

of "ideology." Here it becomes clearer than anywhere else that "philosophical" ideology critique is truly the heir of a great *satirical* tradition, in which the motif of unmasking, exposing, baring has served for aeons now as a weapon. But modern ideology critique—according to our thesis has ominously cut itself off from the powerful traditions of laughter in satirical knowledge, which have their roots in ancient kynicism. Recent ideology critique already appears in respectable garb, and in Marxism and especially in psychoanalysis it has even put on suit and tie so as to completely assume an air of bourgeois respectability. It has given up its life as satire, in order to win its position in books as "theory." From the lively form of heated polemic it has retreated to those positions taken in a cold war of consciousness. Heinrich Heine was one of the last authors of classical enlightenment who literarily defended, in open satire, the rights of ideology critique to "just atrocities'; here, the public has *not* followed him. The bourgeois transformation of satire into ideology critique was as inevitable as the bourgeois transformation of society, in general, together with its oppositional forces.

Ideology critique, having become respectable, imitates surgical procedure: Cut open the patient with the critical scalpel and operate under impeccably sterile conditions. The opponent is cut open in front of everyone, until the mechanism of his error is laid bare. The outer skin of delusion and the nerve endings of "actual" motives are hygienically separated and prepared. From then on, enlightenment is not satisfied, of course, but it is better armed in its insistence on its own claims for the distant future. Ideology critique is now interested not in winning over the vivisected opponent but in focusing on the "corpse," the critical extract
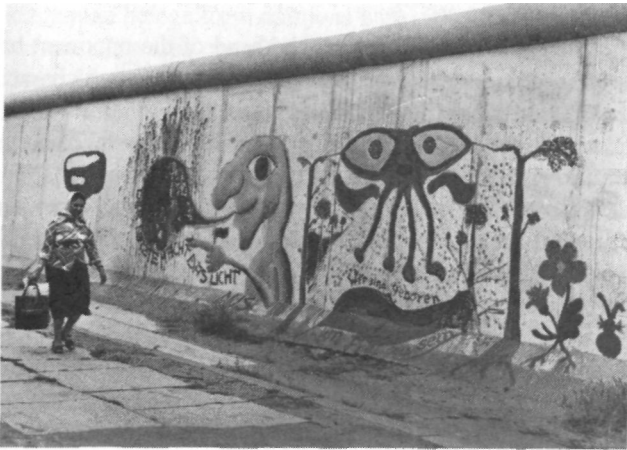
Graffitti on the Berlin Wall. "We are born to be free." Ideology critique as inscription on the other's defense.

of its ideas, which lie in the libraries of enlighteners and in which one can easily read about their grave falsity. Obviously one does not get any closer to the opponent in this way. Those who previously did not want to engage in enlightenment will want to do so even less now that they have been dissected and exposed by the opponent. Of course, according to the logic of the game, the enlightener will at least be victorious: Sooner or later, the opponent will be forced to respond apologetically.

Irritated by the attacks and "unmaskings," the counterenlighteners will one day begin to conduct their own "enlightenment" on the enlighteners, in order to denounce them as human beings and to associate them socially with criminals. They are then usually called "elements." The word is unintentionally well chosen, since wanting to fight the elements does not sound very promising. Eventually, it cannot be avoided; the hegemonic powers begin to talk indiscreetly. Then, increasingly irritated, they reveal something of their secrets; universally acknowledged cultural ideals are thereby cunningly retracted. In the compulsion of the weakened hegemonic powers to confess, as remains to be shown, lies one of the roots of the modern cynical structure.

Without wanting to, "dissatisfied enlightenment" has, in turn, entrenched itself on this front. Threatened by its own fatigue and undermined by the need for seriousness, it often remains content with having wrung involuntary *confessions* from its opponent. In fact, in time, the experienced eye will see "confessions" everywhere, and even when the hegemonic power shoots instead of negotiating, it will not be difficult to interpret bullets as the revelations of a fundamental weakness-that is how those powers express themselves that have no imagination and that'

in order to save themselves, cling to nothing more than their strong nerves and executive organs.

Arguing behind the back and through the head of the opponent has become common practice in modern critique. The gesture of exposure characterizes the style of argumentation of ideology critique, from the critique of religion in the eighteenth century to the critique of fascism in the twentieth. Everywhere, one discovers extrarational mechanisms of opinion: interests, passions, fixations, illusions. That helps a bit to mitigate the scandalous contradiction between the postulated unity of truth and the factual plurality of opinions—since it cannot be eliminated. Under these assumptions, a true theory would be one that not only grounds its own theses best, but also knows how to defuse all significant and persistent counterpositions through ideology critique. In this point, as one can easily see, official Marxism has the greatest ambition, since the major part of its theoretical energy is dedicated to outdoing all non-Marxist theories and exposing them as "bourgeois ideologies." Only by continually outdoing the others, can ideologists succeed in "living" with the plurality of ideologies. De facto, the critique of ideology implies the attempt to construct a hierarchy between unmasking and unmasked theory. In the war of consciousness, getting on top, that is, achieving a synthesis of claims to power and better insights, is crucial.

Since, in the business of critique, contrary to academic custom, ad hominem arguments are used unhesitatingly, universities have, probably deliberately, moved cautiously toward the procedures of ideology critique. For the attack from the flank, the *argumentum ad personam,* is strongly disapproved of in the "academic community." Respectable critique meets its opponent in its best form; critique honors itself when it overwhelms its rival in the full armor of its rationality. For as long as possible, the learned collegium has tried to defend its integrity against the close combat of ideologico-critical exposures. Do not unmask, lest you yourself be unmasked could be the unspoken rule. It is no accident that the great representatives of critique—the French moralists, the Encyclopedists, the socialists, and especially Heine, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud—remain outsiders to the scholarly domain. In all of them there is a satirical, polemical component that can scarcely be hidden under the mask of scholarly respectability. These signals of a holy nonseriousness, which remains one of the sure indexes of truth, can be employed as signposts to the critique of cynical reason. We will find a reliably unreliable traveling companion in Heinrich Heine, who displayed a knack, unsurpassed to the present day, for combining theory and satire, cognition and entertainment. Here, following in his tracks, we want to try to reunite the capacities for truth in literature, satire, and art with those of "scholarly discourse."

The right of ideology critique to use ad hominem arguments was indirectly acknowledged even by the strictest absolutist of reason, J. G. Fichte, whom Heine aptly compared to Napoleon when he said that the kind of philosophy one chooses

depends on the kind of person one is. This critique intrudes into the conditions under which human beings form opinions with either compassionate serenity or cruel seriousness. It seizes error from behind and tears at its roots in practical life. This procedure is not exactly modest, but its immodesty is excused with a reference to the principle of the unity of truth. What is brought to light by the vivisecting approach is the everlasting embarrassment of ideas confronted by the interests underlying them: human, all too human; egoisms, class privileges, resentments, steadfastness of hegemonic powers. Under such illumination, the opposing subject appears not only psychologically but also sociologically and politically undermined. Accordingly, its standpoint can be understood only if one adds to its self-portrayals what is, in fact, hidden behind and below them. In this way, ideology critique raises a claim that it shares with hermeneutics, namely, the claim to understand an "author" better than he understands himself. What at first sounds arrogant about this claim can be methodologically justified. Others often really do perceive things about me that escape my attention—and conversely. They possess the advantage of distance, which I can profit from only retrospectively through dialogic mirroring. This, of course, would presuppose a functioning dialogue, which is precisely what does not take place in the process of ideology critique.

An ideology critique that does not clearly accept its identity as satire can, however, easily be transformed from an instrument in the search for truth into one of dogmatism. All too often, it interferes with the capacity for dialogue instead of opening up new paths for it. This explains, leaving general antischolastic and antiintellectual feelings aside, a part of the current dissatisfaction with the critique of ideology.

Thus it happens that an ideology critique that presents itself as science, because it is not allowed to be satire, gets more and more entangled in serious radical solutions. One of these is its striking tendency to seek refuge in psychopathology. False consciousness appears first of all as sick consciousness. Almost all important works of the twentieth century on the phenomenon of ideology do the same thing-from Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Reich to R. D. Laing and David Cooper, not to mention Joseph Gabel, who has pushed the analogy between ideology and schizophrenia furthest. Those stances are suspected of being sick that loudly proclaim themselves to be the healthiest, most normal, and natural. The reliance of critique on psychopathology, although probably well justified, risks alienating the opponent more and more deeply; it reifies and diminishes the other's reality. In the end, the critic of ideology stands before the opposing consciousness like one of those modern, highly specialized pathologists who can, of course, say precisely what kind of pathological disturbance the patient is suffering rom but knows nothing about appropriate therapies because that is not his specialty. Such critics, like some medicos corrupted by their profession, are interested in the diseases, not in the patients.

The most humorless reification of every opposing consciousness has grown out of the ideology critique that bases itself on Marx (I will not go into whether this is proper use or misuse of Marx). The radical reification of the opponent is in any case of factual consequence of the politico-economic realism characteristic of Marxian theory. However, here an additional motif comes into play: If all other exposures trace false consciousness back to seamy features of the human totality (lies, nastiness, egoism, repression, split consciousness, illusion, wishful thinking, etc.), the Marxian exposure runs up against the nonsubjective, the laws of the politico-economic process as a whole. When ideologies are criticized from a politico-economic perspective, one never really gets down to "human weaknesses." Rather, one hits on an abstract social mechanism in which individual persons, as members of classes, have distinct functions: as capitalist, as proletarian, as intermediate functionary, as theoretical hack for the system. However, neither in the head nor in the components of the system is there any clarity about the nature of the whole. Each of its members is mystified in a way corresponding to its position. Even the capitalist, in spite of practical experience with capital, finds *no* true image of the total structure, but remains a necessarily deceived epiphenomenon of the process of capital.

It is here that a second offshoot of modern cynicism grows. As soon as I assume, in Marx's formulation, a "necessarily false consciousness," the spiral of reification is turned even further. There would then be in the minds of human beings precisely those errors that have to be in them so that the system can function—toward its collapse. In the gaze of the Marxist system-critic, there glitters an irony that is a priori condemned to cynicism. For the critic admits that ideologies, which from an external point of view are false consciousness, are, seen from the inside, precisely the right consciousness. Ideologies appear simply as the appropriate errors in the corresponding minds: the "correct false consciousness." This echoes the definition of cynicism given in the first preliminary reflection (chapter 1). The difference is that the Marxist critic gives "correct false consciousness" the chance to enlighten itself or to be enlightened —through Marxism. Then, in the critic's opinion, it would have become true consciousness, not "enlightened false consciousness," as the formula for cynicism says. Theoretically, the perspective of emancipation is kept open.

Any sociological system theory that treats "truth" functionalistically-I say this in advance —carries an immense potential for cynicism. And since every contemporary intellect is caught up in the process of such sociological theories, it inevitably is implicated in the latent or overt master cynicism of these forms of thinking. Marxism, in its origins, at least maintained an ambivalence between reifying and emancipative perspectives. Non-Marxist system theories of society drop even the last trace of sensitivity. In alliance with neoconservative currents, they proclaim that useful members of human society have to internalize certain "correct illusions" once and for all, because without them nothing functions properly. The

naivete of the others should be planned, "capital fix being man himself."[3] It is always a good investment to mobilize the naive will to work, for whatever reason. System theoreticians and maintenance strategists are from the start beyond naive belief. But for those who should believe in it, the aphorism holds: Stop reflecting and maintain values.

Those who make the means of liberating reflection available and invite others to use them appear to conservatives as unscrupulous and power-hungry good-for-nothings who are reproached with "Others do the work." Very well, but for whom?

Notes

1. [This is a variation of Habermas's formulation of the "zwanglose Zwang des besseren Arguments."-Trans.]

2. In this book I designate consistently any power that dominates as hegemonic power to indicate that this power never is or has power by itself, but always "rides," so to speak, on the back of an oppositional power. In a realistic theory of power, omnipotence and impotence occur only as quasi-"mathematical" ideas of power, as the infinitely great and the infinitely small in power. Omnipotence and impotence cannot confront each other, but hegemonic power and oppositional power can. What "exists" possesses power, a positive quantum of energy, that is centered in conscious bodies and extends itself to appropriate tools and weapons. For this reason, the logic of all-or-nothing is dangerous, indeed fatal, in politics. In Si^yes's statement-"What is the Third Estate? Nothing. What does it want to become? Everything"—a disastrous self-characterization of the oppositional power comes into being, a false logical treatment *(Logisierung)* of political struggle through which the part wants to make itself into the whole. In substance, this false all-or-nothing logic is repeated in Marxism, which wanted to make the proletariat "everything." Is this inverted concept of power a universal legacy of leftist opposition? Even the French New Philosophy, straying into old ways of thinking, comes to grief on this concept by confusing omnipotence with hegemonic power and imposing a Manichaean ontology of an evil state power.

3. [This phrase is taken from Marx, who in turn quotes the French term for fixed capital. — Trans.]

Chapter 3
Eight Unmaskings:
A Review of Critiques

In the following I sketch eight cases of the enlightenment critique of ideology and critique-through-unmasking whose polemical modes of procedure have become paradigmatic. We will be concerned with the historically most successful figures of demasking —successful, however, not in the sense that the critique had really "finished off' what it criticized. The effects of critique are generally different from those that were intended. Social hegemonic powers intent on sustaining themselves prove capable of learning when they are on the defensive and all else fails. A social history of enlightenment must devote attention to the learning processes of defensive hegemonic powers. A cardinal problem in the history of ideology is the backlog of "false consciousnesses" that first learn from their critics what suspicion and exposure, cynicism and "finesse" are.

Our review of critique will show enlightenment *en marche* in an imperturbable and relentless drive against illusions, old and new. That the critique, in its struggle with its opponents, cannot "clean up" (with them) remains to be shown. We want to see how, here and there, in the critique itself, the germs of new dogmatisms are formed. Enlightenment does not penetrate into social consciousness simply as an unproblematic bringer of light. Where it has an effect, a twilight arises, a deep ambivalence. We will characterize this ambivalence as the atmosphere in which, in the middle of a snarl of factual self-preservation with moral self-denial, cynicism crystallizes.

Heinrich Hoerle, *Masks,* 1929. (Reproduced by permission of the Museum Ludwig, Cologne.)

Critique of Revelation

What? The miracle merely an error of interpretation?
A lack of philology?
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

For Christian civilization, Holy Scripture has paramount value by virtue of the idea that it is a work of divine dictation. Human understanding should submit to it, just as the senses should yield to the sight of a "miracle" that happens before one's very eyes. Dressed in the various mother tongues, the "voice" of the divine (theologically, the Holy Spirit) speaks out of the holy text.

The Bible appears "holy" as a text rooted in the Absolute. Accordingly, no interpretation would be adequate enough to exhaust its overabundance of meaning that renews itself through the epochs of humanity. Exegesis can be nothing other than the vain but necessary attempt to fill the tiny spoon of our understanding with this ocean of meaning. However, all interpretations and applications must remain m the last instance merely human and useless without the assumption that the text Uself is divinely inspired. Only this belief raises scripture to its unique position. ^ a word, it is the belief in the revelatory nature of the Bible that makes it the °ly Book pure and simple. This belief manifests itself in a very naive and radical Way in the doctrine of "verbal inspiration," according to which the Holy Spirit stated directly into the pen of the human scribes, without taking a detour

through their finite consciousness. Theology begins with *automatic writing.* The "private" religious opinions of a Matthew or a Paul would be at best interesting, but not binding; they would remain exhaustible and limited human stances of consciousness. Only theological hypostasis, the elevation to the voice of the Holy Spirit dictating to Matthew or Paul, places the text at the source of unlimited meaning.

Enlightenment inquires precisely into this claim. It asks, innocently and subversively, for proofs, sources, and evidence. At the beginning it solemnly avers that it would willingly believe everything, if only it could find someone to convince it. Here it becomes clear that the biblical texts, taken philologically, remain themselves their only witness. Their revelatory character is their own claim, and it can be believed or not; the church, which elevates this revelatory character to the status of a grand dogma, itself plays only the role of an interpreter.

With his radical biblicism, Luther rejected the church's claim to authority. This repudiation then repeats itself on the higher level through biblicism itself. For text remains text, and every assertion that it is divinely inspired can, in turn, be only a human, fallible assertion. With every attempt to grasp the absolute source, critique comes up against relative, historical sources that only ever assert the Absolute. The miracles spoken about in the Bible to legitimate God's power are only reports of miracles for which there are no longer any means of verification. The revelatory claim is stuck in a philological circle.

In his defense of the Reimarus writings in 1777 *(On the Proof of the Spirit and of the Power),* Lessing unmasked in a classic manner the revelatory claim as a mere assertion. The main thesis reads: "Accidental historical truths can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason." His argumentation:

> Consequently, if I do not have anything historical to counter the claim that Christ awakened a dead person, must I therefore accept as true that God has a son who is of the same essence? What is the connection between my incapacity to counter anything substantial against the evidence of the former and my commitment to believe something my reason resists?
>
> If I do not have anything historical to counter the claim that Christ himself rose from the dead, must I therefore accept as true that precisely this resurrected Christ was the son of God?
>
> That Christ, against whose resurrection I have nothing of importance historically to counter, presented himself as the son of God so that his followers for this reason held him to be so; all that I believe with my whole heart. For these truths, as truths of one and the same class, follow quite naturally from one another.
>
> But now to jump with this historical truth over into a completely different class of truths and demand of me that I should restructure all my metaphysical and moral concepts accordingly, to expect of me, be-

cause I cannot counter the resurrection of Christ with credible evidence, that I alter all my basic ideas about the essence of divinity accordingly; if that is not a transition to another logical category *(metdbasis eis alio genos),* then I do not know what Aristotle understood by this desig- nation.

One says, of course: But precisely that Christ, about whom you must historically allow to be true that he raised the dead, that he himself rose from the dead, has himself said that God has a son of the same essence and that *he* is this son.

That would be quite good. If only it were historically certain also that Christ in fact said this.

If one wanted to pursue me and say: "But indeed! That is more than historically certain; for inspired chronologists, who cannot err, assure us of it": But again it is unfortunately only historically certain that these chronologists were inspired and could not err.

That, that is the terrifyingly wide gap over which I cannot come, no matter how often and how earnestly I have attempted to leap over it. If someone can help me over it, then do so! I ask him, I beg him. He would earn a divine reward through me.

Human knowledge is forced to retreat into the limits of historiography, philol- ogy, and logic. Something of this painful retreat appears in Lessing, who does not disingenuously aver that his heart would willingly remain more credulous than his reason allows. With the question "How can one know that?", enlighten- ment severs the roots of revelatory knowledge quite elegantly, without being par- ticularly aggressive. With the best will, human reason cannot find anything in the sacred text but historical, human-made assumptions. With a simple philological query, the claim of absoluteness made by tradition is annihilated.

No matter how convincing the historical-philological critique of the Bible may be, the confessional absolutism of organized religion does not want to ac- knowledge that according to the rules of the art, it is suspended. Its absolutism simply continues to "exist," not, to be sure, as if this suspension and this exposure had never happened, but as if there were no consequences to be drawn from them, except one; namely that one must study and excommunicate the critics. Only after the fundamental critique of modern times does theology completely board the ship of fools of so-called belief and drift farther and farther from the banks of literal critique. In the nineteenth century, the churches gave the signal for merg- mg postcritical irrationalism with political reaction. Like all institutions imbued with the will to survive, they knew how to weather the "dissolution" of their foun- ations. From now on, the concept of 'existence' stinks of the cadaveric poison °t Christianity, of the rotting after-life, of what, in spite of critique, has been criti- -ized. Since then, theologians have had an additional trait in common with ynics: the sense for naked self-preservation. They have made themselves com-

fortably at home in the tub of a dogmatics riddled with holes until the Day of Judgment.

Critique of Religious Illusion

Deception always goes further than suspicion.
La Rochefoucauld

In a strategically clever move, enlightenment's critique of the religious phenomenon concentrates on God's attributes; only secondarily does it tackle the sticky "question of existence." Whether God "exists" is not the basic problem; what is essential is what people mean when they maintain that he exists and that his will is thus and thus.

Initially, then, it is important to find out what they pretend to know of God besides his existence. Religious traditions provide the material for this. Because God is not "empirically" observable, the assignment of divine attributes to *human* experience plays the decisive role in the critique. Religious doctrine can, under no circumstances, evade this point, except by opting for a radical cult theology or, more consistently, for the mystical thesis of an unnameable God. This logically consistent consequence for a philosophy of religion would offer adequate protection against enlightenment's detectivelike inquiries into human fantasies about God that shine through in the attributes. However, with mystical renunciation, religion cannot become a social institution; it lives from the fact that it presents established narratives (myths) and standardized attributes (names and images), as well as stereotyped ways of behaving toward the holy (rituals), in reliably recurring forms.

One thus has only to examine these presentations more closely to track down the secret of their fabrication. The Bible provides the critic of religion with the decisive reference. Genesis 1:27: "And God created Man according to His image, in the image of God created He him." Without doubt, this "image" relation can also be interpreted the other way around. From then on it is no mystery where the images come from; humans and their experiences are the material from which the official dreams about God are made. The religious eye projects earthly images into heaven.

One of these primary projections (how could it be otherwise?) comes from the realm of images related *to family and procreation.* In polytheistic religions one finds intricate, often downright frivolous family sagas and affairs involving the procreation of deities—which one can readily study in Greek, Egyptian, and Hindu gods. That the human power of imagination proceeded too discreetly in picturing the heavenly populations will be maintained by no one. Even the sublime and theologically ambitious Christian doctrine of the Trinity is not free of family and procreation fantasies. Its particular refinement, however, has Mary

getting pregnant by the Holy Ghost. Satire has recognized this challenge. The doctrine is intended to avoid the idea that a sexually constituted bond exists between father and son. The Christian God may well "procreate," but he does not copulate; for this reason the Creed says, with true subtlety: *genitum, non factum.*

Closely related to the idea of procreation is that of *authorship,* of Creation, which is attributed particularly to the superior and monotheistic gods. Here, human experience is mixed in with production, rooted in agrarian and artisanal activity. In their labor, human beings experienced themselves prototypically as creators, as authors of a new, previously nonexisting effect. The more the world became mechanized, the more the idea of God was transferred from the biological conception of procreation to that of production. Accordingly, the procreating God became increasingly a world manufacturer, the original producer.

The third primary projection is that of *succor,* among the constitutive images of religious life perhaps the most important. The greater part of religious pleas are addressed to God as helper in the distress of life and death. Because, however, God's succor presupposes his power over worldly events, the fantasy of the helper is blended with human experiences in protecting, caring, and ruling. The popular image of Christ shows him as the Good Shepherd. In the course of the history of religion, the gods have been assigned jurisdictions and responsibilities, whether in the form of sectoral sovereignty over a natural element such as sea, river, wind, forest, and grain, or in the form of general rule over the created world. Political experiences obviously permeate these projections. The power of God is analogous to the functions of chiefs and kings. The religion of feudal society is the most open with its political projection of God in that it unhesitatingly institutes God as the highest feudal lord and addresses him with the feudal title of "Lord." In English, one still says "My Lord." Anthropomorphism or sociomorphism is revealed most naively where pictorial representations of the gods were attempted. For this reason, religions and theologies that have reflected on this have promulgated a strict prohibition of images: They recognized the danger of reification. Judaism, Islam, and also certain "iconoclastic" factions of Christianity have, on this point, exercised an intelligent continence. Enlightenment satire amused itself over African deities, for whom a black skin was just as self-evident as were slanted eyes for Asiatic idols. It entertained itself with the thought of how •ions, camels, and penguins would probably imagine their dear God: as lion, camel, and penguin.

With this discovery of projective mechanisms, critique of religion provided enlightenment with a sharp weapon. Without great trouble it can be shown that the mechanism of projection is basically always the same, whether it is a matter °r sensual naive notions like slanted eyes and white, grandfatherly beards or of subtle attributes such as personality, original authorship, permanence, or foreknowledge. In all this, consistent critique of religion leaves the question of the existence of God" untouched. Part of its rational tact is not to go beyond the area

defined by the question, "What can I know?" The critique first suffered a dogmatic regression when it itself jumped over the limits of knowledge with its own negatively metaphysical statements and began to profess a clumsy atheism. From then on, representatives of organized religion could point with satisfaction to an approximation between the "atheistic Weltanschauung" and the theological; for where a frontal contradiction comes to a standstill, there is no progress beyond the limits of both positions — and institutions interested, above all, in self-preservation do not need anything more.

Besides the anthropological exposure of God projections, enlightenment has used, since the eighteenth century, a subversive *second strategy,* in which we discover the germ of modern theory of cynicism. It is known as *the theory of priests' deception.* Here enlightenment approaches religion through an instrumentalist perspective by asking, Whom does religion serve, and what function does it serve in the life of society? The enlighteners were not at a loss for the—apparently simple—answer. In any case, they only needed to look back on a thousand years of Christian religious politics, from Charlemagne to Richelieu, to read the answer from the bloody tracks of religiously tinged violence.

> All religions are erected on the ground of fear. Gales, thunder, storms . . . are the cause of this fear. Human beings, who felt impotent in the face of such natural events, sought refuge in beings who were stronger than themselves. Only later did *ambitious men, artful politicians and philosophers* begin to take advantage of the people's gullibility. For this purpose they invented a multitude of equally fantastic and cruel gods, who served no other purpose than to consolidate and maintain their power over people. In this way various cult forms arose that ultimately aimed only at stamping a kind of transcendental legality on an existing social order. . . . The basis of all cult forms consisted in the sacrifice the individual had to make for the well-being of the community. . . . So it is no wonder that, in the name of God, . . . the great majority of human beings are oppressed by a small group of people who have made religious fear into an effective ally. (Therese Philosophe, *Ein Sittenbild aus dem 18. Jahrhundert, verfasst von dem intimen Freund Friedrichs des Grossen, dem Marquis d'Argens* [A picture of morals in the eighteenth century, written by the intimate friend of Frederick the Great, the Marquis d'Argens]; trans. J. Fiirstenauer (Darmstadt, no date); the authorship remains unclear, since it is based only on a remark of the Marquis de Sade; quotation from pp. 111ff.)

This is an instrumentalist theory of religion that is quite blunt. Admittedly, it too attributes the genesis of religions to human helplessness (projection of the helper). What is significant about it, however, is that we find in it the breakthrough to an openly reflective instrumentalist logic. Questioning the function and

application of religion is the future dynamite of ideology critique, the seeds of the crystallization of modern, self-reflective cynicism.

For the enlightener, it is easy to say why religion exists: first, to cope with existential fears, and second, to legitimate oppressive social orders. At the same time, this implies historical sequence, as the text explicitly emphasizes: "Only later . . . " The exploiters and users of religion must be of a different caliber than the simple and fearful believers. The text chooses its expressions accordingly: It talks of "ambitious men" and "artful politicians and philosophers." The expression "artful" cannot be taken seriously enough. It tries to capture an areligious consciousness that uses religion as an instrument of domination. Religion has the sole task of establishing a permanent, mute willingness to sacrifice in the hearts of the subjugated.

The enlightener presumes that the rulers know this and let it work to their advantage with conscious calculation. Artfulness *(Raffinesse,* finesse) expresses just that: "refinement" in the knowledge of domination. The consciousness of those in power has grown out of religious self-deception; it lets the deception go on working, but to its advantage. It does not believe, but it lets others believe. There have to be many fools so that the few can remain the clever ones.

I maintain that this enlightenment theory of religion represents the first logical construction of modern, self-reflective master cynicism.[2] However, this theory was not able to explicate its own structure and implications and, in the course of theoretical development, it perished. In general, the prevailing opinion is that ideology critique did not find its valid form until Marx and that the systems of Nietzsche, Freud, and others continued to elaborate that form. The textbook opinion about the theory of priests' deception says that the approach was inadequate and was justifiably superseded by the more "mature" forms of sociological and psychological critique of consciousness. That is only partially true. It can be shown that this theory includes a dimension that sociological and psychological critiques not only failed to grasp, but to which they remained completely blind when it began to manifest itself within their own domain: the *"artful dimension."*

The theory of deception is, in its reflective aspect, more complex than the politico-economic and the depth-psychological exposure theory. Both theories locate the mechanism of deception *behind* false consciousness: It is deceived, it deceives itself. The deception theory, by contrast, assumes that one can view the mechanism of error along two axes. It is possible that one can suffer a delusion and also, undeluded, use it against others. This is precisely what the thinkers of the rococo and the Enlightenment had in mind-of whom, by the way, not a few had occupied themselves with ancient kynicism (e.g., Diderot, Christoph Wieland). They call this structure, for lack of a more developed terminology, "artfulness" *(Raffinesse),* which is allied with "ambition." Both are qualities that were common in descriptions of human nature in the courtly and urban spheres of that time. In fact, this deception theory entails a great logical discovery —a break-

through in ideology critique to the concept of a *self-reflective ideology.* All other ideology critique possesses a striking tendency to patronize the "false consciousness" of others and to regard it as a kind of blindness. The deception theory, by contrast, develops a level of critique that concedes that the opponent is at least equally intelligent. It views the opposing consciousness as a serious rival, instead of commenting on it condescendingly. Thus, since the late eighteenth century, philosophy holds in its hands the beginnings of the thread of a multidimensional ideology critique.

To portray the opponent as an alert, reflecting deceiver, as an artful "politician," is both naive and cunning. In this way one gets at the construction of an artful consciousness by an even more artful consciousness. The enlightener outdoes the deceiver by rethinking and unmasking *(entlarveri)* the latter's maneuvers. If the deceiving priest or ruler has an artful mind, that is, if he is a modern ruler-cynic, then, in relation to him, the enlightener is a metacynic, an ironist, a satirist. The enlightener can masterfully reconstruct the machinations of the deception in the opponent's mind and explode them with laughter: "You don't want to take us for suckers, do you?" This is scarcely possible unless there is a certain reflective tight spot in which the consciousnesses are a good match for each other. In this climate, enlightenment leads to a training in mistrust that strives to outdo deception through suspicion.

The artful contesting of deception with suspicion can also be demonstrated in the passage quoted earlier. Its special irony becomes recognizable only when one knows who is speaking. The speaker is an enlightened priest, one of those modern and skillful abbots of the eighteenth century who embellish the amatory novels of the time with their erotic adventures and rational small talk. As an expert in false consciousness by profession so to speak, he blabs indiscreetly. The scene is set up as if this cleric, in his critique of the clergy, forgets that he is also speaking of himself. The (probably) aristocratic author speaks all the more through him. He remains blind to his own cynicism. He has joined sides with reason, primarily because reason does not raise any objections to his *sexual* desires. The setting for the spicy statements criticizing religion is the love nest he has just shared with the alluring Madame C. And all of us, the narrator Therese, the recipient of her confidential sketches, and the intimate public, stand behind the bed curtains and see and hear the whisperings of enlightenment: all of this is enough to make you lose your mind—of course, as Heinrich Mann said in his *Henri Quatre,* "to the great advantage of the remaining senses."

The point of the abbot's reflections is to clear away the religious hindrances to "lust." The charming lady has just teased him: "Very well, my dear, what about religion? It forbids us the joys of lust very decisively, except in the state of marriage." One part of the abbot's reply is given in the preceding quotation. For his own sensuousness, he makes use of the exposure of religious prohibitions —

Secret with amorous observer. Detail from an engraving after a painting by Baudouin, around 1780.

however, with the reservation of strict *discretion.* Here, in the superartful argument of the enlightener, his own naivete emerges. The monologue turns into the following dialogue:

"You see, my dear, there you have my sermon on the chapter of religion. It is the fruit of no less than twenty years of observation and reflection. I have always tried to separate truth from lie, as prescribed by reason. We should conclude from this, I believe, that the pleasure that binds us to each other so tenderly, my friend, is pure and innocent. Does not the *discretion* with which we surrender ourselves to it guarantee that it does not injure God or humanity? Of course, without this discretion such pleasures could cause a dreadful scandal. . . . Our example could, after all, confuse unsuspecting young souls and mislead them so that they would neglect their duties to society."

"But," the lady objected justifiably, it seemed to me, "if our pleasures are so innocent, as I would like to believe they are, why shouldn't we let them be known to all the world? What harm could there be in sharing the golden fruits of sensual pleasure with our fellow human beings? Didn't you yourself tell me repeatedly that there is no greater happiness for human beings than to make others happy?"

"Indeed, I said that, my dear," the abbot admitted. "But that doesn't mean that we are allowed to disclose such secrets to the rabble. Don't you realize that the minds of these people are vulgar enough to misuse what seems so sacred to us? You cannot compare them to those who

Punished Curiosity. Hydraulic humor and true adventure. Engraving by G. de Cari.

are able to think rationally. . . . In ten thousand people there will scarcely be twenty who can think logically. . . . That is the reason we must be careful with our experiences." (pp. 113-15)

Hegemonic powers, once they have been induced to start talking, cannot stop themselves from letting out all their trade secrets. Once discretion is assured, they can be marvelously honest. Here, in the words of the abbot, a hegemonic power rouses itself to a truly insightful confession in which can also be heard a large part of Freudian and Reichian theory. But the enlightened privileged also know exactly what would happen if everyone thought the way they do. For that reason, the awakened knowledge that rulers have places discreet limits on itself. This knowledge foresees social chaos if ideologies, religious fears, and conformities were to disappear overnight from the minds of the multitude. Itself without any illusions, it realizes the functional necessity of illusions for the social status quo. This is the way enlightenment works in the minds of those who have recognized the origin of power. Its caution and its discretion are completely realistic. There is in enlightenment a breathtaking soberness in which it understands that the "golden fruits of sensual pleasure" thrive only in the status quo that puts the chances for individuality, sexuality, and luxury in the laps of the few. It was in part to such secrets of a weary power that Talleyrand referred when he commented that only those who lived before the revolution really got to taste the sweetness of life.

Perhaps it is significant that it is the lustful and inquiring lady who artlessly claims the sweet fruits of sensual pleasure for all and who recalls the happiness

of sharing, whereas the realistic abbot insists on secrecy and discretion as longas the "rabble" are not mature enough for such sharing? Perhaps we are hearing from the lady the feminine voice, the voice of democratic principles, of erotic liberality-Madame Sans-Gene of politics. She simply does not understand that desire is sensual pleasure in the world, nor does she understand why something that is so abundant has to be searched out in such roundabout ways.

At the beginning of his *Wintermarchen,* Heinrich Heine takes up this argument concerning liberality. He puts the "old chant of self-denial," which rulers let the foolish folk sing, in its place in the system of oppression:

> I know the style, I know the text
> And also their lordships, the authors;
> I know they secretly drank wine
> And publicly preached water.

Here, the motifs are collected together: "textual critique," ad hominem argument, the artful outdoing of artfulness. Beyond this there is the spirited turn from the elitist program of masters' cynicism to the popular chanson.

> There grows enough earthly bread
> For all humanity's children.
> No less, roses and myrtle, beauty and joy
> And sweet peas as well.

> Yes, sweet peas for everybody
> As soon as the pods burst!
> Heaven we leave
> To the angels and sparrows.

In Heine's poetic universalism, the adequate answer of classical Enlightenment to Christianity appears: It takes Christianity *as knowledge,* instead of leaving it to the ambiguities of faith. The Enlightenment surprises religion by taking it more seriously in its ethos than religion takes itself. Thus, the slogans of the French Revolution sparkle at the beginning of modernity as the most superbly Christian abolition of Christianity. It is the unsurpassable rationality and human character °f the great religions that allows them to flower again and again from their rejuvenable kernels. Realizing this, all forms of critique aimed at abolition see that ey have to handle religious phenomena carefully. Depth psychologies have ᵐade it clear that illusions are at work not only in religious wish-imagery, but * so in the denial of religion. Religion could be counted among those "illusions" at have a future *on the side* of enlightenment because no merely negative cri-¹⁰<ue and no disillusion can ever do them complete justice. Perhaps religion is ᵉᵃⁱly an incurable "ontological psychosis" (Ricoeur), and the furies of critique
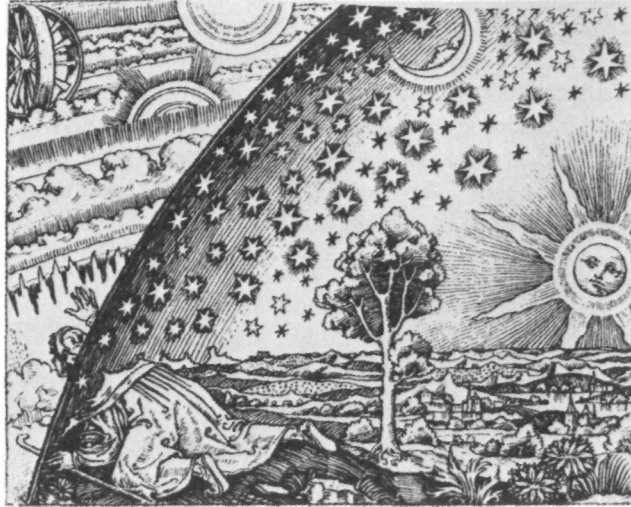
Metaphysical border traffic.

aimed at abolition must become exhausted from the eternal recurrence of what has been abolished.

Critique of Metaphysical Illusion

In the first two critiques we have observed the operational scheme of enlightenment: self-limitation of reason—accompanied by renewed glances beyond the border, whereby one takes the liberty of small trips "across the border," with private provisos such as "discretion." In the critique of metaphysics, things proceed in basically the same way. It can do nothing more than remind human reason of its own limitations. It pursues the thought that reason is indeed capable of posing metaphysical questions but is incapable of settling them conclusively through its own resources. It is the great achievement of Kantian enlightenment to have shown that reason functions reliably only under the conditions of experiential knowledge.[3] With anything that goes beyond experience, it necessarily overreaches its basic capacities. It is a part of its essential character to want to do more than it can. Once the logical critique has taken place, therefore, fruitful propositions concerning objects beyond the empirical are no longer possible. Of course, metaphysical ideas like God, soul, and universe inevitably intrude into thought, but they cannot be treated in any conclusive manner through the means given to thought. There would be some hope, if such ideas were empirical; but since they are not there is no hope that reason will ever "come to terms" with these topics. The rational apparatus is, of course, equipped for an incursion into these prob-

lems, but not to return from such excursions into the "beyond" with any clear, unequivocal answers. Reason sits, so to speak, behind a grating through which it believes it gains metaphysical insights, but what at first seems to be "Knowledge" *(Erkenntnis)* proves to be self-deception under the light of critique. To a certain extent, reason has to be taken in by the illusion that it itself has created in the form of metaphysical ideas. By ultimately coming to recognize its own limits and its own futile play with the expansion of those limits, it unmasks its own efforts as futile. This is the modern form of saying: I know that I know nothing. This knowledge entails, in a positive sense, only the knowledge of the limits of knowledge. Whoever then continues with metaphysical speculation is exposed as a border violator, as a "starving wretch longing for the unattainable."

All metaphysical alternatives are of equal value and undecidable: determinism versus indeterminism; finiteness versus infinitude; the existence of God versus the nonexistence of God; idealism versus materialism; and so forth. In all such questions there are (at least) two logically necessary possibilities, which are equally well or equally poorly founded. One need not, should not, must not "make a decision" as soon as one has recognized both alternatives as reflections of the structure of reason. For any decision implies a metaphysical, dogmatic regression. Of course, we must make a distinction here: Metaphysical thinking bequeaths an invaluable inheritance to enlightenment, namely, the remembrance of the connection between reflection and emancipation, a connection that remains valid even when the grand systems have collapsed. For that reason, enlightenment was always at the same time logic and more than logic, reflective logic. Self-enlightenment is possible only for those who know what world *whole* they are a "part" of. For this reason, social and natural philosophies today have taken over the legacy of metaphysics, to be sure with the required intellectual discretion.

This is also the reason why enlightenment cannot be identical with a theory of faulty thinking that has a long tradition from Aristotle up to Anglo-Saxon language philosophy. Enlightenment never has been concerned only with the unmasking of projections, logical leaps, errors in inference, fallacies, the elision of logical categories, false premises, and interpretations, etc., but, above all, with the *self-experience of the human being* in the labor it costs to critically dissolve naive world- and self-images. The authentic tradition of enlightenment thus always felt alienated by the attempts of modern logical-positivistic cynicism to confine thinking completely to the tub of pure analysis. But it is worthwhile shedding light on the fronts. The logical positivists, who smile derisively at the great themes of the philosophical tradition by referring to them as "illusory problems," radicalize one of the tendencies characteristic of enlightenment. The turn away from the "great problems" is kynically inspired. Is not Wittgenstein really the Diogenes of modern logic and Carnap the desert hermit of empiricism *(Empirie)?* It is as if they, with their strict, intellectual asceticism, wanted to force the carelessly garrulous world to repent, this world to which logic and empiricism do not

mean ultimate revelations and that, unaffected in its hunger for "useful fictions," continues to behave as if the sun does, in fact, revolve around the earth and as if the mirages of "imprecise" thinking are, in fact, good enough for our practical life.

Critique of the Idealistic Superstructure

Marx's critique takes a clear step beyond all previous critiques: It aims at an integral "critique of heads." It insists on putting the heads back on the whole of the living and laboring bodies: That is the meaning of the dialectic of theory and praxis, brain and hand, head and belly.

Marx's critique is guided by a realistic perspective on the social labor processes. What goes on in the heads of people, it says, remains "in the last instance" determined by the social function of the heads in the economy of social labor as a whole. For that reason, socioeconomic critique has little respect for what consciousnesses say about themselves. Its motive is always to find out what the case is "objectively." Thus it asks each consciousness what it knows of its own position in the structure of labor and domination. And because, in doing so, it usually meets with a tremendous amount of ignorance, it gains here its point of attack. Because social labor is subject to a class structure, Marx's critique examines each consciousness in terms of what it achieves as "class consciousness" and what it itself knows about this achievement.

In the system of bourgeois society three objective class consciousnesses can be distinguished initially: that of the bourgeoisie (capitalist class), that of the proletariat (the producer class), and that of the intermediate functionaries (the middle "class") —with which the consciousness of the superstructure laborers, a group of scientists, judges, priests, artists, and philosophers with an indistinct class profile mixes ambiguously.

With regard to the traditional intellectual laborers, it becomes immediately apparent that they usually view their activities in a completely different way than they should according to Marx's model. Intellectual laborers usually know next to nothing about their role in the economy of social labor and domination. They remain far removed from the "ground of hard facts," live with their heads in the clouds, and view the sphere of "real production" from an unreal distance. They exist thus, according to Marx, in a world of global, idealistic mystification. Intellectual "labor" (even the designation is an attack) wants to forget that it is also, in a specific sense, labor. It has got used to not asking about its interplay with material, manual, and executive labor. The entire classical tradition, from Plato to Kant, thus neglects the social base of theory: slave economy, serfdom, relations of subjugation in labor. Instead, this tradition bases itself on autonomous intellectual experiences that motivate its activity: the striving for truth, virtuous consciousness, divine calling, absolutism of reason, genius.
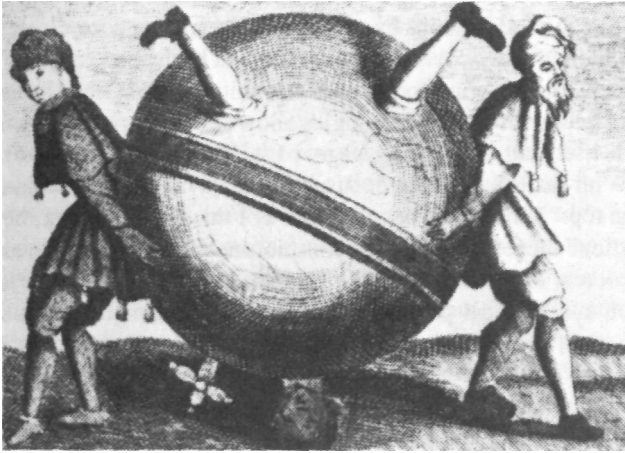
Lafolie des hommes ou le monde a rebours (human folly or the world on its head).

Against this, it must be asserted that labor is an elementary relation of life, which a theory of the real has to take into account. Wherever it shows itself unwilling to do so, and wants to transcend these foundations, an unmasking is called for. This unmasking is to be understood as *grounding.* The typical unmasking gesture in Marx's critique is therefore inversion: turning consciousness around from its head onto its feet. *Feet* means here knowledge of one's place in the production process and in the class structure. That consciousness must be considered unmasked that does not want to know about its "social being," its function in the whole, and therefore persists in its mystification, its idealistic split. In this sense, Marxist critique deals successively with the mystifications of religion, aesthetics, justice, welfare, morality, philosophy, and science.

Besides the critique of mystified consciousnesses, Marx's theory harbors a second far-reaching variant of ideology critique, which has shaped the critical style of Marxism, its polemical sharpness: the theory of the character mask. As a theory of masks, it distinguishes a priori between persons as individuals and as bearers of class functions. In doing so it remains a little unclear which side is respectively the mask of the other—the individual the mask of the function, or the function the mask of individuality. The majority of critics have for good reasons, chosen the antihumanist version, the conception that individuality is the mask of the function. Thus, there may well exist humane capitalists-as the history of bourgeois philanthropy proves—against whom Marxist critics have vehemently polemicized. They are humane merely as individual masks of social inhumanity. According to their social being, they regain, in spite of this, personifications of the profit interest, character masks of capital. Indeed, in some respects they are, for the agitators, worse than the worst exploiters because they

nourish the laborer's patriarchal mystification. "Bourgeois" role theory provides the mirror image of this theory by conceiving social functions ("roles") as masks with which individuality covers itself in order, at best, to even "play" with them.

Of course, workers' consciousness is also initially mystified. Its education under the principles of the ruling ideologies allows no other possibility. At the same time, it finds itself at the beginning stages of realism: because it performs immediate labor. With realistic instinct, it suspects the swindle going on in the heads of "those at the top." It stands on bare ground. For this reason, Marx, here remarkably optimistic, believes that workers' consciousness is capable of an extraordinary learning process, in whose course the proletariat acquires a sober view of its social position and political power—and then sets this consciousness into revolutionary practice, of whatever kind. In the transposition, consciousness gains a new quality.

Here, proletarian enlightenment makes the leap from a theoretical to a practical change; it abandons the privacy of false or true "mere" thoughts in order to organize itself publicly as a new, true class consciousness-true because it understands its vital interests and aggressively works its way out of exploitation and repression. Enlightenment would reach completion *practically,* as the dissolution of class society. Here, the fundamentally ambiguous character of Marx's "theory" is revealed. On the one hand, it reifies every consciousness into a function of the social process; on the other, it wants to make possible the liberation of consciousness from mystification. If one understands Marxism as a theory of liberation, one emphasizes the emancipative formation of proletarian consciousness and that of its allies. This view leads into the open, into the formative "subjectivity" of the (allegedly) last oppressed class. If this class liberates itself from its stifling position, it creates the precondition for the real emancipation (from the exploitation of labor) of everyone. The self-liberation of the slave, in an ideal dialectic,[4] should lead to the liberation of the master from the constrictions of being master. Those who want to see Marx as a "humanist" emphasize this aspect. At its center is the anthropology of labor. Laborers would gain their "selves" only when they enjoy the products on which they have expended their energy, and no longer have to relinquish the surplus value to the rulers. In this thought model, emancipation appears as the self-appropriation of the productive subjects in their products. (Of course, one would like to know what idealism really is if this is not thought out idealistically.)

From a second perspective, an "antihumanist," "realist" strand emerges from Marx's critique. Its emphasis is not on the dialectic of liberation but rather on the mechanisms of universal mystification. If every consciousness is precisely as false as corresponds to its position in the process of production and domination, it necessarily remains captive to its own falsity, as long as the process is taking place. And that the process is in full motion is constantly emphasized by Marxism. Here the hidden functionalism in Marxian theory goes into effect. For this

functionalism, there is to the present day no sharper formulation than the famous phrase "necessarily false consciousness." From this viewpoint, false consciousness is reined into its place in the system of objective delusions. False being is a function of the process.

Here, Marxist system-cynicism comes very close to that of bourgeois functionalists, but there is a reversal of the premises. For bourgeois functionalists regard the functioning of social systems of action as guaranteed only when certain fundamental norms, attitudes, and goals are accepted and obeyed in blind identification by the members of the systems. It is in the interest of the system itself that these identifications are conceived of flexibly (and indeed sometimes even revised) by individual deviants so that the system does not, by being too rigid, lose its ability to adapt to new situations. To this extent, a certain degree of irony and a niche for the revolutionarily inclined actually would be indispensable for every developing system. Naturally, functionalism not only denies human consciousness its right to emancipation; it also denies the meaning of such emancipation from norms and compulsions, for emancipation leads, according to functionalism, directly into nothingness, into an empty individualism, an amorphous chaos, and the loss of structure in society. That there is a grain of truth in this is demonstrated in the most drastic possible way by the socialist social orders in the Eastern Bloc. They provide the functionalist proof in a social laboratory: that an "ordered" social existence is conceivable only under the constraints of functional, purposeful lies. In the cultural politics and ethical drilling of labor and militarism in socialist countries, the functional cynicism of Marx's theory of ideology is displayed in a horrifyingly clear way. In those societies the idea of freedom in an existential, self-reflective enlightenment vegetates on a barbaric level; it is no wonder that the emancipative resistance, which somewhat unhappily calls itself dissidence, manifests itself as *religious* opposition. In socialism, that individual block to reflection (which the conservatives and neoconservatives in the West have long dreamed about) is practiced officially. Socialist countries put the drilling of values into practice with breathtaking radicalness. The element of minimal deviation, in the meantime, is also officially planned, ever since jeans have been made in people's factories and jazz has been played in Dresden. Viewed structurally, the Party dictatorships in the East constitute the paradise of Western conservatism. The great conservative, Arnold Gehlen, did not admire the Soviet Union for nothing, a fact that can be compared with Adolf Hitler's full, but hidden, respect for the apparatus of the Catholic church.

Marxist functionalism remains remarkably blind to its own artfulness. In a modernization of deception, it uses the elements of truth in socialist doctrine as a new ideological bonding agent. The modernization of the art of lying is based °n schizoid finesse; one lies by telling the truth. One practices a split in consciousness until it seems normal that socialism, previously a language of hope, becomes an ideological wall, behind which hopes and future prospects disappear.

Only in Marx's ideology critique can the trace of later cynical finesse be discovered in its beginnings. If ideology really meant "necessarily false consciousness," and (no irony intended) there was nothing other than the right mystifications in the right head, then it has to be asked how the critic can claim to have escaped the vicious circle of deceptions. By going over to the side of the deceivers? Dialectical critique sees itself as the only light in the darkness of "true falsities." However, in this, dialectical critique demands more of a fruitful thought than it can provide. The discovery of labor and the logic of production, despite their fundamental importance, do not provide a master key to all questions about existence, consciousness, truth, and knowledge. For this reason, "bourgeois" countercritique, for the most part, had an easy game with Marxism in its weakest point: the crude level of its theory of science and knowledge.

Critique of Moral Illusion

The roots of moral enlightenment reach back furthest of all into the past—and for good reasons. For with regard to morality, the deepest question of all enlightenment is decided: the question of the "good life." That human beings are not really what they pretend to be is an age-old motif of critical moral thinking. Jesus provided the model in his attack against those who harshly judge others: "How wilt thou say to thy brother, 'Let me pull the splinter out of thine eye,' when, behold, a plank is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite!" (Matthew 7:4-5).

The critique in the New Testament already assumes an "artful" doubling: wolves in sheep's clothing, moralists with a plank in their eye, Pharisaism. From its first moment, this critique of morality proceeds metamorally, here: psychologically. It assumes as a basic principle that the "outward" moral appearance is deceptive. A closer inspection would show how moralists in fact do not serve the law, but cover up their own lawlessness by criticizing others. Matthew 7:4 contains psychoanalysis in a nutshell. What disturbs me in others is what I myself am. However, as long as I do not see myself, I do not recognize my projections as the outward reflection of my own plank, but as the depravity of the world. Indeed, the "reality component of the projection," as psychoanalysts would say today, should not be my first concern. Even if the world really is depraved, I should be concerned about my own defects first. What Jesus teaches is a revolutionary self-reflection: Start with yourself, and then, if others really need to be "enlightened," show them how by your own example. Of course, under the normal conditions in the world, things proceed the other way around: The lawgivers start with others and it remains uncertain whether they will also get around to themselves-They refer to laws and conventions that are supposedly absolute. But the wolves in sheep's clothing enjoy looking at these laws and conventions more or less from above and from outside. Only they are still allowed to know about the ambivalence of things. Only they, because they are lawgivers, feel the breath of freedom

beyond the legislation. The real sheep are forced under the either/or. For no state can be "made" with self-reflection and with irony directed against the existing order. States are always *also* coercive apparatuses that cease to function when the sheep begin to say "I" and when the subjugated free themselves from conventions through reflection. As soon as "those at the bottom" gain the knowledge of ambivalence, a wrench is thrown into the works-enlightenment against the automatism of obedience and achievement.

Christian ethics of self-reflection, the return to oneself in making judgments, is political dynamite. Since the "freedom of a Christian person" suspends every naive belief in norms, Christian cooperation and Christian coexistence are no longer possible on the basis of state government *(Staatlichkeit, civitas),* that is, of coerced communality, but only on the basis of community *(Gesellschaftlichkeit, communitas, societas:* communism, socialism). The real state needs blind subjects, whereas society can understand itself only as a commune of awakened individualities. This establishes the deep bond between Christianity and communism, of which the anarchists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tried to remind us. For the rules according to which life in the anarchist commune is ordered are free, self-imposed bonds, not alien, hierarchically imposed laws. The commune dreams of a permanent renewal of the law through consensus.

The original idea of the church still contains something of this *communio-*model. Of course, this model degenerates quickly in the transition to the organized church. Thereafter it lives on, estranged and truncated, in the great religious orders. The official church, however, develops more and more into a parody of the state and into a coercive apparatus of wondrous proportions. This schizophrenia was rationalized for millennia to come by the church's teacher, Saint Augustine, in his doctrine of the "two kingdoms," the divine and the temporal-which the Augustinian monk, Luther, continued to maintain. That in this doctrine, Augustine applies the concept *civitas* to the religious community signals its political corruption. It may seem curious but understandable that only with the modern movements toward democracy has a fundamental Christian thought again come into political play. Western democracies are basically permanent parodies oi religious anarchism, peculiar mixtures of coercive apparatuses, and orders of freedom. In them the rule applies: an illusory ego for everyone.

Herein lies at the same time the Catholic irony in the modern world. For Catholicism, with its dogma and its absolutist organization, protrudes into a liberalized social order like an archaic hulk. It is still *against the temporal order* only [n] the sense that it maintains its perverse alliance with the centralized power of states, just as it had done with the western Roman Empire, northern European eudalism, and with the absolutism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

at is why today's central powers, which have at least learned to play the liberal S me a little, are somewhat embarrassed in their relations to the openly

authoritarian Vatican. Only with Mussolini's fascism could Catholicism be brought back into the loathsome modernity of the concordats.

This preamble is perhaps useful for understanding the point of departure for the later critique of morality. In the course of its history, Christianity repudiates its own moral structure, a structure of self-reflection superior to conventions. In a word, it itself becomes a conventional coercive organization. It thus degenerates from the free standpoint of metaethics, which, with a clear view of reality *and* with a love full of reason, says what one should do, to the trite standpoint of "Thou shalt." Originally directed against Pharisaism, it has become through its political success the most hypocritical ideology the world has ever known.

This has been generally well known in Europe since the late Middle Ages. Since that time, the wolves in Christian sheep's clothing have been distinguished from the sheep and from those exceptional people who, in spite of Christianity, made something of the opportunities it offered. Since the end of the Middle Ages, that is, ever since written documents have recorded the voice of the people and their realism, a good proportion of the people have not let themselves be deceived about this split in morality. The lustful monk, the bellicose prelate, the cynical cardinal, and the corrupt pope are standard figures in popular realism. No "theoretical" critique has been able to add anything essential to this satirical approach. The unmasking of the clergy belongs to Catholicism like laughter to satire. In laughter, all theory is anticipated.

The critique of morality, however, has not advanced as laughter, and this is connected with the role of Protestantism in the renovation of moralism. Catholicism can be content in the last analysis with satire on the clergy. Protestantism, by contrast, must push the critique of morality forward to the exposure of the layperson, of the fake Christian, and consequently, of everyone. The French Enlightenment directs its moral satire against the personnel in the Catholic spectacle, the nuns, priests, the all too pious virgins and all too holy prelates. Heinrich Heine's attacks too are directed against Catholicism and can remain satirical. All this is innocuous compared with the critique of the morality internalized by Protestant laypeople. How good-natured Diderot's cutting jokes are compared with the critique of Christianity exercised by the son of a Lutheran pastor, Friedrich Nietzsche! There is a clear difference of degree and also a healthy distance between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Germanic Enlightenment. For the special complications of religious existence are ultimately reserved in Catholicism for the clergy. In Protestant countries, the critique of morality necessarily leads to the self-exposure of whole societies and classes. In such countries, particularly in northern Germany and North America, moral enlightenment is therefore unthinkable without sociomasochist components. A second fertile ground is emancipated Judaism—Marx, Heine, Freud, Adorno, among others—which, as Hannah Arendt has shown convincingly, retains a certain outsider viewpoint

Simplicitas (genuine Simplicity) *conquers Fraus* (Fraud). Strasbourg Cathedral, window 45, inset 7.

predisposed toward critique even though it is strongly assimilated into bourgeois society.

The critique of morality pursues essentially three strategies: uncovering a second set of rules (double standard); inversion of being and illusion; and reduction to a realistic original motive.

The uncovering of the *second set of rules* is the simplest procedure, since those roles are immediately apparent through mere observation. Jesus said, "You will recognize them by their fruits." The test of life is decisive. Enlightenment does nothing more than eavesdrop on likely wolves in their dressing rooms, where they put on and take off their sheep's clothing. One has only to hide behind a curtain or under the bed and watch what happens when the suspected wolves are alone together. In this, sexual unmasking has a special value: The abbot who has to hide

in the bedroom closet from the husband returning home; the upright family man who is seen in the dark street disappearing into the house with the red light; the prime minister who forgets his glasses in the brothel. "Can one also sort out grapes from the thorns, or figs from the thistles?" This "flagrant literature" could bear the title of one of the most well known "pornographic" books of eighteenth-century Enlightenment: Mirabeau's *The Aired Curtain.* In all these works, critique did not yet deviate from a sensual, satirical approach.

In this tradition, moral duplicity itself was long regarded as a moral fact, as scandal. Only a cynical man-of-the-world attitude could go so far as to shrug its shoulders about it and soberly accept it as a mere fact. Worldly knowledge recognizes the moral world as a compositum of two worlds: There probably has to be a worldview for practical men who must be strong enough to get their hands dirty in political practice without getting dirty themselves, and even if they do, who cares? And a second worldview for youths, simpletons, women, and sensitive souls, for whom "purity" is just the right thing. One could call it a division of labor among temperaments, or the ugliness of the world; worldly knowledge knows how to calculate with both.

In the *inversion of being and illusion,* critique first separates the facade from the core, in order then to attack the latter as the actual exterior. The most important points of attack are provided by the nerve centers of Christian morality, in goodness as well as in evil: the ethics of compassion and altruism (the commandment to love one's neighbor). Here again, enlightenment tries to outflank deception with suspicion; indeed, it even denies, not unrealistically, the possibility of a perfect deception of a mentally alert enlightener: "One lies with the mouth, but with the grimace that one makes in doing so, one says the truth after **all**" (Nietzsche, *Werke in zwei Banden,* 4th ed. Munich, 1978, vol. II, p. 73). **The** "core" does not remain hidden. The "psychologist" (in Nietzsche's sense) sees the self-pity and resentment shining through the compassion that is shown. A form of egoism shines through every act of altruism. The psychology of the courtly age had an edge on bourgeois thinking with these observations. La Rochefoucauld had already skillfully uncovered the game of self-love *(amour-propre)* in all its masks of fellowship and morality. Following La Rochefoucauld, Nietzsche's critique of Christianity could achieve the stage of maturity, that is, the stage of utter nakedness. The more hollow the lie of altruism revealed itself to be in capitalist society, in which striving for profit and utilitariansm imposed themselves more and more brutally, the easier it was for critical, naturalistic thought to suggest that everyone is his own closest neighbor. But Schiller says: The upright man thinks of himself last *(Wilhelm Tell).* Nietzsche hears the nonsense ringing through Schiller's idealism; he speaks mercilessly of the "moral trumpeter from Sackingen." The naturalist claims to know that everyone, whether upright or not, thinks of himself first and last. Indeed, every attempt to think of others "first" is bound to fail because thinking cannot leave its domicile in the ego. To deny the

Ferdinand Dietz, *Falsitas,* model of a garden figure for Seehof Castle near Bamberg.

primacy of self-love would mean to invert all relations; Nietzsche accuses Christianity of this original falsification, this fundamental distortion, with disquieting sharpness. Bourgeois morality tries to maintain an illusion of altruism, whereas in all other areas bourgeois thinking has long since assumed a theoretical as well as an economic egocentrism.

Nietzsche's critique —apart from the religious "poisoning" by his family —is a reaction against the morally stifling atmosphere of the late nineteenth century when international imperialisms, in the disguise of idealism and a worn out Christian bearing, were setting out to subjugate the rest of the world. The First World War was secretly hoped for by countless contemporaries who expected a "moral cleansing" from it. The edifying lies of Christianized imperialism had become too suffocating.[5] The resonance Nietzsche enjoyed among imperialists had its moral foundation in the cynicism of self-disinhibition; this cynicism makes a continuum between a subtle philosophy and a brutal politics possible for the first time. The night into confession is one of the characteristic movements of modern consciousness, which tries to shake off the existential ambiguities of all morality. It is this flight that opens moral consciousness for cynicism on a broad front.

The third strategy concludes the process of unmasking with the *discovery of*

an original motive. The French moralists called it self-love *(amour-propre);* Nietzsche called it the *will to power.* If Marxism spoke in psychological terms (which, according to its logic, it cannot do), it would call the original motive the *striving for profit.* But it argues in nonpsychological terms; the striving for profit falls in the last instance behind the character mask, so that the capitalist as an individual may be as miserly or as selfless as he likes. For its part, psychoanalysis, having developed in the climate of Nietzsche and the neoromantics, encounters final motives that have nothing to do with altruism and idealism. Important in psychoanalysis is the dialectical moment in the theory of drives, which assumes a two-pronged drive-nature: *ego drives* and *sexual drives* - in the later version, life drive and death drive.

The exposure of morality becomes explosive when it is not exercised by private persons on private persons (or as admission in the context of a confessional relation). Since the eighteenth century, enlighteners have concerned themselves—as defenders of "true morality," whatever that may be—with the *morality of those who rule.* Here, for the first time, the critique of morality shows its political barbs. From this line of critique comes a whole literature about the gluttony of tyrants and the unmasking of the aristocracy's corruption. Schiller's *Robbers* and Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* are the best known examples of this genre.

The moralism in the bourgeois sense of decency put aristocratically refined immoralism into the position of the politically accused. In substance, bourgeois moral literature already exercises a critique of cynicism. It describes states of consciousness in which unethical life *(Unsittlichkeit)* is self-reflective. But bourgeois thinking all too naively assumes it is possible to subordinate political power to moral concepts. It does not anticipate that one day, when it has itself come to power, it will end up in the same ambivalence. It has not yet realized that it is only a small step from taking moral offense to respectable hypocrisy. Heinrich Heine fought in vain against the narrow-minded moralism of bourgeois Enlightenment. The German public could not follow his kynical-satirical protest.

One of the characteristics of German Enlightenment is that under the influence of petit-bourgeois Protestantism, it seldom mustered the power to be cheeky. Where the public itself did not resist, there were courts to exercise censorship. Only in the twentieth century has impudent cheekiness—the sociopsyetiological foundation of an enlightenment on the offensive that does not first ask the authorities whether it is welcome—created subcultural niches for itself in cabaret and in Bohemianism. It failed lamentably to ally itself with the main force of social opposition, the workers' movement. For in the latter, the political moral critique of the ruling strata was transformed into something that could easily be taken for petit-bourgeois morality.

The workers' movement rarely examined itself from the perspective of moral critique. Also, at first, its demands were so persuasive that only the political reaction could have an interest in suspecting something "behind" them. The complex

moral area of envy and social resentment was in fact treated instead from the per-soective of an antisocialistically inspired thinking, from Nietzsche to Schoeck. However, since the relative historical success of the worker's movement, its original ingenuousness has evaporated. It too has long since been infected by am-bivalences. But whether as "social partner" in the West, or as state power in the East, it does not want to acknowledge anything other than a purely political "will to power" in its own ranks. This is the reason for its moral weakness. Indeed, Marxism has denounced the impulses of Nietzsche and the depth psychologies with all its might, and every personal encounter with people from the Eastern sphere of influence proves how astoundingly prepsychological the mentality is in which they are kept, as if two of the greatest psychologists of modernity, Dostoy-evsky and Tolstoy, had not been Russians. The state based on force presupposes blind subjects. It does everything it can to keep powers of reflection that have long been available from becoming effective.

Critique of Transparency

Under this heading we discuss the *discovery of the unconscious,* which, as will be shown, represents a necessary consequence of the modern process of enlight-enment. One of the virtually reactionary myths of the twentieth century is that Sigmund Freud is the "discoverer of the unconscious."[6] The legend of Freud not only falsifies historical truth but also burdens the history of enlightenment with an absurd and inexplicable asymmetry and retardation in the investigation of the unconscious. How could enlightenment have investigated consciousness criti-cally and empirically without encountering its "other side"?

More about real discovery of the unconsciousness: The beginnings of a sys-tematic treatment of the unconscious are to be found—self-evidently, I am tempted to say-in the classical Age of Enlightenment. As Henry F. Ellenberger has shown, the history of methodically controlled encounters with the uncon-scious began in the last third of the eighteenth century. At that time, in the middle of an obscurantist atmosphere (Cagliostro and others), a systematic experimenta-tion with healing through suggestion started and made its first *practical* break-through with Franz Anton Mesmer's alleged "animal magnetism," even if Mes-mer s "fluidical" *theory* was regarded by his contemporaries and by posterity as a failure. Enlightenment depth psychology was born in 1784, three years after ants *Critique of Pure Reason,* when a French aristocrat discovered so-called magnetic sleep, which came to be called hypnosis in the nineteenth century. The marquis of Puysegur, artillery officer of Strasburg, pupil of Mesmer, and lord a large country estate in the village of Buzancy near Soisson, observed, during Philanthropic medical treatment of one of his peasants, a previously unknown anifestation that seemed similar to sleepwalking and therefore was dubbed "arti-Cial somnambulism." This was a state of deep trance in which, paradoxically,

Les effets du magnetisme . . . animal. The blunderer Mesmer puts Parisian society along with its dogs into convulsive shock. Caricature of "Mesmermania" around 1780-85.

a peculiar clairvoyance and power of expression could be observed in the patient, which far exceeded what they were capable of when awake. What was particularly important in all this was the discovery that hypnotized persons proved to be "doctors of themselves" in that they could purposefully and clearly name the causes of their sicknesses about which they normally would not have been able to say anything at all. They uncovered "pathogenic secrets" in themselves, revealed hidden roots of their suffering, made suggestions about their own treatment, and, moreover, they not infrequently showed excellent character traits that the "surface personality" did not have.

The procedure had a grave disadvantage, for which reason, later enlightenment tried to repress this more than a century old "episode": After the procedure, the patients had forgotten everything they had experienced. Through the "posthypnotic amnesia," as it was later called, they were at the mercy of the magnetizer, who could profit from their excursions into the unconscious. Still in a trance, they had to submit themselves to the healing commands of the magnetizer, who transposed the knowledge he had gained in the session about the patient's problematic into hypnotic instructions. These were supposed to remain effective in the unconscious for the patient's own good. Understandably, later enlightenment did not want to be involved with such procedures based entirely on authority and trust. After all, psychologically speaking, enlightenment always meant an advance in the training of mistrust—in the construction of an ego concerned about self-assertion and control of reality. Freud's methodology can be summarized, in a way, as the attempt to keep the path to the unconscious open without using hyp-

osis. One may consider whether, in Freud's procedure, a finesse born of mistrust
• ₙₒₜ ₐt work: Naive and reflected at the same time, it has recourse to the
"offspring" and "representatives" of an unconsciousness otherwise thought of as
closed. Whether this closedness is not also an effect of the mistrustful method is
ₐ question not posed here.

Like Mesmer, Puysegur knew that in the hypnotic treatments his personality
was the actual agent, or more precisely, it was the intimate relation established
between himself and the patient. This "rapport"—in more recent terminology,
transference-served as the medium of a methodical and successful depth-
psychological praxis. This procedure was continually developed and practiced in
credible forms at least until the middle of the nineteenth century. Schopenhauer
could still state that this discovery was possibly the most important in the entire
history of the human mind, even if it at first posed more puzzles for reason than
it resolved. Here was the real breakthrough to a secularized depth psychology that
could free its knowledge from the conventional religious and pastoral study of
souls (whose psychological competence was, in fact, confirmed by a nonsacral
approach to the unconscious). The uncovering of the unconscious touches on that
area in which the counterintuitions of ancient esoterics meet with the structure
of specifically modern knowledge, which in its own way is, in principle, con-
structed counterintuitively. Of course, in the last instance, both must still seek the
connection with "direct experience."

All this says that at least since the late eighteenth century, the illusion of a
transparent human self-consciousness has been systematically destroyed. Som-
nambulant phenomena provide provocative proofs that consciousness does not
know everything about itself. In the state of magnetic lucidity, a zone of knowl-
edge speaks that remains inaccessible to surface consciousness. The old "rational
psychology" with its theory of *memoria,* of the capacity to remember, is no longer
compatible with this view of consciousness. In the process of enlightenment, hu-
man beings become more and more deeply involved in the self-evidence of the
enigma that "there is still something else there." Like an internal gremlin, it
manifests itself in such a way that it cannot be directly grasped. If one looks
closely, it has already disappeared. It follows consciousness like a shadow or like
its double, who never agrees to an encounter with the first ego. But it constantly
follows the first ego without ever revealing its name. Its emotional mode of ap-
pearance is the uncanny and the fear of going mad-two themes that are not the
exclusive property of romanticism.

Hypnosis served the first depth psychology as the royal road to the uncon-
scious. It was with regard to these phenomena that nineteenth-century enlighten-
ment committed one of its worst mistakes. It misinterpreted the lively interest of
reactionary, aristocratic, and religious circles in unconscious phenomena as evi-
dence that all this was merely antienlightenment hocus-pocus. Indeed, Mes-
merism and hypnosis soon sank into the spiritul underground and landed finally

in annual fairs and variety shows, where trickery prevails. Enlightenment was for a long time not clearheaded enough to comprehend that when antienlightenment shows such a strong interest in something it must be important. The later religious spiritualism and the carnival occultism were in fact antienlightenment in practice, but only because they obscured the realistic core of the matter: the breakthrough from *memoria* to the unconsciousness structure, from conscious experience to the unconscious "grammar of feelings."

From the start, the bourgeois-positivistic fraction of enlightenment was uncomfortable about the unpredictable, subversive dimensions of the new category, the unconscious. With it, the motif of critical self-reflection was introduced into civilization in a way that could not please those who held themselves to be the representatives of civilization. If every ego is underlaid by an unconscious, then that is the end of the self-satisfaction of a consciousness that thinks it knows itself, and thus knows how to value itself. The "unconscious" touched on the cultural narcissism of *all* social classes. At the same time, its discovery dissolves the basis of all previous philosophies of consciousness. From now on, the word "naivete" gains a new, more unfathomable meaning, because the abyss above which it hovers is more clearly seen.

Something of this sort must have been in Freud's mind when he composed his oft-quoted aphorism about the "three *mortifications"* that human self-esteem has had to suffer in the process of modern research: the Copernican revolution, which denied the earth's place in the center of the universe; the Darwinian theory of evolution, which included human beings in the chain of animal species and claimed for them precarious kinship with the great apes; and finally, psychoanalysis, which shattered the naive opinion that every ego knows itself best because of its immediate proximity. From now on, everyone is furthest from himself. Under all rationality and all consciousness there extends a vast space of irrationality and unconscious programming that everywhere interferes deceptively with conscious speech and action. The Freudian concept of "rationalization" contains an enormous irony: with the title *ratio,* those explanations and pseudojustifications are now designated with which consciousness covers up its self-delusions. The rational appears as the lid on private and collective irrationality.

Today, the further course, particularly the reorientation of depth-psychological research from its beginnings in hypnosis to the interpretation of dreams and the later branching out of various schools of depth psychology can be assumed to be largely known. Freud designated the dream as his *via regia* to the unconscious. Through it he developed a "technique of reading" that later proved useful in many other manifestations such as neurotic symptoms, sexual disturbances, and artistic creations. Even manifestations such as humor and jokes, accidents, and the choice of partners are now ordered in a relational system structured by the unconscious. The extension of these dynamic interpretations from psychopathology to everyday cultural phenomena demonstrates the full im-

plications of the critique. Besieged transparency must now accept that behind every possible fact of consciousness, dynamic causal rules of the unconscious are uncovered that influence its form. Bourgeois (and also proletarian) idealism observed bitterly that psychoanalysis wanted to "encroach" on the artist's soul and the work of art, that somehow the psychodynamics of a convoluted mother complex was allegedly at work in Goethe's lyrics: For idealism that was worse than bolshevism. The Bolshevists themselves saw in everything that was about to shake their facade of consciousness nothing other than the last scream of bourgeois decadence.

Behind these attitudes toward psychoanalysis there is the desperate defense of the transparency of consciousness, that is, of the claim that the ego knows itself better than anyone else does and is master of the rules of its own exercise of reason. For once one accepts through existential self-reflection the reality of one's own unconscious, then, after this change of viewpoint, not only do sexual repressions and traumatic scars break open, but also, in the course of self-experience, the inner "shadows" collectively become longer and longer. The entire existential relation to "negativity" must be revised, and, with logical, political, and emotional pain, the negative self can emerge, with its sores, its destructiveness, and its ugliness. The ego stands before the monstrous demand: to recognize that it is also what it absolutely believes itself *not* to be. The more conventional consciousness is, the more embittered will be its refusal to look into this mirror. Thus the resistance against dynamic psychology comes especially from those who believe they have something to lose through "analysis." They shout loudest of all that they "don't need all that stuff."

The psychoanalytic technique of reading has become very widespread in Western civilization. Especially in the United States over the past decades it has become dreadfully trivialized and turned into a social game in which the winner is the one who detects the most ulterior motives and neurotic hidden meanings behind everyday appearances in one's own life, as well as in the lives of others. This chronic analysis of oneself and others, which has become something of a sport, leads to at least two false attitudes. It leads, first, to hopeless intellectualization of psychoanalysis, which has thereby become a refuge for emotional coldness and symptomatic rationalism that has found in it the right means to remain entirely unchanged while giving the impression of being something else. Second it leads to an overemphasis of the infantile, which can be subtly reinforced by being continually linked with the present. There is no guarantee that the "dialectic" works positively and that every regression will be canceled out by a corresponding progression. Woody Allen's urban neurotic seems to have gotten off relatively lightly. Psychoanalysis is certainly not a priori, as Karl Kraus has sarcastically remarked, the illness that pretends to be its own cure; but it can easily become so since it continually tends to underrestimate the power of the neurosis that would rather gaze into the mirror than resolutely face the here and now.

By no means does psychoanalysis encounter everywhere suffering individuals who want to be healed at any cost. Their sufferings fit into a dynamics of self-maintenance in a very complicated way. This dynamics cooperates with the ambivalence of the healing hand that, for its part, can often only be effective when it stands with one foot on the side of the suffering against which it seems to struggle. Here begins a drawn-out game of artfulness - on both sides of the therapeutic relationship. One often does not know whether it is not actually the fish who catches the angler.

The category of the unconscious (better, of the "unconscious structure") is probably the most successful figure of thought in the human sciences of our century. With this self-reflective concept, the most significant advances in basic research into the human being and human civilization have been made. Without this concept, modern anthropology would be just as unthinkable as structural mythology, modern theory of grammar just as unthinkable as behavioral physiology and the theory of human biograms. With regard to unconscious regulating mechanisms of human culture and social as well as individual behavior, the human sciences open up an unparalleled reflective attack on everything that, in the human sphere, is "hidden programming" and not conscious behavior.

Here, the most powerful dawning of reflection in the history of human consciousness is taking place despite the inclination of some researchers to emphasize the invariance and unchangeability of unconscious structures. Every transposition into consciousness, every reflection, strikes, no matter how gently, on the "rock of the unconscious." And only in the light of consciousness can it be clarified where enlightenment can be a school of change, and where it can demonstrate its insightfulness by letting happen what cannot be changed.

The psychology of early enlightenment in the eighteenth century, the later schools of dynamic psychology, and all other systems concerned with unconscious structures in the area of human orders have made available such a powerful potential for reflection that it will be a long time before we will be able to see how human societies change when they begin to live continually with such reflecting forces. All these disciplines have built up a methodical network of self-experience that even the world religions have been scarcely able to create, with the exception of those great, meditative schools of metareligiosity whose aim has been to promote consciousness-raising and that, today, significantly, are approaching the reflective psychologies: Zen Buddhism, Sufism, Tantra, Yoga, and others. The only question is whether the political central powers and the energies of repression and divisiveness will succeed, on the macro- as well as the microlevel, in chaining the powers of conscious life that already have been half-awakened from slumber. Neoconservatism has long since seen the gathering danger for the repressive capacities of states and capitals; it senses that the time of consciousnesses has come. Its strength lies in the fact that people have, in addition to a realistic fear of war and crisis, a "fear of freedom" (Erich Fromm) — fear of them-

elves and their own possibilities. It is this fear that makes them listen to the in-
idious denunciation of the "dear ego" (Hans Maier) and of "self-realization" as
ism (john Paul II during his visit to Germany, particularly in his sermon in
Altotting).

Critique of Natural Illusion

Every unmasking critique knows itself to be in an intimate relation with what is
"really the case" below the surface. On all sides, human consciousness is invited
to deceive itself and to be content with mere illusion. For enlightenment, there-
fore, it is always the second look that is decisive because it overcomes the first
impression. If things were generally as they immediately seem, investigation and
science would be superfluous. There would be nothing to look for, look through,
or look into. But science and enlightenment have a detective-like relation to real-
ity. The tension between the search and what is given is particularly radicalized
in the case of human and social phenomena. For here, everything that is "given"
(gegeberi) is simultaneously in a certain way only "ostensible" *(vorgeblich)* and
artificial. Human life moves a priori in a natural artificiality and an artificial natu-
ralness (Plessner). This realization is part of the great achievement of enlighten-
ment's reflection on culture. It shows that human beings, as they are, live "unnatu-
rally." What was natural in them was "lost" and became "distorted" and
"misshapen" through civilization. Human individuals are never in the "center of
their beings," but rather stand beside themselves as persons other than who they
"really" are or could be. These insights are today common knowledge in philo-
sophical anthropology. In the meantime, they have been morally neutralized and
have become detached structural viewpoints. At the beginning of this discovery,
however, the thought of unnaturalness possessed enormous value for moral at-
tacks. Its explosive power was great as long as the belief in a "good Nature"
seemed to be unshaken. One of the battle cries of bourgeois society during its up-
rising against the aristocratic world order was: "Nature! Nature!"

One can see the consequences of this discovery of unnaturalness in Rousseau's
critique of human beings in society. It possesses both a critical-negative and a
utopian-positive side; one could also say: a destructive politics and a constructive
pedagogy. Rousseau diagnosed a total degeneration, a complete fall of humanity
rom "Nature" in the society of the eighteenth century. All spontaneity had been
^naturalized through convention, all naivete had been replaced by finesse, all
"cerity nad been glossed over by facades of social intercourse, etc. Rousseau's
ye tor these things was excessively sharp in a way that only an offended bour-
geois perception, wanting to register its rights to life, could be in an aristocrati-
y fabricated social order. The social theater of the *ancien regime* was becom-
g more transparent and absurd every day. Whereas the aristocracy treated its
or m of life with irony, bourgeois cultural values *(Gemutskultur)* treated the

artificial convolutions in that form of life with disgust. Consequently, Rousseau's critique met with tremendous approval from his contemporaries. In his depiction of social denaturalization, not only did the up and coming bourgeoisie feel confirmed in its most elementary social feeling, but also the more sensitive part of the aristocratic intelligentsia knew itself in the main to be correctly portrayed in this critique. Here the universal law of "sensitive critique" applies: The critique is accepted by those who in any case are less touched by it, but its main targets seem to be looking into a blind mirror that says absolutely nothing to them. The agreement of intelligent aristocrats with Rousseau's critique was an important catalyst for their philanthropic activity, with which they tried to buy off their guilty consciences about benefiting from the status quo. The first rational depth psychology, as mentioned earlier, was indeed an offshoot of aristocratic Rousseauianism. What came to light in its healing procedure could be taken without further ado as proof of the inner "healing powers of nature." The possible destructiveness of the unconscious and the "dark side of nature" first came to the notice of the following generation of romantics and were interpreted in an increasingly conservative-pessimistic way (see E. T. A. Hoffmann, Joseph von Eichendorff, and many others).

A political stance follows directly from this analysis: in the name of the natural against the system of compulsions, on the side of the bourgeois-honest heart against aristocratic-artful deceptiveness, on the side of the free social contract against the old feudal relations based on coercion. The new society wanted to be an order in which all agreed, to their mutual advantage, on a peaceful and diligent life together according to a model based on nature and mutual sympathy. As harmonious and affable as that sounded, some representatives of the *ancien regime* were still sensitive enough to hear the insurrection of hell in this program. With horrified satisfaction, conservatives saw the French Revolution degenerate into terror and war. Nothing since then has nourished the conservative image of humanity more strongly. It thinks it knows that human nature, set loose here and now, deserves no optimism or glowing phrases. Conservative thinking in this instance behaves positivistically. Without first asking about contexts, it notes that, all too often, human beings behave egoistically, destructively, greedily, unwisely, and asocially. Indeed, for this reason, *criminality* was and is so extremely important for all kinds of conservatism, because "short-circuited thinking" finds in it the final proof for a pessimistic view of humanity that, in turn, provides the basis for an authoritarian, strictly disciplining politics. From this viewpoint, there "exist" in nature criminals, idiots, malcontents, egoists, and rebels, just as there exist trees, cows, kings, laws, and heavenly bodies. The Christian doctrine of original sin here joins forces with the conservative, pessimistic understanding of nature. According to this doctrine, human beings, simply because they are born of woman, live in the world as defective creatures.

Rousseau's philosophy sees all this in advance. It knows that one has to get around pessimism by demonstrating how human beings *become* what they are socially. That there are human beings who behave nastily, greedily, unwisely, destructively, etc., proves nothing about their essential being. Here, in Rousseau, we find perhaps the most important figure of thought in moral-political enlightenment: the theory of the innocent victim.

The evidence introduced for political pessimism; the criminal, the lunatic, and the asocial individual, in a word, the second-rate citizen —these are *not* by nature as one finds them now but have been *made* so by society. It is said that they have never had a chance to be as they would be according to their nature, but were forced into the situation in which they find themselves through poverty, coercion, and ignorance. They are *victims of society.*

This defense against political pessimism regarding human nature is at first convincing. It possesses the superiority of dialectical thinking over positivistic thinking. It transforms moral states and qualities into processes. Brutal people do not "exist," only their brutalization; criminality does not "exist," only criminalization; stupidity does not "exist," only stupefaction; self-seeking does not "exist," only training in egoism; there are no second-rate citizens, only victims of patronization. What political positivism takes to be nature is in reality falsified nature: the suppression of opportunity for human beings.

Rousseau knew of two aids who could illustrate his point of view, two classes of human beings who lived before civilization and, consequently, before perversion: the noble savage and the child. Enlightenment literature develops two of its most intimate passions around these two figures: ethnology and pedagogy. To the present day nothing has essentially changed in this approach. Literarily, this double passion precipitates two extensive genres: exotic travel literature and later ethnology on the one hand, and the educational novel and the literature on pedagogy and child development on the other. The primitive peoples, about whom the European explorers from Columbus to Bougainville and Captain Cook reported, provide an enlightenment, which was gradually becoming more political, the urgently needed evidence for its view that, roughly stated, things can "proceed differently" —peacefully, reasonably, humanely, sensuously, without aristocracy, without war, without exploitation, without wigs, without *lettres de cachet.* The noble savages in the South Seas are like an Archimedean point through which one can playfully dislodge the claim of European social orders to be ordained by God and therefore unexcellable. Something different does exist; at the same time, it is better. What is reasonable can thus also become real. That is all enlightenment is trying to say.

From this moment on, the child becomes a political object—to a certain extent, the living security deposit of enlightenment. The child is the "noble savage" in one's own house. Through appropriate education care must be taken in the future

that innocent children are not made into the same artificial social cripples the previous system produced. Children are already what the new bourgeois humans believe they want to become. Enlightenment was not the first to politicize pedagogy; it has *discovered,* however, that children always, and everywhere, are the future security of existing relations. But now children are something more: They carry bourgeois hopes for "another world," for a more humane society. It almost appears as if for the first time a new, politically tinged form of parental love has been developing, concentrated in the wish that one's own children should finally have a better life. Only in a society that felt the shake-up and that committed itself totally to the dynamics of world change and progress can such a form of parental love prosper. A new amalgam of love and "ambition for the child" is thus formed, something that would be meaningless in a stable, stagnant society "without prospects." Peasant societies do not envision "careers" for their children; they see no prospects other than that of life as a peasant. Ambition in the aristocracy is directed not for the benefit of the child but for that of the aristocratic lineage itself, the family. Bourgeois children are the first to have an anthropological and political mission. How the traditional directing of ambitions in the bourgeois parent-child relationship is currently changing could be the topic of a special investigation.

Of course, Rousseau's optimistic naturalism has a very vulnerable point. The beneficence of nature is something that can be doubted even when one does not hold conservative views. In the beginning things were not all that idyllic; genesis *(Ursprung)* is downright severe and difficult. It soon becomes clear that the image of origin cannot be understood historically because, on closer investigation, one finds that war, inequality, and harsh conditions of life are widespread in an unyielding nature; there are exceptions but they can scarcely be interpreted as origin and rule. Since then, the question about "good origins" becomes the crux for enlightenment. It becomes more and more clear that this idea of origin has not a *temporal* but a *Utopian* reference. The Good is still nowhere to be found, except in the wishful human spirit and in daydreams, which unerringly aim at something even though it does not yet exist. Thus, *critical* naturalism can survive only when it withers away and reawakes as the "spirit of Utopia"; the origin then serves as an end-vision (Bloch).

Naturalistic thinking, in fact, fundamentally changed its function in the nineteenth century. The natural sciences provided a concept of nature that was anything but idyllic. Especially since Darwin, the bourgeois order, having become imperialistic, used the beast of prey as its political emblem. Nature was used as justification by those who needed to legitimate acts of violence, not by those who spoke for peace. The heraldry of the old aristocracy had also shown a striking sympathy for predatory animals: the eagle, falcon, lion, bear. Long before Rousseauianism, and in substance opposed to it, there was an aristocratic naturalism

that was renewed in the bourgeois order when it became powerful as political "biologism." Nothing can show more clearly that Rousseauian naturalism had been only a momentary stylization of the conception of nature on which a general theory of liberation could not support itself securely. Hesitatingly, therefore, enlightenment began to take leave of the noble savage and the innocent child, a parting that, of course, can never lead to a complete break *(Bruch)* with these "allies." The child and the savage are beings who have a claim on the sympathy of those who remain true to the idea of enlightenment.

Impulses for self-reflection in the great civilizations come from ethnology even today. Thus, behind the conspicuous present-day cult around the American Indian, there is a good deal of pondering about ideas of nature and the maximal size of societies that want to maintain a reasonable relation to themselves as well as to their environment. And from child psychology, there is still today a steady stream of valuable impulses for reflection on the behavioral patterns in societies that suffer from their unresolved childhoods.

What has remained undamaged in Rousseau's critique is the indispensable exposure of a supposedly evil "Nature" as a social fiction. This remains important in the purportedly natural inferiorities concerning race, intelligence, and sex and sexual behavior. When conservatives and reactionaries refer to "Nature" to justify their assertions about the inferiority of woman, the lesser capacities of dark races, the innate intelligence of children from the upper social strata, and the sickness of homosexuality, they have usurped naturalism. It remains the task of critique to refute this. Ultimately critique must at least be able to show that what "Nature" gives us has to be recognized as neutral and nontendentious so that every value judgment and every tendency can without doubt be understood as a cultural phenomenon. Even if Rousseau's "good Nature" has been discredited, he has at least taught us not to accept "bad Nature" as an excuse for social oppression.

However, when one speaks of the "victims of society," the "artful dimension" quickly comes into the picture again. In the concept of the "victim of society," there is a reflective contradiction that can be misused in many ways. Already in Rousseau, a dubious artfulness is observed that is supposed to conceal a double standard. That he combined nature and childhood in a new idea of education and, at the same time, denied his own children and stuck them in an orphanage, has °ng been understood as a discrepancy between theory and practice. Rousseau was a master of an artful reflexivity that skillfully found fault with others on every Point but in itself always discovered only the purest of intentions. On the white Page of this feeling of innocence, the famous confessions were written. In this osturing there was something that other determined enlighteners, above all einrich Heine, could not and did not want to follow-even though they do not ave anything to do with the notorious defamation of Rousseau by the entire counterenlightenment.

The vulnerable point in the victim theory is, again, the self-reification of consciousness, the establishment of a new naively artful position. This can serve or be felt, depending on the circumstances, as a diversionary trick, as a technique of extortion, or as indirect aggression. Psychology is familiar with the "eternal victim," who exploits this position for disguised aggressions. Also belonging to this category, in a broader sense, are those permanent losers as well as medical and political hypochondriacs who lament that conditions are so terrible that it is a great sacrifice on their part not to kill themselves or emigrate. On the German Left, not least of all under the influence of the sociologized schema of the victim, a certain type of renegade has emerged who feels that it is a dirty trick to have to live in this land without summer and without oppositional forces. Nobody can say that such a viewpoint does not know what it is talking about. Its mistake is that it remains blind to itself. For the accusation becomes bound to misery and magnifies it under the subterfuge of unsuspecting critical observations. With the obstinacy of a Sophist, in aggressive self-reification, many a "critical" consciousness refuses to become healthier than the sick whole.

A second possibility of misusing the victim schema has been experienced by dedicated helpers and social workers when, guided by the best intentions, they try to make prisoners, the homeless, alcoholics, marginal youth, and others aware that they are the "victims of society" who have simply failed to offer enough resistance. The helpers often encounter sensitive resistance to their attempts and have to make it clear to themselves just how much discrimination is present in their own "good will." The self-esteem and need for esteem in the disadvantaged often forcefully defends itself against the demand for self-reification made on them by every political kind of assistance that argues in this way. Precisely those who are worst off feel a spark of self-assertion, whose extinction would be justifiably feared if those concerned began to think of themselves as victims, as non-egos. To preserve the dignity of "poor bastards," they alone and on their own accord can say that they are poor bastards. Those who try to put such words into their mouths insult them, no matter how good their intentions may be. It is in the nature of liberating reflection that it cannot be forced. It answers only to indirect assistance.

From this vantage point, the perspective on a life spent in total, unavoidable benightedness becomes possible. Theodor Adorno sketched this when he spoke of an unhappy consciousness in which the down-and-outers inflict on themselves a second time that wrong that circumstances perpetrated against them in order to be able to bear it. Here, an inner reflection takes place that looks like a parody of freedom. From the outside, the phenomenon resembles satisfaction and would, if addressed, probably also refer to itself that way. In memory of his mother, Peter Handke has found a tender formulation in which the sadness of a loving and helpless knowledge lays down arms before reality: "self-contented unhappiness.'

Enlightenment has neither a chance nor a right to disturb the world's slumber if it looks like *this*.

Critique of the Illusion of Privacy

Where is this ego then, if it is neither in the body nor in the soul?

Blaise Pascal

The last great attack of critique against illusion aims at the position of the ego between nature and society. We know from the line of thought in the preceding critiques that knowledge *(Erkenntnis)* does not have to do with human nature pure and simple, but with nature as conception, nature as fabrication, with unnatural nature. In that which is "given in nature" there is always something "given in addition" by human beings. The "labor" of reflection is summarized in this insight. Modernity establishes itself in our minds in the shape of counterintuitive experiences that break through naivete and exercise a peculiar compulsion on us to increase our intelligence.

Ideologically, the reference to "Nature" is always significant because it produces an artificial naivete and ends up as voluntary naivete. It covers up the human contribution and avers that things are by nature, and from their origins, in that "order" in which our representations, which are always influenced by "interests," depict them. The rudiments for ideologies of order are hidden in all naturalisms. Every naturalism begins as involuntary naivete. Initially, we cannot help thinking that the "order of things" is an objective order. For the first glance falls on the things and not on the "eyeglasses." In the work of enlightenment, this first innocence becomes irretrievably lost. Enlightenment leads to the loss of naivete and it furthers the collapse of objectivism through a gain in self-experience. It effects an irreversible awakening and, expressed pictorially, executes the turn to the eyeglasses, i.e., to one's own rational apparatus. Once this consciousness of the eyeglasses has been awakened in a culture, the old naivete loses its charm, becomes defensive, and is transformed into narrow-mindedness, which is intent on remaining as it is. The mythology of the Greeks is still enchanting; that of fascism is only stale and shameless. In the first myth, a step toward an interpretation of the world was taken; in simulated naivete, an artful stupefaction *(Verdummung)* is at work—the predominant method of self-integration in advanced social orders.[7] Such an observation touches only superficially on the role of mythology in modernity. For the moment this will suffice. Artful self-stupefaction manifests itself in a whole range of modern naturalisms: racism, sexism, fascism, vulgar biologism, and — *egoism.*

To put egoism into this series may, at first glance, seem strange, indeed, even dangerous. Actually, there is in egoism a "natural givenness" of a special kind.

The critique of egoism (better, the critique of the illusion of privacy) constitutes, I think, the core of all enlightenment in which the self-experience of civilized egos comes to maturity. After it, there can be logically no other *uncovering* critique, but only "praxis," conscious life.

How does the ego come to its determinations? What constitutes its "character?" What creates the material of its self-experience? The answer runs as follows: The ego is a result of programming. It is formed in emotional, practical, moral, and political drill. "In the beginning was education" (Alice Miller).

Self-experience proceeds in two stages: naive perception and reflection. In the naive stage, no consciousness can do otherwise than to conceive of its character traits, programming, and training as its own. Whether in the case of impressions, feelings, or opinions, at first it must always say: I am *so! My* feeling is thus, *my* attitude is thus. I am as / am. In the reflective stage, self-consciousness becomes clear about itself: My programming, my traits, my training are thus; I have been brought up in this way and have become so; my "mechanisms" function thus; what I am and what I am not are both at work in me in this way.

The establishment of inwardness and the *creation of the illusion of privacy* are the most subversive themes of enlightenment. It is still not really clear today who the social conveyor of this impulse of enlightenment may be. One of the ambivalences of enlightenment is that although intelligence can be explained sociologically, educationally, and politically, "wisdom," self-reflection cannot. The subject of a radical ego enlightenment cannot be socially identified with certainty —even though the procedures of this enlightenment are anchored in reality.

In this point, the majority of societies seem to strive for a conscious nonenlightenment. Did not Nietzsche too warn of that "life-destroying enlightenment" that touches on our life-supporting self-delusions?[8] Can we afford to shake up the "basic fictions" of privacy, personality, and identity? Be that as it may, in this question both old and new conservatives have come to the hard decision to take the "stance" of defending, against all the demands of reflection, their "unavoidable lies for living," without which self-preservation would not be possible. That they are aided in this by the general fear of self-experience, which competes with curiosity about self-experience, does not have to be expressly emphasized. Thus the theater of respectable, closed egos goes on everywhere, even where the means have long been available to secure better knowledge. Crosswise to all political fronts, it is the "ego" in society that offers the most resolute resistance against the decisive enlightenment. Scarcely anyone will put up with radical self-reflection on this point, not even many of those who regard themselves as enlighteners. The dance around the golden calf of identity is the last and greatest orgy of counterenlightenment. Identity is the magic word of a partially hidden, partially open conservatism that has inscribed personal identity, occupational identity, national identity, political identity, female identity, male identity, class identity, party

identity, etc., on its banner. The listing of these essential demands for identity would already suffice to illustrate the pluralistic and mobile character of that which is called identity. But one would not be speaking of identity if it were not basically a question of the *fixed form* of the ego.

The establishment of inwardness comprises the ego as the bearer of ethics, the erotic, aesthetics, and politics. In these four dimensions, everything that I experience as mine is given to me, though at first "I" was not asked: my norms of behavior, my professional ethics, my sexual patterns, my sensual-emotional modes of experience, my class "identity," my political interests.

Here I want to begin with the last mentioned. By briefly describing the "political narcissisms" of the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, and the proletariat, I will show how, even in the most "inner" region, where we suppose ourselves to be in the closest "narcissistic" proximity to ourselves, we encounter at the same time the most "external" and most universal. Here, the game of "one's own self with what is "alien" becomes visible in the public heart of personalities. Precisely the analysis of narcissism can show how the other has already got the better of the ego. I look in the mirror and see a stranger who swears that it is me. It is one of the irresistible ironies of enlightenment that it shatters our consciousness with such radical counterintuitions. In concluding this line of thought, I want to simply suggest for consideration the question whether the last level of integration in enlightenment does not have to be a kind of "rational mysticism."

The ego enters the political world never as a private individual but as the member of a group, an estate, or a class. From time immemorial, the members of the *aristocracy* have known themselves to be "the best." Their social and political position is based on an open, demonstrative, and self-satisfied relation between power and self-esteem. The political narcissism of the aristocracy is nourished by this plain, power-conscious presumption. The aristocracy has been allowed to believe that it is favored in every existentially essential respect and is called on to excel—to be militarily stronger, aesthetically superior, culturally refined, unbroken in vitality (which only with regard to the courtly aristocracy is no longer quite true). Thus in the function of the aristocracy there is initially nothing that would allow one to suggest that political status destroys vitality. In fact, the nobility often tried to base its cultural self-portrait directly on narcissistic pleasure. Its political-aesthetic culture is based on the motif of self-celebration, of the union of self-consciousness and festival. The everyday form of this narcissistic class consciousness appears in the concept of the *noble's honor* and in the idea of a no-ᴰ'e life-sry/e. With the smallest affronts to their highly trained sense of honor, aristocrats must demand satisfaction—which precipitates the history of the duel ᵃnd symbolic combat in Europe as well as in Asia. Honor was the bond between Motion and public life, between the innermost life of the "best" and the reality [31] life among the "best" as well as in public view of the common people. Rules °' greeting, obsequious forms of behavior, and even grammatical structures,

which are unknown in prefeudal languages (the most striking being the honorific forms in Japanese), can be traced back to these claims to domination, honor, and personal pleasure.

The aristocratic programming of a heightened self-consciousness, however, comprises more than just what is too hastily called vanity or arrogance. It provides at the same time a high level of character formation and education that works to form opinions, etiquette, emotionality, and cultural taste. All these moments are still encompassed in the old concept of *courtliness (Hoftichkeit,* politeness). The courtly person *(cortegiano, gentilhomme, gentleman, Hofmann)* has gone through a training in self-esteem that expresses itself in many ways: in aristocratically pretentious opinions, in polished or majestic manners, in gallant or heroic patterns of feeling as well as in a selective, aesthetic sensitivity for that which is said to be courtly *or pretty.* The noble, far removed from any self-doubt, should achieve all this with a complete matter-of-factness. Any uncertainty, any doubt in these things signifies a slackening in the nobility's cultural "identity." This class narcissism, which has petrified into a form of life, tolerates no irony, no exception, no slips, because such disturbances would give rise to unwelcome reflections. The French nobles did not turn up their noses at Shakespeare's "barbarism" without reason. In his plays one already "smells" the human ordinariness of those who want to stand before society as the best.

With the ascendancy of the *bourgeoisie,* the place of the "best" is awarded anew. The bourgeois ego, in an unprecedented, creative storming to the heights of a new class consciousness won for itself an autonomous narcissism, in whose period of degeneration we are living today; it is for this reason that we have to suffer so much political and cultural depressiveness. The bourgeoisie found its own way of being *better* than the others, better than the corrupt nobility and the uncultivated mob. At first its class ego raised itself on the feeling of having the better, purer, more rational, and more useful *morality* in all areas of life, from sexuality to management. For a whole century, the new bourgeoisie wallowed in moralizing literature. In it, a new political collective learns to say "I" in a special way; whether psychologically and aesthetically as in that "sensitivity" that schools itself in natural beauty, intimate sociability, and empathy with heartrending fates; whether politically and scientifically as in that bourgeois public sphere that starts as a republic of the learned in order to end up as a republic of citizens. Literature, the diary, gregariousness, critique, science, and republicanism are all training grounds for a new bourgeois high ego, for a new will to subjectivity. Only here do citizens learn how to have good taste, proper demeanor, opinions, and will-Here, the class-specific, novel high feelings of bourgeois culture are drilled—the *pleasure of being a citizen:* the awareness of progress; the pride in having worked up from the bottom and in having come a long way; the pride in being the moral and historical torchbearer; the joy in one's own moral sensibility; the demonstrative pleasure in one's own cultivation; the pleasure in having a simultaneously cul-

tivated and naive feeling about nature; the self-admiration of the class for its musical, poetic, and scientific genius; the joy in the feeling of enterprise, invention, and historical movement; finally, the triumph of gaining a political say.

Looking back at the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one now gets an idea of the extent to which creative and coquettish narcissism permeates bourgeois culture. At the same time, however, the bourgeoisie also followed the nobility in essential respects, not least of all in its concept of honor, through which the duel came into bourgeois life and even into the realm of student life. Without doubt, honor became for the bourgeoisie, too, an essential socionarcissistic factor, with which the national militarization of bourgeois society is connected. That this type of bourgeois is dying out today is felt in every nook and cranny of civilization. Those who still know such a latecomer should regard themselves as ethnologists; with wonder they may hear how the last specimens even today cannot walk through the forest without speaking of God.

The neobourgeois generations have modernized their social narcissism. Since at least the Weimar years, the collective ego tone of the bourgeoisie has been loosening up. A lazier style of ego-being as bourgeois is becoming prevalent everywhere. Today we find the mode of expression of the last surviving cultivated bourgeois horribly artificial, and everyone has had the urge to tell them to their faces that they should not ramble on the way they do, so full of themselves. In the twentieth century we observe a sociopsychological front between two bourgeois ego styles, an older and a newer type, which are extremely allergic to each other. The threshold between the two types runs roughly through the time of the First World War and the following phase of modernization. In the mutual dislike of, say, Thomas Mann and Bertolt Brecht, this front becomes concretely visible.

From a historical perspective, the bourgeoisie is the first class that has learned *to say* /and that at the same time has the *experience of labor*. All older class narcissisms can base themselves "only" on struggle, military heroism, and the grandiosity of rulers. When the bourgeois says "I" the idea of the pride of labor, of productive accomplishment can also be heard for the first time. This ego of a "laboring class" introduces a previously unheard of turn toward realism into higher social feelings. Of course, that cannot be seen clearly from the beginning because bourgeois culture was forced to distinguish between poetry and prose, art and life, the ideal and reality. The consciousness of labor in the bourgeois ego •s still thoroughly split-into an idealistic and a pragmatic fraction. The one version of the bourgeois comprises the artisan, the trader, the official, the financier, and the entrepreneur, all of whom, in their own way, can claim to know what abor is. Juxtaposed to them from the beginning, stands a type of bourgeois who oes research, writes poetry, composes and makes music, and philosophizes and who believes that these activities develop a world that is self-sufficient. It is obvious that these two fractions of the bourgeois ego get on only superficially and come together only in the hollow connection of property and cultivation. They

Inscription above the entrance to the concentration camp at Auschwitz: "Labor is liberating."

create the century-long tension between the good and the evil bourgeois, the idealist and the exploiter, the visionary and the pragmatist, the ideally liberated bourgeois and the laboring bourgeois. This tension remains as inexhaustible as that between the world of work and "freedom" in general: Even a large part of socialism to date has been only the renewal of the inner-bourgeois conflict between the idealistic *citoyen* and the detestable bourgeois.

But even the bourgeois experience of labor is not so straightforward as the bourgeoisie would like to have it. The bourgeois, who, as subjects of power, say I *because* they also labor and are creative, express only formally and illusorily the truth for everybody. They want others to forget that their way of laboring is arranged in a questionable way. This holds specially for the genuine bourgeois in the sphere of labor, the entrepreneurs, the capitalists, and financiers. Their consciousness of labor is so inconsistent that, since the late nineteenth century, it is difficult not to speak of lying. For if labor were really what creates a right to a political ego, what about those who labor for bourgeois "laborers"? The situation of the proletariat, which, during a great part of the nineteenth century and in segments of the twentieth, was deprived of its rights, prevented bourgeois society from coming to rest. Precisely the principle of achievement—success and privileges for the more diligent—became undermined in the course of the development. "Labor is liberating" was a slogan that sounded more and more cynical with the passing of each decade, until finally it was written above the entrance to Auschwitz.

The pleasure in being a citizen combined in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the compulsion to politics in a new kind of political complex of feelings that for the past 200 years has seemed to countless individuals to be the inner-

most and most spontaneous impulse of their ego: the *love of the Fatherland.* What began as patriotic spontaneity was methodically organized in the nineteenth century as a political ideology, which in the twentieth century heated up into a political system of madness. The European nationalisms were indeed complexes of convictions and passions that individuals found in themselves as though given by nature, complexes to which they could say in a primary naivete and honesty: That is me, that is how my innermost self feels, that is how my most intimate political reason stirs itself. For Germans, empathy with such naively wonderful patriotisms is actually only still possible when we meet people from foreign countries who live in the first dawning of patriotic self-reflection and who can still claim for themselves a primal innocence. How many German left-wingers did not stand bv with a pensive and uneasy smile when Chilean socialist emigres sang songs that ended with the refrain: *fatherland or death.* It has been a long time since Germans could hear a mutual resonance of progressive and patriotic motives; the reaction has incorporated national feeling for too long.

Two hundred years ago things looked a little different. The first patriotic generations—the French, who after the Revolution felt their national existence threatened by the offensives of European monarchies; the Germans, who offered resistance against the Napoleonic occupation; the Greeks, who engaged in a struggle of liberation against Turkish domination; the disunited and scattered Poles; the Italians in the time of Garibaldi, who felt themselves to be "unredeemed" under multiple foreign domination—all these could, in their national narcissisms, still enjoy, so to speak, a primal innocence.[9] What later with each decade could be seen more clearly probably still remained hidden to them: That patriotism and nationalism were the conscious self-programming of bourgeois ego pride that, taken seriously, immediately lead to worrisome, indeed calamitous, developments. It was precisely in Germany that this innocence was lost early on. Already in Napoleonic times, Jean Paul perceived that artful, self-reflectively mandacious element in Fichte's *Speeches to the German Nation* (1808) that, seen in the light of day, are nothing other than a deliberate programming of a consciousness that is not one bit naive but is supposed to be so. That it was Fichte, one of the greatest logicians of self-reflection in modern philosophy, who preached the love of fatherland to the Germans, reveals the vile, self-deceptive aspects of the earliest stages in German national feeling. Heinrich Heine also saw what was repulsive and affected in German patriotism from its first moment. National spontaneity was generated through pedagogy, indoctrination, and propaganda until finally loud-mouthed national narcissism exploded militarily out of the ideological test tube in the early twentieth century. It celebrated its greatest triumph in the European storm of emotion and war euphoria in August 1914.

Because of its synthetic nature, nationalistic mentality bears up badly when its narcissistic self-programming is disturbed. This is the reason for the rage of the

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bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie, which had constricted itself in a chauvinistic and elitist way, against the self-reflective intelligentsia, which purportedly had such "decomposing" effects. In defending against the "decomposition" *(Zersetzung)* of its artificial naivete, bourgeois ideology maneuvered itself into a position where it came into conflict with its own previous enlightenment. The cosmopolitan composure and universalistic nobleness of enlightenment must have become a thorn in the side of the political narcissism of the patriots. The oft-cited "destruction of reason" (Lukacs) in later bourgeois thinking was deeply rooted in the narcissistic self-assertion of the bourgeois class ego against the forces of disillusionment that reflection inevitably exercises on it. Thus an alliance had to come about between enlightenment and socialist currents that initially knew how to avoid the willful self-delusion of a mentality of domination.

The principal disturbance of nationalism arose, as could not be otherwise, from the political movement of the old Fourth Estate, the *workers'movement.* In it, a new political ego took the floor once more. It was no longer a bourgeois ego, but initially and for a long time, it spoke a bourgeois language. Ideologically, socialism did not at first require its "own" weapon. It was enough simply to take the bourgeoisie at its word: freedom, equality, solidarity. Only when it became evident that all this was not meant so literally did socialism have to forge its own critical weapon against bourgeois ideology, whereby initially it was forced to advance bourgeois ideals against a bourgeois double standard. Only with the theory of class consciousnesses did socialist doctrine elevate itself to a metamoral standpoint.

Ethically, the early workers' movement had every argument on its side, hence its erstwhile moral superiority. It pushed the process that began with bourgeois realism of labor a significant step further. For there is a proletarian consciousness of labor that clearly differs from that of the bourgeois. In it, an archrealistic experience "from the very bottom" wants to gain political expression: One sweats for a whole lifetime and gets nowhere; often there is not even enough to eat, while aggregate social wealth continually grows. One sees it in architecture, in the residences of those who rule, in the construction of cities, in the standard of the military forces, in the luxury consumption of others. Laborers do not participate in the growth of wealth although they spend their whole lives in producing it. As soon as the laborer says I, things must change.

The political egoformation of the proletariat thus begins and proceeds differently from that of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. The laborer ego intrudes into the public world with neither grandiosity of domination nor moral-cultural hegemony. *It possesses no primary narcissistic will to power.* All previous workers' movements and socialisms failed because they disregarded this condition. In the aristocracy, the will to power is in politics and in life almost identical; it is anchored in the social structure as status narcissism — whatever is on top automatically experiences itself as the best, as political and existential excellence. In the

h ureeoisie, class narcissism already becomes more ambivalent. On the one hand it is linked to a merit that, through a permanent straining of moral, cultural, nd economic creativity, tries to earn cultural hegemony; on the other, it is nationalistically degraded. Thus, a will to power is not necessarily a will to govern, as was revealed by the notorious reluctance of the German bourgeoisie in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to get involved in politics; the bourgeois narcissisms can remain content with the will to profit, to success, and to "culture." Finally, for the laborer ego, the will to power and especially the will to govern are only secondary motives, in which calculation rather than passion is at work.

From the beginning, proletarian realism has two mutually contradictory dimensions. The first realism says: So that you get what you deserve, you yourself must make the move; "no God, no kaiser, no tribune" will give you what you need; you will only come out of your misery when you wake up politically and being to participate in the game of power—as Pottier said in the *Internationale.* The second realism knows that politics means being called on to make sacrifices; politics happens at levels where my immediate interests count for nothing and where, according to Lenin, people are counted by the millions. In workers' realism, an ancient, deep-rooted mistrust of political politics lives on. The maxim "If you don't concern yourself with politics, then politics will concern itself with you"—the basic formula for the politicization of the proletariat—has indeed been heard by laborers but in the last instance it sounds like cynicism to them, like a well-formulated but vulgar notion. That they are the ones who must pay and sacrifice for politics is no secret to them. A primal wish, childlike and hyperrealistic at the same time, would be by contrast that such politics finally cease and that, in good conscience, one finally would not have to bother about such things. All "little" people, not only laborers in the narrower sense, have felt the urge to stick out their tongues at the whole of politics. For this reason, in popular realism, jokes about politicians, including those about one's own party big shots, have provoked the heartiest laughter.

The antipolitical streak in laborer's consciousness already knows, of course, that politics represents a coercive relation that grows out of distress and conflict. Politics arises from a social clinch that can only satisfy those who are a priori the winners-the elite, the rich, the ambitious, those who feel they are the best at making politics. The socialist encouragement of the laborer to get involved in politics thus always means a partial muzzling of proletarian realism. To experience the clinch of classes, parties, and blocs "willingly" would be truly a harsh demand-and something of the kind is often an undertone in socialist politics, insofar as they are not already merely a language for new nationalisms.

Herein lies one of the reasons why the political programming of the laborer ego in the sense intended by ideologists has failed throughout almost the whole °nd. It is obvious that the workers' movement, wherever it has become strong, ªs pushed through wage increases, social security benefits, chances to partici-

pate, and the first steps toward the redistribution of wealth. To date, however, no ideology has been able to talk it into a real political will to power. Apolitical realism is not so easily deceived. Large-scale political mobilizations of the masses either presuppose wars or have their roots in a fascistoid-theatrical orchestration of the masses. A symptom of this is that people are almost nowhere so nauseated by politics as in the so-called socialist countries, that is, in countries where the laborer ego officially is supposed to be in power. They perceive the party rhetoric largely as a prayerwheel and as a parody of what they really want—a somewhat higher standard of living, a slackening of compulsions to work, liberalizations. It is one of the greatest ironies of modern history that no Western proletariat has been able to generate such spontaneous and disciplined strike movements as the socialist Poles of 1980, whose strike in fact expressed not a will to power but rather the will to reduce suffering at the hands of power. It is the paradigm of proletarian realism—a strike against political politics and against the ideology of the eternal victim.

This paradigm, of course, has its prehistory. In the workers' movement of the nineteenth century, two rival currents competed; these currents were based on the opposing realisms of proletarian consciousness: Marxism and anarchism. Marxism outlines the most consistent strategy of a socialist will to power as a will to govern and even goes so far as to support a "duty to power," so long as it is realistic to assume the existence of states and state politics. By contrast, anarchism has struggled since the very beginning against the state and political power machines as such. The Social Democratic (later Communist) line thought it knew that the "winning of bread" (Kropotkin) the anarchists talked about could lead only by way of hegemonic power in the state and the economic order. They believed that only as rulers of the state could the "producers" distribute social wealth to themselves indirectly through the state. None of the great Communist theoreticians and politicians foresaw realistically enough that this strategy would probably end up in the exploitation of the workers by the agents of the state and military. In anarchism, by contrast, the need to be antipolitical and the idea of self-determination were affirmed, and both were radically opposed to the idea: "Oh God! Another state, once again a state!"

The overprogramming of proletarian realism into a "party identity" can be studied since the nineteenth century as if it were a lab experiment. At first, the laborer ego finds in itself feelings of deficiency that can be politically stimulated: undernourishment, legislative demands, an awareness of being disadvantaged, claims on the fruits of one's own labor, etc. These basic motivations are now threaded into various strategies. The strategies are different because it is not clear from the motivations alone which path one can follow the fulfillment of these demands. The paths reflect the principal bifurcation in proletarian realism. Thus, against the tendency to class consciousness there is a powerful privatism; against the tendency toward a strategy in the state, a tendency toward a strategy against

the state; against the parliamentary way, an antiparliamentary way; against the idea of representation, the idea of self-management, and so on. Today, the alternatives are called authoritarian and libertarian socialism. Splits in the workers' movement are rooted in such oppositions.

The splitting is grounded in objectivity. Those who want to educate the proletarian ego to a party identity do violence to a part of its fundamental experiences and motivations. The Communist branch of the workers' movement is, in fact, marked by a characteristically cynical cadre politics in which the leadership functions like a "new brain" that demands only precise functioning from the rest of the party body and that often even carries out a putsch against the basic programs of the "old brain." The weakness in anarchism, on the other hand, is its inability to effectively organize the real life interests of the proletariat, which it surely understands better; for organization is the domain of the authoritarian wing. Under the given conditions, there is no way to realize the ideas of self-management and self-sufficiency—or only on a small scale. It was no accident, therefore, that anarchism addressed not so much the proletarian antipolitical instinct which it wanted to support and strengthen, as petit-bourgeois "revoltism."[10]

The forces causing the split have systematically ruined the workers' movement. Of course these forces not only follow the lines of the primal split as outlined here, but are soon involved in a higher dynamic of splitting, a dynamic that is of a reflective nature. The formation of the proletarian ego is a process that, even more than the self-formation of the bourgeoisie between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, takes place in the laboratory of the public sphere. Here, no naivete is safe from reflection. In the long run, no swindle can occur here. What was true for nationalism holds even more for socialism. One looks on as it takes form and as soon as it begins to make politics through fictions, it is struck by a contradiction —and that by no means merely from the outside but even more from within. Every exclusive, self-satisfied, and dogmatic self-programming can and must be broken down. A political movement does not base itself on existential realism and a science of society without paying a price. As soon as a fraction of the workers' movement appeared with the claim of knowing and executing *the* correct politics, an opposing fraction *had* to arise that contradicted the first and claimed to have better insight. That is the blind, purely mechanical-reflexive tragedy of the socialist movement. Werner Sombart, a bourgeois economist whose fame today has faded, sarcastically counted at least 130 different varieties of socialism, and a satirist today could easily keep on counting. The splits are the pnce of progress in reflection. Every half-alert person recognizes that party egos are produced in the test tube of propaganda and cannot be congruent with the real-ism at the base and the most elementary feelings toward life. One can see it with the naked eye: Here are programs searching for naivetes that are supposed to Kientify themselves. But no politics can, on the one hand, base itself on critique and science and, on the other, set its hopes on naivete and a system of blind devo-

tion. Because every socialism wants to be a "scientific Weltanschauung," it permanently regurgitates its own poison; its realistic stomach spits out the slop of mere dogmatics.

For most people today, the inner-socialist debates from the revisionism dispute of the old social democracy up to the conglomerations of Second, Third, and Fourth Internationals are as curious as the dispute among theologians of the sixteenth century over the interpretation of Holy Communion. They see in them what the historian also discovers through dispassionate research: that the formation of a unified proletarian ego oriented toward its own vital interests has failed.

Up to now, the will to live and the will to power have set up two different accounts. Precisely in the case of the proletarian ego, the fictions were weaker than the realisms. The programmers of political identity fought with each other from the beginning and got entangled in their printouts. The unified proletarian class ego is not a reality but a myth. One recognizes this myth easily when one observes the programmers in their public activities; indeed, for a while they called themselves, with refreshing candor, propagandists, disseminators of ideology.

What also has played a role in the collapse of the socialist programming of identity is the psychological naivete of the old concept of politics. Socialism, especially in Western nations, has not known how to convincingly orchestrate the pleasure in making politics or even the prospect of lessening suffering at the hands of politics. Its psychopolitics remained almost everywhere on a crude level; it could mobilize rage, hope, longing, and ambition but not what would have been decisive, namely, the pleasure in being a proletarian. Precisely that, according to the socialist concept of the proletariat, is not at all possible since proletarian existence is defined negatively: to have nothing besides offspring and to remain excluded from better chances and the riches of life. Positive ego can only be achieved by deproletarianization. Only in the revolutionary Prolet-Cult, which blossomed in Russia shortly after the October Revolution, was there something like a *direct* class narcissism, a self-celebration of the proletariat that soon had to wither under its own plaintiveness and mendacity. However, in political narcissism, just as in private narcissism, to be "better" is everything. *Noblesse oblige.* But can one say: *proletariat oblige?*

The proletarian ego, which follows in the footsteps of the bourgeois ego and registers its claims to an inheritance, possesses the class experience of working people who are beginning to overcome their political muteness. Every ego, in order to manifest itself and to stand up to public scrutiny, requires a solid nucleus, a pride of ego, which can endure having to appear before others. The greatest breakthrough for the people came when they discovered the language of human rights for themselves. These rights were articulated from the peasant wars of 1525 up until the modern Russian and Polish resistances as the rights of Christians. In the traditions based on the American and French revolutions, they are understood as temporal natural rights.

The elevated feeling, composed of indignation and a claim to freedom, of being not a slave (robot) but *also* a human being, gave the early workers' movement its moral, psychological, and political strength, a strength that grew even more under repression. (For this reason, the socialist movement had a competitor in the Christian workers' movement, which pursued the same motive: the feeling of being a meaningful human being, politically and legally, but to be sure, without the revolutionary element.) For as long as the misery of the proletariat was so horrifying, as nineteenth-century documents substantiate, even the discovery of the feeling for human rights had to give the laborer a political ego nucleus. This gives early and naive socialism a nostalgic charm, a moving, political humanism filled with truth. But a sobering up comes about in the dispute over the correct interpretation of human rights. In the late nineteenth century, the age of strategy, of division, of revision, and of fraternal conflict begins. The consciousness of human rights frayed in the gear wheels of the logic of party and struggle. It lost its capacity to sustain in the proletariat an elevated feeling firmly grounded in the public sphere when the socialist currents began to slander each other.

Social democracy had already tried somewhat earlier in its cultural politics *(Bildungspolitik)* to stimulate the nerve of class narcissism by broadcasting the slogan Knowledge Is Power. With this, the claim to its own class culture begins, a class culture rooted in the recognition that without a class-specific creativity and a superior "morality" and cultivation, no socialist state can be set up. "Knowledge is power"—this statement can also mean that socialism finally began to sense the secret of the relation between narcissistic pleasure in culture and political power. "Being poor is no guarantee at all of being good and clever" (E. Kastner, *Fabian,* 1931).

In the heyday of the workers' movement, the consciousness of human rights was outbid by a proletarian pride in accomplishment that, for good reason, made reference to the labor, diligence, and power of the class. Its knowledge of power culminated in the sentence: All wheels stand still, if our strong arms so will. In the pathos of the general strike, something of the elevated feeling of class power and the domination of production lived on —only, of course, under the almost always unrealistic assumption of proletarian unity. The latter was broken because vital interests and political interests could never coincide in the proletariat. Yet even the strength of a latent consciousness of the general strike and labor in the long run does not suffice to stabilize an elevated class feeling. The bleakness of everyday life is more powerful than the political learning in the dramatic episodes °f class history. In the last instance, the consciousness of power and labor alone cannot sustain pride in a culture that can perpetually renew itself.

The regenerability of elevated feelings is rooted in the cultural and existential creativity of a class. In the end, mere power becomes boring even to itself. Where the pleasure in politics reduces to the ambition of those who rule, a vital resistance °f the masses is, in the long run, unavoidable. But in this lies also the germ of

an objective proletarian feeling of inferiority. Wage labor creates abstract value. It is productive without being creative. The idiocy of industrial labor erects in the meantime an impenetrable wall against a true class narcissism of the proletariat. The cultural hegemony of those who produce, however, could only grow out of such a class narcissism. By contrast, a cultural system based on a crude ideology of labor is incapable of acquiring the most valuable inheritance of aristocratic and bourgeois culture: the pleasure politics of a creative life. The socialist way of inheriting has intensified the old deficiencies and diminished the old privileges. In a civilization of the "good life," to inherit from the nobility and the bourgeoisie can only mean avoiding the deficiencies of the predecessors and appropriating their strengths. Anything else would not be worth the trouble.

I will forgo presenting the establishment of inwardness in other areas—erotics, ethics, aesthetics-in the way in which I have briefly attempted to present it in the instance of the paradoxical inwardness of class narcissisms. In any case, the scheme of the critique would be the same: investigation of collective programming and self-programming. Today the sociocultural conditioning of the sexes is a common topic of discussion. The naive masculinity and femininity in the members of less-developed cultures may strike us as charming; in our own context we trip over the "stupid" factor in the results of such training. Today it can be expected of everyone to know that masculinity and femininity are formed in drawn-out social self-training, just like class consciousnesses, professional ethics, character, and personal tastes. Every person goes through years of apprenticeship in inwardness, every newborn child years of apprenticeship in gender identity. Later, in becoming aware of oneself, men and women discover a spontaneity of feeling constituted in such and such a way: I like her; I don't like him; those are my impulses; this turns me on; those are my wishes; I can satisfy them to this extent. From the first look we take at our experiences we believe we can say who we are. The second look will make it clear that education is behind every particular way of being. What seemed to be nature, on closer observation reveals itself as code. Why is that important? Well, those who enjoy advantages from their programming and that of others, naturally feel no impulse to reflect. But those who suffer disadvantages will refuse in the future to make sacrifices based on a mere training in bondage. The disadvantaged are immediately motivated to reflect. One can say that the *universal* discontent in relations between the sexes today has led to a strong increase in the readiness to reflect on the causes of problematic relationships —in both sexes. Wherever one gets "involved" with problems, one finds both sides sunk in reflection.

And after reflection? Well, I know no one who could be said to be "finished with reflecting." The "labor" of reflection never ends. It appears to be infinite; of course, I believe it is a "benign infinity," which implies growth and maturation. In innumerable respects, people have reasons to get to know themselves better.

Pellegrino Tibaldi, *Polyphem,* around 1555.

Whatever we may be, for better or for worse, we are thus initially and "naturally" "idiots of the family,"[11] in the broadest sense: educated people. In the last instance, enlightenment has to do with the idiocy of the ego. It is difficult to disperse inner automatisms; it takes effort to penetrate the unconscious. A permanent critical self-reflection would be necessary in the end to counter the tendency to submerge oneself in new lacks of awareness, new automatisms, new blind identifications. Life, which also searches for new stability through revolutions and moments of awareness, obeys an inclination to inertia. The impression can thus arise that the history of spirit *(Geistesgeschichte)* constitutes a simple dance of ideologies and not a systematically worked out movement of human cultures from immaturity and delusion. In the twilight of "postenlightenment," the idiocy of egos twists itself into postures that are more and more artful and more and more convoluted —into a conscious unconsciousness, into defensive identities.

The mania for "identity" seems to be the deepest of the unconscious programmings, so deeply buried that it evades even attentive reflection for a long time. A formal somebody, as bearer of our social identifications, is, so to speak, programmed into us. It guarantees in almost every aspect the priority of what is alien over what is one's own. Where "I" seem to be, others always went before me in order to automatize me through socialization. Our true self-experience in original Nobodiness remains in this world buried under taboo and panic. Basically, however, no life has a name. The self-conscious nobody in us —who acquires names and identities only through its "social birth"-remains the living source of freedom. The living Nobody, in spite of the horror of socialization, remembers the energetic paradises beneath the personalities. Its life soil is the mentally alert body, which we should call not *nobody* but *yesbody* and which is able to develop m the course of individuation from an areflexive "narcissism" to a reflected "self-

discovery in the world cosmos." In this Nobody, the last enlightenment, as critique of the illusion of privacy and egoism, comes to an end. If mystical advances into such "innermost" zones of preindividual emptiness used to be exclusively a matter for meditative minorities, today there are good reasons for hoping that in our world, torn by struggling identifications, majorities for such enlightenment will finally be found.

It is not infrequently necessary for the pure interest in surviving to be able to be Nobody. The *Odyssey* demonstrates this in its funniest and most grandiose passage. Odysseus, the mentally alert hero, in the decisive moment of his wanderings after fleeing from the cave of the blinded Cyclops, calls to him: It was Nobody who blinded you! In this way, one-eyedness and identity can be overcome. With this call, Odysseus, the master of clever self-preservation, reaches the summit of mental alertness. He leaves the sphere of primitive moral causalities, the web of revenge. From then on he is safe from the "envy of the gods." The gods mock Cyclops when he demands that they take revenge. On whom? On Nobody.

The Utopia of conscious life was and remains a world in which we all have the right to be Odysseus and to let that Nobody live, in spite of history, politics, nationality, and Somebodiness. In the shape of our bodies, we should embark on the wanderings of a life that spares itself nothing. When in danger, mentally and spiritually alert persons discover Being-as-Nobody in themselves. Between the poles of Nobodiness and Somebodiness, the adventures and vicissitudes of conscious life are strung. In conscious life, every fiction of an ego is dissolved once and for all. For this reason, Odysseus, and not Hamlet, is the true founding father of modern and everlasting intelligence.

Notes

1. This holds for Bruno Bauer's classic polemic, *Theologische Schamlosigkeiten* (1841), in Bauer, *Feldziige der reinen Kritik,* ed. H. M. Sass (Frankfurt, 1968).

2. There is already a precursor of this doctrine among Greek Sophists: Critias.

3. The extension of the Kantian critique always proceeded from the narrowness of its physically oriented concept of experience. Whenever one moved beyond Kant, one did so in the name of an enriched concept of experience that was extended to historical, cultural, symbolic, emotional, and reflective phenomena.

4. [See Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit.* -Trans.]

5. At one point in chapter 5 I will hint at the relation that could exist between present-day, respectable cynicism of the politics of armament and peace and a third world war.

6. In chapter 8 ("The Cynicism of Knowledge"), I will describe Freud as the protagonist of a kynical theory. See in the same chapter, "Sexual Cynicism." [See also by Peter Sloterdijk, *Der Zauberbaum. Die Entstehung der Psychoanalyse imjahr 1785* (Frankfurt am Main, 1985). —Trans.1

7. It is the cultural strategy of all neoconservativisms. See chapters 15, 16, and 23 ("Political Coueism").

8. [See also by Peter Sloterdijk, *Der Denker aufder Btihne. Nietzsches Materialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986).—Trans.]

9. Most recently, Jean Plumyene has impressively sketched the drama of early nationalisms: *Les nations romantiques. Histoire du nationalisme,* vol. 1 (Paris, 1979).

10. Its development can be studied through the example of the "individualist" anarchism inspired by Stirner.

11. [This refers to a phrase from Marx concerning "rural idiocy." Initially we cannot help having been made by the family into the "idiots" we are.-Trans.]

Chapter 4
After the Unmaskings: Cynical Twilight. Sketches for the Self-repudiation of the Ethos of Enlightenment

> You are still there! No, that is unheard of,
> Disappear, we have after all enlightened!
> The pack of devils, it does not ask for rules.
> We are clever enough, and still Tegel is haunted.
> > Goethe, *Faust I,* Walpurgisnacht

> "I look on, is that nothing?"
> "Who can be helped by it?"
> "Who can be helped?" said Fabian.
> > Erich Kastner, *Fabian* (1931)

> For they know what they do.
> > Ernst Ottwald, *Denn sie wissen, was sie tun* (1931)

These eight turbulent and hard-won advances of reflective enlightenment have made history just like the great breakthroughs in natural science and technology with which they have combined in the last 250 years into a permanent industrial and cultural revolution. Just as urbanization, motorization, electrification, and the information revolution have radically altered life in societies, so the labor of reflection and critique has structurally broken up consciousnesses and forced a new, dynamic constitution on them. "Nothing is solid anymore." It has plowed up an intellectual-psychic field on which old forms of tradition, identity, and character can no longer exist. Its effects add up to the complex of a modernity in which life knows itself to be at the mercy of a continuum of crisis.

Enlightened Prevention of Enlightenment

Enlightenment has certainly been enormously successful. In its arsenal, the weapons of critique stand ready; those who want to view these even in isolation would have to think that a party so armed would inevitably win the "struggle of opinions." But no party can appropriate these weapons solely for itself. Critique does not have a unified bearer but rather is splintered into a multitude of schools, factions, currents, avant-gardes. Basically, there is no unified and unambiguous enlightenment "movement." One feature of the dialectic of enlightenment is that

"This is what they have refused to accept from me . . . these ignoramuses!"

it was never able to build a massive front; rather, early on, it developed, so to speak, into its own opponent.

As shown in the second preliminary reflection, enlightenment is broken by the resistance of opposing powers (hegemonic power, tradition, prejudice). Because knowledge is power, every hegemonic power challenged by "another knowledge" must try to stay in the center of knowledge. However, not every power is the right center for every knowledge. Reflective knowledge cannot be separated from its subject. Thus, only one means remains available to hegemonic powers: to separate the subjects of possible oppositional power from the means of their self-reflection. This is the reason for the age-old history of "violence against ideas". It is violence neither against persons nor against things in the trivial sense; it is violence against the self-experience and the self-expression of persons who are in danger of learning what they should not know. The history of *censorship* can be summarized in this phrase. It is the history of the politics of antireflection. At that moment when people become ripe for experiencing the truth about themselves and their social relations, those in power have always tried to smash the mirrors in which people would recognize who they are and what is happening to them.

Enlightenment, no matter how impotent the mere means of reason seem, is subtly irresistible, like the light, after which, in sound mystical tradition, it is named: *les lumieres,* illumination. Light is unable to reach only those places where obstacles block its rays. Thus, enlightenment tries first to light the lamps and then to clear the obstacles out of the way that prevent the light's diffusion.

In and of itself, light cannot have any enemies. It thinks of itself as a peacefully illuminating energy. It becomes bright where surfaces reflect it. The question will be, Are these reflecting surfaces really the final targets of illumination, or are these surfaces interposed between the source of enlightenment and its intended recipients? In the language of the eighteenth-century Freemasons, the obstacles that disturbed or blocked the light of knowledge had a threefold name: superstition, error, and ignorance. They were also called the three "monsters." These monsters were real powers with which one had to contend and which the Enlightenment took it upon itself to provoke and overcome. Enthusiastically and naively, the early enlighteners presented themselves to the powers-that-be in the name of their struggle for light and demanded free passage.

However, they never really got a clear view of the "fourth monster," the actual and most difficult opponent. They attacked the powerful but not their knowledge. They often neglected to investigate systematically the knowledge of domination in the hegemonic powers. This knowledge always has the structure of a double knowledge: one for the rules of conduct of power and one for the norms of general consciousness.

The consciousness of those who rule is that "reflecting surface" that is decisive for the course and diffusion of enlightenment. Thus, enlightenment brings power truly to "reflection" for the first time. Power reflects in the double sense of the word: as self-observation and as refraction *(Brechung)* and return *(Zurucksendung)* of the light.

Those who rule, if they are not "merely" arrogant, must place themselves studiously between enlightenment and its addressees in order to prevent the diffusion of a new power of knowledge and the genesis of a new subject of knowledge about power. The state must know the truth before it can censor it. The tragedy of the old social democracy is that, of the hundred meanings of the statement "Knowledge is power," it had consciously recognized only a few. It continually failed to recognize which knowledge it is that really gives power and what kind of power one must be and have in order to gain the knowledge that expands power.

In French conservatism and royalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there occasionally was resentful speculation about how the revolution of 1789 could have been "avoided." This reactionary gossip has at least one very interesting aspect: Monarchical conservatism hits the nerve of a cynically studious politics of hegemonic power. The train of thought is very simple: If the monarchy had fully exhausted its capacities for reform; if it had learned to deal flexibly with the facts of the bourgeois economic order; if it had made the new economy the basis of its domestic policy, etc. —then perhaps things would not have had to happen as they did. Royalists, if they are intelligent, would be the first to admit that Louis XV and Louis XVI were partly responsible through their mistakes and political impotence, for the disaster. But they by no means therefore renounce the

Frederick II at his writing desk in his study, in the company of his dogs.

idea of monarchy as such because they justifiably assume the possibility of a "despotism capable of learning." The politically hollow head of France in the eighteenth century allowed knowledge about power to form an extramonarchical center.

If one looks more closely, the chain of events of the actual revolutionary happenings begins with a touching and oppressive display: The hegemonic power tried at the last moment to approximate the people's knowledge about its problems [In or]der to take back the reins, which had slipped from its grasp. This is the significance of those famous "complaint books" that, on the eve of the revolution and at the bidding of the crown, were supposed to be written by every county and borough so that in the highest places, the real distress and wishes of the people could

finally become known. In an act of patriarchal humility, whereby the people played their role with high hopes, and a political-erotic beating of the heart, the monarchy conceded that it needed to learn more. It let it be known that from then on it was willing to become also the center of that knowledge and of those political needs whose splintering off into a revolutionary center it had tolerated for too long. But precisely in doing this, the crown set the ball of a revolutionary causality rolling, for whose momentum the system had no inherent brake.

In the great Continental monarchies of the eighteenth century, a different style of government had prevailed—a "patriarchal enlightenment." The monarchies of Prussia, Austria, and Russia had leaders who were willing to learn. Thus, one talks of an enlightenment under Peter, Frederick, and Joseph, whereas one cannot, much as one might like to, speak of an enlightenment under Louis. In the countries of "enlightened despotism," a semiconservative development planning was effected from above; from this planning emanated, in the final analysis, the impulse for modern planning ideas, which everywhere attempted to combine a maximum of social stability with a maximum expansion of power and production. Contemporary "socialist" systems still work completely in the style of enlightened absolutism, which calls itself "democratic centralism" or a "dictatorship of the proletariat" or whatever other euphemisms there are.

In these things, the German example has an ambivalent prominence. Nevertheless, German enlightenment does possess not only representatives such as Lessing and Kant but also Frederick II of Prussia, who must be counted among the clever minds of the century. As a prince, he was completely a child of the Age of Enlightenment and author of an anti-Machiavelli text who condemned the openly cynical technique of domination in the older statecraft; as a monarch, he had to become the most self-reflective embodiment of modernized knowledge about ruling. In his political philosophy, the new clothes of power were tailored, the art of repression was schooled in the Zeitgeist.[1] Frederick's new cynicism was camouflaged by melancholy because he strove for personal integrity by trying to apply the Prussian-ascetic politics of obedience to himself. With a formal, and partly also with an existential consistency, he transferred the idea of service to the crown, designating the king the "first servant of the state." Here the depersonalization of power begins, and it reaches its peak in modern bureaucracy.

Frederick's melancholy shows how in enlightened despotism a certain "tragic" tone must emerge, a tone, incidentally, that lent many admirers of Prussia a secret, sentimental identity. It still feeds the present-day nostalgia for Prussia, this outgrowth of a social-liberal, bureaucratic romanticism. The German enlightenment, more than any other, senses the schizoid split in itself; it knows about things that it may not live out; it possesses a knowledge whose real subject it cannot be. It absorbs insights in order to prevent them from advancing to the egos, which would without fail act according to them, if they only possessed them. In this

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E. Schalk, *Political Juggling Act* (literally, egg dance). Caricature of Bismarck as Minister for Conflict. *Frankfurter Latern,* 1863.

schizoid melancholy, the main thread of recent German history already begins to unravel—the demoralization of bourgeois enlightenment by an intelligent hegemonic power.

Otto von Bismarck was the second great cynical force in German modernity, a figure of repression highly capable of thinking. As creator of the "delayed nation" (1871), he was at the same time the one who tried to turn back the domestic political clock of this nation by half a century. He undertook the denial of evolution on a grand scale. He strove to maintain standards for the political denial of rights that no longer corresponded to the balance in sources of power in his time. He repressed not only the political will of the old Fourth Estate, which had long since begun to articulate itself (social democracy), but also that of the Third Estate, of bourgeois liberalism. Bismarck hated liberalism *(Freisinn,* sense of freedom) possibly even more than the "red hordes" of social democracy. Even in po-

litical Catholicism (the center party), he sensed the claim to a political ego that provoked his cynicism. The place where these political egos wanted to speak their mind, the Prussian parliament (later the Reichsparlament), he called realistically and contemptuously a "gossip shop," for the real decisions were always made solely by him and the crown. Here, the main thread of German masters' cynicism becomes a strong rope. "Reason and argue as much as you want, but obey!" Here the road begins that leads from the "gossip shop" of Bismarck's time to the demoralized and chaotic parliamentarism of the Weimar period.

It remains to be considered whether in Social-Democratic periods the diffusion of identity of enlightenment must proceed more strongly than ever. As soon as "enlightened" governments are established, the schizoid tension within the subject of power is intensified; the subject must split off its own knowledge of enlightenment and get involved in the melancholy realism of governing —it must learn the art of the second-worst evil. No merely moral consciousness and no loyalty to principles will be able to cope with the intricate realisms of the exercise of power. Not without intention, I explained in the Preface that the critique of cynical reason is a meditation on the statement "Knowledge is power." It was a slogan of the old social democracy; the critique as a whole thus leads to a meditative grounding *and* dissolution of the core of social democracy: pragmatic political reason. As pragmatics, it respects the given order against which, as reason, it continues to revolt. Only under the sign of a critique of cynicism can the worn-out counterposition of theory and praxis be superseded; only it can leave the schoolboy dialectic of "ideal" and "reality" behind. Under the sign of a critique of cynical reason, enlightenment can gain a new lease on life and remain true to its most intimate project: the transformation of being through consciousness.

To continue enlightenment means to be prepared for the fact that everything that in consciousness is mere morality will lose out against the unavoidable amoralism of the real. Is this not what social democracy is learning today in that, almost against its will, it is becoming caught up in the Great Dialectic?[2] This pain of learning is one of the three main factors in the self-denial of present-day enlightenment.[3]

Enlightenment experiences its main refractive break *(Brechnung)* in the political cynicism of the hegemonic powers. For knowledge is power, and power, when forced to fight, leads to the splitting of knowledge into livable and nonlivable knowledge. This appears only superficially as an opposition between "realism" and "idealism." In truth, a schizoid and an antischizoid realism oppose each other here. The first appears respectable, the second cheeky. The first assumes responsibility for what one cannot be responsible for; the second irresponsibly champions the cause for what one can be responsible for. The first, so it says, wants to secure survival; the second wants to save the dignity of life from the encroachments of the realism of power.

Breaks in Enlightenment

Besides the main fracture of enlightenment through the hegemonic powers' politics of antireflection, which consciously tries to preserve the naivete of others, we observe further breaks and unevennesses in the development of enlightenment that maneuvers it to the edge of self-denial.

The Breaking through Time

Enlightenment is a process in time, a form of evolution. It uses up life-time in the case of individuals, process-time in the case of institutions. Nothing happens overnight with it, although jumps and abrupt awakenings are not foreign to it. Its rhythm is difficult to predict, and it varies infinitely according to inner and outer conditions and resistances. Analogous to the image of the flame, its energy is most intense at the center and dies down at the periphery. Starting from the pioneers and masters of reflective intelligence in philosophy and the arts, its impulse is refracted initially in the milieu of the intelligentsia with its inertia, then in the world of social labor and politics, further in the countless private spheres split off from the universal, and is finally reflected back by pure misery that can no longer be enlightened.

Biographically, enlightenment knows many stages and steps that earlier were strikingly represented in the esoteric movements. In the old Freemasonry, an initiation process was staged that was intended to represent the sequence of maturation, reflection, practice, and illumination. This indispensable biographical system of stages of enlightenment as *initiation* is corrupted in modern pedagogy; the system of stages lives on only superficially in the graduated order of the educational system and in the sequence of school years and semesters. The curricula in modern schools are parodies of the idea of development. In the old Humboldtian university, with its "authoritarian" relation between teachers and learners and its student freedoms, a trace of that biographical consolidation and an opportunity for personal initiation into knowledge still lived on. In the modern educational system, the idea of embodied knowledge in those who teach as well as in those who study is lost. The professors are really not "confessors" but coaches in courses for the acquisition of a knowledge removed from life. The universities and schools practice a schizoid role playing in which an unmotivated, prospectless but intelligent youth learns to keep up with the general standards of enlightened meaninglessness.

In the temporal refraction of enlightenment, we distinguish a biographical and a sociological dimension. Each new generation requires its own time to process in its own rhythm what has already been achieved. But since schizoid culture works toward a depersonalization of enlightenment, an enlightenment without embodied enlighteners, a great big groan issues from modern schools. Its "ap-

Georg Scholz, *Industrial Farmers,* 1920. (Reproduced by permission of the Von der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal.)

paratus of enlightenment" confronts youth from the position of an opponent. If there were no teachers who desperately made every effort for enlightenment in spite of instruction and who invested their vital energies in the pedagogic process in spite of conditions, scarcely any pupils would still experience what school should be about. The more systematically education is planned, the more it is a matter of accident or luck whether education as initiation into conscious living still takes place at all.

With the sociological breaking of enlightenment in time, it is the "province"- in the concrete as well as metaphorical sense —that resists the impulse of enlightenment with its inertia. Province means accommodation to repressions and hardships that actually no longer exist. Only in the idle motion of habituation and self-

repression do they remain effective —unnecessarily. In the age of advanced jj,„ntenment one really feels for the first time how deadly substanceless misery and how wretched outmoded unhappiness are. The province has taken part in modernization without participating in liberalization; it has gone along and yet remained behind. Today this picture is, of course, changing. A relative inversion in the tendencies of urban and rural consciousness can be distinguished; certain signs make it clear that a stifling retardation is not the same as an insightful not-wanting-to-go-further. A new provincial consciousness emphasizes that enlightenment cannot pledge itself for all time to a blind alliance with the scientific-technical-industrial complex, even if the latter has been its inseparable companion for centuries. The social forefront of enlightenment today aims at a qualification of that technical enlightenment with whose unleashing the hot phase of our history began. In it can be discovered traces of myth, dreams of a rational-magical mastery of nature, omnipotence fantasies of political engineers. In the culture of technology, urban imperialisms are realized. Increasingly, voices of considerable theoretical weight—from Toynbee to Wittfogel —have elaborated on a premonition of how the future of urban and industrial civilizations could be called the new province.[4]

The Breaking by the Party

Those who inquire after the political subject of enlightenment become lost in a maze. The split in motivations for enlightenment between liberalism and socialism, the latter of which in turn branches into authoritarian-Communist, Social Democratic, and anarchist currents, goes back to basic principles. Each party has loudly claimed for itself a special relation, indeed, an intimate identity with enlightenment and science. Liberalism bears in its very name not only economic freedom but also civil freedom and freedom of thought; social democracy has presented itself for ages now as the party for the rational guidance of social developments; and communism steals the show by presenting itself as the current in which partiality *{Parteilichkeit)* and insight into truth have become one. Whom should we believe? For those who are still free enough to pose the question, there 's probably no alternative than to resort to one's own reflection, whereby potentially a new enlightenment party, that of "one's own opinion," could arise. Those free enough to do this are possibly also free enough to agree with the antiparty impulse of anarchism that attacks all parties as surrogates of the state and accuses them of being mechanisms of stupefaction and apparatuses for recruiting the fatuous electorate. The wonderful-sounding dialectical phrase about "truth and partiality" thus remains a pipe dream —until one can discover an impartial party that serves universal life interest by intervening in the blind mechanisms of self-destruction.

The Breaking by Sectors

Especially the advanced thrusts of enlightenment that question the fictions of a clear self-consciousness, of nature, and identity are unhesitatingly opposed even today by great social powers that operate with these fictions. This can easily be demonstrated in the case of depth-psychological enlightenment, which became involved in a battle on two fronts with other fractions of enlightenment; the latter performed a thorough job of counterenlightenment on it. On one side, the psychology of the unconscious was unrelentingly "disproved" and accused of being mythology by scientism and natural-scientific medicine; on the other side, it was denounced by official Marxism as a symptom of bourgeois irrationalist decadence.

Psychological and political enlightenment are, in fact, opponents in that they not only compete for the free energies of individuals but also often come into conflict at the heart of the matter. As soon as proclivities for a party coagulate in identities, so that individuals do not merely support a party but become a party, psychological reflection must inevitably have a decomposing effect on such artificial naivete. It thereby slips into the role of an unwelcome enlightenment. Conversely, psychological enlightenment puts itself in a bad light when it starts to become a Weltanschauung, a school of opinion, an ideology, or even a sect. One sees this in the many pitiful squabbles and dogmatisms of a new psychological orthodoxy as well as in the ossifications and demarcations of a psychologizing subculture. It becomes really scandalous when psychologists —for example, C. G. Jung—through a combination of ambition and naivete have tried to win favor with political currents such as fascism. Instead of providing a psychology of authority and an illumination of political masochism, the leaders of schools of psychology have been inclined to taste the sweetness of authority and to use masochistic mechanisms to their own advantages.

The Break in Intelligence

I just indicated that the alliance of enlightenment with the process of natural-scientific, technical civilization is no longer unambiguous. The philosophy of enlightenment still hesitates to annul the coerced alliance and to seek a new relation to the sciences. The modern equation of reason and science is too powerful for philosophy - if it does not want to destroy itself—to simply push aside the advantages of the sciences. Nevertheless, the signs of the times indicate a twilight of the scientific idols. Since the time of European romanticism, so-called irrationalist currents have repeatedly resisted the process of modern rationalism. The present also is experiencing such a wave of antirationalism in which the motifs of "another kind of reason" combine with each other—motifs of a logic of feelings and mysticism, of meditation and critical self-reflection, of myth and a magical worldview. It would probably be wasted time to try to sort out the grain from the

chaff- Time will tell which impulses survive the fad phase. As soon as American syncretism comes and goes here and the first titillation of *anything goes* has worn off perhaps the charms of clarity too will again be valued. In the long run, murky mixtures are unpleasant; where "anything goes," nothing matters anymore, but we have to grit our teeth and bear it.

Beyond the mechanics of pendulum swings between fascination and boredom, enlightenment still has the task of assigning an appropriate place in our culture to the sciences. A prerequisite for this would be the clarification of the relationship between types of intelligence—particularly of various opposing kinds of cleverness such as science and wisdom, learnedness and presence of mind.

The distancing of the types of intelligence from each other that in modern reason are only illusorily brought together in the unity of rationality, has long been obvious. What Georg Lukacs, for example, attacked as "irrationalism" in modern bourgeois thinking—the "destruction of reason"-contains in its basic impulse a fully justified separation of "another" kind of intelligence from the hegemony of rationalism and natural science. The only bad thing here is that irrationalism from Bergson to Klages took itself much too seriously. It fell over itself with its pretensions to respectability and struck up the solemn tone of a priest where a great philosophical buffoonery would have been just the right thing. In pronounced irrationalist literature one often finds a mixture of theorizing melancholy and self-pretension. Still, Bergson did, at least, write about laughter.

The bourgeois compulsion for respectability spoiled the satirical, poetical, and ironic possibilities of irrationalism. Those who see the "Other" should also tell it otherwise. But those who present what they have "grasped" beyond the limits of a narrower rationality, claiming nothing less than validity of the most respectable insights, degrade both the irrational and the rational. Thus, Gottfried Benn struck at the heart of oracle-irrationalism when he said that in Germany thinkers who cannot master their world-pictures linguistically are usually called visionaries.

Respectable conservatism has known much of this for a long time. Under its frequently demagogic wailing about the evils of progress, it has preserved the insight that the modern kind of knowledge has little to do with that state of human maturity that is called wisdom by all great teachers. Wisdom is not dependent on the level of the technical mastery of the world; conversely, the latter presupposes the former when the process of science and technology moves toward an insane state of affairs-as we are observing today. With the aid of Buddhist, Taoist, and original Christian, Indian, and American Indian intelligence, no production lines and no satellites can be built. However, in the modern type of knowledge, that awareness of life dries up from which the old teachings of wisdom take their inspiration, in order to speak of life and death, love and hate, antagonism and unity, individuality and cosmos, manliness and womanliness. One of the most important motifs in the literature of wisdom is a warning against false cleverness, against

"head" knowledge and learnedness, against thinking in terms of power and arrogant intellectuality.

Breaking Down Half-Open Doors

In spite of all inhibitions, breaks, and self-doubt in the course of its development, enlightenment has unleashed an enormous potential for reflection. This is unmistakable even in the present phase of demoralization. The penetration of science, psychology, and schooling into large areas of social life has brought strong means of reflection, especially into the heads of the intelligentsia and state employees. The diffusion of power in the modern state has led to an extraordinary dissemination of the knowledge of power, which simultaneously intensifies the cynicism of the knowledge of power, as sketched earlier, that is, the self-denial of morality and the splitting off of insights that cannot be lived out into a diffuse collective mentality. Here we flesh out our initial thesis: Discontent in our culture appears today as universal, diffuse cynicism.

With the diffusion of cynicism to a collective mentality of intelligence in the gravitational field of the state and the knowledge of power, the erstwhile moral foundations of ideology critique collapse. Critics, as Walter Benjamin notes in his aphorism of 1928 (see the Preface), have long since blended together with what is to be criticized, and that distance that would be created by morality has been lost through a general muddling along in immorality, semimorality, and the morality of lesser evils. Cultivated and informed people of today have become aware of the essential model of critique and the procedure of unmasking without having been shaken. The existence of such models of critique is perceived today as a contribution to the sad complicatedness of relations in the world rather than as an impulse for an existential self-reflection. Who today is still an enlightener? The question is almost too direct to be decent.

There is, to be concise, not only a crisis of enlightenment, not only a crisis of the enlighteners, but even a crisis in the praxis of enlightenment, in *commitment* to enlightenment. Today, the word "committed" is said with a mixture of acknowledgment and indulgence, as if it were a fragile sediment from a younger psychological layer that has to be handled with the utmost care. It is almost as if our sympathy goes less to those for whom another commits himself or herself than to the commitment itself in its rarity and fragile naivete. Who does not known this from his or her feelings toward the so-called alternative movements? Something similar can be seen in France, where the younger generation of intelligentsia, *apres* Sartre, is experiencing the dissolution of the old foundations of political moralism that constituted leftist identity. Commitment? "Takes place in the ivory tower. The committed sit there actively" (Ludwig Marcuse).

In that the moral foundation of enlightenment is decomposing because the modern state simultaneously demoralizes the enlightened and makes public ser-

vants of them, the perspectives of what was earlier called commitment are becoming blurred. When someone tries to "agitate" me in an enlightened direction, my first reaction is a cynical one: The person concerned should get his or her own shit together. That is the nature of things. Admittedly, one should not injure good will without reason; but good will could easily be a little more clever and save me the embarrassment of saying; "I already know that." For I do not like being asked, "Then why don't you do something?"

Things have been this way now for a long time: The "committed" enlightener breaks down doors that, admittedly, are not completely open, but they also no longer have to be broken down. It can go so far that one knows more about moral conditions as a cynic than as a committed person. Since Erich Kastner, the tone of satire in modern enlightenment is reflectively tinged and hits its mark with a melancholy, coquettish spin, if it still wants to hit the mark at all. Today's jokers are anything but committed, and they can profit from the inflated price of laughter insofar as buffoonery suits the spirit of the times better than does good old nasty satire. The last defenders of ideology critique are inspired buffoons, such as Otto, in whom one finds little sociology but a good deal of mental alertness.

Besides "commitment," and entwined with it, we find in our memory another recent sediment—the experience of the student movement, scarcely settled, with its ups and downs of courage and depression. This most recent sediment in the history of political vitality forms an additional veil over the old feeling that something ought to be done about this world. The dissolution of the student movement must interest us because it represents a complex metamorphosis of hope into realism, of revolt into a clever melancholy, from a grand political denial into a thousand-faceted, small, subpolitical affirmation, from a radicalism in politics into a middle course of intelligent survival. I do not really believe in the end of enlightenment merely because the spectacle has come to an end. When so many disappointed enlighteners whine today, they are just spitting out all their rage and sadness, which would hinder them from continuing to propagate enlightenment, into the spittoon of the public sphere. Only courageous people feel when they are discouraged; only enlighteners notice when it is getting dark; only moralists can become demoralized. In a word: We are still here. Leonard Cohen has written [a] lyrical line that could be the battle song of an enlightenment that has become muted: "Well, never mind: We are ugly, but we have the music" *(Chelsea Hotel* No. 2).

A German enlightenment intelligentsia does not find itself for the first time in such a twilight state, where the doors are ajar, the secrets aired, the masks half lowered-and where, in spite of this, dissatisfaction still will not be dispelled. In the introduction to Part V, I want to describe the "Weimar symptom" as the temporally closest historical mirror in which we can look at ourselves. In the Weimar Republic, the progressive intelligentsia had already reached a stage of reflection m which ideology critique as social game became possible and in which everyone

could lift the masks from everyone else's face. From this stage of development comes that experience of "total suspicion of ideology," which was discussed so much after the Second World War and which was spoken about so much because one would have really liked to have avoided the serious game of this critique.

If one slips into the umpire's black suit for a moment, one finds a clearly structured playing field with well-known players, established tactics, and typical fouls. Each side has developed certain, almost rigged, moves of critique; the religious criticize the areligious and vice versa, whereby each side has in its repertoire a metacritique of the ideology critique used by the opposing side; the moves in the dialogue between Marxists and liberals are to a large extent fixed, likewise those between Marxists and anarchists as well as those between anarchists and liberals. In this dialogue, the approximate penalty for the anarchists' fouls and the customary depression of the liberals and the Marxists after the length of the sentence is announced are known. One knows pretty well what natural scientists and representatives of the humanities will accuse each other of. Even the ideology critique used by militarists and pacifists on each other threatens to stagnate, at least as far as creative moves are concerned. For ideology critique, the Sartrean film title, *The Game Is Over,* itself almost half a century old, thus seems apposite.

Marxist Elegy: Althusser and the "Break" in Marx

But enlightenment is and remains unsatisfied. The second major factor in its self-denial is its disappointment with Marxism. A large part of the present-day cynical twilight has its origin in the experiences of what became of "orthodox" Marxist movements, in Leninism, Stalinism, with the Vietcong, in Cuba, and in the Khmer Rouge. In Marxism we experience the collapse of what promised to become "the rational Other." It was the development of Marxism that drove a wedge between enlightenment and the principle of being left-wing, and that wedge can never be taken out. The degeneration of Marxism into the legitimating ideology of hidden nationalist and open hegemonic and despotic systems has ruined the much-celebrated principle of hope and spoiled any pleasure in history, which is in any case difficult. The Left too is learning that one can no longer speak of communism as if none existed and as if one could ingenuously begin anew.

I have hinted at the peculiar double structure of Marxian knowledge in the fourth unmasking: It is a composite of emancipative and reifying theory. Reification *(Verdinglichung)* is a feature of any knowledge that strives to dominate things *(Dinge).* In this sense, Marxian knowledge was a knowledge of domination from the start. Long before Marxism was in power anywhere, theoretically or practically, it already behaved tactically in a perfectly realist-political style, as a hegemonic power even before it seized power. Marxism always dictated much too precisely the "correct line." It has always hot-temperedly annihilated every practical alternative. It has always said to the consciousness of the masses: I am

your master and liberator, you shall have no other liberator before me! Every liberty you take upon yourself from elsewhere is a petit-bourgeois deviation. In relation to other tendencies of enlightenment, Marxism also assumed the position that corresponds to that of a "reflecting surface." The intellectual student cadre of Marxism behaved like the censorship departments of bourgeois ministries for the interior and for the police, which studied everything produced by non-Marxist enlighteners and censored that which gave even a hint of promoting nonconformism.

Louis Althusser, earlier the theoretical head of the French Communist Party, created a disturbance more than a decade ago when he claimed to have found a "scientific, theoretical break" in Marx's work, a transition from a humanist ideology to an antihumanist structural science, which occurred between the early works and the works of maturity. This break, which Althusser, one of the best Marx experts of the present, had theoretically tracked down, seems to have been reincarnated in his own personality. In a way, he became sick because of what he saw. This break became his scientific, political, and existential locus. Because Althusser understood Marx sympathetically, the break in Marx's theory and existence impressed itself with an almost symbiotic depth on his theory and his life. One may venture to say that Althusser was wrecked by this conflict. For years, the contradiction between his philosophical competence and his loyalty to the Communist Party put a strain on his theoretical work as well as on his very existence. Married to a sociologist with "Bolshevist convictions," the conflict between orthodoxy and insight, between loyalty and freedom, pursued him even into his private life. Althusser recognized that, in a certain regard, Marx was no longer Marx and that a break, an ambiguity runs through his work that again and again makes its theoretical and practical validity problematic. In his loyalty to the truth *and to* the Communist Party, Althusser could no longer remain Althusser. Thus, the world-famous Marxist philosopher, in a "psychotic" attack of mental confusion, as they say, murdered his wife on 16 November 1980, perhaps in one of those desperate states in which one no longer knows where the other begins and the ego ends, where the boundaries betwen self-assertion and blind destruction dissolve.

Who is the murderer? Is it Althusser, the philosopher, who killed himself through his wife, the "dogmatist," in order to end the state of divided being that kept the philosopher from really living. Is it the murder of liberation by a prisoner who, as inner self-defense, killed what killed him? Is it a murder committed on Althusser, the famous man, who could destroy his own false identity, his own raise fame, his false signification only by plunging into the cynical sphere of criminality? As is known in psychology, there are suicides who are basically murderers of someone else; but there are also murderers who are basically suicides MI that they annihilate themselves in the other.

I will attempt to interpret the Althusserian "break" differently from the way in

which he himself interpreted it; in doing so I will pay attention to his example and the language of his act. I want to erect a monument to the philosopher by reconstructing his interpretation of Marx —the real break in Marx's theory. It is a monument for a murderer who, with confused violence, made visible a break that cannot be made to disappear by any act of will to mediate it, by any loyalty, or by any fear of separation.

In the Marxian oeuvre there is a rupture, not between an "ideological" and a "scientific" phase but between two modalities of reflection—a kynical-offensive, humanistic, emancipative reflection and an objectivistic, master-cynical reflection, which derides the striving for freedom of others in the style of a functionalist ideology critique. On the one hand, Marx is something of a rebel, on the other, something of a monarch; his left half resembles Danton, his right half is reminiscent of Bismarck. Like Hegel, who bore a similar double temperament of revolutionary and statesman within himself, Marx is one of the greatest dialectical thinkers because in him a fruitful inner polemic between at least two sparring thinker-souls was at work. Althusser's theoretical and existential tragedy starts from his partisanship for the "right" Marx, whom he discovered in his writings *after* the so-called *coupure epistemologique.* It is that "realist-political" Marx to whom Althusser attributes an absolutely "scientific" *Realtheorie* of capital, purified of all humanist sentimentalities; this is the sense of his "structural reading."

The work of the young Marx is rooted in his impressions of the Hegelian Logic, with which he went into battle against Hegelian idealism itself. Labor and praxis are the key concepts with which one finds one's way out of the casing of the system in a Hegelian way. They hold the hope of a new type of scientific approach, an empiricism that does not fall back behind the summits of philosophical reflection. With these concepts of labor and praxis, which combine in the lofty concept of politics, the left-Hegelian generation went beyond its master. From this spirit grew a powerful, pugnacious social critique that understood itself as "real humanism," as a turning to the "real human being."

The genius of the young Marx is shown in his not remaining content with a turning from the Hegelian "system" to a post-Hegelian humanist "critique." His sharpest polemic, therefore, was directed initially against his greatest temptation, which he shared with his generation of intelligentsia, namely, to persist in mere "critical critique." He sensed, and rationalized this perception, that a powerful critical theory must conquer the world of objects and reality itself in order to conceptualize them not only positively but also critically. This impulse was the reason, among other things, for his turning to political economy, which he took up in its naive, bourgeois form in order to surpass it with a reflected theory. The insipid phrase "learning process" fails to capture the drama of this creative reflection. Marx's thinking traveled the path from the Hegelian system to the critique of political economy, from a contemplative conception of theory to an understanding of theory as world-mover, from the sphere of ideas to the discovery of

labor, from abstract to concrete anthropology, from the illusion of nature to the history of the self-creation of humanity. As theory of social emancipation, Marxian knowledge could secure recognition only if, at the same time, it named a mass ego that would recognize the possibility of its freedom in the mirror of this theory. Here, Marx made himself into the historical-logical teacher and patron of the proletariat, which he identified as the predestined pupil of his theory. Through the proletariat, he wanted to become the great liberator by intervening in the course of European history as the teacher of the workers' movement.

Marx, however, stepped over dead bodies at least twice in a way that raises doubts as to his claim to teach and his realism. In Max Stirner and Bakunin I see the most intimate opponents of Marx because they were the theorists whom he could not simply surpass but whom, in order to exclude them, he had to practically annihilate with his critique. For both represented clear logical and objective alternatives to Marx's solutions, Stirner with his question whether and how one can break through "private" alienation, and Bakunin with his question whether and how a way can be found to a future "alienation-free society." Marx criticized both outright with a practically eviscerative hatred. The famous posthumous *German Ideology,* in large part directed against Stirner, contains the most intensive, detailed dispute Marx and Engels ever carried out with a thinker; and the annihilation of Bakunin was for Marx a preoccupation that stretched over many years. In Marx's hatred for both, in his scorn and his infinite contempt, an energy was at work that in no way can be explained by temperament and a feeling of competitiveness. Both showed him the systematic limits of his own approach — experiences that he could neither integrate nor simply disregard. Here, elementary and undeniable considerations came into play for which there was no place in Marx's plan and for which no place was to be made. Indeed, moreover, in Stirner, as in other representatives of critical critique and of the "Holy Family," Marx recognized something that was also present in himself, but whose right to exist he had to deny in order to become *this* Marx. With his right side, with his "realistic," statesmanlike, realist-political, and grand-theoretical side he suppressed the left, rebellious, vital, merely "criticistic" side, which, in the others, confronted him as a "position as such." In his critical annihilation of Stirner and Bakunin, he stepped over his own corpse, so to speak, over the concrete, existential, and in the last instance, "feminine" part of his intelligence. With this part he had revolted, critically and realistically-concretely, against Hegel; now he comes forward as master thinker against this side in its one-sidedness.

Stirner, like Marx, belongs to the "young Germany" generation that, in the climate of Hegelian philosophy, with its subversive training in reflection, had developed an extraordinary sense for everything that "takes place in the head" (Feuer-°ach, Bruno Bauer, Arnold Ruge, Moses Hess, Karl Griin, Heinrich Heine, among others).

Hegel's logic had conquered a space that is neither only being nor only con-

sciousness but contains "something of both"; this is expressed in the figure of thought "mediated immediacy." The magic word of the new logic is "mediation" *(Vermittlung).* We may translate it as "medium." Between being and consciousness is something in the middle that is both and in which the illusory antithesis of spirit and matter disappears; Marx transposed this vision to his theory of capital.

Let us say it concretely: In people's heads, historically formed programs of thinking and perception are at work that "mediate" everything that moves from the outside to the inside, and vice versa. The human cognitive apparatus is, in a way, an inner relay, a switching station, a transformer in which perceptual schemata, forms of judgment, and logical structures are programmed. Concrete consciousness is never immediate but is mediated by the "inner structure."

Reflection can assume basically three attitudes to this transmitted inner structure: It can try to escape the inner structure by "deprogramming itself; it can move within the inner structure as alertly as possible; and it can surrender itself as reflection by accepting the thesis that the structure is everything.

We now have to treat these three attitudes. Stirner's idea is simply to throw all alien programming out of one's head. After this total self-purification of the head, a naked, so to speak empty, reflected egoism should remain. If society really has trained "kinks" into my head, then my emancipation, thought through quickly, must presumably consist in my dismantling this alien programming. What is one's own in ego consciousness tries thus to rid itself with a snap of the fingers of what is alien. Stirner aims for a liberation from alienation in one's own interior. What is alien makes itself at home in me; I thus win "myself back by expelling what is alien. For several hundred pages one can read how Marx and Engels got worked up about this basically simple thought. They criticized this neoegotistical position in a devastating way—not morally but epistemologically: as a new self-delusion. They showed that the Stirner egos, those "individuals" who have based their position on nothing and view themselves as their only property, leap into a new naivete that betrays itself not least of all in its petit-bourgeois, boasting standpoint of "I am the be-all and end-all." The theoretical anarchism of the nineteenth century reached its first culmination in Stirner. Stirner effected an "existentialist" reduction to pure ego, but in doing this he very naively presupposed the ego as something that simply "exists." Once I have thrown out of "me" what is alien (society), Stirner believes, then a beautiful ego of my own remains that revels in the "possession" of itself. In radiant naivete, Stirner speaks of the "property" that individuals have in themselves. But one can only possess what exists in reality. Here, valid reflective experience and confused naivete stand next to each other, separated by a hairbreadth. Existentialist reflection on one's "own" consciousness is as realistic as the transition to the idea of self-property is false. Self-reflection leaves nothing objective that one could possess.

Marx and Engels dismantle this construction down to its atomic components. On wings of contempt, they prepare for themselves a feast of satirical reflection that, as alertly as possible, moves within the inner structure of consciousness. In the destruction of the Stirnerian illusion, however, they destroy more than the opponent; they destroy themselves in him. The way they do it, line for line, with intensive logic, meticulous philology, and a cruel pleasure in destruction—that is more than critique; it is the exorcism of a danger, the elimination of "another possibility." In fact, Marxism could never shake off the anarchist and existentialist shadow that fell on Stirner. Only with Sartre and Marcuse did this shadow again gain a more intensive life in Marxist-inspired thinking.

Marx does not belong to that sort of naive-genius that, like Schelling, "develops its thought in public." *The German Ideology* remained a private text. It was not published until 1932. Since then, Marx philologists have passed it around like a holy text. In the student movement, it was taken into battle as an antisubjectivistic weapon-by the "strict" Marxists against the spontaneists[5] and the academic flower children. In fact, however, there was a good reason for Marx and Engels's discretion regarding their most intensive work in ideology critique. *The German Ideology* lets the cat out of the bag. One can learn from it that, on the question of subjectivity, Marx and Stirner went off in symmetrically false directions. Both know that human consciousness, as one initially finds it, is "alienated" and must be "appropriated" through patient reflection. Both think in the dialectic of the authentic and the alien; however, both fail to find the middle ground and plunge into exclusive alternative positions. Stirner chose the right, Marx the left path. Stirner believes he can overcome the expropriation of oneself *(Enteignung)* through an individualist act of purification. In his "adulthood," individuals learn how to expel their inner alien programming so that they have it and do not have it at the same time and thus "keep" it as its free masters and possessors. By surrendering thoughts and things as their own, they are no longer under their power. In Stirner's thinking, realistic self-reflection and ideological ego-cult flow without clear boundaries into one another. What can be a productive experience of inner distancing from conditioning has become in Stirnerism dogmatically ossified to a new "short-circuited thinking."

Marx's investigation of class consciousnesses is at its starting point equally realistic. Class consciousnesses, worldviews, and ideologies can indeed be understood as "programming"; they are mediations, formed and forming schemata °f consciousness, results in a world-historical process of the self-formation of all intellect. This way of seeing opens a path to a fruitful analysis of patterns in consciousness that can become free of the curse of naive idealism. With their "in the last instance" *dogmatic* materialism, however, Marx and Engels deviate from this approach again. They dissolve subjectivity in the historical process. This comes ut in the harshness and contempt with which Marx treats his "existential" oppo-ᵉnts. In this brutality, the other, master form of reflection begins to stir. Where

The trial against the "Industry Party" in Moscow.

Stirner brought his rebellious, protesting ego out into the public arena, Marxism produced revolutionaries who, with the feeling of supreme slyness and an artful sense for reality, use themselves as means in the historical process. In the clinch with Stirner's *false individual,* the idea of the *false Nobody* arises in Marx's theory- those revolutionaries who themselves will become only grim instruments of the fetish: revolution. That is the break Althusser has discerned in the Marxian oeuvre after *The German Ideology.* Early on, at the latest since the polemic against Stirner, there begins a tendency in Marx's thinking to chain oneself, almost like Jesuits of the revolution, to the process of historical development, in the belief of being able not only to recognize the development but also to direct it. Marx's theory sets its hope on domination by conceiving of the subject of the theory as a function of development. Through self-reification it believes it can achieve a mastery of history. By making itself into an instrument of a purported future, it believes it can make the future into its own tool.

This schizoid logic of master's cynicism has no historical parallel. Only an extremely highly developed consciousness can deceive itself in such a way. The only thinker whose self-reflection reached similar heights of artful self-denial was Friedrich Nietzsche, whose historical influence is well known.

The philosophically significant pinnacle of this artful self-reification was reached by those courgeous old Communists who, in the Moscow Show Trials, in the face of certain death, falsely confessed to having conspired against "the revolution," a confession that was not merely extorted but possessed an aspect of freedom insofar as the accused, with their confessions, wanted to save the revolution from greater damage than had already been done to it by accusation and exe-

cution. The subtlety of this doubling of murder by the judiciary with suicide can-not be grasped with conventional conceptions of "tragedy." They are murders in which it is clear only in the biological sense who is in fact killing whom. They are murders and suicides within a schizophrenic structure, where the ego that kills can no longer be clearly distinguished from the ego that is killed. Only one thing is certain: In the end the corpses of intelligent human beings are lying on the ground, strangled, shot, beaten. The case of Althusser is probably, among other things, a supplement to the psychopathology of Marxism. It takes place on an in-telligence level of murderous violence on which the revolution devours its cleverest children, not to mention the millions who lost their lives without know-ing exactly what they had to do with this revolution, except perhaps that what was killing them could not be quite the truth.

The young Marx expressed the logical root of these inversions in 1843 in a fully alert sentence that was written before that time of callousness, although it already betrayed a cynical tendency: " . . . communism has seen other socialist doctrines rise up against it not by accident but because it itself is only a particular, one-sided realization of the socialist principle." (Letters from the *Deutsch-Franzosischen Jahrbuchern,* Marx to Ruge, September 1843). The word "one-sided" shows the elevated irony of Marxism at play. Those who say "one-sided" know that there are, and must be, at least two sides. Those who then decide for one side deceive themselves and others. Only a knowledge that is consumed by an enormous will to power can want to present conscious one-sidedness as the truth. In doing so, it profoundly denies its own pathos for genuine cognition. Thus, communism is that knowledge of power that tells it all before it has taken over the reins. This, and only this, constitutes, on a philosophical level, its affinity to fascism.

The Feeling toward Life in Twilight

The self-denial of enlightenment is a result of the most recent history, which has ground up all nice illusions of a "rational Other." Enlightenment must inevitably be led astray by the principle of being Left as long as this is represented in reality by despotic systems. Fundamental to enlightenment is that it prefers the principle of freedom to that of equality. It cannot pretend not to see that socialism, to which its sympathies belong, has lost its innocence almost as much as that against which •t was originally directed. "Real existing socialism," as it exists today, in a way makes the question of Left and Right superfluous. For it distinguishes itself from capitalism presumably in recognizable forms that may have their pros and cons. ᴮᵘt it shares with capitalism, as with any political-economic order, the imprint ᵒʳ hard reality, which can never be Left or Right in and of itself but, as something hat is also made by us, is always how it simply is. Only morality can take a stance toward realities that is Left or Right. Reality, insofar as it concerns us, is for us

welcome or hated, bearable or unbearable. And consciousness faced with what is given, has only the choice of recognizing it or not. This is what, crudely enough, the critique of cynical reason makes clear. The outlook for understanding the significance of the current demoralization from this vantage point does not remain primitive. Only morality is prone to demoralization, only an awakening waits for illusions. The question is whether we, in this demoralization, come closer to the truth.

We have, in fact, plunged into a twilight of a peculiar existential disorientation. The feeling toward life in the present-day intelligentsia is that of people who cannot grasp the morality of immorality because then everything would be "far too simple." For that reason, too, deep down no one knows how things should go from here.

In the cynical twilight of a disbelieving enlightenment, a peculiar feeling of timelessness arises that is hectic and perplexed, enterprising and discouraged, caught in the middle of everything, alienated from history, unaccustomed to any optimism about the future. Tomorrow assumes the dual character of inconsequence and probable catastrophe; somewhere in between, a small hope of getting through lingers. The past either becomes an academic spoiled child or is privatized together with culture and history and shrunk down at the flea market to curious miniatures of those things that once were. The most interesting things are still biographies from the past and lost kings—particularly the pharaohs, with whose eternal life as the comfortable dead we can identify.

Against the principle of hope, the principle of life in the here and now rises up. On the way to work one hums, "Don't wait for better times" (Wolf Biermann; —Trans.) or "There are days when I wish I were my dog." In alternative bars one sees posters that say: *Due to lack of interest, the future has been canceled.* Next to it one reads: *We are the people whom our parents always warned us about.* The late and cynical feeling of the times is that of the trip and of mundane everyday life, stretched between irritable realism and incredulous daydreams, present and absent, cool or meditative, down to earth or far out, depending entirely on the mood. Some are ambitious, and others just hang around. More than ever, we wait for something corresponding to that feeling of better days, that something has to happen. And more than a few want to add: It doesn't matter what. We feel catastrophic and catastrophile, bittersweet and private, if it is at all possible to keep the nearby area free from the worst. Good films are important. Yet it is not easy to imitate good examples because every case is different, especially one's own. We buy books for each other and are a little astonished when the pope comes to Germany, that he still exists at all. We do our work and say to ourselves, it would be better to get really involved. We live from day to day, from vacation to vacation, from news show to news show, from problem to problem, from orgasm to orgasm, in private turbulences and medium-term

affairs, tense, relaxed. With some things we feel dismay but with most things we can't really give a damn.

The newspapers write that we have to get ready to struggle for survival again, to tighten our belts, to lower our sights, and the ecologists say the same thing. Privileged society, to hell with it! In weak moments we donate something for Eritrea or for a ship for Vietnam, but we don't go there. We would still like to see a lot of the world and in general *"to live a whole lot more."* We ask ourselves what to do next and what will happen next. In the *feuilleton* of the *Zeit,* the culture critics argue about the right way to be pessimistic. One emigrant from the East says to the other: "For a long time I've seen things as bleakly as you. But in spite of it all and everything. Where would we be if everybody despaired?" And the other says: "The time for 'in spite of is over."

Some have been trying for a long time to bring their psychoanalysis to a close, and others have been asking themselves for a long time if they can justify not yet having begun analysis. But you also have to think about what it costs and how much the insurance pays, and whether afterward you can still get on as well as you think, in the middle of your misery, you should be able to get on, because you are not sure at the beginning whether you want to go on as you did before. Oh, and another thing: It turns out that good cooking is not a betrayal and that this stupid stuff about consumption and having a car is not really so . . .

In such a time of open secrets, where a crazy small-scale economy splits thinking, where so-called society dissolves into hundreds of thousands of strands of planning and improvisation that mutually ignore one another but are related through all kinds of absurdities —in such a time it cannot do enlightenment, or what is left of it, any harm to reflect critically on its foundations. There have been impressive examples of such critical reflection for a long time. For a long time, the "public sphere" was one of the strongest themes of a renewed enlightenment, especially in connection with the word "experience" and even more so with "life context" *(Lebenszusammenhang),* which was so pleasant to write because you got the feeling that somehow or other life forms contexts, and context is like a promise of meaning.

However, in the meantime, the intellectual hunting fever for the "life context" has faded because this life context represents a being at least as rare as the *Wolpertinger,* a hare with antlers that lives in Bavaria and that Bavarian practical jokers used to hunt when vacationers from Prussia had become much too cocky and needed to be taught a lesson. But now that the Prussians stay away and build their own "life context" behind self-activating shooting devices,[6] hunting for *Wolpertinger,* the special enlightenment for sly Prussians, has slackened off just as much as enlightenment in general and enlightenment for non-Prussians.

What next? In the fifth preliminary reflection, which introduces the actual investigation of the foundations of cynical reason, I want to try to name a source °f enlightenment in which the secret of its vitality is hidden: cheekiness *{Freeh-*

heit, a word whose meaning lies somewhere between cheekiness and impudence-Trans.)-

Notes

1. "It is misspent effort to try to enlighten humankind. One has to be content with being wise oneself, if one can, but leave the mob to error and strive only to keep it from crimes that disturb the social order" (Frederick II of Prussia in a letter to dAlembert, 1770).

2. Said less ceremoniously, in the great pell-mell, in the ambivalence of the factual.

3. Besides this I discuss the historical discrediting of the Marxist alternative ("Marxist Elegy," this chapter) and the clouding over of the sociopsychological atmosphere as a whole (chapter 5, section entitled "Unashamed Happiness").

4. See also Peter Jirak, "Zukunft als Provinz," *Frankfurter Hefte,* vol. 33 (April 4, 1978).

5. [The "Spontis" were the advocates of spontaneity in the West German student movement.-Trans.]

6. [Prussia lies in present-day East Germany. —Trans. 1

Chapter 5
"In Search of Lost Cheekiness"

A timid arse seldom lets go with a joyful fart.
Lutheran saying

The objection, the side leap, light-hearted mistrust,
the pleasure in mockery are signs of health: Everything
that is unqualified belongs to pathology.
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

They have laid their hands on my entire life;
so let it stand up and confront them. . .
Danton, before sentence is passed on him

Greek Philosophy of Cheekiness: Kynicism

Ancient kynicism, at least in its Greek origins, is in principle cheeky. In its cheek-
iness lies a method worthy of discovery. This first really "dialectical material-
ism," which was also an *existentialism,* is viewed unjustly, beside the great sys-
tems in Greek philosophy —Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoa—as a mere game of
satyrs, as a half-jovial, half-dirty episode, and is passed over. In *kynismos* a kind
of argumentation was discovered that, to the present day, respectable thinking
does not know how to deal with. Is it not crude and grotesque to pick one's nose
while Socrates exorcises his demon and speaks of the divine soul? Can it be called
anything other than vulgar when Diogenes lets a fart fly against the Platonic the-
ory of ideas-or is fartiness itself one of the ideas God discharged from his medi-
tation on the genesis of the cosmos? And what is it supposed to mean when this
philosophizing town bum answers Plato's subtle theory of eros by masturbating
in public?

To understand these apparently irrelevantly provocative gestures, it is worth
reflecting on a principle that called into being the doctrines of wisdom and that
was regarded by the ancient world as a truism, before modern developments
eradicated it. For the philosopher, the human being who exemplifies the love of
truth and *conscious* living, life and doctrine must be in harmony. The core of ev-
ery doctrine is what its followers embody of it. This can be misunderstood in an
idealistic way as if it were philosophy's innermost aim to get people to chase after
unattainable ideals. But if philosophers are called on to live what they say, their

task in a critical sense is much more: to say what they live. Since time im-memorial, every ideality must be materialized and every materiality idealized in order to be real *for us,* as beings in the middle. A separation of person and thing, theory and praxis at this elementary level cannot be taken into consideration at all-except perhaps as a sign of a corruption of truth. To embody a doctrine means to make oneself into its medium. This is the opposite of what is demanded in the moralistic plea for behavior guided strictly by ideals. By paying attention to what can be embodied, we remain protected from moral demagogy and from the terror of radical abstractions that cannot be lived out. (The question is not what is virtue without terror but what is terror other than consistent idealism.)

The appearance of Diogenes marks the most dramatic moment in the process of truth of early European philosophy: Whereas "high theory" from Plato on ir-revocably cuts off the threads to material embodiment in order instead to draw the threads of argumentation all the more tightly together into a logical fabric, there emerges a subversive variant of *low theory* that pantomimically and grotesquely carries practical embodiment to an extreme. The process of truth splits into a discursive phalanx of grand theory and a satirical-literary troupe of skirmishers. With Diogenes, the resistance against the rigged game of "discourse" begins in European philosophy. Desperately funny, he resists the "linguistifica-tion" of the cosmic universalism that called the philosopher to this occupation. Whether monologic or dialogic "theory," in both, Diogenes smells the swindle of idealistic abstractions and the schizoid staleness of a thinking limited to the head. Thus he creates, as the last archaic Sophist and the first in the tradition of satirical resistance, an uncivil enlightenment. He starts the *non-Platonic dia-logue.* Here, Apollo, the god of illumination, shows his other face, which escaped Nietzsche: as thinking satyr, oppressor, comedian. The deadly arrows of truth rain down on the places where lies lull themselves into security behind authori-ties. "Low theory" here for the first time seals a pact with poverty and satire.

From this perspective, the significance of cheekiness is easily shown. Since philosophy can only hypocritically live out what it says, it takes cheek to say what is lived. In a culture in which hardened idealisms make lies into a form of living, the process of truth depends on whether people can be found who are aggressive and free ("shameless") enough to speak the truth. Those who rule lose their real self-confidence to the fools, clowns, and kynics; for this reason, an anecdote has Alexander the Great say that he would like to be Diogenes if he were not Alex-ander. If he were not the fool of his political ambition, he would have to play the fool in order to speak the truth to people, and to himself. (And when the powerful begin, for their part, to think kynically, when they know the truth about them-selves and, in spite of this, "go on as before," then they completely fulfill the *mod-ern* definition of cynicism.)

By the way, only in the last few centuries has the word "cheeky" *(frech)* gained a negative connotation. Initially, as for example in Old High German, it meant

a productive aggressivity, letting fly at the enemy: "brave, bold, lively, plucky, untamed, ardent." The devitalization of a culture is mirrored in the history of this word. Those who are still cheeky today were not affected by the cooling off of the materialist heat as much as those who are inconvenienced by brazen people would like. The prototype of the cheeky is the Jewish David, who teases Goliath, "Come here, so I can hit you better." He shows that the head has not only ears to hear and obey but also a brow with which to menacingly defy the stronger: rebellion, affront, effrontery.

Greek kynicism discovers the animal body in the human and its gestures as arguments; it develops a pantomimic materialism. Diogenes refutes the language of philosophers with that of the clown: "When Plato put forward the definition of the human as a featherless biped and was applauded for it, he tore the feathers from a rooster and brought it into Plato's school saying, 'That is Plato's human'; as a result, the phrase was added: 'with flattened nails' " *(Diogenes Laertius,* vol. VI, p. 40). That—and not Aristotelianism —is the real-philosophical antithesis to Socrates and Plato. Plato and Aristotle are both master-thinkers, even if a spark of Socrates' plebeian street philosophy is still present in the Platonic ironies and dialectic mannerisms. Diogenes and his followers countered this with an essentially plebeian reflection. Only the theory of this cheekiness can open up access to a political history of combative reflections. This makes the history of philosophy possible as dialectical social history: It is the history of the embodiment and the splitting of consciousness.

Since, however, kynicism has made speaking the truth dependent on the factors of courage, cheekiness, and risk, the process of truth gets caught in a previously unknown moral tension; I call it the *dialectic of disinhibition.* Those who take the liberty of confronting prevailing lies provoke a climate of satirical loosening up in which the powerful, together with their ideologists of domination, let go affectively —precisely under the onslaught of the critical affront by kynics. But while kynics support their "cheekiness" with a life of ascetic integrity, they are answered, from the side of the attacked, by an idealism with a disinhibition that is disguised as outrage and that, in the most extreme case, can go as far as extermination. An essential aspect of power is that it only likes to laugh at its own jokes.

Pissing Against the Idealist Wind

eekiness ^{nas}> ^m principle, two positions, namely, above and below, egemonic power and oppositional power, expressed in the language of the Mid-^e Ages: master and serf. Ancient kynicism begins the process of "naked arguments" from the opposition, carried by the power that comes from below. The yi'c farts, shits, pisses, masturbates on the street, before the eyes of the Athe-^{ian} market. He shows contempt for fame, ridicules the architecture, refuses re-

spect, parodies the stories of gods and heroes, eats raw meat and vegetables, lies in the sun, fools around with the whores and says to Alexander the Great that he should get out of his sun.[1] What is this supposed to mean?

Kynicism is a first reply to Athenian hegemonic idealism that goes beyond theoretical repudiation. It does not speak against idealism, it lives against it. Diogenes may well be a figure whose public appearance can be understood in terms of the competition with Socrates; his bizarre behavior possibly signifies attempts to outdo the cunning dialectician with comedy. But this is not enough: kynicism gives a new twist to the question of how to *say* the truth.

The academic conversation among philosophers does not concede the materialist position a fitting place —indeed, it cannot because the conversation itself presupposes something like an idealist agreement. An existential materialist feels misunderstood from the start in a place where people only talk. In the dialogue of heads, only head theories will ever come up, and a head dialectics will easily rise above the clash of an idealism with a head materialism. Socrates copes quite well with the Sophists and the theoretical materialists if he can entice them into a conversation in which he, as a master of refutation, is undefeatable. However, neither Socrates nor Plato can deal with Diogenes — for he talks with them "differently too," in a dialogue of flesh and blood. Thus, for Plato there remained no alternative but to slander his weird and unwieldy opponent. He called him a "Socrates gone mad" (Socrates *mainoumenos).* The phrase is intended as an annihilation, but it is the highest recognition. Against his will, Plato places the rival on the same level as Socrates, the greatest dialectician. Plato's hint is valuable. It makes it clear that with Diogenes something unsettling but compelling had happened with philosophy. In the dog philosophy of the kynic *(kyon,* dog in Greek; — Trans.), a materialist position appears that is clearly a match for the idealist dialectic. It possesses the wisdom of original philosophy, the realism of a fundamental materialist stance, and the serenity of an ironic religiosity. For all his crassness, Diogenes is not cramped in opposition or fixated on contradiction. His life is marked by a humorous self-certainty characteristic only of great spirits.[2]

In idealism, which justifies social and world orders, the ideas stand at the top and gleam in the light of attentiveness; matter is below, a mere reflection of the idea, a shadow, an impurity. How can living matter defend itself against this degradation? It is excluded from academic dialogue, admitted there only as theme, not as an existent. What can be done? The material, the alert body, begins to actively demonstrate its sovereignty. The excluded lower element goes to the marketplace and demonstratively challenges the higher element. Feces, urine, sperm! "Vegetate" like a dog, but live, laugh, and take care to give the impression that behind all this lies not confusion but clear reflection.

Now, it could be objected that these animal matters are everyday private experiences with the body and do not warrant a public spectacle. That may be, but
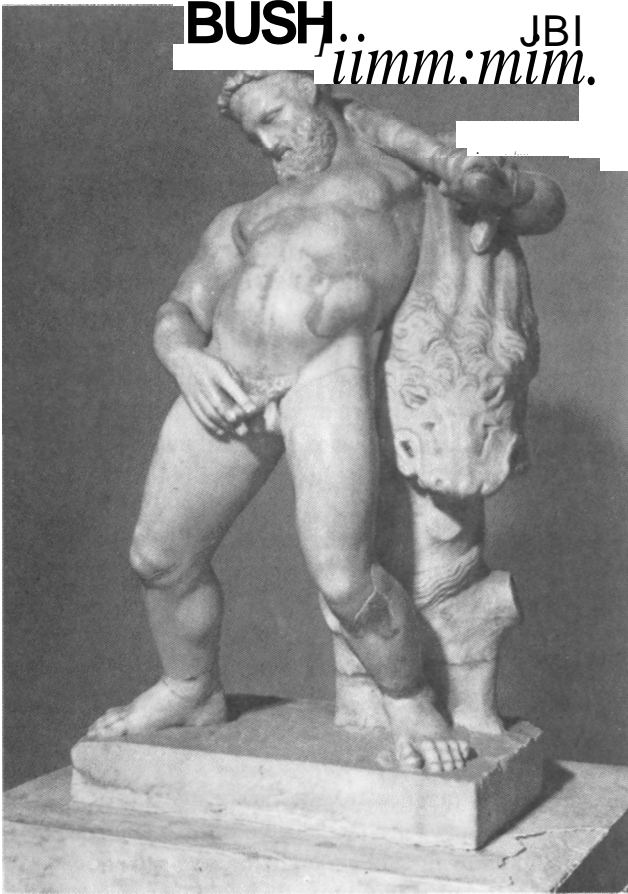
Hercules pissing.

it misses the point. This "dirty" materialism is an answer not only to an exagger-
ated idealism of power that undervalues the rights of the concrete. The animalities
are for the kynic a part of his way of presenting himself, as well as a form of ar-
gumentation. Its core is existentialism. The kynic, as a dialectical materialist, has
to challenge the public sphere because it is the only space in which the overcom-
ing of idealist arrogance can be meaningfully demonstrated. Spirited materialism
is not satisfied with words but proceeds to a material argumentation that rehabili-
tates the body. Certainly, ideas are enthroned in the academy, and urine drips dis-
creetly into the latrine. But urine in the academy! That would be the total dialecti-
cal tension, the art of pissing against the idealist wind.

To take what is base, separated, and private out onto the street is subversive.

This is also, as we will see, the cultural strategy of the bourgeoisie, which achieved cultural hegemony not only through the development of commodity economy, science, and technology, but also through a publicizing of the private—secretly inspired by materialism—of its inner world of love, feeling, body, with all their sensual and moral complications. For over two hundred years we have been observing a permanent, though always contested, movement of the private into the public sphere. Sexual experiences play a key role in this because the dialectic of the splitting off into privacy and the return to the public realm is forced on them with exemplary violence. Bourgeois culture, oriented toward reality, cannot help taking up the thread of the *Icynical cultural revolution.* Today we are beginning to understand that again. Willy Hochkeppel has recently sketched the parallels between ancient kynicism and the modern hippie and alternative movement.[3] Neokynical elements have influenced bourgeois consciousness of private life and existence since at least the eighteenth century. In them, a reserve of the bourgeois feeling toward life is articulated against politics-as an abstract form of life forced into false heights. For politics —of yesteryear, and more than ever, of today — is just as the kynics of the degenerating Greek city-states experienced it: a threatening coercive relation between human beings, a sphere of dubious careers and questionable ambitions, a mechanism of alienation, the level of war and social injustice—in brief, a hell that imposes on us the existence of Others above us who are capable of violence.

The public sphere of the Athenian market was electrified by the kynical offensive. Although Diogenes did not accept pupils in the usual sense, his didactic impulse, even if it was subliminal,[4] became one of the most powerful in the history of spirit.

When Diogenes urinates and masturbates in the marketplace, he does both-because he does them publicly —in a model situation. To publicize something implies the unified act of showing and generalizing (the semantic system of art is based on this).[5] The philosopher thus gives the small man in the market the same rights to an unashamed experience of the corporeal that does well to defy all discrimination. Ethical living may be good, but naturalness is good too. That is all kynical scandal says. Because the teaching explicates life, the kynic had to take oppressed sensuality out into the market. Look, how this wise man, before whom Alexander the Great stood in admiration, enjoys himself with his own organ! And he shits in front of everybody. So that can't be all that bad. Here begins a laughter containing philosophical truth, which we must call to mind again if only because today everything is bent on making us forget how to laugh.

Later philosophies, at first the Christian, the post-Christian still more, suspend the rule of embodiment step by step. Finally, intellectuals expressly confessed the "nonidentity" of life and insight, most pointedly Adorno, who categorically distinguished the validity of intellectual-spiritual *(geistig)* structures from the notorious "wretchedness" of the bearers of "spirit." That the destruction of the principle

₀f embodiment is an achievement of Christian-bourgeois-capitalist schizophre-nias does not have to be demonstrated at length. The principle of embodiment cannot be upheld anymore by modern intellectuals, for reasons of cultural consti-tution. An intelligentsia that has its social role to play must become, whether it is conscious of it or not, a pilot group for existential strife. Modern philosophers, insofar as they still lay claim to this name, have transformed themselves into schizoid brain-animals —even when they turn their theoretical attention toward negativity, the excluded, the downtrodden, and the conquered.

Bourgeois Neokynicism: The Arts

That the impulse toward sensual embodiment has not been fully eradicated is es-sentially an achievement of bourgeois art (in part also of social rebellion, which, however, does not concern us here). The bourgeois arts have a philosophical sig-nificance in that they call a neokynical current to life, although not under this name. Nevertheless, when they speak of "Nature" and genius, truth, life, expres-sion, etc., that is the kynical impulse at play. It exploits the license provided by art to express the demand for existential undividedness. The Prometheus of the effusive young Goethe could be the new guiding symbol of the impulse. Like him, art tries to create human beings in the image of whole, embodied beings who laugh and cry, enjoy themselves and are glad, and who don't give a damn about gods and laws. The young Goethe, more than any other, sensed the vital secret of bourgeois neokynicism and lived it out as art. Nature, Nature! is the battle cry of sensual enlightenment that Goethe sounded in his fascinatingly moody, aggres-sive, and-in the truest sense of the word-cheeky speech on Shakespeare Day, 1771.

Give me air, so that I can speak!

And how does our century have the cheek to judge nature. How could we know her, we who, from our youth, feel in ourselves and see in others everything laced up and affected? And now in conclusion, al-though I have not yet begun! What the noble philosophers have said about the world is also true of Shakespeare: What we call evil is only the other side of good; it is necessary for the existence of the good and belongs to the whole just as the Torrid Zone must burn and Lapland must freeze so that there may be a temperate zone. He leads us through the whole world, but we coddled and inexperienced human beings scream every time we see a grasshopper: Lord, he's going to eat us!

Gentlemen, rise up! Trumpet all the noble souls out of the Elysium of so-called good taste where they, drowsy and in dull twilight, are half there and half not; they have passions in the heart but no marrow in the bone. And because they are not tired enough to rest and yet are too

lazy to be active, their shadow life lazes and yawns away between myr-
tle and laurel bushes.

In the Sturm und Drang of early bourgeois art, human beings not of the nobility
announce —probably for the first time since antiquity —their claim to a full life,
to the embodiment of their sensuousness, to undividedness. A stormy, aesthetic
kynicism vents itself. It is a young, twenty-two-year-old man who attacks in an
annihilatingly joyful way the rococo culture with its limp charm of inauthenticity,
its cunning schizophrenias, and its moribund, manneristic theater. Goethe's
speech reads like a manifesto for bourgeois neokynicism. It explodes everything
that is mere morality by referring to the grand amoralism of nature; in nature,
so-called evil also plays a positive role. (In chapter 7, "The Cabinet of Cynics,"
I will interpret Goethe's Mephistopheles in a new light—as a perplexed figure
created from the substance of kynical-cynical experience.)

Bourgeois art was, of course, condemned to represent sensuous totality in
fiction, if at all. Because of this weakness, bourgeois antibourgeois repeatedly re-
newed the attack of neokynicism against the splitting of and the defamation of the
sensual. They wanted to embody the rights to existence of the excluded low ele-
ments with body and soul —beyond the boundaries of illusion. That is one of the
reasons why art has its eye on "life" so much; it is its kynical impulse that wants
to jump out of fiction into reality. Aesthetic amoralism is only a prelude to life
demanding its sensual rights practically. We can conclude that in a sensually
balanced culture, art as a whole would be "less important," less lofty, and less
laden with philosophical motifs. Perhaps we are on the way to this kind of art.

During their great period, bourgeois arts were influenced by an enormous hun-
ger for negativity, not least of all because the secret of vitality pulsates in this
negativity. Again and again, liberating negativisms have broken through the
propensity for harmonious stylization. A sensual realism rose up repeatedly
against the demand for harmony. It marks the philosophical significance of bour-
geois art; it makes this art into a vehicle for the Great Dialectic. Heights that are
not measured against great depths are shallow; the sublime that is not brought
down to earth by the comical becomes cramped. The philosophically significant
bourgeois schools of art—apart from a few classicistic-harmonious and aes-
theticistic, "cold" tendencies —are schools of negation, universalisms, realisms,
naturalisms, expressionisms, schools of nakedness, of the scream, and of ex-
posure. The sensual verity of the arts has offered refuge to the "whole truth." The
arts have remained a sphere where, in principle, one could "know both" —as Pas-
cal had demanded of insight into the *condition humaine* that it know both, the
great and the small, the angelic and the satanic, the high and the low. Great art
sought a whole made of extremes and not a tensionless midpoint.

The limits of art, bourgeois as well as socialist, consist in the bounds set to
its "realization." It is entangled from the start in the schizoid process of civiliza-

tion. Society thus cultivates an ambivalent relation to the arts; they fulfill needs, it is true, but they should not "go too far." The principle of harmony has tried since time immemorial to keep kynicism in check. The truths of art have to be fenced in if they are not to become damaging to the mentality of "useful members of society." In these restrictions it is difficult to say what is conscious politics and what is spontaneous regulation of the relation between art and society. The fact is, however, that the boundary between art and life is almost never significantly obliterated. The Bohemians, a recent social phenomenon apart from all this, always remained a minimal group even if at certain times they enjoyed a maximum of attention.

Two speculative rules of social art-ecology thus can be formulated: the genuine, the lively, which exists as "original," is limited by its rarity; the impulses these originals (works and individuals) emit to the masses become restricted through fictionalization. What is genuine remains rare; imitations as well as mere "curiosities" are innocuous anyway and are released for a mass market.

Art cries for life as soon as the kynical impulse is at play within it. Wherever aesthetic techniques are involved, in the press as well as the electronic media, in advertising as well as commodity aesthetics, this call is brought to the masses in its fictionally restricted form. Here art still appears as something pleasant, here there is still something beautiful at low prices. By contrast, for more than a hundred years, "high art" has been retreating into the difficult, the artistic, and the painful, into refined ugliness, artful brutalities, and calculated incomprehensibility, into the tragically complex and the bewilderingly capricious.

Aesthetic modernity gives us an art of poisoned confectionery. It can perhaps be viewed in aroused, cold connoisseurship but it cannot be consumed without risking an upset stomach. So much fresh negativity is spewed out by the modern arts that the thought of an "enjoyment of art" vanishes. Only in snobbery, for the elite of connoisseurs and for fetishists, does the pleasure in unenjoyability flourish, which goes back to the dandyism of the nineteenth century and which today reemerges in the self-stylizations of cliques of youth as chic and revolting.

Whatever wants to live demands more than beautiful illusion. Ironically, of all people, Adorno, one of the greatest theoreticians of modern aesthetics, fell P^{r}ey to the neokynical impulse. Does the reader remember the episode in the lecture hall described in the Preface? The disturbance of the lecture and the female students' naked breasts? Now, their baring was no run-of-the-mill erotic-cheeky argument with female skin. They were, almost in the ancient sense, kynically ^{ar}ed bodies, bodies as arguments, bodies as weapons. Their showing them-•eives, independently of the private motives of the demonstrators, was an anitneoretical action. In some sort of confused sense, they may have understood ^{eir} act as a "praxis of social change," in any case, as something more than lec-^{Ur}es and philosophical seminars. Adorno, in a tragic but understandable way, ^{a}d slipped into the position of the idealistic Socrates, and the women into the

position of the unruly Diogenes. Against the most insightful theory these-it is to be hoped —intelligent bodies willfully positioned themselves.

Cynicism as Cheekiness That Has Changed Sides

Cheekiness from below is effective when it expresses real energies as it advances. It must consciously embody its power and alertly create a reality that can at most be resisted but not denied. When the dissatisfied "serf'jokingly picks up his master in his arms, he gives a foretaste of the violence his revolt would have. A cheeky neckline, which reveals naked female skin, plays with the power that the rare exerts over the commonplace. In the old sexual economy, the strength of the weaker sex lay in the deficiency that it involuntarily-voluntarily imposed on the needs of the "stronger" sex. Finally, religious cheekiness, blasphemy, causes pious seriousness to collapse when the physiologically irresistible energy of laughter attacks it.

Certain small phrases irrefutably advance cheeky realism from below against the "law," two sets of two words, each of which deflates false pretensions: So What? and Why Not? With a persistent So What? many young people have driven their incorrigible parents enlighteningly to frustration. Children's play groups are often good schools for enlightenment because they train the saying of So What? incidentally in a natural way. That would be nothing other than the practice the fully socialized find so difficult: to say No always at the right moment.[6] The fully developed ability to say No is also the only valid background for Yes, and only through both does real freedom being to take form.

That which has power can take liberties. Power, however, is above *and* below, of course, in distorted proportions; the serf is not nothing and the masters are not everything; subjugation is just as real as domination. The power of the underdog comes into its own individually as that cheekiness that constitutes the core of power in kynicism. With it, those who are disadvantaged can anticipate their own sovereignty. A second level on which the underdogs try out possibilities of willfulness is subversion, willful praxis in the sense of semiliberties that stretch the law. We probably only seldomly make clear to ourselves how immense the factor of subversion in our society can be—a world in shadows, full of secretive cheekiness and realisms of all kinds, full of resistances, discharges, machinations, and a sense for one's own advantage. Half of normality consists of microscopic deviations from the norms. This field of willfulness, of the little tricks in life, and of black morality is almost just as unresearched as, on the other side, the expansion of corruption. Both are, in the nature of things, scarcely accessible. We know about them but do not speak about them.

The freedom of the hegemonic powers is also a double freedom. In the first place, it comprises the privileges and liberties of masters that are connected with hegemonic power itself. There is no cheekiness involved in taking such liberties

> # Verurteilt!
>
> **Bebel:** Der Lehrer fragte den Kleinen, warum er denn in den Himmel wolle, und was war die Antwort? **Da hätte ich keinen Hunger mehr!** Giebt es etwas Empörenderes, giebt es etwas Aufreizenderes gegen die heutige Gesellschaftsordnung, als diese Aeußerung des Kindes? . . .
>
> **Graf v. Arnim:** **Der Vater hat vielleicht alles vertrunken!** (Stürmische Pfui = Rufe bei den Socialdemokraten.)
>
> **Bebel:** Das ist eine Infamie! Der Herr lacht, das ist eine Gemütsroheit! (Stürmische Zu = stimmung links. Lärm rechts.)

Cynicism as rulers' joke: "Condemned!"

BEBEL: The teacher asked the small boy why he wanted to go to heaven, and what was the answer? *There I wouldn't be hungry anymore!* Is there anything more outrageous, is there anything that incites more against today's social order than the statement of this child?

LORD v. ARNIM: *Perhaps the father had drunk everything!* (Stormy boos from the Social Democrats.)

BEBEL: That is an infamy! The gentleman laughs, that is a coarseness of temperament! (Stormy approval to the left. Noise to the right.)

but there is tact in not being ostentatious in enjoying them. Most of the old seigneurs, for example, did not exercise the right of sexual feudalism, the "right to the first night" with the brides of serfs, and the high life of today's superrich is discreetly concealed behind middle-class facades, or in closed milieus.

But also for the powerful there is something that amounts to semiliberties. As a rule, they allow themselves such liberties only under pressure because, in so doing, they betray themselves to opposing consciousness. The consciousness of the master knows its own specific cheekiness: master cynicism in the modern sense of the word, as distinct from the kynical offensive. Ancient kynicism, primary and pugnacious kynicism, was a plebeian antithesis to idealism. Modern cynicism, by contrast, is the masters' antithesis to their own idealism as ideology and as masquerade. The cynical master lifts the mask, smiles at his weak adversary, and suppresses him. *C'est la vie. Noblesse oblige.* Order must prevail. The force of circumstances often exceeds the insight of those concerned, is that not so? Coercion by power, the compulsion of "things"! In its cynicisms hegemonic Power airs its secrets a little, indulges in semi-self-enlightenment, and tells all. *Master cynicism is a cheekiness that has changed sides.*[7] Now it is not David who challenges Goliath, but the Goliaths of all times—from the arrogant Assyrian
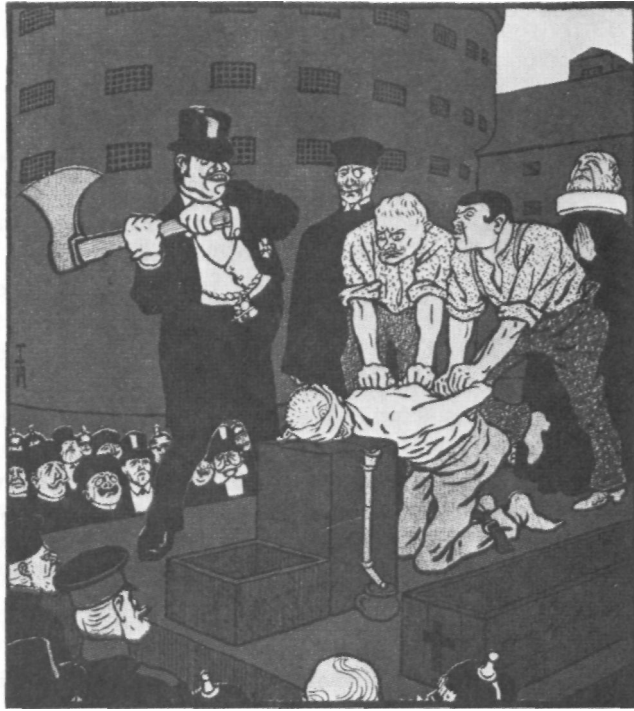
Thomas Theodor Heine. *Through Darkest Germany, 2. An Execution,* 1899 (Sim-*plicissimus* No. 35, title page). "Now, be calm, my good fellow. Be glad that you aren't a Social Democrat; then things would get even nastier for you." (©S.P.A.D.E.M., Paris/V.A.G.A., New York, 1987.)

military kings to modern bureaucracy —who show the brave but doomed David who is on top and who is on the bottom. Cynicism in public service. The wittiness of those who are in any case on top assumes some strange forms. When Marie Antoinette inquired about the reasons for the unrest among the people, she was told: "The people are starving, Your Majesty, they have no bread." Her reply: "If the people have no bread, why don't they eat cake?" (Conversely, F.J. Strauss says, "In life we cannot eat Black Forest cake every day.")

As soon as master consciousness has unmasked itself even slightly with its cynicisms, it betrays itself to the oppositional power. But what if there is no such power? In societies where there is no effective moral alternative and where potential oppositional powers are to a large extent entangled in the apparatuses of power, there is no longer anybody in a position to become outraged about the cynicisms of hegemonic power. The more a modern society appears to be without alternatives, the more it will allow itself to be cynical. In the end, it is ironical about its own legitimation. "Basic values" and excuses merge imperceptibly. The

bearers of hegemonic power in the political and economic scene become hollow, schizoid, unconvincing. We live under the management of respectable players. If, earlier, great politicians were those who were "free" enough to become cynics so that they could play coolly with means and ends, today every functionary and backbencher is as experienced in this regard as Talleyrand, Metternich, and Bismarck put together.

Jiirgen Habermas, with his theory of the crisis of legitimation, has undoubtedly struck the nerve of nerves in modern political systems. The question remains, Who can be the subject of knowledge about the legitimation crisis? Who enlightens, and who is the enlightened? Cynicism proceeds by way of a diffusion of the subject of knowledge, so that the present-day servant of the system can very well do with the right hand what the left hand never allowed. By day, colonizer, at night, colonized; by occupation, valorizer and administrator, during leisure time, valorized and administered; officially a cynical functionary, privately a sensitive soul; at the office a giver of orders, ideologically a discussant; outwardly a follower of the reality principle, inwardly a subject oriented toward pleasure; functionally an agent of capital, intentionally a democrat; with respect to the system a functionary of reification, with respect to the *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld), someone who achieves self-realization; objectively a strategist of destruction, subjectively a pacifist; basically someone who triggers catastrophes, in one's own view, innocence personified. With schizoids anything is possible, and enlightenment and reaction do not make much difference. With the enlightened integrated person —in this world of clever, instinctive conformists—the body says no to the compulsions of the head, and the head says no to the way in which the body procures its comfortable self-preservation. This mixture is our moral status quo.

Theory of the Double Agent

It is time to speak of a phenomenon that seemingly manages to survive only on the margins of political systems; in fact, however, it touches on the existential core of societies: the phenomenon of secret agents. The psychology of agents, especially of the double agent, would be the most important chapter in present-day political psychology. Incredible stories are told of conspiratorial groups in Switzerland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where an impenetrable snarl of czarist, anticzarist, Communist, anarchist, and Western European groups of agents had arisen. They all kept their eyes on each other, and their calculations and consciousnesses reflected on and into one another. In the heads of the conspiratorial party cells as well as in the secret police planted among them, fantastically convoluted tactics and metatactics were spun out. One has heard of double and triple agents who themselves in the end no longer exactly knew for whom they were really working and what they were seeking for themselves in this double and triple role playing. They were initally committed to one side, were

then bought off, and were finally enticed back by their own original party, etc. There was basically no longer any self that would have been able to "self-seekingly obtain advantages from all sides. What is self-interest in someone who no longer knows where his "self is?

But much the same thing can be said, I believe, for anyone who takes a place in the body politic *(Staatskorper)* or in corporations or institutions and knows roughly in which direction the state is heading. Between loyalties and insights an ever-widening gulf is opening that makes it difficult to know where one stands. On which side do our loyalties lie? Are we agents of the state and of institutions? Or agents of enlightenment? Or agents of monopoly capital? Or agents of our own vital interests that secretly cooperate in constantly changing double binds with the state, institutions, enlightenment, counterenlightenment, monopoly capital, socialism, etc., and, in so doing, we forget more and more what we our"selves" sought in the whole business?

It was no accident that it was Walter Benjamin, that great expert in polyvalent meaning who built secret bridges between Judaism and sociology, Marxism and messianism, art and critique, who introduced the agent motif into the human sciences—recall, for example, his famous and cunning interpretation of Baudelaire in which he characterized the poet as a secret agent of his class. The multiple-agent activity of the intelligentsia is characteristic of modernity— a fact that has always seemed threatening to those simplifiers who were determined to do battle and to those who think in terms of friend and foe. (Was Stalinism not, among other things, an attempt to break out of the ineluctable multiple binds of every intelligentsia by means of a paranoic simplification of the fronts so that once again everything would become simple enough for even Stalin to comprehend? This could be called, somewhat more elegantly, "the reduction of complexity.")

Who is subjectively, objectively, implicitly, and explicitly whose agent, functionary of which link in the system, helper of which tendency? In Stalinist thinking, to this day, one uses the word "objective" when one wants to dissolve double binds and ambivalences by force. Those who deny complex realities like to pretend to be "objective" and accuse those who are conscious of problems of fleeing from reality and daydreaming. Not even with the seemingly most unambiguous and most decisive figures can it be "objectively" determined which tendency they have ultimately signed themselves up for, especially when one considers that history, in spite of all plans, obeys the rules of a game that escapes our grasp. The parties and groups that present themselves to the public with decisive programs are themselves masks of tendencies that reach beyond them and about whose final results one can say little in advance. Marxists like to fantasize in this twilight about a great, secret demiurge, a supercynical trickster who sits in the association of German industrialists, or who even has a ministerial post without portfolio in the chancellor's office and makes the state dance to the tune of the large industries. This projective strategy of simplification is as innocently naive as it is innocently

artful. It has a grand history - right up to Balzac with his mysterious thirteen who, behind the scenes, held the strings in their hands like a cosa nostra of capital.

The most devastating of such fantasies was an invention from the world of Russian secret agents before the turn of the century: the fantasy of the "wise men of Zion," an anti-Semitic fabrication in which an originally Enlightenment satire (by M. Joly) wandered by way of the mind of a cynical chief of the secret service in Paris, who forged the alleged "Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion," into the mind of a confused Russian philosopher of religion. From there the "Protocols" made the return journey to Europe, where they became the main document of anti-Semitic paranoia and had an impact on Hitler and from there to Auschwitz. That was a subterfuge in the simplifications of German fascism that projected the anonymous effects of the system onto demonic "intentions" so that even confused simple citizens did not lose the "overview."

Cheeky Social History

The history of cheekiness is not a discipline of historiography, and I do not know whether it would do the matter a favor if it were to become one. History is always a secondary force that must be preceded by an impulse of the moment. As far as cynicism is concerned, the impulse should be obvious; with respect to kynicism and cheekiness, the impulse will probably be sought in vain.

Since antiquity, the role of the *city* in the genesis of satirical consciousness is sociohistorically uncontroversial. However, in Germany after the decline of the cities during the Thirty Years' War, there was for a long time no city with a metropolitan character. As late as 1831, Heinrich Heine had to emigrate to Paris-the principal city of the nineteenth century-in order to breathe liberating city air. "I went because I had to."

As the northern Italian city cultures, which Jakob Burckhardt described, exploded with sarcasm and Roman and Florentine wit rang shrill in their citizens' ears, Germany possessed, apart from Eulenspiegel, the plebeian protokynic of modern times, admittedly no Aretino but nevertheless a cobbler from Nuremberg who wrote droll stories: old Hans Sachs who, somewhat unjustly, is remembered as the progenitor of narrow-minded, middle-class humor. This Sachs, perhaps guided by good instinct, had also written a dialogue about Diogenes —and thus already at the beginning of bourgeois culture there is a link to the kynical impulse. But Nuremberg degenerated and rose to prominence again only with the coming °f the railway and as the site of the Nazi rallies. In that place, where the first Presentiments of the bourgeois principle of culture had flourished, kynical realism and urban laughter, petit-bourgeois master cynicism was perfected in the hu-morless mass parade of columns for subsequent war cemeteries. The only German city that, as far as cheekiness goes, left no possibility unexhausted, was-and ls to the present day-Berlin. For the spirit of those who paraded in Nuremberg,

Till Eulenspiegel.

this city was always a little eerie. Gottfried Benn captures the provincialism of the marchers when he caricatures their ideas: "Thinking is cynical, it takes place above all in Berlin; in its place the *Weser* song is recommended."

Cheekiness always had a rougher time in Germany than in the Latin countries. More often than not, it came on stage as master cynicism, as disinhibition of the powerful. Heinrich Heine, who represents the exception (but he was a child of the French-tinged Rhineland), had to content himself in his search for indigenous models and allies with other traditional German characteristics —embodied in the snarled truthfulness of Voss, in the morally strong clarity of Lessing, and in Luther's courageous confessional power. Nevertheless, not without justification, a characteristic tradition of German cheekiness could be connected to Luther, for his Protestantism came at a time when it was not usual to say to kaisers: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise," —an act of reckless courage and the most willful

frivolity. Moreover, in Luther an animal element, a power, appears that approves itself—a vital archetype of swinishness that is inseparable from kynical motifs.

Apart from the *city,* three social dies of serene refractoriness have played an essential role in the history of cheekiness: the *carnival,* the *universities,* and the *Bohemians.* All three function as safety valves through which needs that otherwise are not given their due in social life can achieve a limited release. Here, cheekiness has had a space in which it has been tolerated, even if the tolerance has lasted only a short time and can be rescinded.

The old carnival was a substitute revolution for the poor. A kingly fool was elected who reigned over a thoroughly inverted world for a day and a night. In this inverted world, the poor and the decent brought their dreams to life, as costumed oafs and bacchanals, forgetting themselves to the point of truth, cheeky, lewd, turbulent, and disgraceful. One was allowed to lie and to tell the truth, to be obscene and honest, drunken and irrational. From the carnival of the late Middle Ages, as Bachtin has shown, satirical motifs flow into art. The colorful languages of Rabelais and other Renaissance artists draw on the parodistic spirit of carnivalism. It inspires macabre and satirical traditions and makes fools and harlequins, buffoons and Punches into standard figures of a great comical tradition that fulfills its task in the life of society even when it is not Shrove Tuesday. Class societies can scarcely survive without the institution of the inverted world and the crazy day —as the Indian and Brazilian carnivals demonstrate.

Likewise since the late Middle Ages, universities have become important in the social economy of cheekiness and kynical intelligence. They were by no means simply places of teaching and research. In them, there romped also a vagrant, extravagant, youthful intelligence that was clever enough to know something better than just cramming. In this respect, the Sorbonne in Paris enjoys special fame. It formed a city within a city, the Latin Quarter, in which we recognize the forerunners of all later Bohemians. In the bourgeois epoch, the years at the university were for the students a time when they could defer the serious things in life, when they could take liberties before going on to careers and an orderly life. Those adults who later, as respectable gentlemen, maintain that they too were young are thinking back on student larks, student freedoms, and intrigues. Life around the universities gave the concept of "youth" a particular color in the bourgeois period. The Old Gentlemen tore their hair only officially, but they secretly noted with satisfaction when their sons did exactly the same things. The dignitaries find it eerie to be confronted by a young generation that is too cool lor nonsense and that, precociously cynical, gets straight to the heart of the matter. The twentieth century has known several such cool generations, starting with the Nazi fraternity in which a troupe of cool snot-noses mingled with the populist 'dealists; later they became fighter pilots or jurists in the system, and still later, Democrats. Following them came the "skeptical Generation" of the fifties, which stands today at the helm, and following them, the generations of the seventies and

eighties, among whom the early developers in cynicism are already making themselves noticed as New Wave.

The Bohemians, a relatively recent phenomenon, played a prominent role in the regulation of the tensions between art and bourgeois society. Bohemianism was the space in which the transition from art into the art of living was tried out. For a century, Bohemianism gave the neokynical impulse a social shelter. As a regulator for bourgeois careers, it was above all important because, similarly to the universities, it served as a "psychosocial moratorium" (Erikson) in which young bourgeois could live out their crises of adjustment in the transition from the world of school and home to the world of serious occupations. Research has established that there were only a few long-term Bohemians; for the great majority of Bohemians, the milieu remained a transit station, a space for testing out life and departing from the norms. There they used their freedom to work out their rejection of bourgeois society until a (perhaps) more grown-up "yes, but" took its place.

If we look today at these nurturing soils and living spaces in which deviation and critique, satire and cheekiness, kynicism and willfulness thrive, it becomes immediately clear why we must fear the worst for embodied cheeky enlightenment. Before our very eyes, cities have been transformed into amorphous clumps where alienated streams of traffic transport people to the various scenes of their attempts and failures in life. For a long time now carnival has meant not "inverted world" but flight into safe world, of anesthesia from a permanently inverted world full of daily absurdities. We know that, at least since Hitler, Bohemianism is dead, and in its offshoots in the subcultures cheeky moods are to be found less than the cheerless attitudes of withdrawal. And as far as the universities are concerned—oh, let's not talk about that!

These mutilations of cheeky impulses indicate that society has entered a stage of organized seriousness in which the playgrounds of lived enlightenment are becoming increasingly clogged. This is what dampens the climate of this country so much. We live on in a morose realism, not wanting to be noticed, and play the respectable games. Cynicism prickles beneath the monotony. A clear-sighted coquetting with its own schizophrenia betrays the unhappy consciousness, in academia and elsewhere. The provocations seem to be exhausted, all bizarre twists of modern existence seem to be already tried out. A state of public, respectable torpor has been entered. A tired, schizoidly demoralized intelligentsia plays at realism by contemplatively walling itself up in harsh circumstances.

Embodiment or Splitting

The embodied is that which wants to live. But life is fundamentally different from the postponement of suicide. Those who live in societies armed with atomic weapons become, whether they want to or not, at least semiagents of a cynical

community of suicides, that is, unless they were to decide to resolutely turn their backs on it. That is precisely what a continually growing number of people are doing, people who have emigrated since the fifties—to Provence, Italy, the Aegean, California, Goa, the Caribbean, Auroville, Poona, Nepal, and, last but not least, to Tibetan highlands in the interior of Germany and France.

Two questions arise in connection with these phenomena, the first cynical, the second concerned. First, when it comes to the crunch, will that be far enough? And second, who is helped when the morally most sensitive people abandon the sinking ship of cynical society? We have "good" reasons to ask these questions, for the growing expectation of war nourishes both the cynical and the concerned view on what is coming. Emigration could be useful for both sides if we understand it correctly: for the emigrants, who will find out whether the greener pastures they seek exist; for those who remain behind, to whom the departure of the others says: There where you are, life is not possible—for us. Is it for you?

Emigration could be taken somewhat less seriously if it were really only a fringe phenomenon. However, nothing permits this innocuous view of things. What is happening on the fringe today comes from the middle. Emigration has become a fact of mass psychology. Entire strata of the population have been living for a considerable period in an inner somewhere-else, just not in this country. They do not feel bound to what are called the fundamental values of society. One hears "fundamental values" and involuntarily sees mushroom clouds rise up. One hears those who are responsible proclaim their readiness to negotiate and feels, looking into their faces, the ice of the end of the world in their eyes. The main body of society has long since chosen to emigrate into leisure time, and for them the word "life" gets its bright color from memories of certain moments on happy vacations —when the horizon opened up . . .

What is to be done? Get out or collaborate? "Flee or stand firm?" Both alternatives seem inadequate. Their expressions are all overused and ambivalent. Are the "escapists" really comprehended with this word? Is there not infrequently a lot of cowardliness and melancholy, collaboration and opportunism in what is called "standing firm"? Is escapism without exception a conscious act—and don't a lot of so-called escapists *(Aussteiger)* already find themselves on the outside before they are asked about their own attitude? Is collaboration really cynically tinged everywhere? Is it not also motivated by the need for something "positive" and the need to belong?

But it is also worthwhile to see the elements of truth in the expressions on both sides. Escapists are justified, because they do not want to be entangled with open ᵉyes in the intolerable cynicisms of a society in which the distinction between producing and destroying is becoming blurred. Collaboration is justified because individuals are also permitted to orient themselves toward survival in the short run. To flee is justified because it rejects a stupid courage and because only fools let themselves be consumed by hopeless struggles — when there are spaces that are

more amenable to life. Standing firm is justified because experience shows that every conflict that is merely avoided will catch up with us at every point of our flight.

For this reason, the alternative that corresponds to our view of life must be grasped in a different way— it is that between *embodiment* or *splitting.* It is an alternative that addresses itself first to consciousness, and only afterward to behavior. It demands a radical priority of self-experience over morality. It is a matter of either consciously letting what is already torn apart grow together again or unconsciously surrendering what is split off to the schizoid process. Integration or schizophrenia. Choose life or celebrate at the party of suicides. That may sound like a spiritual diet for individuals, and those who take it this way have heard right. Initially enlightenment has no other addressees than those individuals who elude blind socialness *(Gesellschaftlichkeit)* without thereby being able to cease playing a role in society. One must therefore keep the idea of enlightenment alive-through embodied enlightenment, of course. Enlightenment means to affirm all antischizophrenic movements. The universities are scarcely the place where this happens. The *universitas vitae* is taught in other places, there, where people oppose the cynicism of split official consciousness, where they try out forms of living that open up a chance for conscious life in minds, bodies, and souls. It unfolds in a broad field of individuals and groups who carry on the kynical impulse and who attempt what no politics and no mere art can take from them: to tackle, with their alertness, the splits and unconscious elements that seep into individual existence; to grow into one's own possibilities; and to participate in enlightenment's labor of cheering up, a part of which is to pay attention to the wishes that are the premonition of the possible.

Psychopolitics of Schizoid Society

What are the signs of a prewar period? How do the psychopolitical constitutions of capitalist societies before world wars reveal themselves? German history offers an exemplary lesson in how world wars ferment in the psychic *(seelisch)* tensions of a nation. On the basis of two —viewed pessimistically, three —cases we can study what it means to live in the prelude to great military explosions. The main psychopolitical symptom is an increasing heaviness in the social atmosphere, which becomes charged with schizoid tensions and ambivalences to the point where it is no longer tolerable. In such a climate, an eerie readiness for catastrophes flourishes; I call it, alluding to Erich Fromm, the *catastrophile complex.* It attests to a collective disturbance of vitality through which the energies of the living are displaced into a sympathy with the catastrophic, the apocalyptic, and the violently spectacular.

The historian knows that political history cannot be the site of human happiness. Nevertheless, if we want to ask when in our century Europeans experienced

War volunteers in Unter den Linden, Berlin, August 1, 1914.

their happiest hour, we will be embarrassed by the answer. But the signs and the documents speak for themselves. We stand at first perplexed before the phenomenon of August 1914: What the peoples of Europe, on entering the war, experienced at that time is designated by historiographers ashamedly as "war psychosis." If we look closer, we see it was a matter of indescribable storms of affect that took hold of the masses, of outbreaks of jubilation and of national emotion, of pleasure in fear and the ecstasy of fate. There were moments of pathos and a presentiment of life beyond comparison. The slogan of the times was an ecstatic one: Finally things have gone so far. The masses probably also experienced fear, but above all a feeling of basic change into something that promised "life." The slogans were rejuvenation, putting to the test, cleansing bath, purgative cure. In the first year, the war was waged by purely volunteer armies; no one had to be forced to go to the front. The catastrophe enticed the Wilhelminian youth. When the catastrophe occurred, the people recognized themselves in it and understood that they had waited for it.

There is not the slightest reason to believe that the people of that time were so very different from people of today. Only arrogance could allow us to deceive ourselves that we would be smarter in existentially decisive matters than those volunteers from Langemarck who, by the thousands, pathetically ran into the fire °r the machine guns. The only difference is that the psychic mechanisms of later generations operate more subtly. That is why we are initially astounded that the Processes then ran so naively and unrestrained on the surface. The war enthusiasts nought they were experiencing the qualitative difference between provisional ar-rangements and decision, a sultriness and clarification —in a word, the difference between inauthentic and supposedly authentic life. Even after the war, the talk of "battle as inner experience" wafted through pre-Fascist literature. In the war, as » was felt by the men of August 1914, there would finally be something at stake wat made living worthwhile.

The First World War signals the turning point in modern cynicism. With it the up-tempo phase of the decomposition of old naivetes begins-such as those about the nature of war, the nature of social order, of progress, of bourgeois values, indeed, of bourgeois civilization itself. Since this war, the diffuse schizoid climate around the major European powers has not become any less intense. Since then, those who have spoken of cultural crisis, etc., have had that mental disposition of postwar shock unquestionably in mind that knows that the naivete of yesterday will never exist again. Irrevocably, mistrust, disillusion, doubt, and distanced stances have infiltrated into the sociopsychological "hereditary substance." Everything positive will be from then on an "In-spite-of," laced with latent desperation. Since that time, the broken modes of consciousness visibly reign: irony, cynicism, stoicism, melancholy, sarcasm, nostalgia, voluntarism, resignation to the lesser evil, depression and anesthesia as a conscious choice of unconsciousness.

In the few years of the Weimar Republic the catastrophile complex built up again until finally the economic crisis ignited the kindling. The joyless republic granted an end to itself. In the myth of revolution and in the myth of the people, catastrophile tendencies found their "respectable" underpinnings. Whoever secretly accepted the catastrophe loudly claimed to know where the course of events was heading and which drastic cure was the proper one. Those who saw the catastrophe approaching tried, before it broke, to get the most out of life. In 1931, Erich Kastner captured the voice of a man who was beyond the cliffs of naive morality and who, with his private lust for life, swam with the current as it flowed toward the next cataract.

> "Serious conversations, how? Is there a life after death? Confidentially, there isn't. Everything must be settled before death. There's a heap of things to do, day and night. . . . Better to amuse yourselves than to redeem humanity. As I said, life has to be settled before death. More information glady given. Don't be so serious, my boy."[8]

That is a contemporary voice that in fifty years has not become outmoded. This is how a person speaks who knows that *he* does not change history. In spite of everything he wants to live—before the end, which is disguised as an uprising.

Today, the latent will to catastrophe on all sides has taken cover under the official respectability of the politics of peace. The mechanisms whose relatively brutal openness characterized the Fascist style have sunk into the subliminal and the atmospheric under the masks of accommodation, good will, and sincere sentiments. Naive stimuli have disappeared from the surface of consciousness. The increasing socialization of reactions represses open gestures; what is called democracy means, psychologically, an increase in self-control, which is probably necessary in dense populations. However, we should not be deceived by the calmed surface. The catastrophile complex lives on, and if not all signs are mis-

leading, its mass is caught up in incessant accumulation. Perhaps it is the "accomplishment of terrorism"—to speak frivolously—to have made the catastrophile currents, at least here and there, tangible and recognizable. One can refer to what is clearly there.

Recall the kidnapping and murder of the president of the Employers' Association, Hans-Martin Schleyer—the feverish climate of those months when terrorism approached its peak in Germany. At that time, the psychopolitical scenario that belongs to the catastrophile complex again came crassly to light, perhaps for the first time since the Second World War. The media and the voices of state were spontaneously and completely united in their respectable tone of indignation and dismay. Among millions of published sentences, there was hardly a passage in which the truth of the masses in the atmosphere forced its way through. This truth consisted, as every whispered conversation, every scene at a kiosk, dialogues in canteens and bars, chats in lobbies, etc., proved, in a flickering ambivalence of feelings in which existential fears and desire for catastrophe were indistinguishably entwined. The avidness of the reporting, the measureless breadth of the discussion, and the excess of state and private reactions, even viewed in retrospect, speak an unmistakable language. Here something had happened that touched the feeling toward life. A nameless hunger for drama in history and a desperate longing for conflict on the right front had so confused hearts and minds that for months on end, an event was gnawed away at that in its criminal and political content did not justify such agitation. Through the political staging of the crime and the spectacular interaction of state and terror group, it took on the significance of an epoch-making event. It nourished itself on powerful catastrophile currents and swelled up, becoming the dominant emotional theme of endless days. Sociopsychologically, it brought an hour of truth. It was the substitute for a history in which something moves, the caricature of a "liberation struggle," an idiotic-criminal parody of that which social democracy under Wilhelm II, Hindenberg, and Hitler had neglected—battle on the wrong front, at the wrong time, by the wrong attackers against the wrong opponents, and yet, in spite of the sum of all these distortions, it was greedily lapped up by society as a substitute for struggle, conflict drug, and political catastrophe film.

At one point, the universal consensus in the cynically mute delirium around the "event" was torn open. I here refer to the paper by "Mescalero,"[9] who had been naive enough to believe that, without being punished, one could break through conspiracies of silence of this magnitude with honesty and throw open the ambivalences for debate. He thus spoke in a formulation that has become famous and that was repeated incessantly by the media to millions and millions of ears, of his "deep, secret joy" {klammheimlichen Freude) he discovered in himself in the first moment on hearing of the Buback murder, in order then, in the next moment of reflection, to distance himself from it. Mescalero was shocked at himself and wanted to speak reasonably about this shock. With the Mescalero explo-

sion, the collective ambivalence discharged itself in a grand parade of lies. That was a historical moment of learning-from then on it could no longer be suppressed that society again lived in a prewar period in which all conflicts that had to do with life feelings were decisively postponed to that moment when the external war would make the encounter with inner reality superfluous. In the ballet of rectifications, shieldings, repudiations, and protestations, the attitude of respectability celebrated a paper victory over the honesty that had said the other part of the truth, if not for everybody, then at least for many. Since that time, we can imagine how the papers will rustle in which, at the outbreak of war, those with responsibility will read of their dismay, shock, and resolution—if there is enough time for this before the atomic burial of the Federal Republic *(Atom-BRDigung).*

Unashamed Happiness

Does cheekiness, which recalls the rights to happiness, still have a chance? Is the kynical impulse really dead, and is it only cynicism that has a grand, deadly future? Can enlightenment —the idea that it would be reasonable to be happy —be reincarnated in our gloomy modernity? Are we defeated once and for all, and will the cynical twilight of harsh reality and moral dream never again grow lighter?

These questions touch on the feeling toward life in the atomically armed civilizations. These civilizations are going through a crisis of their innermost vitality that is probably without historical parallel. The tip of this uneasiness can perhaps be felt most keenly in Germany, the country that has lost two world wars and in which the atmospheric conditions register most sensitively how it feels to live between catastrophes.

Modernity is losing, in addition to its feeling of vitality, the distinction between crisis and stability. No longer do any positive experiences of our situation take place, no feeling that existence can extend into an immeasurably wide and firm horizon without exhausting itself. A feeling of the provisional, the speculative, at best medium-term, lies at the bottom of all public and private strategies. Even those who are optimists by constitution are beginning to quote Luther, who said he would plant an apple tree today anyway, even if he knew that tomorrow the world would come to an end.

Periods of chronic crisis demand of the human will to live that it accept permanent uncertainty as the unchangeable background of its striving for happiness. Then the hour of kynicism arrives; it is the life philosophy of crisis. Only under its sign is happiness in uncertainty possible. It teaches moderation of expectations, adaptability, presence of mind, attention to what the moment offers. It knows that the expectation of long-term careers and the defense of social assets must entangle one in an existence "as care" *(Sorge).* It was no accident that Heidegger, in the days of the precarious Weimar Republic, revealed the "structure of cares" in existence. *(Sein undZeit,* 1927). Care absorbs the motif of happi-

We're alive, we're alive, 1945.

ness. Those who want to hold on to the latter must learn, following the kynical model, to break the hegemonic power of cares. But socialized consciousness sees itself at the mercy of an incessant agitation by themes of care. These themes create the subjective lighting of the crisis in which even the well-to-do have already acquired the mentality of the shipwrecked. Never were such well-heeled people so much in a mood of termination.

This widespread disturbance of vitality and this bleakening of the life feeling provide the general background to the demoralization of enlightenment. "Care" clouds existence so persistently that the idea of happiness cannot be made socially plausible any more. The atmospheric presupposition for enlightenment-cheering up—is not present. Those who, like Ernst Bloch, spoke of the "principle of hope" would have to be able to find this climatic a priori of enlightenment, the view of a clear sky, at least in themselves; and that Bloch found it makes him different from the mainstream of intellectuals. Even when everything became gloomy, he knew the private secret of cheering up, trusting in life, letting expression flow, believing in development. It was his power to rediscover the "current of warmth"—which he carried in himself—everywhere in human history. That made his view of things more optimistic than they deserve. The current of warmth is what separates him so much from the Zeitgeist. The intelligentsia is exposed to the cold currents of universal demoralization almost without protection; indeed, it can almost seem as if, as far as defeatism and disorientation are concerned, it is still out in front. Now, no one can be talked into believing in the spirit of utopia" or a "principle of hope" who can discover no experiences in himself that give these expressions meaning. But it can be asked for which existential disposition Utopia and hope stand. Is it a "dissatisfaction in principle," as some

say? Is the Blochian hope —as is claimed—a creation of resentment? I believe, if it is taken that way, the report from the current of warmth was not listened to carefully enough. Its message is not the principle of denial. Principled hope stands for "biophilia" (Fromm); it is a code word for creative friendliness toward life. With it, that which lives follows an unquestioned permission to be and to become. That establishes its opposition to the predominant mentality of care and self-inhibition *(Selbsthemmung)*.

Self-inhibition is the symptom that perhaps best characterizes the rest of the "critical" intelligentsia in the tired column of enlightenment. It knows it is in a two-front situation: On the one side, it is at pains to resist the cynicism of "late capitalism," which has coagulated into a system; on the other side, it is anxious about the radicalness of the emigrants and escapists who seek other ways and who break off cooperation. In such an in-between position, the temptation to defend its "identity" through forced moralism is great.[10] But with moralism one surrenders oneself more than ever to the overserious and depressive mood. The scenery of the critical intelligentsia is therefore populated by aggressive and depressive moralists, problematists, "problemoholics," and soft rigorists whose predominant existential stimulus is *No.* From this group there is not much hope for the correction of the vitally false course.

From Walter Benjamin comes the aphorism: "To be happy means to be able to look into oneself without being frightened."[11] Where does our readiness to be frightened come from? Fright is, I think, the shadow of moralism and of denial, which together cripple the capacity for happiness. Where moralism is, fright necessarily dominates — as the spirit of self-denial, and fright excludes happiness. Morality always knows, with its thousand and one fixed ideas, how we and the world are supposed to be but are not. From moralism, even a leftist moralism, in the long run unrealistic and cramped effects emanate. Perhaps an age-old tradition of Christian joylessness again makes itself felt in enlightenment, a tradition whose perception of things is attracted by whatever can be taken as proof of the negativity of existence. There is so much of that that the material will not be exhausted for the whole of the moralist's life.

The fronts between moralism and amoralism are thus curiously inverted.[12] The former, although it has good intentions, encourages the climate of negativity; the latter, although it acts so foolishly or sinisterly, elevates morale considerably. And this amoral good humor is what must attract us as enlighteners onto the pre-Christian, the kynical terrain. We have gone so far that happiness seems politically indecent to us. A short time ago, Fritz J. Raddatz gave his enthusiastic commentary on Gunther Kunert's morbid *Abtotungsverfahren* (Procedures for killing, 1980) the title "Happiness—The Ultimate Crime?" Perhaps better: "Happiness-The Ultimate Impudence!" Herein lies the cardinal point of all principled cheekiness. Those who still want to claim to be enlighteners must be able to be so

cheeky, so impudent. It is no longer so much our heads on which enlightenment has to perform its labor, it is the gloomy egoisms, the frozen identities.

It may be telling for the demoralized state of critical intelligence that for the entire spectrum of biophilia and self-affirmation, it knows scarcely any word other than "narcissism." If this concept already in itself is a dubious construction, in the hands of conservatives it becomes a cudgel for a psychologizing counterenlightenment with which social tendencies toward critical self-reflection are supposed to be quelled. Just as the phenomenon of narcissism as sickness and unconscious tic is interesting and welcome, it is equally suspect as a healthy condition. As a general sickness it functions like a psychological dynamo for society, which requires people who are full of self-doubt, affirmation-seeking, ambitious, greedy for consumption, selfish, and moralistically zealous in their intent on being better than others. As a healthy condition, "narcissistic" self-affirmation would laugh in the face of the impudent demands of such morose societies.

Gray is the basic color of an age that, for a long time, has again been dreaming secretly about the colorful big bang. What necessitates and inspires such dreams is a sum of vital incapacities. The well-behaved sociopsychological enlightenment thought the problem lay in the "incapacity to mourn." But this is not the sole factor. It is even more the incapacity to have the right rage at the right time, the incapacity to express, the incapacity to explode the climate of care, the incapacity to celebrate, the incapacity to let go. Among all these atrophies, one capacity has remained that unerringly sets its sights on what a life grants to itself in the end, a life that no longer sees a way out of such relations: the capacity, under respectable pretenses, to work toward circumstances in which, unavoidably, everything will be blown to smithereens with the greatest possible spectacle without anyone feeling to blame. The catastrophe warms people up and in it, the barren ego comes to its last feast that melts long-lost passions and impulses together in the final burn-up.

A short time ago, the leader of the English punk group, The Stranglers, celebrated the neutron bomb in a frivolous interview because it is what can set a nuclear war into motion. "Miss Neutron, I love you." Here he had found the point where the kynicism of protesters coincides with the brazen-faced master cynicism of the strategists. What did he want to say? Look how wicked I can be? His smile was coquettish, nauseated, and ironically egoistic; he could not look the reporter in the face. As in a dream, he spoke past the camera for those who will understand him, the little, beautifully wicked punk devil who causes the world to rattle with unthinkable words. That is the language of a consciousness that earlier perhaps did not mean to be so wicked. But now, since the show demands it, not only is it unhappy, it also wants to be unhappy. In this way misery can be outdone. The last act of freedom is used to will what is terrifying. In this act is a grand gesture, a pathos of ugliness-desperate cheekiness that gives off a spark of independence. In the last instance they can pretend to be innocent, and

the war, the great big shitty mess, is caused by the others anyway. They, the beautiful self-mutilators, know enough to scream out against the conspiracy of silence of the respectable. Everything is shit, "Miss Neutron, I love you." There is still something of one's own in willed self-destruction, a symbolic shock. That is what can be enjoyed in them. In intellectual trash, in the cynical show, in the hysterical uprising, and in the crazy parade, the suffocating armor around the well-behaved wild ego loosens up: *Rocky Horror Picture Show,* the hot-cold hissing death drive of the hunger for oneself.

Meditation on the Bomb

Here we have to think ahead—assuming further that fringe and middle correspond more deeply to one another than seems obvious at first glance. On the surface, the life-style of the punks and that of the establishment seem to be irreconcilable. But at bottom they are very close. Cynical eruptions are catapulted out of the catastrophile masses of civilization. For that reason the philosophical, the comprehending approach to phenomena must not limit itself to subjective excesses, but must begin with the objective excesses.

Objective excess is nothing other than the excess of structural unrest that characterizes our form of life, even in its saturated phases and in the intervals between wars. At the end of the Second World War, the earth's weapon potential sufficed for a multiple extinction of every citizen on earth. As we approach the Third, the extermination factor has been multiplied by hundreds, even thousands. The overkill atmosphere becomes denser by the minute. The factor grows monthly and its growth is, in the final analysis, the determining agent of our history. The overkill structures have become the actual subject of current developments. In the First as well as in the Second World, an enormous proportion of social labor flows into these structures. At the moment preparations are being made for a renewed escalation, but this is not our theme here.

In view of these "hard facts," the task of philosophy is to pose child's questions like the following: Why don't people get along with each other? What compels them to prepare for their mutual atomization? Philosophers are those who can put aside the hardened, habituated, and cynically versed contemporary in themselves —who, without further ado, can make clear to that contemporary in two or three sentences why everything is the way it is and why it cannot be changed with good intentions. The philosopher must give a chance to that inner child who "does not yet understand" all this. Those who "do not yet understand it" can perhaps pose the right questions.

All wars are, at root, the consequence of the principle of self-preservation. In the competition among political groups, war has been an age-old means of establishing and defending the existence, identity, and form of life of a given society against the pressure of a rival. Since time immemorial, realists assume a natural

right to self-preservation of the individual group and to military self-defense of the group attacked. The morality that legitimates the suspension of morality in war is that of self-preservation. Those who fight for their own life and its social forms stand, according to the conviction of all previous realistic mentalities, beyond the ethics of peace.

When one's own identity is threatened; the prohibition of killing is suspended. That which constitutes the basic taboo in times of peace becomes a duty in times of war; indeed, a maximum of killing is even honored as a particularly worthy achievement.

All modern military ethics, however, have abolished the image of the aggressive hero because it would interfere with the defensive justification for war. Modern heroes all want to be mere defenders, heroes of self-defense. One's own primarily aggressive component is uniformly denied: All professional soldiers see themselves as *protectors* of peace, and attack is solely a strategic alternative to defense. The latter remains the first priority over all military modes of behavior. Defense is nothing more than the military counterpart of what is called self-preservation in philosophy. This cynical self-denial of every morality is guided by the principle of self-preservation, which anticipates the "moment of truth" and arms itself with a free-style ethics without illusions.

If we look at today's world from this perspective, boundless proliferation of the principle of defense strikes us. East and West, both armed to the teeth, confront one another as giants of self-defense. In order to be able to "defend" itself, each party has produced instruments of destruction that suffice for the absolute annihilation of human, animal, and even plant life. In the shadow of atomic weapons, even the deadly specialties of war biologists and chemists are usually overlooked. In the name of self-preservation a reckless sadism disguised as defense has flourished in the minds of the researchers of destruction; an old oriental master of torture would have an inferiority complex by comparison.

However, we do not want to impute unusually evil motives to any party or any of those in charge. Everyone probably does what he can within the realm of the possible. However, this realm itself has its malicious peculiarities. It seems that a certain form of realism has come close to its immanent limits, namely, that realism that adopted war as *ultima ratio* of political self-preservation in its mode of reckoning. This realism should not be retrospectively condemned; it has had its time and done its work, for the good perhaps, for evil certainly. It must be observed, however, that this *ultima ratio* realism is bankrupt.

Today's "politics of disarmament" has only apparently grasped this. That behind it there is no real insight is revealed by the fact that the negotiating nations are playing a double game. While they talk, they frantically build up stockpiles; the question, as mad as it seems, is basically whether "only" armament should be pursued or whether armament plus talking is better.[13] In this way, I maintain, a solution will never be found. Following this way, the arms race *can* only end in

war. The wild proliferation of the principle of defense precludes all other possibilities.

The ultimate war has truly become an "internal matter" of armed humanity. In it, it is a matter of breaking through the principle of harsh self-preservation with its archaic and modern *ultima ratio* of war. For this unforeseen struggle on the inner front against the deadly realism of political self-defense, the strongest allies are truly needed. On this front, overpowering weapons, fear-inducing strategies, and cunning maneuvers are required. In this respect we are not without hope, the arsenals are full. Among the weapons now being made ready for use are collected all imaginable monstrosities: nerve gases, microbe armies, gas clouds, bacteria squadrons, psychedelic grenades, astrocannons, and death rays. We do not want to undervalue the accomplishments of these means. But the philosopher is drawn again and again by an old dependency back to the H-bomb because its nuclear mode of operation challenges contemplation most of all. Nuclear fission is in any case a phenomenon that invites meditation, and even the nuclear bomb gives the philosopher the feeling of here also really touching on the nucleus of what is human. Thus, the bomb basically embodies the last, most energetic enlightener. It teaches an understanding of the essence of splitting; it makes completely clear what it means to set up a Me against a You, an Us against a Them to the point of a readiness to kill. At the summit of the principle of self-preservation it teaches how to end and conquer dualisms. The bomb carries the last hope and task of Western philosophy, but its pedagogical procedure still seems unusual to us. It is so cynically crass and so suprapersonally hard that one is reminded of Eastern Zen masters who do not hesitate to punch their pupils in the face if that helps their progress toward enlightenment.

The atomic bomb is the real Buddha of the West, a perfect, sovereign apparatus without bonds. It rests unmoving in its silos, purest reality and purest possibility. It is the epitome of cosmic energies and human participation in these, the highest achievement of human beings and their destroyer, the triumph of technical rationality and its sublation *(Aufhebung)* into the para-gnostical. With it we leave the realm of practical reason where ends are pursued through appropriate means. The bomb has long since ceased to be a means to an end, for it is the boundless means that exceeds every possible end.[14] However, since it can no longer be a means to an end, it must become a medium of self-experience. It is an anthropological event, an extreme objedification of the spirit of power that works behind the drive to self-preservation. Although we built it to "defend" ourselves it has, in fact, yielded for us a defenselessness without parallel. It is a consummation of the human in its "evil" aspect. We cannot get any more evil, intelligent, or defensive.

The bomb is really the only Buddha that Western reason could understand. Its calm and its irony are infinite. It makes no difference to it how it fulfills its mission, whether in mute waiting or as firecloud; for it, the change of aggregate cir-

John Heartfield. The arms industry's choir. "A Mighty Fortress Is Our Geneva."
Photomontage, 1934.

cumstances has no relevance. As with Buddha, everything that could be said is
said through its mere existence. The bomb is not one bit more evil than reality
and not one bit more destructive than we are. It is merely our unfolding, a mate-
rial representation of our essence. It is already embodied as something whole,
whereas we, in relation to it, are still split. Confronted by such a machine, strate-
gic considerations are not appropriate but a heightened attentiveness is. The bomb
demands of us neither struggle nor resignation, but self-experience. We are it.
In it, the Western "subject" is consummated. Our most extreme armament makes
us defenseless to the point of weakness, weak to the point of reason, reasonable
to the point of fear. The only question that remains is whether we choose the ex-

ternal path or the inner path —whether insight will come from critical reflection or from the fireballs over the earth.

All external paths, no matter how "well intended" they may be, come together, as our experience shows, again and again in the irresistible flow toward armament. All "inner paths," even when they appear awfully unrealistic, flow together in the single tendency that furthers real pacification. The modern world process led to a point beyond which the most external path, politics, and the most inner path, meditation, speak the same language; both revolve around the principle that only a *"relaxation of tensions"* can help us along. All secrets lie in the art of conceding, of not resisting. Meditation and disarmament discover a strategic common interest. If that's not an ironic result of modernity! Grand politics today is, in the final analysis, meditation on the bomb and deep meditation seeks the urge to build bombs in us. Meditation works gently on everything that has solidified internally as the crust of a so-called identity. It dissolves the armor behind which an ego sits that feels itself to be the defender of its "basic values." (The strategists of armament say: "We have the better values!") The bomb is a damned ironic machine that is "good" for nothing and yet produces the most powerful effects. Even though it may be our Buddha, it nevertheless has the sarcastic devil within itself. One must have put oneself in its interior in order to feel what it means to explode into the cosmos with a complete dissolution of the self. *It* can do this at any time. A similar pandemonium and laughter reigns at the core of the igniting explosive mass as in the interior of suns. To know that one has such a possibility at one's disposal gives a unique superiority. Deep down, the human spirit knows itself to be in solidarity with its eerie and ironic sun machine.

Those who look very carefully can observe every now and then how the bombs seem to smile mockingly to themselves. If we were only alert enough to perceive this smile something would have to happen that the world has never experienced: It could become fearless and feel how relaxation loosens the archaic cramps of defense. "Good morning, Miss Neutron, how are you?" The bombs become the night watchmen of our destructiveness. If we awake, then, like the entreating voices at the end of Hermann Broch's *Schlafwandler* (Sleepwalkers), the thousand bombs will talk to us, for "it is the voice of humanity and of the people, the voice of solace and of hope and of the immediate good: "Don't do yourself any harm, for we are all still here!"

Notes

1, I treat Diogenes, as well as the other kynical and cynical figures, in the present tense, not historically, from a distance. The present tense creates the possibility of a general *typification* of kynical and cynical themes.

2. See the portrait of Diogenes in chapter 7. I show there also the sociocritical, political side of the kynical impulse. This side explains why kynicism fits present-day potentials for social resistance "to a T."

3. Willy Hochkeppel, *Mit zynischem Lacheln. Uber die Hippies der Antike,* in *gehort gelesen* (Dec. 1980):89ff.

4. Especially subdued and diverted through the Stoa.

5. See the chapter entitled "Zur Logik der Representation. Selbstdarstellung als Tateinheit von Publizieren und Verallgemeinern," pp. 305ff (On the Logic of Representation. Self-presentation as Unity of Action in Publishing and Generalization) in my book *Literatur und Lebenserfahrung. Autobiographien der 20er Jahre* (Munich, 1978).

6. See Klaus Heinrich's fine book, *Versuch Uber die Schwierigkeit Nein zu sagen.* Heinrich has also discussed the explosiveness of ancient kynicism in *Parmenides und Jona* (Frankfurt, 1966).

7. I initially avoid the psychology of cynicism in order to develop it primarily in a social-philosophical way. Subjective cynicism and its psychodynamics are treated in part V.

8. Erich Kastner, *Fabian. Geschichte eines Moralisten* (1931; reprint 1976), pp. 64-65.

9. [The *Gottinger Nachrichten,* the Gottingen university student newspaper, published an article in its 25 April 1977 edition entitled "Buback-An Obituary." The author used the nom de plume "Mescalero" to identity himself as "metropolitan Indian." Buback was federal attorney general at the time of his murder.-Trans.]

10. Iring Fetscher, *Reflexionen uber den Zynismus als Krankheit unsererZeit,* in *Denken im Schatten des Nihilismus,* ed. A. Schwan (Darmstadt, 1975), has also remarked that in the intellectual's attempt to avoid cynicism, moralistically loaded tensions are manifest.

11. Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstrasse* (Frankfurt, 1969), p. 59.

12. I take up the problem of amoralism systematically in chapter 7, where Mephistopheles, the Grand Inquisitor, and Heidegger's Anyone are discussed.

13. This arm-and-negotiate strategy is a source of political demoralization that pervades the youth in the West-insofar as they still resist the enticements of schizoid realism. Hence their resistance against "double decisions" and double thinking.

14. This thought was made clear a quarter of a century ago by Gunther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Uber die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution* (Munich, 1956).

Part Two
Cynicism in World Process

I. Physiognomic Main Text

Chapter 6
Concerning the Psychosomatics
of the Zeitgeist

Your body speaks its mind.
Stanley Keleman

A philosophical physiognomy follows the idea of a second, speechless language. This notion of a speechless language is as old as human communication, indeed, even older, its roots going back into the prehuman and the prerational, into the sphere of animal sensing and orientation. Not only verbal language has something to say to us; things too talk to those who know how to use their senses. The world is full of shapes, mimicry, faces; from all around us the hints of forms, colors, and atmospheres are received by our senses. In this physiognomic field, all the senses are tightly interwoven. Those who have been able to maintain their perceptual competence undamaged possess an effective antidote to the atrophy of the senses with which we pay for progress in civilization. Our culture, which floods us with signs, educates us in the area of physiognomic knowledge to a state of dyslexia. Nevertheless, there exists an undercurrent in our cultural life in which a mentally alert and self-evident capacity to enter into the language of shapes has reproduced itself—partly in the arts, partly in scattered traditions of knowledge about human nature in which, under various names (morals, the sorting of spirits, psychology, or the study of expressions) that other kind of perception of people and things is practiced.

Whereas the process of civilization, whose core is constituted by the sciences, teaches us to distance ourselves from people and things so that we experience them as objects, physiognomic sense provides a key to all that which reveals our proximity to the environment. Its secret is intimacy, not distance; it dispenses not a matter-of-fact but a convivial knowledge of things.[1] It knows that everything has form and that every form talks to us in multiple ways. The skin can hear, the

ears have the capacity to see, and the eyes can distinguish warm from cold. Physiognomic sense pays attention to the tensions in the forms and, as the neighbor of things, eavesdrops on their expressive whispering.

Enlightenment, which strives for the reification and objectification (Kmachlichung) of knowledge, reduces the world of the physiognomic to silence. The price of objectivity is the loss of closeness. Scientists lose the capacity to behave as neighbors of the world; they think in concepts of distance, not of friendship; they seek overviews, not neighborly involvement. Over the centuries, modern science excluded everything that was incompatible with the a priori of objectifying distance and intellectual domination over the object: intuition, empathy, *esprit de finesse*, aesthetics, erotics. Out of all this, however, a strong current has remained effective in genuine philosophy for ages; in it, to the present day, flows the warm current of a convivial intellectuality and a libidinous closeness to the world that compensates for the objectifying drive toward the domination of things.

Something of the "love of wisdom" necessarily tinges the objects of this wisdom and moderates the coldness of purely objective knowledge. Only a science that obliterates the last residues of philosophy in itself under the pretense of objectification cuts through even the last threads of neighborly and intimate sense that had bound it to things. It loosens the bonds to the physiognomic and eradicates the traces of the *esprit de finesse* that necessarily remain "subjective" and incalculable. What is repressed cannot, of course, fail to return, and the irony of enlightenment tries to make such a return look like irrationalism, against which sworn enlighteners struggle with a vengeance. In the century-long dispute between rationalism and irrationalism, two complementary but one-sided views are putting each other on trial.

As far as cynicism is concerned, our knowledge of it can initially be no other than one of intimacy. It was spoken about as though it were something atmospheric, a moral-psychological pulsation permeating our civilization. I have not yet met anyone who did not show signs of intuitive connivance as soon as this phenomenon was brought into the conversation. With this word, memories of situations, moods, experiences are evoked. It is as if a definite feeling toward life looked in the mirror as soon as the concept is placed insistently enough, as means of reflection, before our consciousness. Cynicism is one of the categories in which modern unhappy consciousness looks itself in the eyes. We have the cynical Zeitgeist and that specific taste of a fragmented, overcomplicated, demoralizing world situation in our bones, our nerves, our eyes, and in the corners of our mouths. In everything that is really contemporary, the kynical and the cynical elements become noticeable as part of our bodily-psychical and intellectual physiognomy. The Zeitgeist has left its mark on us, and whoever wants to decipher it is faced with the task of working on the psychosomatics of cynicism. This is what an integrating philosophy demands of itself. It is called integrating because it does
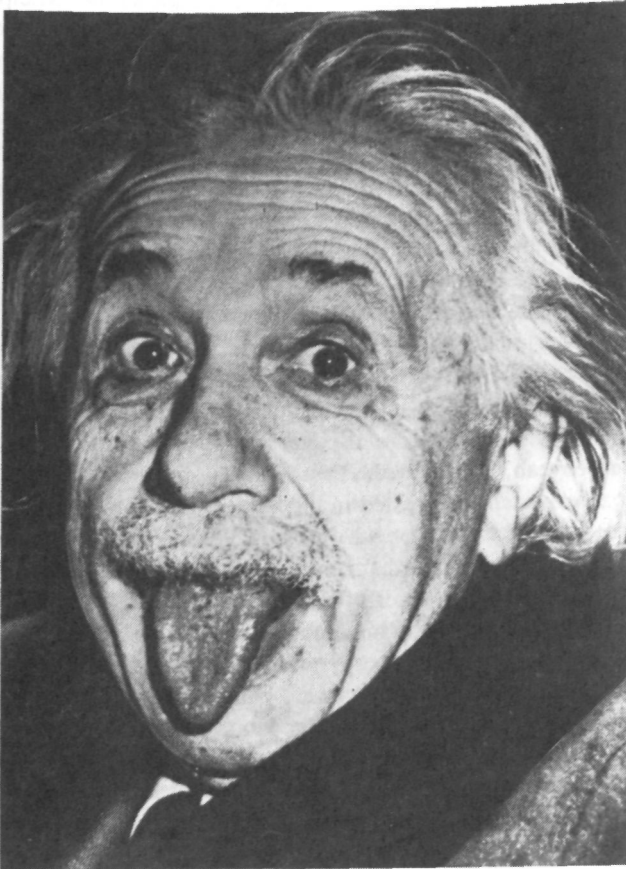
not let itself be seduced by the attraction of the "great problems," but instead initially finds its themes in the trivial, in everyday life, in the so-called unimportant, in those things that otherwise are not worth speaking about, in petty details. Whoever wants to can, in such a change of perspective, already recognize the kynical impulse for which the "low-brow themes" are not too low.

Tongue, Stuck Out

For well-bred people it is difficult to say no. A no would be willfulness and the more well bred we are, the more willfulness is exorcised. Obedience is the first duty of children, and it later becomes the duty of a citizen. In quarrels among children, however, it does not yet play a role, and here saying no and asserting oneself are not so difficult. When we quarrel passionately, we often come to the point

where words alone are not enough. The body then knows how to help: We stick out our tongues and make a noise that makes it clear what we think of the other person. We put all our energy into it, and apart from all its other advantages, it is also unequivocal. Sometimes when we do this, our eyes squint maliciously together and the eyelids quiver from the energy being emitted. At other times when we stick out our tongues, we open our eyes wide, like funny mirrors. Those who can stick out their tongues are not in danger of nodding when they want to shake their head. Generally, as far as gestures of the head are concerned, saying no is not firmly fixed in the body; there are cultures in which head shaking and nodding, no and yes, are learned the opposite way.

Sticking the tongue out says no with many undertones: There can be aggression in it, obstinacy, or mockery, and it tells the addressee that we consider him or her an idiot or a bore. This no may be nasty or cheerful, or both: joy at another's misfortune. In doing so, we can easily make a sound that sounds like "neaah," which goes well with malicious joy —with greater agitation even a "beaah" or an "eeyeah," whereby the expression of disrespect predominates. We are, of course, especially interested in the maliciously joyful no that belongs to kynical satire; it is sticking the tongue out like Eulenspiegel did, the attacking fool who can well mock the stupid misfortune of others. Eulenspiegel is the modern model of the kynic, an enlightener of the crude sort who is not intimidated even by thrashings. He does not hide his malicious joy behind good manners as the more refined enlighteners of the bourgeois epoch do, and he has fun exposing and embarrassing stupid people. Because he is a pantomimic enlightener, he does not experience the inhibitions that force subtler people to hide their "nasty" emotions. He embodies a robust intelligence that does not censor its impulses. He stands, like all kynics, halfway between the impudent and the spontaneous, between the naive and the artful, and because he oscillates so ambivalently between honesty and nastiness with his vulgar assent, conventional morality does not have an easy time with him. He proves that often we bring the truth to light only at the cost of rude impertinence. With this we are in the middle of cultural ambivalences. The truth often speaks against all conventions, and the kynic plays the role of a moralist who makes it clear that one has to violate morality in order to save it. That is the sign of complicated times. Things have become so tangled that morality and amorality change abruptly into one another. The one side declares Eulenspiegel, who sticks his tongue out at them, to be crazy, while he insists that it is his fellow beings who are nuts and require treatment.

Mouth, Smiling Maliciously, Crooked

The knowledge of the master cynic is based on a crooked superiority. The powerful man sees to his advantage, even when he knows that he thereby comes into a morally dubious position. A crooked smile, an evilly clever gesture, easily

arises out of crooked superiority. This smile defends a bad status quo, an in-justice. The rights of others? Where would we end up? Hunger? What's that? One corner of the mouth, often the left corner, is drawn upward. On the mouth of the master, the split in his consciousness becomes visible; the other half knows that there is really nothing to laugh about. One half of the mouth turns knowingly up-ward, so that the other half involuntarily falls contemptuously downward. The worldy realism of the master cynic comes from the wish to save face while getting his hands dirty. This face thus often goes together with polished manners. The cynical smile appears, true to form, embedded in a brazen politeness that restrains itself and reveals that it wants to keep others at a distance as surely as it controls itself.

This is the smile of the heights of power and its melancholy, as it can be seen on high officials, politicians, editors. Best of all, however, one can imagine courtly personages of the rococo with this smile—as, say, the unhappy, unctious man-in-waiting of Louis XV, LeBel, in the film *Fanfan the Hussar,* whose smile was as crooked as the comma between yes and but.

Mouth, Bitter, Tight

The life experiences of victims are revealed in their bitterness. On their lips, a bitter silence forms. They cannot be tricked anymore. They know how things work. The emphatically disappointed may even gain a small advantage over fate, a space for the play of self-assertion and pride. Lips that are pressed tightly to-gether and narrowed to thin lines because of hardship betray the worldly, ex-perienced side of those who have been duped. Even some children whom life has treated badly have these bitter, tight mouths from which it is so difficult to wangle some sort of consent to anything good. Mistrust is the intelligence of the disad-vantaged. However, the mistrustful can easily make stupid mistakes once more when their bitterness causes them to also pass over what, after all those painful things, would do them good. Happiness will always look like fraud and will seem much too cheap to be worth reaching for. Bound to past experience, the cynically bitter lips know only one thing: that ultimately everything is deception and that no one will ever again bring them to be soft and, blushing, surrender themselves to any temptation of the world's swindle.

Mouth, Laughing Loudly, Big-Mouthed

"hen the cynic smiles melancholically-contemptuously, from the illusionless heights of power, it is characteristic for the kynic to laugh so loudly and un-abashedly that refined people shake their heads. Kynical laughter comes from the mtestines; it is grounded at the animal level and lets itself go without restraint. Those who claim to be realists should, strictly speaking, be able to laugh this

Detail from Raphael, *The School of Athens, Diogenes on the Steps.*

way-this total, uncramping laughter that wipes away illusions and postures. We have to imagine the laugh of the great satirist Diogenes as just such a laugh, and Diogenes is related to the wandering Asiatic monks who presented their pious trickery in the villages and, roaring with laughter, disappeared from the scene when the villagers discovered that the holiness of these holy men was not quite as they had imagined. In the expression of some laughing Buddhas, too, there is something of this animal and, at the same time, ecstatic and realistic belly laughter that frolics about so unselfconsciouslessly in its springs and thrusts that no ego is left in the laughing, only a serene energy that celebrates itself. Those who are too civilized and timid easily get the impression that there could be something demonic, devilish, unserious, and destructive in such laughter. Here is the place to listen carefully. The Devil's laughter has the energy of destruction within it, with crashing crockery and collapsing walls, an evil laughter above the debris. In positive ecstatic laughter, by contrast, the energy of a perplexed affirmation is at play; in spite of its wildness, it sounds contemplative, celebratory. It is also no accident that women rather than men tend to laugh in this way, and the drunken rather than the sober. The devil's energy is the energy that laughs until the others fall silent. In the laughter of Diogenes and Buddha, the ego itself, which had taken things so seriously, laughs itself to death. Of course, that takes a big mouth that can be opened wide without hindrance, not for fine phrases but for a strong vitality in which there is more astonishment than pretentiousness. The kind of big'

mouthedness that interests the philosopher is not an active but a passive one, the saying of aaah when we watch fireworks or look at a mountain, or in flashes of genius in which Aha! passes through us. With great insights we want to shout, and what are great insights other than a release from false complicatedness?

Mouth, Serene, Still

In a satisfied face, the lips rest on each other, imperceptibly vibrating. Everything is as it is. There is nothing to say. Diogenes sits mute in the sun and contemplates the stone steps of the market pavilion. Not the shadow of a thought passes through his head. His eyes are immersed in the cosmic flickering of the Greek light. He watches the people going about their business. If it occurred to one of them to sit down in front of him and closely observe his face with an open heart, it could easily happen that that person would suddenly, disconcertedly begin to cry or to laugh for no reason at all.

Eye Gazes, Eye Blinkers

The eyes are the organic prototype of philosophy. Their enigma is that they not only can see but are also able to see themselves seeing. This gives them a prominence among the body's cognitive organs. A good part of philosophical thinking is actually only eye reflex, eye dialectic, seeing-oneself-see. For this, reflecting media, mirrors, water surfaces, metals, and other eyes are necessary, through which the seeing of seeing becomes visible.

The kynical gaze understands itself as looking through a laughable and hollow show. It would like to put society before a natural mirror in which people recognize themselves unveiled and without masks. Diogenes sees through the puffed-up idealism and cultural arrogance of the Athenians. What interests him is not masquerades and idealistic poses, justifications and palliations. He rivets his eyes on the naked facts of nature. In a sense, if he possessed theoretical ambition, he could rate as the first critical positivist. The kynical gaze is always directed at what is naked; it wants to acknowledge the "raw," animal, and simple facts above which the lovers of higher things like to place themselves. Indeed, the original kynic can take pleasure in what is naked and elementary because he experiences m them truth as unconcealedness. For him the usual divisions are invalid; there !s neither above nor below, neither dirty nor pure. This gaze is open, realistic, and generous, and it is not embarrassed to look at what is naked; it does not matter whether it is beautiful or ugly, as long as it is natural. The gaze of the master ᶜynic, by contrast, is unhappily broken, reflectively bent. With this gaze, the hegemonic powers look at their own strategy, recognizing that behind everything mat presents itself as law, a large portion of force and arrogance is hidden. Who should take closer notice of that than those who exercise power and arrogance
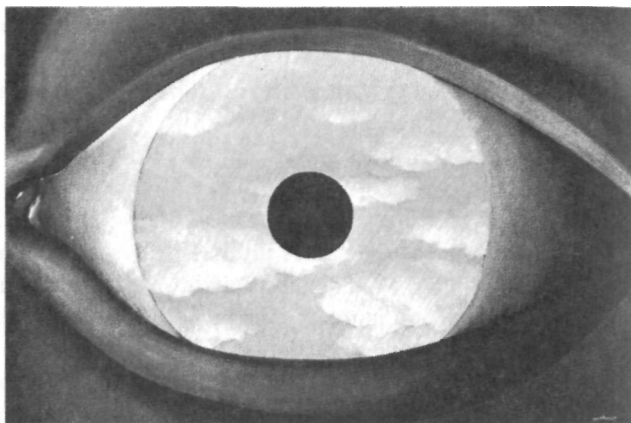
Rene Magritte, *The False Mirror,* 1928. (©S.P.A.D.E.M., Paris/V.A.G.A., New York, 1987.)

half-heartedly and half-awake? In the melancholy reflection of a master cynic, therefore, there is often a tendency to be cross-eyed. The eyes of marked cynics betray themselves through a touch of cross-eyedness, a slight inward or outward turning of one of the organs. Those who are born cross-eyed and choose the path to science, philosophy, or political practice already appear to be somatically predisposed toward a double vision of things, of essence and illusion, of the concealed and the naked. The organ dialectic of their eyes drives them on in this, whereas other thinkers, bound by the myth of normality, like to ignore that they, too, see from two different perspectives and that nobody has two identical eyes. A part of our thinking structure is located in the eyes, particularly the dialectic of right and left, of the masculine and the feminine, of the straight and the crooked.

With intellectuals, an astounding dullness in the eyes is often evident that comes not least of all from the continual violence done to the eyes by having to read things the eyes would not accept if they had their own way. They must serve merely as tools for reading; and it is no wonder when the perspective of such people, being used to black lines, glides right off from reality. Master cynical knowledge, as it collects in intellectual heads, betrays itself through the rigid eye blinkers and a cloudiness and coldness of the gaze. It transfixes things it does not penetrate and to which it does not really grant existence. In such eyes there is an expression that can be compared with the crooked smile. The cynical gaze lets things know that they do not exist as real objects for it, but only as phenomena and information. It looks at them as if they already belonged to the past. It takes them in, registers them, and ponders its self-preservation. Of course it is offended that the things return this gaze; they look back as coldly as they are looked at.

cannot become warm before the ice melts in the eyes of those who believe were called on to valorize, to administer the world, and to ravage it. tnw

Breasts

l the modern civilization of media and fashion, an atmospheric concoction of osmetics, pornography, consumerism, illusion, addiction, and prostitution reigns for which the baring and depiction of breasts is typical. In the commodity world, it seems that nothing functions without them anymore. Everyone speculates cynically on the addictive reflexes of others. With everything that is supposed to look lifelike and arouse desires, they are present, as the universal ornaments of capitalism. Everything that is dead, superfluous, alienated draws attention to itself with laughing forms. Sexism? If only it were so simple. Advertising and pornography are special cases of modern cynicism, which knows that power must make its way through ideals and that the dreams and addictions of others can be simultaneously stimulated and frustrated in order to achieve one's own ends. Politics is not only the art of the possible, as has been said, but just as much the art of seduction. It is the chocolate side of power that assumes first, that order must prevail and, second, that the world wants to be deceived.

These modern business breasts exist, philosophically speaking, only in themselves *(an sich),* as things, not for themselves *(fur sick),* as conscious bodies. They merely signify a power, an attraction. But what would breasts be for themselves, independent of their cynical baring on the commodity market? What is their relation to the power and energy emanating from them? Many would prefer to have nothing at all to do anymore with this play of power, attraction, and desire. Others embody consciously and frivolously their appeal to the other sex. Something of their consciousness of power is still present in the hackneyed phrase about the "weapons of a woman." Some are also unhappy because they do not look like the ideal breasts in advertising. They do not feel very good being naked when they do not have the prevailing aesthetic on their side. Some, on the other hand, have the sweetness of ripe pears that have become so heavy and friendly toward themselves that, on an appropriate occasion, they fall from the tree into a hand they feel recognizes them.

Arses

 he arse seems doomed to spend its life in the dark, as the beggar among body Parts. It is the real idiot of the family. However, it would be a wonder if this black s eep of the body did not have its own opinion about everything that takes place n higher regions, similar to the declassed who often cast the most sober gaze on People in the upper strata. If the head were to enter into conversation just once Wlth its antipode, the latter would first stick out its tongue, if it had one. As in

the enlightenment film of the *Rote Grtitze,*[2] *Was heisst hier Liebe* (What do you mean by love?), the arse would say to the higher spheres: I find that our relationship is shitty.

The arse is the plebeian, the grass-roots democrat, and the cosmopolitan among the parts of the body— in a word, the elementary kynical organ. It provides the solid materialist basis. It is at home on toilets all over the world. The International of Arses is the only worldwide organization that has no statutes, ideology, or dues. Its solidarity cannot be shaken. The arse crosses all borders playfully, unlike the head, to which borders and possessions mean a lot. Without any objection, it squats on this or that chair. To an unspoiled arse, the difference between a throne[3] and a kitchen stool, a bench and a Holy Chair is not particularly impressive. Now and again, it can also sit on the ground; the only thing it dislikes is standing when it is tired. This proclivity for the elementary and the fundamental predisposes the arse especially to philosophy. It probably registers the nuances, but it would not think of making a fuss like vain heads do when they knock themselves bloody over the occupation of seats. It never loses sight of what really underlies it: the firm ground. In an erotic sense, too, the arse often shows itself to be both sensitive and superior. It does not pretend to be choosier than is necessary. Even then, it is the one that easily raises itself above imagined borders and exclusivities. When the famous Arletty was accused of having had sexual relations with members of the German occupation forces, her answer is said to have been: "My heart is French, but my backside is international." As representative of the kynical principle per se (able to survive anywhere, reduction to the essentials), the arse can hardly be brought under government control, although it cannot be denied that many an arsehole has given off nationalistic tones.

Often beaten, kicked, and pinched, the arse has a worldview from below: plebeian, popular, realistic. Millennia of bad treatment have not passed over it without leaving a mark. They have trained it to be a materialist, albeit one with a dialectical tendency, which assumes that things are shitty but not hopeless. Nothing can cause as much bitterness as the feeling of not being welcome. Only the undertone of fascination that can be heard through so much maltreatment gives the oppressed a secret feeling of power. Something about which silence is so stubbornly maintained, even though it cannot be evaded, must have a great power over the spirits. The best energies are often hidden behind the strongest swear words. It is as if all the maltreated backsides are waiting for their hour of revenge in the near future, when everything will again be falling flat on its arse. The feeling f^{or} time is generally one of the special strengths of arses, for very early on they develop a feeling for what has to be done immediately, for what can be postponed, and for what a well-padded behind can wait out patiently until doomsday. Th^{at} is really a political art that today is called timing and that has its roots in a praxis even children's arses learn, namely, to perform what has to be at the right tim^{e}> not too early and not too late.

. . . how Eulenspiegel shat in a bathroom in Hannover and claimed it was a house of purity. Woodcut illustration from a popular book, 1515.

The arse triumphs secretly, conscious that without it nothing works. Being there precedes being such and such; first existence, then qualities; first reality, then good and evil, above and below. Thus arses are, in addition to their dialectical-materialist inclinations, also the first existentialists. They practice the existential dialectic in advance: Should one decide in favor of what has to be in any case, or does one choose to revolt against the unavoidable? Even those who decide to let things take their course have decided, as Sartre says, not to decide. Freedom surrenders to necessity. One can, however, also decide against it —not, of course, against the fact that one must, but against the fact that the must can do anything at all with one. One can struggle against it and hold back what has to be; then one becomes, following Camus, the person in revolt. Nobody must must, says Lessing's Nathan, and the popular saying adds: Dying and shitting are the only things one must do. That remains the kynical a priori. The arse is thus, of all bodily organs, the one closest to the dialectical relation of freedom and necessity. It is no accident that psychoanalysis—a thoroughly kynically inspired discipline—devotes subtle investigations to it and names a fundamental anthropological stage, the anal phase, after the experiences and vicissitudes of the arse. Its themes are Can and Cannot, Must and Must not, Have and Hold Back. The Principle of achievement is contained in it. To understand the arse would be therefore the best preparatory study for philosophy, the somatic propaedeutic. How

many constipated theories we would be spared! Again we meet up with Diogenes
He was the first European philosopher who, instead of employing a lot of words
in the Athenian market, performed his urgent business. *Naturalia non sunt turpi$_a$*
In nature, he says, we find nothing about which we would have to be ashamed
Real bestiality and perverted spirits are found where the arrogance of morality
and the imbroglio of culture begin. The heads, however, did not want to recog-
nize that this was an early climax of reason, a moment in which philosophy had
found a balance with the principle of nature. For a moment, it was beyond good
and evil and beyond turning up its nose. Respectable thinkers, on the other hand
insist on their view; according to them, it can only have been a joke or a provoca-
tive dirty trick. They refuse to conjecture that there could be a truth-producing
meaning in such a manifestation.

Fart

The theme cannot be excused; indeed, it will get worse. I regret this for all sensi-
tive readers, but the fart, even if not emitted, cannot be omitted. Those who do
not want to talk about it would also have to have kept silent about the arse. The
subject matter demands it, and after we have spoken about oral matters, our
presentation, for better or for worse, must go through its anal phase before we
come to the genitals. To speak of the fart is not difficult insofar as it represents
a sound that always means something in social situations. Witnesses of a fart in-
evitably interpret the sound. All in all, the semantics of the fart is a rather compli-
cated problem, a problem that is seriously neglected by linguistics and communi-
cation research. The scale of meaning stretches from awkwardness to contempt,
from humorous intentions to lack of respect. Teachers, professors, speakers, and
conference participants all know the torture of having to stifle a fart because such
a sound expresses something that, in reality, one does not want to say. Could it
aid our empathy with politicians if, in listening to their speeches, we were to think
more often that they are possibly at that very moment concentrating on subduing
a fart that has been wanting to interrupt their talk? The art of the vague statement
is related to the art of unobtrusive flatulence: Both are diplomacy.

Semiotically, we assign the fart to the group of signals, that is, of signs, which
neither symbolize nor depict something but rather point to a situation. When the
locomotive whistles, it warns about its approach and possible danger. The fan
conceived as a signal shows that the lower body is in full action, and in situations
where any reference to such regions is absolutely undesirable, this can have ta
consequences. Ernst Jiinger noted in his *Paris Diary* about his reading ot tn
historian Flavius Josephus's *Jewish War:*

Here I again came upon a passage in which the beginning of unrest in
Jerusalem under Cumanus is described (II, 12). While the Jews

gathered for the festival of unleavened bread, the Romans positioned a cohort above the hall of columns in the temple to keep an eye on the crowd. One of the soldiers in the cohort pulled up his coat, and with a mocking bow turned his behind to the Jews and "let forth an indecent sound corresponding to his position." That triggered a clash that cost ten thousand lives, so that one can speak of the most fateful fart in world history. *(Strahlungen,* vol. II, pp. 188-89)

The cynicism of the Roman soldier, whose fart was a political provocation and a "blasphemy" in the temple,[4] finds a counterpart in Jiinger's commentary, which crosses over into the area of theoretical cynicism.[5]

Shit, Refuse

Here we come to the whole of the matter. As children of an anal culture, we all have a more or less disturbed relation to our own shit. The splitting off of our consciousness from our own shit is the deepest training in order; it tells us what must happen privately and under wraps. The relation that is drummed into people with regard to their own excretions provides the model for their behavior with all sorts of refuse in their lives. Hitherto, refuse was systematically ignored. Only under the sign of modern ecological thinking do we find ourselves forced to become conscious again of our refuse. High theory discovers the category "shit"; a new stage of the philosophy of nature thereby comes due, a critique of the human being as a hyperproductive shit-accumulating industry-animal. Diogenes is the only Western philosopher who we know consciously and publicly performed his animal business, and there are reasons to interpret this as a component of a pantomimic theory. It hints at a consciousness of nature that assigns positive values to the animal side of human beings and does not allow any dissociation of what is low or embarrassing. Those who do not want to admit that they produce refuse and that they cannot choose to do anything else risk suffocating one day in their own shit. Everything suggests that Diogenes of Sinope should be admitted to the Ancestral Gallery of Ecological Consciousness. The grand act of ecology in the history of ideas that will have an impact as far as philosophy, ethics, and Politics are concerned will be to transform the phenomenon of refuse into a "high" heme. From now on it is no longer an onerous secondary phenomenon but is recognized as a basic principle. With this, the last hidden positions of idealism and dualism are really broken down. Shit has to be encountered in another way. ls now necessary to rethink the usefulness of the unuseful, the productivity of le unproductive, philosophically speaking: to unlock the positivity of the negate and to recognize our responsibility also for what is unintended. Kynical philsophers are those who do not get nauseated.[6] In this they are related to children, do not yet know anything about the negativity of their excrement.

The Scepter. What we conjecture where we don't see anything, that rules the world.

Genitals

These are the geniuses among the organs of the lower half of the body. When they have collected enough experience, they can tell fine stories about how things really are in the big and the small world. They are like the wire pullers in the dark the shark song in the *Threepenny Opera* says cannot be seen. But in their hands all threads finally come together. In the beginning, Freudian psychoanalysis was accused, among other things, of cynicism because it taught that everything human beings do can be reduced in the final analysis to sexual impulses and their detor mations. This is, of course, a malicious misunderstanding even though it has grain of truth. In fact, psychoanalysis does adopt something of the kynical im pulse in its theoretical procedure, namely, a resoluteness not to let the naked tru that hides behind cultural disguises elude it. As long as it was customary to se

omething low and dirty in sexuality, it was also only a small step to confusing the kynical drive in psychoanalysis toward truth with cynicism, which tries to reduce everything "higher" to the lowest denominator. Then cynicism would be just _{va}riant of nihilism, and Freud would have preached a materialism that unduly emphasizes the animal in human beings.[7] However, insofar as psychoanalysis constitutes a theory supportive of life and humanity, it is not at all cynical but tries, in the spirit of Diogenes (and even more, of Epicure), to heal those fissures that idealistic taboos have opened up in carnal pleasures. If today the figure of Freud is virtually overgrown with objections and doubts about his theory and his person, it should nevertheless not be forgotten how great the liberation is that has emanated from him.

However, after the "sexual revolution" things have not gotten any simpler, and it is precisely enlightened genitals that often have an unhappy consciousness. They now live in the twilight of freedom and have learned that sexual adventures and the art of loving are not the same thing. After the "mutual use of the sexual organs"-as Immanuel Kant, in good enlightened fashion, described the marriage contract-the question often remains: Is that all? And if that is everything, why make such a fuss about it?

Out of liberal sexual roaming, a cynicism easily results for which everything is a matter of indifference. The longer the game lasts, the stronger the impression becomes that what we are really looking for does not exist in this world. In their own way, the genitals know, once they have gone through the school of capaciousness, about the modern "frosts of freedom." They begin to get scared of exaggerations. The suspicion grows that they too are on the best path toward becoming respectable, if respectability means a mixture of reasonableness, cynicism, and resignation.

Enlightenment disillusions, and where disillusionment becomes widespread, self-experience in the ecstasy that shows us in clear moments who we can really be dies. This is the most sensitive point in advanced civilization. The more ideals disintegrate and the positing of meaning from "above" fails, the more we will be forced to listen to the life energies that bear us along. Whether they can carry us, 'hat is the question, for they can only do so when they flow without obstruction. [0] they flow? Does life live? Are orgasms really our signposts to that "oceanic -eling" described by Romain Rolland as the basis of religious consciousness and that our great theoretician of the libido, Sigmund Freud, refused to acknowledge ^ecause he had not directly experienced **it?**

Notes

- • borrow this concept from Ivan Illich and transfer it to the area of epistemology.
- • [A progressive children's theater group in Berlin-Trans.]
- • Napoleon Bonaparte, who was admired by many because of his realistic cynicism (see chapter ' ª * ᵉ ᵈ 'n his sarcastic New Year's Day speech in 1814: "What is a throne anyway? Four pieces

of gilded timber and a shred of velvet?-No, the throne is a man, and I am this man." The langu_a,, of a cynic, who behaves like an upstart, i.e., awkwardly matter-of-fact, toward ceremony ("fuss"i and legitimacy ("paper").

4. Later (see chapter 8) I explain blasphemy as a phenomenon related to religious cynicism

5. See on this point the sixth cardinal cynicism (chapter 8).

6. Here we see that cynicism arises from a reversal of kynicism. The cynic feels nauseated in prj_n ciple: for him, everything is shit; his overdisappointed superego does not see the good in the shit Hence his *nausee.*

7. The connections between psychoanalysis and cynicism will be touched on in three places it this book; in chapter 8 ("Sexual Cynicism" and "The Cynicism of Knowledge") and in chapter 13 Excursus 2 ("The Ice Dogs: On the Psychoanalysis of the Cynic").

Chapter 7
The Cabinet of Cynics

In the cabinet of cynics, there are no individualized personalities but rather *types,* that is, social characters and characters of a period. When we examine them, it does no harm to imagine them as dolls in a cabinet of wax figures where prominent historical personages meet. On our tour we also encounter literary figures who can be used to demonstrate archetypal features of cynical consciousness. Only the first two we find exhibited here—both figures of antiquity—actually lived: Diogenes of Sinope, the ancestral father of the species, and Lucian of Samosata on the Euphrates. The two modern figures, Goethe's Mephistopheles and Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, are by contrast figures created by poets out of the material of cynical experience. In plasticity, they have everything the historical personalities have. As pure types there is something impersonal, immortal, about them, and in this they resemble Diogenes and Lucian, of whom we likewise possess only silhouettes with none of the details that distinguish real individuals from their types. At the end of this series, we find, as representative of the present, a quite faceless figure that resembles everybody and nobody. It is called Anyone *(das Man);* Martin Heidegger has polished and abstracted it. It reminds one a little of the figures of the painter De Chirico, mannequins with empty, round heads and artificial limbs, geometrically shaped, which look like human beings, but only "look like" because they lack "authenticity."

We will keep the tour through the historical cabinet as short as possible, first, because museums are fatiguing and second, because the main points can be demonstrated by a few examples. By rights, of course, many other faces would nave to crop up —Antisthenes, Crates, Aristophanes, Francois Villon, Rabelais,

Heinrich Zille, Dog theater on a fairground in Berlin around 1900.

Machiavelli, Eulenspiegel, Castruccio Castracani, Sancho Panza, Rameau's nephew, Frederick II of Prussia, de Sade,[1] Talleyrand, Napoleon, Büchner, Grabbe, Heine, Flaubert, Nietzsche, Cioran, and many more. Some of them will be mentioned in other parts of this book. The whole of Part V, Historical Main Text, is indirectly devoted to the German kynics and cynics of the early twentieth century.

   We join our museum guide, who, before each of the figures, insists on making educated comments on the historical significance of the gentlemen depicted. It is clear that philosophy is his passion and that he belongs to that species of people who like to show off their education. That means that from now on we will have to grit our teeth. The man really wants to teach us something. Nothing is worse than a museum guide who, in all seriousness, wants to instruct his visitors. Such a dilettante lacks the professional philosopher's fear of philosophy. But have courage! Haven't we already survived unscathed quite different attempts to make us smarter? Avanti!

Diogenes of Sinope: Human Dog, Philosopher, Good-for-Nothing

> *Once he called out loud: Hey there, people! and as they ran up to him, he worked them over with his staff with the words: I called for people, not riff-raff!*

To approach one another with a smile full of "understanding" would be a misunderstanding. Diogenes, who we have before us here, is not at all an idylh° dreamer in his tub but a dog that bites when he feels like it.[2] He is one of those

Diogenes, Democritus, and two fools standing around the globe. From the *Narren-schiff* (The ship of fools), 1497.

who simultaneously bark and bite and do not pay much attention to proverbs. His bite sank so deep into the most highly treasured values of Athenian civilization that since then no satirist could be trusted. The memory of his bites belongs to the most vivid impressions retained from antiquity. For this reason, the humorous approval of this philosopher by many an ironically minded citizen almost always rests on a belittling misunderstanding. In the citizen there is a caged wolf who sympathizes with the biting philosopher. But Diogenes sees above all the citizen •n his sympathizer, and he bites all the same. Theory and praxis are incalculably interwoven in his philosophy and there is no room for mere theoretical agreement. Even mere practical imitation would not please him; he would probably think it was stupid. He is impressed only by characters whose presence of mind, quick wit, alertness, and independent feeling toward life are a match for his. His ^{su}ggestive success rests not least of all on the fact that he was a teacher who Wanted no pupils who imitated him. In this he resembles the Japanese Zen Masters, whose effect is achieved by teaching through nonteaching.

We could not picture his external appearance today or gain an impression of

his effect on the Athenian environment if we did not have the visual instruction of the hippies, freaks, globetrotters, and metropolitan Indians.[3] He is a wild, witty, cunning sort. Part of the standard picture, as it is handed down from antiquity, is that the kynic must be without possessions —mostly involuntarily by birth, then, on top of that, voluntarily, whereby an impression of sovereignty arises. Everything kynics own, they carry with them. For Diogenes and his kind this means an all-weather coat, a staff, a knapsack with the smallest personal effects, including probably a toothpick, a pumice for cleansing the skin, a drinking vessel made of wood. The feet are in sandals. This outfit, when it was chosen by free citizens, was somewhat shocking, especially at a time when it was considered disgraceful for an Athenian to appear in public unaccompanied by slaves. That Diogenes had a beard is self-evident, even if it is not so much a matter of a proper beard, but rather of the unshavenness of many decades.[4]

Diogenes' influence on his contemporaries, however, was not a question of aesthetics. A disheveled appearance says little when, on the other hand, it is known that the Athenian upper-class whores granted the unkempt philosopher exclusive and unpaid favors that other poor suckers at most only dreamed about. Between Lai's and Phryne, the star courtesans of the Attic capital, and Diogenes, it seems there were laws of giving and taking that the normal citizen, who has to pay cash for everything, does not understand.

To call him an ascetic would be incorrect because of the false undertones the word asceticism has assumed through a thousand-year-long masochistic misunderstanding. We have to rid the word of its Christian connotations to rediscover its fundamental meaning. As free of need as Diogenes appears, he could be taken rather as the original father of the idea of self-help, and thus as an ascetic in the sense that he was a self-helper by distancing himself from and being ironic about needs for whose satisfaction most people pay with their freedom. He, who provided the impulse for kynicism, introduced the original connection between happiness, lack of need, and intelligence into Western philosophy—a theme that can be found in all *vita simplex* movements in world cultures. As the original hippie and proto-Bohemian, Diogenes has left his mark on the European tradition of intelligent living. His spectacular poverty is the price of freedom; that must be understood. If he could be well-off without sacrificing his freedom, he would not have objected at all. But no wise man can let himself be made a fool of by so-called needs. Diogenes taught that the wise man too eats cake, but only if he can just as well do without it.

A dogmatism of poverty does not come into question; it is rather a matter of discarding false weights, which hinder one's freedom of movement. Self-torture is definitely a stupidity for Diogenes. Still more stupid, of course, from his point of view are those who spend their whole lives running after something they already have. Citizens struggle with the chimera of ambition and strive for riches

G. J. Caraglio after Parmigianino, *Diogenes with the "Platonic human,"* around 1530-40.

that, in the last analysis, they cannot enjoy any more than what is enjoyed in the elementary pleasures of the kynical philosopher as a daily recurring matter of course: lying in the sun, observing the goings-on in the world, being glad, and having nothing to wait for.

Since Diogenes was one of those philosophers of life for whom life is more important than writing, it is understandable why not a single authentic line from him has been preserved. Instead, a garland of anecdotes lives on around him that say more about his influence than any writing could do. Whether he really composed some writings, such as a *Politics* and the seven tragedy-parodies, as claimed by tradition, is left aside here. In any case, his significance does not lie ln writings. His existence is absorbed in the anecdotes he provoked. In them he became a mythical figure. Witty and instructive stories buzz around him, as they

do around his colleague, Mullah Nasrudin, in the Sufian satire. Precisely that proves his real existence. The most vital people thrust themselves on their contemporaries and even more on posterity as projection-figures and attract a definite direction of fantasy and thinking to themselves. They stimulate people's curiosity as to what it would be like to be in the skin of such a philosopher. Thereby they not only gain pupils but also attract people who carry their living impulse further. This curiosity with regard to Diogenes' existence seized even the greatest military hero of antiquity, Alexander of Macedonia, who is reputed to have said that he would want to be Diogenes if he were not Alexander. This shows the heights, both political and existential, to which the philosopher's influence reached.[5]

In the attempt to express Diogenes' intentions in modern language, we automatically approach existential philosophy. However, Diogenes does not talk about existence, decision, absurdity, atheism, and such key words of modern existentialism. The ancient Diogenes is ironic about his philosopher colleagues, poking fun not only at how they torture themselves with problems but also at their credulity regarding concepts. His existentialism does not go primarily through the head; he experiences the world as neither tragic nor absurd. There is not the slightest trace of the melancholy around him, which clings to all modern existentialism. His weapon is not so much analysis as laughter. He uses his philosophical competence to mock his serious colleagues. As anti-theoretician, anti-dogmatist, anti-scholar, he emits an impulse that resounds everywhere where thinkers strive for a "knowledge for free people," free also from the strictures of a school, and with this he begins a series in which names like Montaigne, Voltaire, Nietzsche, Feyerabend, and others appear. It is a line of philosophizing that suspends the *esprit de serieux*. How Diogenes' existentialism is to be understood is still best shown in the anecdotes. The danger of underestimating the philosophical content of kynicism, precisely because it has been handed down "only" anecdotally, is great. That even great spirits of the caliber of Hegel and Schopenhauer have fallen into this trap can be gleaned from their presentations of the history of philosophy. Hegel above all was blind to the theoretical content of a philosophy that finds ultimate wisdom precisely in not having a theory for the decisive things in life and that teaches instead to undertake the risk of existence consciously and serenely-

1. Legend has it that the young Alexander of Macedonia one day sought out Diogenes, whose fame had made him curious. He found him taking a sunbath, lying lazily on his back, perhaps close to an Athenian sportsfield; others say he was gluing books. The young sovereign, in an effort to prove his generosity- granted the philosopher a wish. Diogenes' answer is supposed to have been: "Stop blocking my sun!"[7] That is perhaps the most well known philosophical anecdote from Greek antiquity, and not without justice. It demonstrates in one stroke wha antiquity understands by philosophical wisdom — not so much a theoretical knowl- edge but rather an unerring, sovereign spirit. The wise man of long ago knew bes

Johannes Platner, *Diogenes and Alexander,* 1780.

of all the dangers of knowledge that lie in the addictive character of theory. All too easily they draw intellectuals into the ambitious stream where they succumb to intellectual reflexes instead of exercising autonomy. The fascination of this anecdote lies in the fact that it shows the emancipation of the philosopher from the politician. Here, the wise man is not, like the modern intellectual, an accomplice of the powerful, but turns his back on the subjective principle of power, ambition, and the urge to be recognized.[8] He is the first one who is uninhibited enough to say the truth to the prince. Diogenes' answer negates not only the desire for power, but the power of desire as such. It can be interpreted as an abridgment °f a theory of social needs. Socialized human beings lost their freedom when their educators succeeded in instilling wishes, projects, and ambitions in them. These atter separate them from their inner time, which knows only the Now, and draw them into expectations and memories.

Alexander, whose hunger for power drove him to the borders of India, found his master in an outwardly insignificant, indeed, a down-and-out philosopher. In eality, life js not t0 ^ found with the activists or in the mentality of security. re, the Alexander anecdote comes close to Jesus' simile about the birds in the avens who neither sow nor harvest yet live as the freest creatures under God's

Giovanni Castiglione, *Diogenes looking for Human Beings.*

heaven. Diogenes and Jesus are united in their irony directed at social labor that exceeds the necessary measure and merely serves to extend power. What for Jesus was taught by the birds was for Diogenes taught by a mouse; it became his model for self-sufficiency.[9]

2. Just as the Alexander anecdote highlights the philosopher's attitude toward the powerful and the insatiable, the famous episode with the lantern illustrates his stance vis-a-vis his fellow citizens in Athens. One day, in broad daylight, the philosopher lit a lamp and, as he was asked on his way through the town what he was doing, his answer was, Tm looking for people." This episode provides the masterpiece of his pantomimic philosophy. The seeker of people with his lantern does not couch his doctrine in a complicated, cultivated language. Seen in this light, Diogenes would certainly be the most humanitarian philosopher of our tradition, popular, graphic, exoteric, and plebeian, to a certain extent the great Grock[10] of antiquity. However, as affably as Diogenes behaves in his existential didactic procedure, just as biting —indeed, misanthropic —do his ethics turn against the inhabitants of the polis. Laertius emphasizes the special talent of our philosopher to show contempt—a sure sign of a strong, morally critical irritability. He pursues an idea of humanity that he scarcely finds realized in his fellow human beings. If true human beings are those who remain in control of their desires and live rationally in harmony with nature, it is obvious that urbanized, social human beings behave irrationally and inhumanely. They indeed require the philosopher's light even in daylight to orient themselves in the world. As a moralist, Diogenes appears in the role of the doctor of society. His harshness and roughness since that time have been interpreted ambiguously, either as poisons or as medicine. Where the philosopher appears as therapist, he inevitably encoun-

9iu&ro   tHompfies

G. Ehinger after Johann Heinrich Schonfeld, *Quaero homines,* first third of the
eighteenth century.

ters resistance from those who refuse his help, or, even more likely, denounce
him as a troublemaker or as the one who really needs to be healed —a structure
that can be observed everywhere today where therapists confront the disease-
producing relations of their society. In a way that inevitably reminds one of Rous-
seau, the philosopher with the lantern declares his fellow citizens to be social crip-
ples, misformed, addicted beings who in no way correspond to the image of the
autonomous, self-controlled, and free individual according to which the philoso-
pher tries to shape his own life. This is the therapeutic foil to social unreason.
In its exaggeration there is a misanthropic side, just as its practical effect may be
to balance and humanize. This ambivalence cannot be resolved theoretically, and
whether Diogenes as a person was more misanthrope than philanthrope, whether
m his satire there was more cynicism than humor, more aggression than cheerful-

ness, can in any case no longer be decided from our historical distance. I believe everything points toward underscoring in the figure of Diogenes the sovereign, humorous philosopher of life who, in Erich Fromm's words, is driven by a biophilic disposition to sarcastically take human stupidities to task. Enlightenment in antiquity tends to manifest itself in quarrelsome figures who are capable of reacting in an uncivil way to the spectacle of false living.

Diogenes appears in the period of the decay of the Athenian urban community. It is the eve of Macedonian rule with which the transition to Hellenism begins. The old, small-scale, patriotic ethos of the polis is caught in its own dissolution, which loosens the bonds of individuals to their citizenship. What was earlier the only conceivable place for sensible life now shows its obverse side. The city now becomes a melting pot of absurd customs, a hollow political mechanism whose functioning can now, all at once, be seen through as if from the outside. All but the blind must recognize that a new ethos and a new anthropology are now needed. One is no longer a narrow-minded citizen of a random city-community but must understand oneself as an individual in an extended cosmos. To this extended cosmos corresponds, geographically the new, broad trading network of the dawning Macedonian world empire; culturally, the Hellenistic civilization around the eastern Mediterranean; existentially, the experience of emigration, of migration, of being an outsider. Of Diogenes it is said: "Asked about his hometown, he answered: 'I am a citizen of the world!' " *(Diogenes Laertius,* vol. VI, p. 63). This grandiose new concept contains the boldest answer in antiquity to its most unsettling experience: reason's becoming homeless in the social world and the separation of the idea of true living from the empirical communities. Where socialization for the philosopher becomes synonymous with the unreasonable demand to be satisfied with the partial reason of one's own random culture and to join in the collective irrationality of one's society, there, the kynic's refusal has a Utopian significance. With their demand for a rational vitality, those who refuse shut themselves in against objective absurdities. The kynic thus sacrifices his social identity and forgoes the psychic comfort of unquestioned membership in a political group in order to save his existential and cosmic identity. He individualistically defends the universal against the—at best—half-rational collective particular that we call state and society. In the concept of citizen of the world, ancient kynicism passes on its most valuable gift to world culture. "The only true order of state I find is in the cosmos" *(Diogenes Laertius,* vol. VI, P-72). Cosmopolitan sages as bearers of living reason will accordingly only be able to integrate themselves unreservedly into a society when it has become a world-polis. Until then, their role is inevitably that of subversives; they remain the biting conscience of every dominating self-satisfaction and the affliction of every local narrowing.

3. The legend of Diogenes, which also provides us with all kinds of funny p[ic]tures, further reports that our philosopher, in order to prove his autonomy, made

his home in a vat or a tub, whether that sounds like a fairy tale or not. The explanation that possibly it was not a vat in our sense of the word but rather a cistern or a walled container for water or grain hardly detracts from this story. For no matter how the ominous vat was shaped, what is important here is not its appearance but what it signifies when, in the middle of the world-city, Athens, a man who was held to be wise decided to "live" in it. (He is also said to have slept under the roof of the hall of columns of Zeus, ironically remarking that the Athenians had probably erected the building especially for him as an abode.) Alexander the Great is said to have stood before the philosopher's residential container and cried out with admiration: "O vat full of wisdom!" What Diogenes demonstrates to his fellow citizens through his life-style would be designated now as a "regression to the level of an animal." Because of this, the Athenians (or perhaps it was the Corinthians) derogatorily called him "dog," for Diogenes had reduced his requirements to the living standards of a domestic pet. In doing so, he had freed himself from civilization's chain of needs. He thus also turned the Athenians' nickname around against them and accepted the insult as the name of his philosophy.[11]

One must recall this when one hears the quintessence Diogenes is supposed to have drawn from his doctrine: "To the question of what gain philosophy had brought him, he said, if nothing else, then at least, to be prepared for every vicissitude" *(DiogenesLaertius,* vol. VI, p. 63). Sages show that they can live literally anywhere because, in *any* place, they are in harmony with themselves and the "laws of nature." To the present day, this is the decisive attack against the ideology of "Home Beautiful" and comfortable estrangement. This does not necessarily mean that Diogenes would have to nourish resentment against comfort and cosy homes. However, those who want to be "prepared for every vicissitude" would understand comfort as a passing episode, like any other situation. That the philosopher was serious about this view, he could, of course, prove to his fellow citizens only in the tub because a comfortably situated Diogenes would never have had as great an impact as this impoverished, declassed wiseman at the nadir of architecture. In the later Stoa, where in matters of possession kynical principles were cited absolutely *{habere ut non:* have as if you did not have), one often did not know how it was really intended, for one indeed "had" and, seen on the whole, Stoicism was a philosophy of the comfortable. Diogenes, however, really was without possessions and he could convincingly shake his contemporaries' consciousness, as later, on Christian soil, the Franciscans first were able to do again. In a modern language, what in Diogenes upset his contemporaries could be expressed succinctly: "rejection of the superstructure" *(Uberbau-Verweigerung)*[n]. Superstructure in this sense would be what civilization offers by way of comfortable seductions to entice people to serve its ends: ideals, ideas about duty, promises of redemption, hopes for immortality, goals for ambition, stations of power, careers, arts, riches. From a kynical perspective, they are all

Francisco de Goya, *You Will Not Find Him.*

compensations for something a Diogenes does not let himself be robbed of in the first place: freedom, awareness, joy in living. The fascination of the kynical mode of life is its astounding, indeed almost unbelievable serenity. Those who have subjected themselves to the "reality principle" watch, perplexed and annoyed at the same time, but also fascinated, the activities of those who, so it seems, have taken the *shorter path* to authentic life and who avoid the long detour of culture to the satisfaction of needs. "Like Diogenes, who used to say, it is divine not ° need anything, and semidivine to only need little" *(Diogenes Laertius,* vol. * ' p. 105). The pleasure principle functions for the wise in a way similar to that normal mortals, however, not because they get pleasure from the possession

biects, but because they realize how dispensable objects are, and thus they remain in the continuum of vital contentedness. With Diogenes, this pleasure nvraniid, in which one only surrenders a lower form of pleasure in favor of a higher form, is evident. Yet here lies also the easily misunderstood point in kynical ethics:[13] It easily finds followers among masochistically inclined people who, through asceticism, get a chance to express their resentment against what is living *(lebendig)*- This ambivalence will mark out the further course of kynical sects. With Diogenes, kynical serenity still speaks for itself. It is the riddle on which those who suffer under an all-too-well-known "discontent in the culture" labor, including Sigmund Freud, who went so far as to claim that happiness was not provided for in the plan of creation. Would not Diogenes, the protokynic, be the most appropriate person to stand as a living witness against the great psychologist's resignation (a mild variant of cynicism?)?

4. The political barb of the kynical offensive only reveals itself in a last group of anecdotes about Diogenes the shameless, Diogenes the "political animal." Now, this has nothing to do with what Aristotle understands by *zoon politikon,* the human being as a social entity that can only experience its individuality in relation to society. The expression "animal" is to be taken more literally than the translation of *zoon* as "living being" allows. The emphasis is on animality, the animal side and animal basis of human existence. "Political animal": This term outlines the platform of an existential anti-politics.[14] Diogenes, the shameless political animal, loves life and demands a natural, not an exaggerated, but an honorable place for the animal side. Where the animal side is neither suppressed nor excessively elevated, a "discontent in the culture" becomes impossible. Life energy must rise from below and flow unobstructedly, even in the wise. For the person who loves life, like Diogenes, the "reality principle" takes on a different form. Ordinary realism stems from fearfulness and a peevish putting up with necessities that the "system of needs"[15] prescribes for socialized beings. According to tradition, Diogenes lived to a ripe old age, more than ninety years. For a philosopher who was a student of ethics and regarded only embodiment as valid, this fact functions like a proof in his favor.[16] Some say that Diogenes poisoned himself by gnawing on the raw bone of an ox; this is surely the version told by his opponents, who maliciously emphasize the risks of a simple life. Perhaps they reveal thereby hat Diogenes extended the critical spark against civilization even to eating cusoms, playing off the raw against the cooked, and therefore could have been a °rerunner of the modern proponents of raw foods and natural diet. According 0 the version disseminated by his pupils, Diogenes died by holding his breath, >ch, of course, would be an excellent proof of his superiority in living as in dying.

Diogenes' shamelessness cannot be understood at first glance. Although it ,ee ms to be explained on the one hand by a philosophy of nature *(naturalia non*

sunt turpia), its real point lies in the political, sociotheoretical arena. Shame is the most intimate social fetter, which binds us, *before* all concrete rules of conscience, to universal standards of behavior. Existential philosophers, however cannot remain satisfied with the socially prescribed conditioning in shame. They return once more to the beginning of the process. What a person really has to be ashamed of is by no means settled by social conventions, especially because society itself is suspected of being based on perversions and irrationalities.[17] The kynic thus serves notice on being led by the nose by deeply engrained commandments regarding shame. The customs, including those dealing with shame, could after all be perverted. Only an examination following the principles of nature and reason can give them a secure foundation. The political animal breaks through the politics of ashamedness. It demonstrates that people as a rule are ashamed for the wrong reasons, for their *physis,* their animal sides (which, in fact, are innocent), while they remain unmoved by their irrational and ugly practices, their greed, unfairness, cruelty, vanity, prejudice, and blindness. Diogenes turns the tables. He literally shits on the perverted norms. Before the eyes of the Athenian market public, he used to do "what concerns not only Demeter but also Aphrodite" *{Diogenes Laertius,* vol. VI, p. 69)—translated: shitting, pissing, masturbating (possibly fornicating too). The later Platonic and Christianized tradition, which suffocated the body under shame, of course, could see only scandal in this, and centuries of secularization were necessary before the philosophical core of significance in these gestures could be approached. Psychoanalysis has done its bit for this rediscovery by inventing a language in which anal and genital "phenomena" can be spoken about in public. Precisely this, on a pantomimic level, was demonstrated by Diogenes for the first time. If wise persons are emancipated beings, they must have dissolved the internal instances of oppression in themselves. Shame is a main factor in social conformisms, the switch point where external controls are transformed into internal controls. With his public masturbation, Diogenes committed a shamelessness by means of which he set himself in opposition to the political training in virtue of all systems. It was a frontal attack on all politics of the family, the core of all conservatism. Because, as tradition ashamedly has it, he sang his wedding song with his own hands, he was not subject to the compulsion to get married to satisfy his sexual needs. Diogenes taught masturbation by practical example, as cultural progress, mind you, not as regression to the animalistic. According to the wiseman, one should let the animal live, insofar as it is a condition of the human. The serene masturbator ("If only one could also drive away hunger by rubbing the belly") breaks through the conservative sexual economy without vital losses. Sexual independence remains one of tn most important conditions of emancipation.[18]

Diogenes, the political animal, raises existential presence of mind to a p^{rinC1}?, pie that finds its most concise expression in the phrase "Be prepared for anything-In a world of incalculable risks, where accidents and changes make it too difficu

to plan ^{ar|}d where the old order can no longer deal with the new events, the bi-
ophilic individual is left with scarcely any other way out than this streamlined
phrase. Politics is that activity in which one has to be ready for anything. Social
life is not so much a safe retreat as the source of all dangers.

Presence of mind then becomes the secret of survival. Those who need little
can maneuver against political fate when they have to live in times in which poli-
tics determines our fate. Politics is also the sphere in which people beat each other
over the head because of the competition for nonessentials. The full repercussions
of kynical anti-politics first become clear in times of crisis.

If we now pass on to the next figure in our cabinet of cynics, we will see how
things become complicated as soon as the philosophers, or better, the intellec-
tuals, no longer keep to kynical abstinence but seek bourgeois comfort and, at the
same time, try to reserve the prestige of the philosopher for themselves. Di-
ogenes, who embodies his doctrine, is still an archaic figure; "modernity" begins
with splits, inconsistencies, and ironies.

Lucian the Mocker, or: Critique Changes Sides

> *You are very much mistaken if you believe that there are antiq-*
> *uities. Antiquity is only now beginning to emerge.*
>
> Novalis

We encounter this man from Samosata on the Euphrates, a Syrian by birth, who
has a place of honor in the history of evil tongues —half a millenium later —in a
thoroughly transformed cultural setting. On his life in brief:

After an unsuccessful attempt at sculpturing, Lucian (born about 120
A.D.) became a rhetorician, a profession that scarcely has a parallel in
our time and that has been not inappropriately translated as "concert
speaker." Thus, like Poseidonius and Paulus a great traveller and wan-
derer, he moved across the country, through the entire Mediterranean
region as far as Gaul, making showy and pompous speeches; and al-
though he did not speak Greek without an accent, he had considerable
success. But he was too clever, too restless, and intellectually not mod-
est enough to be content with success on the podium and the applause
of the elegant world. Thus, in his fortieth year, he turned to varied sa-
tirical writing, or, as we would say, moralistic essays. It is they, of his
life and works, that have stood the test of time. In later years he ac-
cepted a position as public servant of the Roman Empire in Egypt,
thereby letting himself in for something he himself had mocked not a
little, namely, a secure salary and domiciled settledness. The last date
^{ln} his life that can be fixed is the death of the emperor, Marcus
Aurelius (17 March 180 A.D.). It is surmised, since it is not known

precisely, that he died soon after. (Otto Seel, afterword to *Lukian, Gesprache der Gotter und Meergotter, der Toten und der Hetdren* [Stuttgart, 1956], pp. 241-42)

It could be contended that in Lucian's time, the seed of the protokynic germinated in a puzzling way. An author during the middle period of the Roman emperors, a contemporary of the Stoic emperor, Marcus Aurelius,[19] he is the most important, though the most malicious, witness of the fact that one of the most powerful impulses in Western philosophy had issued from the apparent satyrical play of the kynical polemic against civilization. Indeed, after a good half a millenium, kynicism for the first time had found within the Roman Empire a truly ideal soil, a situation of flourishing alienation in which it inevitably expanded in all directions. The "dogs" had begun to howl in large packs, and moralistic resistance against the social and human circumstances in the empire had swelled to a powerful spiritual current. The kynicism of the time of the emperors has been called the hippie and escapist movement of antiquity (Hochkeppel). To the extent the empire transformed itself into a colossal bureaucratic apparatus whose inner and outer workings an individual could not fathom or influence, its ideological power to integrate and its capacity to rouse feelings of citizenship and commitment to the state had to dissipate. The administration's inaccessibility to the citizens, the despised extortion of taxes by the military and civil Moloch, the citizens' aversion to military service are all unmistakable signs of an advanced social crisis. The Roman world order was long since no longer that *res publico* that had once grown naturally out of the life of *societas.* Rather, the imperial state apparatus weighed on its citizens like a leaden foreign body. In such periods it was natural that the schools of philosophy, once the province of a few, received a massive influx that assumed symptomatic proportions. The need for individualistic self-assertion against coercive society became a psychopolitical reality of the first order. Because no one could any longer cherish the illusion that he led his "own" life in this political system, innumerable people had to feel the impulse to reestablish their authenticity in areas free from the state, namely, in the form of philosophies of life and new religions. This explains the enormous success ot philosophical sects, mostly of Greek origin—to which the kynics also belong-[as] well as of the new religious cults whose origins were in Asia Minor.

Christianity, too, was at first only one of many forms of late-Roman exoticism and orientalism. Already at that time, not only the light but also the attractive darkness of mysteries came from the East. From the Greeks the Romans adopte their cultural decor and the doctrine of *humanitas* as well as those critical, i dividualistic forces from Attic sources that had been active as "moral moles ready during the disintegration of the Greek polis. This individualistic ferm[e] again released its energies in the alienation of the Roman bureaucratic state, no however, in such mass forms that the individualistic impulse had to be qua!'

tjvely transformed. The many individual cases resulted in a new quality of forma-
tion of stereotypes. Among the educated there was a certain abhorrence of the
sects with their vagabonds, preachers, moralists, cults, and communities, which
for centuries formed part of the image of the time of the emperors.[20] The old-
humanistic, high individualism of cultivated Romans looked contemptuously on
the new and in part asocial energy of individualists. At that time, people turned
up their noses just as much at the Christians as at the kynics. One of the older,
ironically cultivated, conservative voices of this time is that of Lucian, as we can
hear in his merciless satire on the voluntary death of the kynical sect leader,
Peregrinus, known as Proteus. We want to concentrate on this text. It is the para-
digm of a new cynical tone of voice that intellectuals of more advanced times as-
sume as soon as their contempt is provoked. The parallels to the present are so
obvious that it is not necessary to pursue the issue. It is worthwhile to look into
Lucian's ancient kynical mirror so as to recognize the fresh, cynical present in it.

What is it about? In his satire, Lucian deals with a spectacular incident that
is supposed to have happened on Olympus during the games, before a considera-
ble audience: The same Peregrinus had decided to burn himself publicly on a
large pyre in order to give the world the spectacle of a tragic and heroic voluntary
death, thereby increasing the stature of his sect and, as Lucian emphasizes, satis-
fying his own aspirations for fame. This plan, which was announced in advance
by the main actor in order to ensure a fitting resonance, was actually carried out.
The public gesture was consciously planned and designed to make an impression
on the crowd. Of course, as a model there was only Socrates, who had left behind
the greatest example of philosophical resoluteness through his voluntary death.
There were possibly also the Indian Brahmans of that time, whose self-chosen
death by fire had been heard about in the West since the days of Alexander's cam-
paign. Lucian claims to have witnessed the incident. The tone of the description
is so scornful that it is advisable to read it as more of a document on the witnesses'
critical view of things than as a factual report on the incidents mentioned. The
only thing that can be believed with some degree of certainty from this report is
that the kynicism of a Peregrinus must have had almost nothing in common with
Diogenes' kynicism except the name and some ascetic superficialities. The roles
appear to be reversed between Peregrinus and Lucian since, for Diogenes, a
Pathetic gesture such as a heroic self-chosen death would have been unthinkable.
^e can be certain that Diogenes, agreeing with Lucian on this point, would have
-clared it to be crazy because the kynic's concern, literarily speaking, is
comedy, not tragedy; satire, not the serious myth. This reveals a profound struc-
^ral change in kynical philosophy. Diogenes' existence drew its inspiration from
""elation to Athenian comedy. It is rooted in an urban, humorous culture,
unshed by a mentality that is open to jokes, quick repartee, mockery, and a
ny contempt for stupidity. Its existentialism is based on a satirical founda-
• Late-Roman kynicism is completely different. In it, the kynical impulse has

obviously been split-in an existential direction and in a satirical-intellectual direction. Laughing becomes a function of literature, and living remains a deadly serious business.[21] The sect kynics, it is true, had zealously prescribed for themselves a program of life without needs, preparedness-for-anything, and autonomy, but had succumbed to their role as moralists, often with deadly seriousness. The motif of laughter, which had called Athenian kynicism to life, had expired in late-Roman kynicism. The sect gathered around itself the unstable and resentful, bums and moral zealots, outsiders and narcissistic people needing something to hold on to rather than laughing individualists.

The best among them were probably moralists with an ascetic, independent bent, or gentle adepts at life, who traveled around as moral psychotherapists, welcomed by those willing to experience something new; but for self-confident conservatives, they were suspect, if not despised.

In relation to these people it is now Lucian who assumes the position of the satirist and humorist previously held by them. However, he no longer exercises the kynical mockery of the uncultivated sage on the representatives of vain knowledge. Rather, his satire is a cultivated attack on the uncultivated beggar-moralists and wailers, that is, a kind of master's satire on the intellectual simpletons of his time. Group dynamics probably plays a greater role than "theory"[22] in what appears in antiquity as a philosophical-moral dispute; there is some evidence for the view that Lucian comes down so hard on the kynics because they want *the same thing* he does. They direct themselves at a similar public and work over the same field, even though with other, more radical means. They too are wanderers, street orators, dependent on public attention, and a sort of intellectual recipient of alms. It is just possible that Lucian hates himself in them, to the extent that similarities exist. If the kynics are the world despisers of their epoch, Lucian is the despiser of the despisers, the moralist of the moralists. Himself all too well versed in such matters, he recognizes in his adversaries the tendency to supercilious, naive, pompous, gushing fanaticism, in which vanity and masochistic martyrlike characteristics may have played a role. This gives Lucian's satire its psychological background. What the kynic Peregrinus, who is eager to die, presents to his spectators as an example of wisdom and the heroic contempt for death is for Lucian nothing other than an aberration of a laughable mania for glory. If Peregrinus aims at self-deification in the eyes of his disciples and their contemporaries, u» self-evident that Lucian must expose this plan as vanity. But we should bear in mind that in judging others, people employ the standards of their own frame o reference and therefore ultimately speak "about themselves" when they judg others. That the thirst for glory was the frame of reference in which a good pa of Lucian's existence had moved can hardly be doubted, given everything that 1 known about him. Whether it is by their frame of reference that we can best un derstand the kynical movement is doubtful. Let us follow Lucian's account.

Lucian's exposition says nothing good at all about its victim. At the beginning, T ucian sees a eulogist of Peregrinus enter, whom he, the very picture of his nraised master, portrays as a big-mouth, blubberer, virtuous poser, quack, and sentimental buffoon who tells the wildest stories as he sweats and breaks out in crocodile tears. The following speaker, by contrast, unfolds Peregrinus's life story and sketches a devastating picture of the man who wants to burn himself to death. There is no doubt that Lucian has put his own version in the mouth of this speaker —according to which the master is a criminal, charlatan, and megalomaniac. Peregrinus's life reads like the biography of a criminal whose stages consist entirely of profligacy: from adultery, after which, when he was caught, a radish was ignominiously stuck in his anus to pederasty and bribery, to the apex of heinous crimes, patricide. After that—forced to flee from his hometown, Parium—he was ripe for a career as traveling con man. Forthwith, Peregrinus joined a Christian(!) congregation where he quickly moved up on the basis of his rhetorical stunts. The disciples of the "crucified Sophist" from Palestine are portrayed as naive people who can be duped into just about anything by a cunning mind. From the Christians then, or, as Lucian calls them, "Christianers," he went over to the kynics, let a long philosopher's beard grow, took up the knapsack of the wandering preacher, staff and coat, and got as far as Egypt on his journeys. There he created a stir through public self-flagellations and by shaving half of his head, which was supposed to be a "completely new and admirable kind of exercise of virtue." Having arrived in Italy, he indulged in diatribes against the emperor, was thus expelled from Rome, and as a result gained the reputation of someone unjustly persecuted. In his puffed-up vanity he finally got the idea into his head of burning himself at the Olympic Games with great pomp.

After this presentation of the main actor, Lucian turns to a critique of the pyric act. He reviews it as a theater critic would a bad play.

> In my view it would be more fitting to await death with composure, not, like a fleeing slave, to run from life. If, however, he is so firmly determined to die, why does it have to be by fire and with a pomp fit for a tragedy? What is the point of *this* way of dying when he could nave chosen a thousand other ways? (Lukian, *Werke in drei Banden* [Berlin and Weimar, 1974], vol. II, pp. *31.38).*

ecording to Lucian, in truth, complete justice was done him with this act of self-remation; it was nothing more than deserved punishment that he executed on wiself, and the only thing wrong with the act was the time he chose since it ^ould have been better for Peregrinus to have killed himself much earlier. Beond this, Lucian's laughing critic also objects that for this drama a more uncomnable death would have been appropriate; in self-cremation one only has to Pen one's mouth one time in order to die on the spot. Moreover, Lucian's speaker

encourages all Peregrinus's disciples to follow their master by throwing themselves as quickly as possible into the flames so that the specter of kynicism might come to an end.

These passages make clear the meaning of the phrase: Critique changes sides. Earlier we defined cynicism as a cheekiness that has changed sides. Lucian is talking here as a cynical ideologue who denounces the critics of power to the powerful and cultivated as ambitious lunatics. His critic activities have turned into opportunism trimmed to the irony of those in power, who want to make fun of their existential critics. Only this can explain how Lucian's speaker can come up with the idea that such examples of kynical contempt for death are dangerous for the state because, through lack of deterrence, they remove the last source of restraint from criminals threatened by the death penalty. It is a joyless laughter with which a sect of moralists is exhorted to commit mass suicide by fire or by smoke; Tens and hundreds of thousands of religious "dissidents" were yet to perish in the arenas and on the pyres of the Roman Empire.

The cynical fearlessness with which Lucian comments on the act of self-cremation is astounding. After Peregrinus himself had held a sort of corpse's speech and, "greedy for glory," had over and over again delayed the final moment of the burning, the moment finally came when the pyre was ignited by two disciples and the master jumped into it, invoking the paternal and maternal spirits. That provokes Lucian's laughter once more, as he recalls the story of the patricide. He called on those standing around to leave the dismal place: "It is truly not a charming sight to view a fried-up old manikin and, in doing so, to breathe in the foul fat-vapors." (I quote here the juicier translation of Bernay in *Lucian und die Kyniker* [1879].)

Of course, we must not judge Lucian solely on the basis of this scene. We have probably come upon him in his weakest moment, in the middle of a group-dynamic wrangle with a rival, on whom he projects all of his contempt.[23] The scene is important for us because in it the leap of the kynical impulse from a plebeian, humorous culture-critique to a cynical ruler's satire can be observed. Lucian's laughter remains a nuance too shrill to be serene; it reveals more hate than sovereignty. In it there is the sarcasm of someone who feels himself put on the spot. When the kynics attacked the Roman state, Hellenic civilization, and the psychology of ambitious and comfortable citizens, they shook the social foundations on which the existence of the highly cultivated ironist also rested.

Mephistopheles, or: The Spirit that Always Denies and the Will to Knowledge

THE MASTER: I have never despised your kind.
Of all spirits that deny,
The rogue weighs least heavily on my mind.

MEPH1STOPHELES: What, executioner! Of course, hands and feet
And head and behind, they are yours.

Since Lucian's appearance as cynical satirist who jeers at the kynical sect, one and a half millennia have passed. Through all the changes in world history-the decline of the western Roman Empire, the Christianization of the Occident, the rise of feudalism, the age of chivalry, the Reformation, Renaissance, Absolutism, the rise of the bourgeoisie—the kynical impulse has continued in the most varied refractions and disguises. Goethe's famous theatrical devil meets us at the zenith of the Enlightenment, in that decade of the eighteenth century when the Sturm und Drang of the awakening bourgeois culture was at its most explosive. Mephistopheles appears in the stormy years of secularization that begin to liquidate the thousand-year-old inheritance of Christianity. The essence of the bourgeois cultural revolution in the eighteenth century is characterized perhaps more than anything else by the fact that with the greatest poet of the age, it embodies itself in the figure of a devil that, like Satan, enjoys the freedom to say things "as they really are." The Devil is the first post-Christian realist; his freedom to speak must still seem infernal to older contemporaries. When the Devil opens his mouth to say how it really is in the world, the old Christian metaphysics, theology, feudal morality are swept away. If his horns and claws are also taken away, there remains of Mephistopheles nothing more than a bourgeois philosopher: realist, antimetaphysicist, empiricist, positivist. Not by chance did Faust, the epitome of the modern researcher from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, seal a pact with a devil of this kind. Only from the Devil can one learn "how things really are." Only he has an interest in making us take off the religious spectacles and see with our own eyes. In this way, the idea of "God the Father, Son, & Co." becomes superfluous.

Mephistopheles is a fluorescent being who lives entirely in his metamorphoses. He emerges from a dog. For his first appearance, the Devil chooses the symbol of the kynical sect of philosophers. Recall that Faust, at the nadir of his "theoretical despair," had decided to kill himself. The choirs of Easter night hold him back from his intention at the very point when the ampoule of poison is already touching his lips. He returns to life. On his Easter stroll, he meditates on the dual nature of his soul. His thoughts on this can be read as the deep self-reflection of a bourgeois scientist: Within him there is struggle between realism *and* insatiability, the drive toward life *and* the longing for death, the "will to night" *and* the will to power, the sense for what is possible *and* the drive toward what is (still) impossible. In the dusk Faust sees a "black dog roaming through crop and stubble" that circles around the strollers in broad spiral movements. Faust imagines that he sees an inferno behind the animal; Wagner, however, remains blind to the magical manifestation. In the end, a black poodle lies before the scholar on its belly, tail wagging, well trained and apparently tame. In the

study, finally, the real metamorphosis of Satan begins, as the thinker is on the verge of translating the Evangelium of Saint John into German. As soon as Faust has found the correct translation for the Greek concept *logos (Tat),* the dog starts yowling. Curious changes of form begin: "How long and broad my poodle is becoming." In the end, the "traveling scholastic" appears as the "heart of the matter" *[des Pudels Kern;* literally, the poodle's kernel; —Trans.] and gradually reveals the Devil's claws. The sequence of the scene graphically depicts the dialectic of master and servant. The Devil cowers at first in the role of a dog, then of a servant, in order, so he thinks, to ultimately win complete domination over the scholar's soul.

The metamorphosis from dog to monster, from monster to traveling scholastic is only the beginning of a rather long series of transformations. Mephistopheles is like a master of disguise, an impostor, or a spy[24] because the condition for the survival of evil in the post-Christian era is that it conceal itself behind the appropriate fashionable and socially accepted masks of innocuousness. The feudal personification of "evil" as corporeal Satan is, so to speak, annulled in Goethe's ironic drama. The point of Goethe's theatrical devil, namely, is its modernization to the worldly grand seigneur—a tendency continued by Thomas Mann in *Doktor Faustus.* The Devil becomes a figure of immanence, and evil even gains sympathy through its civility. In Goethe's drama, even the witches have to look twice to see through the dissolute squire, Junker Liederlich. On one occasion he appears as a worldly court figure with doublet and plume. On the next, in the student scene, he dons the costume of the great scholar, in order to parody the scholar's learnedness in a satire inspired by a cynicism of knowledge — the most malicious improvization of a Gay Science before Nietzsche. Finally, he appears as an elegant gentleman and magician who knows how to speak quick wittedly with procuresses, and as a fencing master, he instructs Faust on how he can expedite his lover's brother, who has become burdensome, into eternity. Impudent cheekiness and cold sarcasm belong inevitably to the attributes of the modern, "immanent" devil, just as much as cosmopolitanism, linguistic competence, cultivation, and legal understanding. (Contracts have to be made in writing.)

This modernization of evil does not arise from a poet's whim. Even though it is presented poetically-ironically, it rests on a solid logical basis. In the framework of modern forms of consciousness, art is in no way "merely" the locus or the beautiful and the amusing, but one of the most important points of access for research into what is traditionally called truth—truth in the sense of a perspective on the whole, truth as understanding the essence of the world. "Great Art" was always a pandemonic art that tried to capture the "theater of the world."[2] Herein is rooted the philosophical prominence of works of art such as *Faust.* At the point where traditional metaphysics fails —in interpreting evil in the world—because the Christian background of these metaphysics with its optimism of salvation has faded, art jumps into the breach. Seen from the viewpoint of the history of ideas,

Gustav Grundgens in the role of Mephistophiles in Goethe's *Faust.*

Mephistopheles (whom I regard as a central figure of modern aesthetics) is a child of the idea of *development*, through which, in the eighteenth century, the age-old questions concerning the theodicy and the transience of phenomena can be posed in a new form and answered with a new logic. So much is certain: that from this time on, evil in the world—death, destruction, and negativities of all kinds-can no longer be interpreted as the punitive or testing interventions of God in human history, as was done by the centuries of Christianity. The secularization, naturalization, and objectification of our understanding of the world has made too much progress for theological answers to still be able to satisfy. For more fully developed reason these have become not only logically untenable but, what is more important, existentially implausible. God, devil, and the entire theological nomenclature can at best be taken only symbolically. This is precisely what Goethe's drama attempts. It plays with the theological figures under "poetic license." His irony seizes on a degenerated system of plausibility only to use the old characters to erect a new logic, a new system of meaning. In substance, it is the same logic that underlies the Hegelian conception of the world and of history, the logic of evolution, the logic of a positive dialectic that promises constructive destruction. This thought model guarantees a new era of metaphysical speculation. It is borne by the powerful modern evidence that the world moves and that its movement is forward and upward.[26] Suffering in the world appears from this Perspective as the necessary price for development, which leads inexorably from the dark beginnings toward radiant goals. Enlightenment is not merely a theory °f light but, still more, a theory of the movement toward light-optics, dynamics,

organology, theory of evolution. Goethe's devil already practices this new way of seeing that, as we will show, constitutes a foundation of all great modern theories that are at least tempted by cynicism. In evolutionism lies the logical root of theorizing cynicisms that cast grand rulers' gazes on reality. In the sciences theories of evolution take over the metaphysical inheritance. Only they possess enough logical power to integrate with a comprehensive view the evil, degeneration, death, pain, the whole gamut of negativities inflicted on the living. Those who say "development" and affirm the goals of development have found a perspective that can *justify* whatever serves development. Evolution (progress) is thus the modern theodicy; it provides the final logical underpinnings for the negative. In the evolutionist's view of what must suffer and perish, modern intellectual cynicism already plays its ineluctable game; for it, the dead are the manure of the future. The death of others appears as the ontological and logical premise for the success of "one's own cause." In an incomparable manner, Goethe has the Devil express the metaphysically permeated confidence in life of the newly conceived dialectic.

> FAUST: Very well, who are you then?
> MEPHISTOPHELES: A part of that force,
>   that always wills evil and always creates good.
> FAUST: What is meant by this riddle?
> MEPHISTOPHELES: I am the spirit that constantly denies,
>   And that rightly so; for everything which arises,
>   Is worthy of perishing!
>   Therefore, it would be better if nothing arose.
>   Thus, everything which you call
>   Sin, destruction, in short, evil,
>   Is my proper element.[27]

As far as the history of the kynical impulse is concerned, whose tracks we are following, Mephistopheles occupies an ambiguous position within it: with his grand seigneur side, just as with his proclivity for grand theory, he is a cynic; with his plebeian, realistic, and sensuously joyful side, he is kynically oriented. One of the paradoxes of this wordly and ordinary devil of evolution, who can also imitate Eulenspiegel, is that, in relation to Doctor Faust, he is the real enlightener. The scholar possesses a series of traits that today would be readily designated as antienlightenment: the esoteric urge to communicate with the spirits beyond. Interests in magic, and a questionable taste for crossing the limits of huma" reason and demanding too much of it. The person who is not satisfied with tn deficient rationalism and empiricism of human knowledge will really say in tttf end: "Here I stand, a fool so poor; I am as wise as I was before." At the end o the great will to knowledge there is of necessity always "theoretical despair. [1] thinker's heart burns when he realizes that we cannot know what we "really" wan

w) w. Faust is basically a desperate Kantian who tries to escape the compulsion
self-limitation through a magical backdoor. The urge to go beyond the limit
emains stronger than the insight into the limitedness of our knowledge. In Faust
can already see what Nietzsche and, later, pragmatism will emphasize: that
the will to knowledge is always nourished by a will to power. For this reason,
•he will to knowledge can never come to rest in knowledge itself; its urge, accord-
ing to its roots, is immeasurable because, behind every knowledge, new puzzles
mount up: A priori, knowledge wants to know more. "What one does not know,
that is precisely what is needed. / And what one knows, cannot be used."
Wanting-to-know is an offspring of the desire for power, the striving for expan-
sion, existence, sexuality, pleasure, enjoyment of the self, and for anesthetizing
the necessity of dying. Whatever presents itself as theoretical enlightenment and
research, in the nature of things, can never reach its alleged goals because these
do not belong to the theoretical sphere.

For those who realize this the scientific impulse becomes an aesthetic impulse.
Art is the real Gay Science: It stands, as the last guarantor of a sovereign and
realistic consciousness, between religion *and* science. However, it does not have
to, like the former, appeal to faith, but has experience and the vitality of the senses
on its side; on the other hand, it does not have to treat the empirically given in
such a rigorously truncating way as the latter. The Devil, who, in Goethe's work,
guarantees the principle of morally unrestricted experience, entices the despair-
ing enlightener into the broad field of life: "So that you, without bonds, free / Ex-
perience what life is." What has been called the amoralism of a r t - t o be allowed
to see and say everything — is really only the obverse side of this new, total empiri-
cism. Those who have experienced the despair of the impossible will to knowl-
edge can become free for the adventure of conscious living. Experience will
never be entirely absorbed by theory— as presupposed by consistent rationalists.

Experience what life is! The principle of experience, in the last analysis, bursts
all moralism, including that of the scientific method. What life is is grasped by
the researcher not in the theoretical attitude but solely through the leap into life
itself.   Mephistopheles serves those who want to take the step beyond theory as
"•agister Ludi: He introduces them to the process of a kynical and cynical empiri-
cism from which alone life experience arises. Come what may, whether morally
good or evil, that is no longer the question. Scientists who hide their will to power
ᶠom themselves and conceive of experience only as knowledge about "objects"
o-nnot achieve that knowledge acquired by accumulating experience in the form
ᵃjourney to the "real" things. For the empirical amoralist, life is not an object
Ut a medium, a journey, a practical essay, a project of alert existence.[29]

As soon as they consciously experience their entanglement in the fate of other
ˑVes. kynical empiricists inevitably encounter what is commonly called evil.
>wever, they experience in so-called evil an unavoidable side; that puts them
8 t m the middle and above it at the same time. Evil appears to them as some-

thing that by its very nature, cannot be anything other than what it is. The proto-types of this "evil," which is stronger than morality (which demands only that the former *ought* not to be), are free sexuality, aggression, and unconsciousness (in-sofar as the last is to blame for fateful entanglements; compare the model tragedy of unconscious action, *Oedipus Rex).*

The greatest of all moral shamelessnesses and simultaneously the most un-avoidable of all is to be a survivor. Over shorter or longer causal chains, every living person is a sur-vivor *[Uberlebener,* literally, over-liver; —Trans.] whose acts and omissions are connected to the downfall of others. Where such causal chains remain short and direct, one speaks of guilt; where they are more medi-ated, of guiltless guilt or tragedy; where they are strongly mediated, indirect and universal, of bad conscience, uneasiness, tragic feeling toward life.[30]

Faust, too, does not escape this experience. For he becomes not only the se-ducer and lover of Gretchen, but also the one who survives her. Pregnant by him, she murders the child of this love in despair. For her, out of good has come evil, out of sexual surrender, social scandal. The causality of fate, which arises from the mechanism of morality, rolls over her with merciless consistency; despair, confusion, murder, execution. The tragedy can be read as a passionate poetical plea for the widening of moral consciousness: Art *is* critique of naive, mechani-cal, reactive consciousness. Under the presupposition of naivete, disastrous con-sequences must follow repeatedly from the feelings, morals, identifications, and passions of human beings; only in naivete and unconsciousness can mechanical-moral causality make its game of individuals. But in contrast to Gretchen, who is destroyed by the "tragic" mechanisms, Faust has a master teacher at his side who keeps him out of the possible causalities of blind, naive despair.

> But you are otherwise rather bedeviled.
> I find nothing in the world more absurd
> Than a devil who despairs.

In vain Faust imprecates his teacher, who inflicts on him the pain of experienc-ing himself as an accomplice devil. He would gladly banish the Devil back into the shape of the kynical dog, or still further, into that of the snake. But all paths back to naivete are closed to him. He has gained the Mephistophelian conscious-ness for himself, which demands that whatever human beings can know about themselves, they should in fact know; it breaks the spell of the unconscious. The aesthetic amoralism of great art implies a school of becoming conscious: Morality works on in naive consciousness like a part of the unconscious; what is uncon-scious, mechanical, unfree in our behavior is the real evil.

Mephisto, as we said, possesses the profile of a kynical enlightener and thus displays a knowledge gained only by those who have risked having a perspective on things that is free of morality.[31] This is shown nowhere better than with sexual-ity, where, emphatically, moral inhibitions must first be left behind in order, lik^e

Faust, "without bonds, free," to experience what life is. Mephisto is the first sexual positivist in our literature; his way of seeing is already that of sexual kynicism. "It is true, a child is a child, and play is play." For him it is no secret how the clockwork in the man, Faust, can be wound up: "Only" the vision of the naked woman within him has to be awaked —in modern language, the erotic illusion, the "imago," the sought-after ideal, the sexual schema. The elixir of youth awakes the drive that makes every woman as desirable as Helen. The person who falls in love, as suggested by Goethe's irony, is basically the victim of a chemical reaction. More modern cynics or playboys assure us that love is nothing more than a hormonal disturbance.[32] The cynical bite lies in the "nothing more," which, literarily, belongs to satire; existentially, to nihilism; epistemologically, to reductionism; metaphysically, to (vulgar) materialism. As serene materialist, Mephistopheles professes the animal compulsiveness of love. "Custom or not, it passes too." Whatever may occur to love-smitten fools by way of elevated gushing does not count, insofar as one as proper diabolus always thinks only of one thing: "what chaste hearts cannot do without."

The attitude of the critical Devil toward the sciences is scarcely less lacking in respect. The entire lifeless, logically ossified, conceptual casuistry of learned stuff does not suit him. If empiricism is his program, then in the kynical, vital form: head over heels into a full life, let one's own experience be the ultimate criterion. His speech encourages one to risk experience, and because he distinguishes sharply between the gray of theory and the green of life, he finds none of the academic forms of teaching to this taste. Professors are the fools of their own doctrinal structures, in modern language, accessories to their "discourses." In all faculties vain babblers hang around, who complicate the simplest things to the point of unrecognizability, the jurists no less than the philosophers, the theologians by profession, and the medicos with a vengeance.

As a cynical gynecologist, Mephisto relates the pernicious old proverb that all female diseases are to be "cured from one point." Our theory devil can, of course, expect more applause when he brings his semantic cynicism (today: language critique) into play against the pseudologies and arrogated terminologies of the disciplines. He sees that incomprehension likes to take refuge in words and that ignorance can keep itself afloat longest by having command of a jargon. The Devil expresses what students feel: that "doctoral stupidity" (Flaubert) is part and parcel °r the university, which, safe from discovery, smugly reproduces itself there, what this devil presents in the *Collegium logicum* (students' scene) on the subject ⁰ the language of philosophers and theologians amounts to a poetical nominalism ⁿat stands up to the most rigorous logical reconstruction.

If one takes stock, one recognizes that Goethe's Mephistopheles, in spite of all symbolic concessions, is basically already no longer a Christian devil, but a post- hnstian figure with pre-Christian traits. The modern side in him touches on a ʳᵉactualized antiquity: Dialectic evolutionism (positive destruction, evil that is

good) touches on a philosophical conception of nature that has more to do with Thales of Miletus and Heraclitus than with Kant and Newton.

The Grand Inquisitor, or: The Christian Statesman as Jesus Hunter and the Birth of the Institutional Doctrine out of the Spirit of Cynicism

> *That's it precisely, the "but". . . called Ivan. So that you know, novice: What is senseless is all too necessary on earth. The world is based on the senseless, and without it, probably nothing at all would happen on earth. I know what I know!. . .*
>
> *. . . According to my lamentable, earthly, Euclidean understanding, I know only that suffering exists but no one is guilty, that everything follows immediately and simply one from the other, that everything flows and evens itself out—but that is only Euclidean nonsense . . . . What do I gain by the fact that there are no guilty ones, that everything follows immediately and simply one from the other and that I know that—I need retribution, otherwise I will annihilate myself . . . Listen: If all have to suffer and with their suffering procure eternal harmony, what do children have to do with that?—Why have they too been caught up in the material and have to serve as the manure for someone's future harmony?*
>
> Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

Dostoyevsky's gloomy Grand Inquisitor, too, is only apparently a figure of the Christian Middle Ages, just as Goethe's Mephistopheles is only apparently still a Christian devil. In reality, both belong to the modernity of the nineteenth century, the one as aesthetician and evolutionist, the other as representative of a new, cynical political conservatism. Like Faust, the Grand Inquisitor is a retrospective projection of advanced ideological tensions from the nineteenth into the sixteenth century. Intellectually as well as chronologically, he stands closer to figures like Hitler and Goebbels, Stalin and Lunacharsky than to the historical Spanish Inquisition. But is it not frivolous to place an honorable Christian cardinal in such company? The defamation weighs heavily and must be justified by strong evidence. This is provided by the Grand Inquisitor's story, as Ivan Karamazov tells it.

The cardinal and Grand Inquisitor of Seville, an ascetic old man of ninety years within whom all life seems to be extinguished except in his eyes a dark ember still glows, one day became —as Ivan says in his "fantastic poem"—a witness to the return of Christ. Before the cathedral, Jesus had repeated his miracle of long ago and, with a soft word, had brought a dead child to life. It seems as it the old man had immediately comprehended the significance of this act, but his

reaction is paradoxical. Instead of paying homage to the returned Lord, he points his bony finger at him and orders the watchman to arrest the man and lock him up in the vault of the Holy Tribunal. In the night, the old man descends the stairs to Jesus in the dungeon and says:

> " 'Is it you? You?'
>   "But receiving no answer, he adds quickly: 'Do not answer, be silent. And, indeed, what can you say? I know too well what you would say. Besides, you have no right to add anything to what you have said already in the days of old. Why, then, did you come to disrupt us? For you have come to disrupt and you know it. But do you know what is going to happen tomorrow? I know not who you are and I don't want to know: whether it is you or only someone who looks like him, I do not know, but tomorrow I shall condemn you and burn you at the stake as the vilest of heretics, and the same people who today kissed your feet, will at the first sign from me rush to rake up the coals at your stake tomorrow. Do you know that? Yes, perhaps you do know it . . . ' "
> (Trans. David Magarshack [Harmondsworth, 1958], p. 293, modified)

Those who find the Grand Inquisitor's behavior strange will be even more curious about the meaning of the event when they have understood the decisive point with the greatest possible sharpness: In the thinking and action of the old man there is not a trace of dimness or blindness, no error and no misunderstanding. What Jesus had assumed about his crucifiers as grounds for forgiveness—"for they know not what they do"—can in no way be applied to the churchman. He knows what he is doing and he knows it with a downright shocking clarity, regarding which the only remaining question is whether it should be called tragic or cynical. If the Grand Inquisitor knows what he is doing, then he must be acting for reasons of overpowering gravity, reasons that are strong enough to dislodge the religious faith he outwardly represents. The old man does in fact give Jesus his reasons. To be concise, his speech is the reply of a politician to the founder of a religion. Seen somewhat more deeply, it is a settling of accounts of anthropology with theology, of administration with emancipation, of the institution with the individual.

We have just heard the main accusation against the returned one: He has come to disrupt." In what? The Inquisitor blames his Savior for returning precisely at that moment when the Catholic Church, through the terror of the Inquisition, was about to stamp out the last sparks of Christian freedom and was almost able to delude itself into believing that it had completed its work: establishing domination "rough the "true religion." Having become completely unfree (in the religious-Political sense), the people of this time are more than ever convinced that they are free. Did they not possess the truth? Had not Christ promised that the truth will make us free? The Grand Inquisitor, however, can see through this decep-

tion. He is proud of his realism; as representative of the victorious church, he claims not only to have completed Jesus' work but still more, to have *improved* it! For Jesus, so he says, did not know how to think politically and had not comprehended what human nature in a political respect required: namely, *domination.* In the speech of Dostoyevsky's cardinal to his silent prisoner, we discover one of the origins of modern institutionalism, which, in this passage, and perhaps only in this passage, admits in a remarkably open way its cynical basis in conscious deception that appeals to necessity. The powerful, according to Dostoyevsky's profound and vertiginous reflections, make the following calculations:

Only a few possess the courage to be free, as Jesus demonstrated when he answered the question of the tempter in the desert (concerning why he did not, although he was hungry, transform stones into bread): "Man does not live by bread alone." Only a few have the power to overcome hunger. The many, in all ages, will reject the offer of freedom in the name of bread. In other words, people in general are in search of disburdenment, ease, comfort, routine, security. Those invested with power can, in all ages, confidently assume that the great majority have a horror of freedom and know no deeper urge than to surrender their freedom, to erect prisons around themselves, and to subjugate themselves to idols old and new. What can the master Christians, the representatives of a religion of freedom, do in such a situation? The Grand Inquisitor understands his assuming power as a kind of self-sacrifice.

> "But we shall tell them that we do your bidding and rule in your name.
> We shall deceive them again, for we shall not let you come near us
> again. That deception will be our suffering, for we shall be forced to
> lie." (Ibid., p. 297)

We are witnesses here of a unique, strangely convoluted thought experiment in which the paradoxes of modern conservatism are hatched. The churchman raises an anthropological protest against the unreasonable demand of freedom that the founder of the religion has left behind. For human life, frail as it is, needs first of all an ordered framework of habit, certainty, law, and tradition—in a word, social institutions. With breathtaking cynicism the Grand Inquisitor accuses Jesus not of having abolished the discomfort of freedom but of having aggravated it. He has not accepted human beings as they are but has overstrained them with his love. To this extent, the later masters of the church have superseded Christ in their sort of love of humanity-which is thoroughly pervaded by contempt and realism. For they take human beings as they are: childlike and childish, indolent and weak. The system of a ruling church, however, can only be erected on the shoulders of people who take the moral burden of conscious deception on themselves, that is, priests who consciously preach the opposite of the actual teachings of Christ, which they have understood precisely. To be sure, they speak

the Christian language of freedom, but they serve the system of needs —bread, order, power, law —that makes people submissive. The concept of freedom, as the Grand Inquisitor knows, is the fulcrum in the system of oppression: The more repressive it is (Inquisition, etc.), the more violently must the rhetoric of freedom be hammered into people's heads. Precisely this is the ideological stamp of all modern conservatisms in the East as well as in the West. They are all based on pessimistic anthropologies according to which the striving for freedom is nothing ₘore than a dangerous illusion, a mere basically insubstantial urge that glosses over the necessary and ineluctable institutional ("bound") character of human life. Wherever in the world today theories of freedom and emancipation make themselves heard, they are repudiated with words like the following from the Grand Inquisitor.

> "But here, too, your judgement of people was too high, for they are slaves, though rebels by nature. Look around you and judge: fifteen centuries have passed, go and have a look at them: whom have you raised up to yourself? I swear, human beings have been created weaker and baser creatures than you thought them to be! . . . In respecting them so greatly, you acted as though you ceased to feel any compassion for them." (Ibid., p. 300 modified)

This is, still formulated in moral clauses, the Magna Charta of a theoretical conservatism on an "anthropological" foundation. Arnold Gehlen probably would have undersigned it without hesitation. Even the rebellious element in human beings is included as a natural constant in the calculations of this detached pessimism. Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor speaks as conservative politician and ideologue of the nineteenth century, looking back on the storms of European history since 1789.

> "They will tear down the temples and drench the earth with blood. But they will realize at last, the foolish children, that although they are rebels, they are impotent rebels who cannot bear their own rebellion. . . . unrest, confusion, and unhappiness —that is the lot of people today." (Ibid., pp. 300-1, modified)[34]

But that is not enough. The final ascent to the "yawning heights" (Sinoviev) of a cynically conceived conservative politics still lies before us: when the Grand Inquisitor reaches his most extreme confession; when power tells its trade secrets m the most shameless and audacious way. That is a moment of that higher shame-'essness through which inbred disingenuousness finds its way back to truth. In the mouth of the Grand Inquisitor, Dostoyevsky's reflections cross the cynical threshold beyond which there is no way back for the no longer naive consciousness. He admits that the church long ago consciously sealed a pact with the Devil, that tempter in the desert, whose offer of worldly domination Jesus himself had re-

The Hamburg Faust Ensemble on tour in Moscow. Mephistophiles, Gustav Grund-
gens, meets Boris Pasternak.

jected at that time. According to the cardinal's admission, the church has, with
open eyes, gone over to the Devil's camp —at that time it decided to take the sword
of worldly power into its own hands (in the time of Charlemagne). It paid for it
with an unhappy consciousness and a chronically split conscience. But that it had
to do it, is, in spite of everything, beyond question for the church politician. He
speaks like someone who knows that he has sacrificed a great deal, and as it could
not be otherwise, it is a sacrifice on the altar of the future, nourished by the "spirit
of Utopia." This is a sign that allows us to date this thought with certainty in the
nineteenth century, which made every form of evil thinkable if only it served a
"good purpose." The Grand Inquisitor is enraptured with the vision of a humanity
united by Christianity, welded together by power and inquisition. This vision
alone gives him something to hold on to and hides his cynicism from himself, or
better, ennobles it to a sacrifice. Millions upon millions of people will happily
enjoy their existence, free from all guilt, and only the powerful, who make the
sacrifice of exercising cynical domination will be the last unhappy ones.

> "For we alone, we who guard the mystery, we alone shall be unhappy.
> There will be thousands of millions of happy infants and one hundred
> thousand sufferers who have taken upon themselves the curse of knowl-
> edge of good and evil." (Ibid., p. 304)

Perplexing analogies between Goethe and Dostoyevsky now become visible:
Both talk of a pact with the Devil; both conceive of evil as immanence; both re-
habilitate Satan and acknowledge his necessity. Dostoyevsky's devil, too —stated
concisely, the principle of power, world dominion —is conceived as a part of a

power that wills evil but brings forth "good"; for good is also supposed to arise finally from the Grand Inquisitor's gloomy labor as his concluding Utopia shows. In both cases, to conclude a pact with the Devil means nothing more than to become a realist, that is, to take the world and people as they are. And in both cases it is a matter of the *power* that must be dealt with by all those who let themselves in for this kind of realism. With Faust, this is the power of knowledge; with the Grand Inquisitor, the knowledge of power.

Knowledge and power are the two modes by which one reaches the modern state beyond good and evil, and in that moment when our consciousness takes the step into this beyond, cynicism is unavoidably on the scene—with Goethe, aesthetically; with Dostoyevsky, morally and politically; with Marx, embodied in a philosophy of history; with Nietzsche, psychologically and vitalistically; with Freud, sexually and psychologically. Here we have zeroed in on the point where cynicism and enlightenment touch. For enlightenment furthers the empirical-realistic disposition, and where this advances without obstruction it inevitably leaves the limits of morality behind. "Realistic" thinking must constantly use an amoral freedom in order to attain clarity. A science of reality becomes possible only where metaphysical dualism has been ruptured, where the inquiring spirit has constructed a consciousness beyond good and evil, where, without metaphysical and moral prejudice, neutral and tedious, it searches for what is the case.[35]

Would the Grand Inquisitor then be a cofounder of positivistic political science that takes humankind empirically and from its circumstances determines the kind of political institutions that are necessary for its survival? For Dostoyevsky, the institution of church is only representative of those coercive institutions that regulate social life, their apex being occupied by the state and the army. It is the spirit *of these* institutions that is abhorred by any recollection of the magnificent primitive Christian freedom. It is not religion as religion that has to burn the returned Christ, but religion as Church, as analogue of the state, as institution; it is the state that fears the civil disobedience the religious are capable of; it is the army that condemns the spirit of Christian pacifism; it is the masters of the world of work who have a horror of people who place love, celebration of life, and creativity higher than slaving for the state, the rich, the army, etc. Accordingly, must the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoyevsky's narrative burn Jesus, the meddler, as he intended? To be perfectly consistent, yes. But let us hear how the story ends as Ivan Karamazov tells it.

"I intended to end it as follows: When the Inquisitor has finished speaking, he waits for some time for the prisoner's reply. His silence distresses him. He sees that the prisoner has been listening intently to him all the time, looking gently into his face and evidently not wishing to say anything in reply. The old man would like him to say something,

however bitter and terrible. But he suddenly approaches the old man and kisses him gently on his bloodless, aged lips. That is his entire answer. The old man gives a start. There is an imperceptible movement at the corners of his mouth; he goes to the door, opens it and says to him: 'Go, and come no more—don't come at all —never, never!' And he lets him out into 'the dark streets and lanes of the city.' The prisoner goes away." (Ibid., p. 308, modified)

Dostoyevsky obviously guards against giving an unambiguous solution, probably because he saw that, one way or the other, the game is not over. For a moment, nevertheless, the church politician must admit defeat; for one second he sees the "Other," the infinite affirmation that includes even him and that neither judges nor condemns. Dostoyevsky's Jesus loves not only his enemy but, what is considerably more complicated, also him who betrays and perverts him.[36] However one may interpret the open end of the drama, it in any case demonstrates that Dostoyevsky recognizes a conflict between two principles or forces that balance each other; indeed, even more, they neutralize each other. By suspending any decision, he puts himself de facto in the region beyond good and evil, that is, in that area where we can do nothing more than take facts and reality "positively," as they are. Institutions follow their own logic, religion follows another, and the realist is well advised to seriously take both into account, without forcing a decision for one side or the other. The actual result of the Grand Inquisitor's cynical reasoning is not so much the self-exposure of the church politician, but the discovery that good and evil, end and means can be interchanged. This result cannot be overemphasized. With it, we slide inevitably into the area of cynicism. For it means nothing less than that religion can just as easily be made an instrument of politics as politics can be made an instrument of religion. Because this is so, everything that was held to be absolute now comes into a relative light. Everything becomes a question of the lighting, the viewing angle, the projection, the purpose intended. All absolute anchoring is gone; the age of moral teetering begins. Beyond good and evil we by no means find, as Nietzsche assumed, a radiantly vital amoralism but rather an infinite twilight and a fundamental ambivalence. Evil becomes so-called evil as soon as it is thought of as a means to good; good becomes so-called good as soon as it appears to be something disruptive (Jesus as disrupter), destructive in the sense given to it by the institutions. Good and evil, viewed in a metaphysical light, transmute unflinchingly into each other, and those who have come so far as to see things this way gain a tragic view that, as we show here, is really a cynical view.[37]

For as soon as the metaphysical distinction between good and evil becomes outmoded and everything that exists appears neutral in a metaphysical sense, only then does modernity, as we refer to it, really begin: It is the age that can no longer conceive of any transcendental morality and that, consequently, finds it impossi-

ble to distinguish neatly between means and ends. From then on, all statements about ends (and especially about final ends) appear as "ideologies," and what earlier were ideals and moral doctrines are now transparent and useful "intellectual" apparatuses. Morals and consciousnesses of values consequently can be studied like things, namely, as subjective entities.[38] Consciousness (a later terminology will use the concept "subjective factor") is thus no longer the wholly Other, the opposed principle, in relation to external being, but is itself a part of being, a part of reality. One can study it, describe it historically, pull it apart analytically, and—the decisive point—use it politically and economically. From this moment on, a new hierarchy arises: on the one hand, the naive, the believers in values, the ideologized, the deceived, the victims of their "own" imaginations, in a word, the people with "false consciousness," the manipulated and the manipulate. This is the mass, the "spiritual realm of animals" [Hegel; —Trans.]. The region of false and unfree consciousness. All those have succumbed to it who do not possess the great, free "correct consciousness." But who has the "correct consciousness"? Its bearers are to be found in a reflecting elite of nonnaive people who no longer believe in values, who have overcome ideology, and have dissolved the deception. They are the ones who are no longer manipulable, who think beyond good and evil. Everything now depends on whether this intellectual hierarchy is also a political hierarchy, thus on whether the nonnaive people are, in relation to the naive, the rulers. With the Grand Inquisitor the answer would be a clear-cut yes. However, are all enlightened people, all realists, all nonnaive people essentially Grand Inquisitors, that is, ideological manipulators and moral deceivers who use their knowledge about things to rule others, even if for their purported good? Well, it is in our own interest not to demand a quick answer to this question.

The Grand Inquisitor, as we said, is a prototype of modern (political) cynics. His bitter anthropology prompts him to believe that human beings must be and want to be deceived. Human beings require order, which in turn requires domination, and domination requires lies. Those who want to rule must accordingly make conscious use of religion, ideals, seduction, and (if necessary) violence. For them, everything, even the sphere of ends, becomes a means; modern grand politicians are total "instrumentalists" and disposers of values.[39]

Nevertheless, in spite of all this, one cannot say that they are obscurantists. In the framework of Dostoyevsky's story, the role of realist falls to those who surrender their insights. Their garrulous cynicism thus remains an absolutely indispensable factor for the process of truth. If they were really *just* deceivers, they would keep silent. However, in the final analysis, they too think that they are doing the right thing even if they employ crooked means to this end. Their maxims resemble Claudel's motto: God writes straight even on crooked lines. "In the last ^stance," they have not given up the tendency toward "good." Made to speak, ᵐᵉy give an account of their motives, and their confessions, although giddying,

are invaluable contributions to the search for truth. In a roundabout way, cynics contribute what they can toward enlightenment; indeed, without their spectacular, amoral, and evilly clever self-exposures, this entire area would remain impenetrable. Precisely because an impression of "naked" reality can only be gained from a standpoint beyond good and evil, we must rely in the search for truth on the "amoral," self-reflective statements of those who have assumed such standpoints. From Rousseau to Freud, existentially crucial knowledge has been expressed in the form of *confessions* .[40] One has to go behind the facade to recognize what is really the case. Cynicism speaks of what is behind the facade; that becomes possible when the feeling of shame ceases. Only when individuals have taken the step beyond good and evil for themselves can they make a productive confession. But when they each say, "/am thus," they mean basically, "/? is thus." My "sins" fall not on me but on *it* within me; they are only sinful illusions. In reality, my evil is only a part of universal reality, where good and evil disappear in a grand neutrality. Because truth means more than morality, amoralists justifiably do not necessarily feel themselves to be bad; they serve a higher authority than morality.

From this perspective, the Grand Inquisitor becomes a figure typical of the epoch. His thinking is dominated by two antagonistic motives that simultaneously conflict with and condition each other. As realist (positivist), he has left the dualism of good and evil behind.[41] As a man of Utopia, he holds on to realism all the more grimly. Half of him is an amoralist, the other a hypermoralist; on the one hand cynic, on the other dreamer; here freed from all scruples, there bound to the idea of an ultimate good. In praxis, he does not recoil from any cruelty, infamy, or deception; in theory, the highest ideals rule him. Reality has taught him to be a cynic, pragmatist, and strategist; however, because of his intentions, he feels himself to be goodness incarnate. In this fragmentation and double-tonguedness we recognize the basic structure of "realistic" grand theories of the nineteenth century. They obey a compulsion to compensate for every gain in realism (amoralism) with an assault on Utopia and substitute morality, as if it were unbearable to accumulate so much power of knowledge and knowledge of power if "extremely good" ends did not justify this accumulation. The Grand Inquisitor's speech reveals to us at the same time where these extremely good ends —which justify everything—come from: from the historical future. At the end of "history," "thousands of millions of happy infants" will populate the world—coerced into their happiness and enticed into paradise by the few who rule them. However, until then we have a long way to go, a way that will be lined by countless pyres. But since the end is considered absolutely right, no price seems too high to reach it. If the end is absolutely good, its goodness must rub off even on the most horrible means that have to be employed along the way. Here total instrumentalism, there Utopia: That is the form of a new, cynical theodicy. Human suffering thereby is attributed an overarching historical tendency: Suffering becomes,

frankly put, an unavoidable function of progress; suffering is strategy— mind you, suffering in the form of causing to suffer (Inquisition). The strategist suffers only insofar as he knows that he consciously deceives.

The reason for presenting the Grand Inquisitor here now becomes clear: He is really a bourgeois philosopher of history with a Russian Orthodox profile, a tragically vilified crypto-Hegelian. If one wants to imagine the worst consequence, one must imagine what would happen if a Russian politician like the Grand Inquisitor came face to face with the most powerful and most "realistic" philosophy of history in the nineteenth century: Marxism. But it is not necessary to imagine this because the encounter between the Great Inquisition and Marxism has in fact taken place; we need only to page through the East European history of this century to come across at least two larger-than-life hybrid figures of the type Marxist-Grand Inquisitor, utopian-grand cynic. Whether this encounter was necessary or was based on a misunderstanding is beside the point. From a historical perspective, the coalescence of Marxist ideology and Grand Inquisition cannot be retracted, even if good reasons could be given to show why the russification of Marxism actually represents a curiosity, namely, the reckless, illegitimate perversion of a theory of liberation into an instrument of the most rigorous oppression. This process can only become understandable from the cynically inverted optics of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor. Only such optics gives a logically explicit model for interpreting the phenomenon: Those who want to rule use the truth in order to lie. Those who deceive the masses in the name of truth —and Marxism undeniably possesses strong elements of truth—risk, at least in theory, no repudiation. However, like the Grand Inquisitor, modern rulers must say to a returned Marx: We will no longer let you come into our midst; we will cite you as our authority, but only on the irrevocable condition that you "never, never" come again! For no matter who came—"HE" himself or only his "image"—he would inevitably be a troublemaker and we know all too well what happens with such people.

Is the reasoning of the Grand Inquisitor supposed to have revealed a basic contradiction between the spirit of "truth" and the spirit of "institutions"? Is it supposed to be a universal "law" that in the attempt to make the "truth" into a "state religion," truth must turn itself into its complete opposite? Does not everything speak for the view that the Grand Inquisitor's logic has triumphed, according to which a returned Jesus would be burned on the pyre of the Holy Inquisition, a returned Nietzsche perish in the gas chambers, a returned Marx rot alive in a Siberian labor camp? Is there a law that regulates such cynically tragic inversions?

The nineteenth century, we have said, is the epoch of the great, realistic theories that fix a "down-to-earth" gaze, unconcerned about good and evil, on that Part of the world that is relevant for human beings: history, the state, power, class struggles, ideologies, natural forces, sexuality, the family. All these bodies of

knowledge are now ordered into a great theoretical arsenal, into the tool em
rium of practical interests. "Knowledge is power," says the workers' moverne
But to the extent that, on the one side, the instruments are stacked up, on the oth
the plans grow. Here the tools, there the designs; here the matter-of-fact, neutr I
ized means, there the grandiose, Utopian good ends. Here the facts, there th
values. This, in outline, is the self-understanding of modern instrumentalism n
pragmatism. With one foot in the area beyond good and evil, one feels around
with the other foot for a firm stand in (utopian) morality. Concisely stated: The
nineteenth century develops a first form of modern cynical consciousness that
links a rigorous *cynicism of means* with an equally rigid *moralism of ends.* For
as far as the ends were concerned, scarcely anyone risked imagining a real region
beyond good and evil-for that would be "nihilism." Resisting nihilism is the real
ideological war of modernity. If fascism and communism struggle somewhere on
a common front, it is on the front against "nihilism," which with one voice is at-
tributed to "bourgeois decadence." Common to both is the resoluteness to oppose
the "nihilistic" trend with an absolute value: Here the people's Utopia, there the
communist Utopia.[42] Both guarantee a final end that sanctifies every means and
that promises to give meaning to existence. However, where radical cynicism of
means comes together with a resolute moralism of ends, there, the last residue
of moral feeling for the means dies out. Modern, heavily armed moralism works
itself up into an unheard-of destructive whirlwind and drives the hell of good in-
tentions to an extreme.

This must not be understood as theoretical deduction. To be sure, we have
tried to sketch a logic of modern political catastrophes, but this attempt is
preceded by the real catastrophes. No thinking on its own could summon up
enough frivolity and despair to come to such conclusions merely out of a "striving
for truth." In fact, basically no human being would be able to imagine devasta-
tions of the magnitude of those experienced if they had not actually happened.
In retrospect, attention is just now being drawn to the intellectual preconditions
of the political calamity. Looking back, one can ask what conditions made the
self-made hell possible. This hell really must have come about before thinking
could overcome its timidity and inertia and begin to investigate the grammar ot
the catastrophes. The only ones to anticipate the logic of large-scale catastrophes,
Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky, basically did not yet know the extent to which they
spoke of politics as they carried out their tortuous thought experiments. For this
reason, they spoke almost exclusively in moral-psychological concepts and un-
derstood themselves as the last in a centuries-old religious tradition. What they
wrote was incubated in a religiously stamped, psychologically exposed inward-
ness. Both understood themselves as explosions in the Christian tradition, as co-
mets at the end of the history of religion to that point—leading over to a bleaK
modernity. But the political transposition of their visions in both cases occurred
within two generations. Thought out beforehand in inwardness, the structures d^e~

•ribed by Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky gained fulfillment in the most brutal manifestations. The Russian Grand Inquisitor of the twentieth century really existed as did the German populist *Ubermensch,* both instrumentalists in the grand style, cynical to the extreme as far as the means are concerned, pseudonaively •moral" with regard to the ends.

In the meantime, we have come so far from our starting point that it might seem as if no connection at all existed any longer between Diogenes, the Protokynic, and the Grand Inquisitor, the modern cynic. Only through an inexplicable quirk in the history of concepts, so it seems, does modern cynicism hark back to an ancient school of philosophy. However, in this apparent quirk, a bit of method can be made clear, a link connecting dissimilar phenomena over millennia. This link, so we believe, consists in two formal, common points between kynicism and cynicism: The first is the motif of *self-preservation* in crisis-ridden times, the second a kind of shameless, "dirty" realism that, without regard for conventional moral inhibitions, declares itself to be for how "things really are." Compared with the existential realism of ancient kynicism, however, modern cynicism is only the "half of a whole." For its sense of facts, as shown, is directed only toward an unscrupulous, matter-of-fact way of dealing with means to an end, *not toward the ends* themselves. Modern, theoretically reflecting grand cynics like the Grand Inquisitor are anything but descendants of Diogenes. In them rather gnaws the ambition of Alexander, whom Diogenes had rebuffed; it is, of course, a displaced kind of ambition.[43] Where Diogenes expressed the "wish" "Stop blocking my sun," those skilled at modern cynicism strive for "a place in the sun." They think of nothing else than to cynically —in the sense of openly ruthless—scramble for earthly goods, which Diogenes had rejected with disdain. And for them, literally any means is justified, to the point of genocide, plundering of the earth, devastation of land and sea, and the decimation of fauna, showing that with regard to the instrumental, they have really put themselves beyond good and evil. But where is the *kynical* impulse to be found? If cynicism has already become an unavoidable aspect of modern realism, why does this realism not also encompass the ends? The *cynicism of the means* that characterizes our "instrumental reason" (Horkheimer) can be compensated for only by a return to a *kynicism of the ends.* This means taking leave of the spirit of long-term goals, insight into the original purposelessness of life, limiting the wish for power and the power of wishing —in a word, comprehending the legacy of Diogenes. This is neither a romanticism of rubbish bins nor a gushy enthusiasm for the "simple life." The essence of kynicism consists in a critical, ironical philosophy of so-called needs, in the elucidation of their fundamental excess and absurdity. The kynical impulse not only was alive from Diogenes to the Stoa, but also had its effect on •Jesus himself, the troublemaker par excellence and in all real disciples of the master who, like him, were illuminated by the insight into the purposelessness of existence. This is the basis for the puzzling influence of old Asian teachings of wis-

dom that fascinate the West because they coolly turn their backs on its ideology of purposes and all its rationalizations of greed. On earth, existence has "nothing to search for" except itself, but where cynicism rules, we search for everything, but not for existence *(Dasein).* Before we "really live," we always have just one more matter to attend to, just one more precondition to fulfill, just one more temporarily more important wish to satisfy, just one more account to settle. And with this just one more and one more and one more arises that structure of postponement and indirect living that keeps the system of excessive production going. The latter, of course, always knows how to present itself as an unconditionally "good end" that deludes us with its light as though it were a real goal but that whenever we approach it recedes once more into the distance.

Kynical reason culminates in the knowledge—decried as nihilism—that we must snub the grand goals. In this regard, we cannot be nihilistic enough. Those who reject all so-called goals and values in a kynical sense break through the circle of instrumental reason, in which "good" goals are pursued with "bad" means. The means lie in our hands, and they are means with such enormous significance (in every respect: production, organization, as well as destruction) that we must begin to ask ourselves whether there can still be any ends that are served by the means. For what good then could such immeasurable means be necessary? In that moment when our consciousness becomes ripe to let go of the idea of good as a goal and to devote itself to what is *already there,* a release is possible in which the piling up of means for imaginary, always receding goals automatically becomes superfluous. Cynicism can only be stemmed by kynicism, not by morality. Only a joyful kynicism of ends is never tempted to forget that life has nothing to lose except itself.

Since in this chapter we have spoken a lot about great spirits who have returned, it would be appropriate finally for us to imagine a *returned Diogenes.* The philosopher climbs out of his Athenian tub and enters the twentieth century, gets caught up in two world wars, strolls through the principal cities of capitalism and communism, reads up on the East-West conflict, listens to lectures on nuclear strategy, the theory of surplus value, and value-added tax, visits television stations, gets caught in the vacation traffic on the freeways, sits rolling his eyes in a Hegel seminar . . . Has Diogenes come to disrupt? It seems more likely that he himself is rather disturbed. He had taught: Be ready for anything, but what he now sees goes too far even for him. He had found even the Athenians to be pretty crazy, but what he finds in the present defies classification. Stalingrad, Auschwitz, Hiroshima—he longs to go back to the Persian Wars. Out of fear ot psychiatric institutions, Diogenes refrains from going through the streets by day with a lantern.[44] If philosophical pantomime fails, even he would not know how to talk to these people. He has noticed that they have been drilled to understand what is complicated, not what is simple. He has fathomed that for them, what is perverse appears normal. What to do? Suddenly he gets a feeling he never had

back then in Athens: to have something important to say. At that time, everything had been almost like a game; now, however, it seems to him that something serious should be made of it. With a sigh, Diogenes agrees to play along with the game. From now on he will try to be respectable; as far as he can; he will also learn modern philosophical jargon and play with words until people become giddy. And gingerly, subversively, with a deadly earnest air, he will try to spread his ridiculously simple message among his contemporaries. He knows that thinking in the sense of the cynicism of means has made his potential pupils artful, and their critical understanding functions superbly. The philosopher who teaches the kynicism of ends must be a match for this understanding. That is Diogenes' concession to modernity. Two paths present themselves for undermining the modern use of understanding in the sciences and technologies: the ontological and the dialectical. Diogenes has tried both incognito. It is up to us to decipher his traces.

Anyone, or: The Most Real Subject of Modern Diffuse Cynicism

> With respect to this /everyday *way of being;—Au.]* it may not be *superfluous to say that interpretation has a purely ontological intention and is far from being a moralizing critique of everyday existence or from having "cultural-philosophical" aspirations.*
>
> Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (p. 167)

> *"Life" is a "business" regardless of whether it covers its costs or not.*
>
> *Sein und Zeit* (p. 289)

> *Why live when for as little as ten dollars you can be buried?*
> Advertising slogan in the United States

Anyone, the nonperson in our cabinet of cynics, reminds one, in its meager form, of jointed figures used by graphic artists for position studies and anatomical sketches. However, the position that Heidegger had his eye on is an indefinite one. He eavesdrops on the "subject" in the banality of the everyday mode of being. * he existential ontology, which treats Anyone and its existence in every day ness, attempts something that would not have occurred even in a dream to earlier philosophy: to transform triviality into an object of "higher" theory. This of itself is ᵃ gesture that inevitably leads us to suspect Heidegger of kynicism. What critics °f the Heideggerian existential ontology have cited as its "mistake" is perhaps its ᶜᶠucial point. It elevates the art of platitudes into the heights of the explicit concept. One could read his ontology as an inverted satire that does not drag down ᵂ»at is high, but raises what is low. It tries to say what is self-evident so explicitly

and thoroughly that even intellectuals, by rights, would have to understand it. In a certain regard, a logical Eulenspiegel game on a grand scale is hidden in Heidegger's discourse, with its scurrilous refinements in conceptual nuances—the attempt to translate mystically simple knowledge about simple life "as it is" into the most advanced tradition of European thinking. Heidegger's posture of a Black Forest peasant who, withdrawn from the world, likes to sit and brood in his hut, cap on his head, is no mere external detail. It belongs to the essence of this kind of philosophizing. It contains the same ambitious plainness. It shows just how much mischievousness it really takes under modern conditions to say something so simple and "primitive," that it can be accepted in the face of the complex convolutions of "enlightened" consciousness. We read Heidegger's statements about Anyone, existence *(Daseiri)* in everydayness, about talk, ambiguity, fallenness, and thrownness *(Geworfenheit),* etc., against the background of the preceding portraits of Mephisto and the Grand Inquisitor: as a series of etudes in higher banality with which philosophy feels its way into that "which is really the case." It is precisely by doing away with the myth of objectivity that Heidegger's existential-hermeneutical analysis produces the hardest "depth positivism." A philosophy thus appears that participates ambivalently in a disillusioned, secularized, and technicized Zeitgeist. It thinks from beyond good and evil and from this side of metaphysics. It can move only along this thin line.

The theoretical neokynicism of our century—existentialist philosophy-demonstrates in its form of thinking the adventure of banality. What it presents is the fireworks of meaninglessness that begins to understand itself. We have to clarify for ourselves the contemptuous phrase with which Heidegger, in the motto cited earlier, strongly distances his work from any "moralizing critique," as if he wanted to emphasize that contemporary thinking has left the swamps of moralism behind once and for all and no longer has anything in common with "cultural philosophy." The latter can be nothing more than "aspiration": vain pretension, grandiose thinking, and Weltanschauung in the style of the nineteenth century, which never wanted to come to an end. By contrast, in the "purely ontological intention," the burning coolness of real modernity is at work, which no longer needs any mere enlightenment and which has already "been through" every possible analytic critique. Laying bare the structure of existence by thinking ontologically, by speaking positively: To this end Heidegger, in order to avoid the subject-object terminology, throws himself with commendable linguistic mischievousness into an alternative jargon that, viewed from a distance, is certainly no more felicitous than what he wanted to avoid, in whose innovativeness, however, something of the adventure of modern primitiveness shines through: a linking of the archaic with modern times, a reflection of the earliest in the latest. The "explicitness" of Heideggerian speech expresses what philosophy otherwise does not find worth speaking about. Precisely in that moment when thinking—explicitly "nihilistic"—recognizes meaninglessness as the foil of every possible statement

or attribution of meaning, the highest unfolding of hermeneutics (i.e., the art of understanding meaning) becomes necessary in order to articulate philosophically the meaning of meaninglessness. That, according to the reader's background, can be as stimulating as it is frustrating, a circling around in conceptualized emptiness, a shadow play of reason.

What is this rare being that Heidegger introduces under the name of Anyone? At first glance, it resembles modern sculptures that do not represent any definite object and whose polished surfaces do not admit of any "particular" meaning. Still, they are immediately real and firm to the touch. In this sense Heidegger emphasizes that Anyone is no abstraction—roughly, a general concept that comprises "all egos"; instead, he wants to relate it, as *ens realissimum,* to something that is present in every one of us. But it disappoints the expectation of personal-ness, individual purport, and existentially decisive meaning. It exists, but there is "nothing behind" it. It is there like modern, nonfigure sculptures: real, everyday, concrete part of a world but not referring at any time to an actual person, a "real" meaning. Anyone is the neutrum of our ego: everyday ego, but not "I myself." It represents in a certain way my public side, my mediocrity. I have Anyone in common with everyone else; it is my public ego, and in relation to it, averageness is always in the right. As inauthentic ego, Anyone disposes of any highly personalized decisiveness *(Entschiedenheii)* of its own. By nature, it wants to make everything easy for itself, to take everything from the outside and to abide by conventional appearances. In a certain respect, it also behaves in this way toward itself, for what it is if'self" it also accepts, just like something it finds among other things that are simply givens. This Anyone can thus only be understood as something nonautonomous, which has nothing of itself or solely for itself. What it is is said and given by others; that explains its essential distractedness *(Zer-streutheit).* Indeed, it remains lost to the world that it at first encounters.

> At first, "I" "am" not in the sense of one's own self but the Others in the modus of Anyone. From the latter and as the latter, at first I am "given" my "self." At first, existence *[Dasein]* is Anyone and mostly it remains so . . . . As Anyone I always live under the inconspicuous domination of the Others . . . . Everyone is the Other and no one is himself. The Anyone . . . is Nobody. *(Sein und Zeit,* pp. 129, 128)

This description of Anyone, with which Heidegger makes it possible to speak about the ego without having to do so in the style of subject-object philosophy, works like a retranslation of the expression "subject" into the vernacular where » means "the subjugated one."[45] Those who are "subjugated" think that they no longer possess them"selves." Not even the language of Anyone says anything of its own but only participates in the universal "talk" *(Gerede, discours).* In talk-in which one says the things that "one" says-Anyone closes itself off from really Understanding its own existence as well as that of the things talked about. In talk,
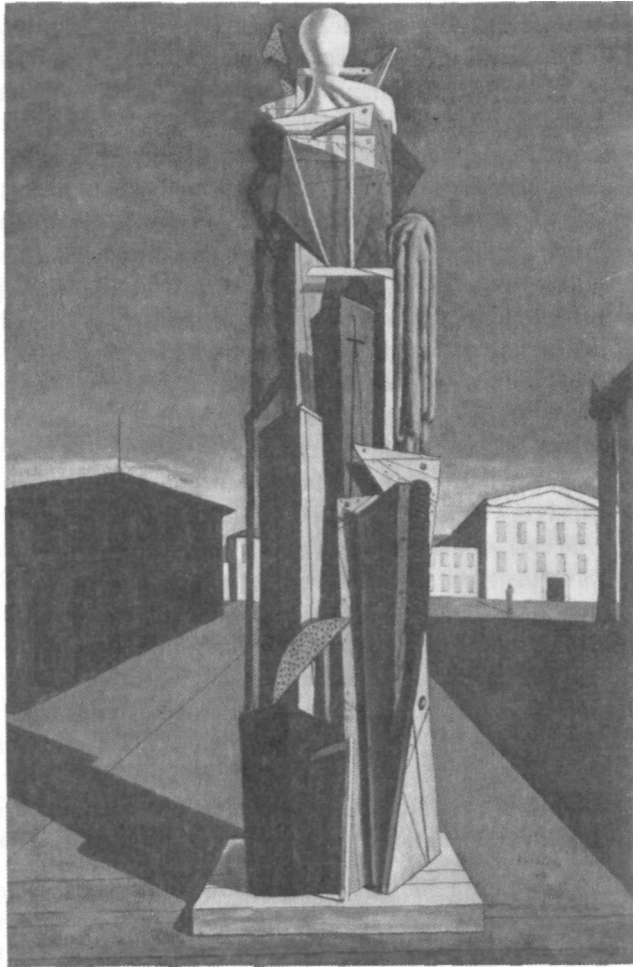
De Chirico, *The Great Metaphysician,* 1917. (©S.P.A.D.E.M., Paris/ V.A.G.A., New York, 1987.)

the "uprootedness" *(Entwurzelung)* and the "inauthenticity" *(Uneigentlichkeit)* of everyday existence reveal themselves. To it corresponds the curiosity that fleetingly and incessantly gives itself up to whatever is newest. The curious Anyone, insofar as it also "undertakes communication," is never really after genuine understanding but its opposite, avoidance of insight, evasion of the "authentic" perspective on existence. Heidegger expresses this avoidance through the concept *of distraction (Zerstreuung)* — an expression that makes one prick up one's ears. Even though everything up to this point tried to sound thoroughly timeless and

universally valid, we know at once with this word at which point in modern history we stand. No other word is so saturated with a specific taste of the mid-twenties-of the first German modernity on a large scale. Everything we have heard about Anyone would be, in the final analysis, inconceivable without the precondition of the Weimar Republic with its hectic postwar life feeling, its mass media, its Americanism, its entertainment and culture industry, its advanced system of distraction. Only in the cynical, demoralized, and demoralizing climate of a postwar society, in which the dead are not allowed to die (because from their downfall political capital is to be made), can an impulse be diverted out of the "Zeitgeist" into philosophy to observe existence "existentially" and to place every-dayness in opposition to "authentic," consciously decided existence as a "being unto death." Only after the military *Gotterddmmerung,* after the "disintegration of values," after the *coincidentia oppositorum* on the fronts of the material war, where "good" and "evil" despatch each other into the "beyond" did such a critical "reflection" on "authentic being" become possible. In this period, for the first time attention is drawn in a radical way to the inner socialization. This period senses that reality is dominated by spooks, imitators, remote-controlled ego machines. Each person could be a double *(Wiedergdnger)* instead of itself. But how can one recognize this? In whom can one still see whether it is "it-self or only Anyone? This question stimulates in existentialists deep cares about the important but impossible distinction between the genuine and the nongenuine, the authentic and the inauthentic, the articulated and the inarticulated, the decided and the undecided (which is simply "as it is").

> Everything looks as though it is genuinely understood, comprehended
> and said, but basically it is not, or it does not look as though it is, but
> basically it is. *(Sein und Zeit,* p. 173)

Language, it seems, laboriously keeps what merely "looks like" apart from what really "is so." But experience shows how everything becomes obscured. *Everything looks "as if."* The philosopher worries about this "as if." For the positivist, everything would be as it is; no difference between essence and appearance—that would only be the old metaphysical spook again with whom one wants nothing more to do. But Heidegger insists on a difference and holds fast to the Other, which is not only "as if," but has the essential, genuine, authentic in itself. The metaphysical residue in Heidegger and his resistance against pure positivism are revealed in the *will to authenticity {Willen zur Eigentlichkeii).* There is still another "dimension"—even if it evades demonstration because it does not belong to the realm of demonstrable "things." The Other can initially be asserted only °y simultaneously averring that it looks precisely like the One; seen from the out-ˢ'de, the "authentic" does not distinguish itself from the "inauthentic" in any way.

In this remarkable figure of thought, the highest degree of alertness of mind °f the twenties pulsates: It postulates a difference that must be "made," though
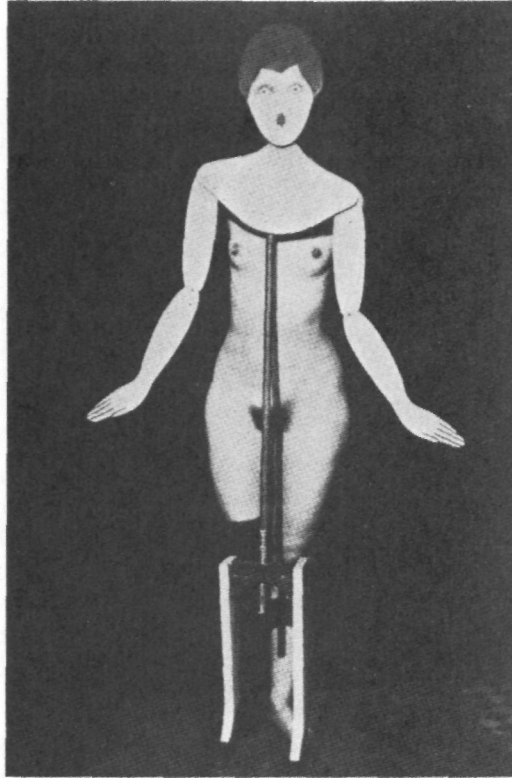
Man Ray, *Clothes Stand,* 1920. (©S.P.A.D.E.M., Paris/V.A.G.A., New York, 1987.)

it cannot be ascertained in any way. As long as ambivalence is at least still *asserted* as a fundamental feature of existence, the possibility of the "other dimension" remains formally salvaged. With this, Heidegger's movement of thought *(Denkbewegung)* seems to already exhaust itself: in a formal salvaging of the authentic, which of course, can look exactly like the "inauthentic." But mere assertions are not enough; ultimately, the much-entreated authentic existence requires something "special for itself[46] in order to be somehow distinguished. How we are to find it remains the question for the time being. In order to make things really exciting, Heidegger emphasizes on top of it all that the "habituatedness *(Verfallenheiif* of existence as Anyone in the world is not a fall from some kino of higher or "original state," but rather that existence is all along "already-always habituated. With dry irony, Heidegger remarks that Anyone lulls itself into thinking that it leads a genuine, full life when it throws itself unreservedly into worldly goings-on. On the contrary, it is precisely in that that he recognizes habituated-

ness. It ^{must} be admitted that the author of *Sein und Zeit* knows how to torture the reader who impatiently awaits the "authentic" and —let us be frank—it is a torture by means of a "pronounced" "deep platitude." He leads us, fantastically, explicitly, through the labyrinthine gardens of a positive negativity; he speaks about Anyone and its talk, its curiosity, its degeneratedness into the goings-on, in brief, of "alienation," but he assures us in the same breath that all this is established without a trace of "moral critique." Rather, all this is supposed to be an analysis "with ontological intent," and whoever speaks of Anyone is by no means describing a downtrodden self but a quality of existence that originates simultaneously with authentic being-as-self. That is how it is from the beginning, and the expression "alienation," oddly enough, does not refer *back* to an earlier, higher, essential authentic being without estrangement! Alienation, we learn, does not mean that existence had been wrenched from if'self," but rather that the inauthenticity of this alienation is from the start the most powerful and the most primitive mode of being of existence. In existence there is nothing that, in an evaluative sense, could be called bad, negative, or false. Alienation is simply the mode of being of Anyone.

Let us try to make the unique choreography of these leaps in thought clear: Heidegger pushes the labor of thinking, which strives toward realistic sobriety, beyond the most advanced positions of the nineteenth century. If the previous grand theories only had the power for realism when they possessed a Utopian or moral counterweight for balance, Heidegger now extends "nihilism" to include the utopian-moral area. If the typical pairings of the nineteenth century were liaisons between theoretical science and practical idealism, realism and utopianism, objectivism and mythology, Heidegger now sets about a second liquidation of metaphysics. He proceeds to a radical *secularization of ends.* Without much ado, he notes the unquestionable freedom from ends characteristic of life in its authenticity. We do not at all move toward radiant goals, and we are not commissioned by any authority to suffer today for a great tomorrow.[48] Also with regard to the ends, one needs to think beyond good and evil.

The distinction between authentic and inauthentic seems more puzzling than it really is. So much is clear from the beginning: It cannot be the difference in a "thing" (beautiful-ugly, true-false, good-evil, great-small, important-unimportant), because the existential analysis operates *prior to* these differences. Thus, the last conceivable difference remains that between decided and undecided existence—I would like to say, between *conscious* and *unconscious* existence. However, the opposition between conscious and unconscious should not be understood in the sense of psychological enlightenment (the undertone of decided-undecided points more in the direction intended). Conscious and unconscious here are not cognitive oppositions, or oppositions in information, knowledge, or science, but existential qualities. If it were otherwise, the Heideggerian pathos °f "authenticity" would not be possible.

The construction of the authentic —finally —results in the theorem of "being-unto-death," for Heidegger's critics an excuse for the cheapest kind of outrage: Bourgeois philosophy can no longer work itself up to anything more than morbid thoughts on death! Ash Wednesday fantasies in parasitic heads! There is an element of truth in such critique when it says that Heidegger's work, contrary to its intention, reflects the historical-social moment in which it was written; even though it claims to be ontological analysis, it provides an unintended theory of the present. To the extent that it is involuntarily such a theory, the critics are probably justified in pointing out an unfree, indeed, deluded side in it, but that does not mean that they should not also properly assess its inspired side. No thought is so intimately embedded in its time as that of being-unto-death; it is the philosophical key word in the age of imperialist and Fascist world wars. Heidegger's theory falls in the breathing space between the First and the Second World Wars, the first and the second modernization of mass death. It stands midway between the first triumvirate of the destruction industry: Flanders, Tannenberg, Verdun, and the second: Stalingrad, Auschwitz, Hiroshima. Without death industry, no distraction industry. If *Sein undZeit* is read not "merely" as existential ontology but also as an encoded social psychology of modernity, insights into structural relations open up, offering a tremendous perspective. Heidegger has captured the connection between modern "inauthenticity" of existence and modern fabrication of death in a way that is accessible only to a contemporary of industrial world wars. If we break the spell cast by the suspicion of fascism on Heidegger's work, explosive critical potentials are disclosed in the formula "being-unto-death." It then becomes understandable that Heidegger's theory of death harbors the greatest critique by this century of the last. Namely, the best theoretical energies of the nineteenth century went into the attempt to make the *deaths of others* unthinkable by means of realistic Grand Theories.[49] The great evolutionist designs lifted the evil in the world, insofar as it affected others, into the higher state of later, fulfilled times: Here there are formal equivalences between the idea of evolution, the concept of revolution, the concept of selection, the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest, the idea of progress and the myth of race. In all these concepts, an optics is tested out that objectifies the downfall of others. With Heidegger's theory of death, twentieth-century thinking turns its back on these hybrid, theoretically neutralized cynicisms of the past century. Viewed superficially, only the personal pronoun is altered: "One dies" becomes "I die." In conscious being unto death, Heideggerian existence revolts against the "constant reassurance about death" on which an excessively destructive society inevitably relies. The total militarism of industrial war forces in everyday circumstances a narcotic repression of death that has as few loopholes as possible—or the deflection of death onto others: That is the law of modern distraction. The world situation is such that it whispers to people, if they are attentive. Your annihilation is merely a question of time, and the time that it takes to reach you is simultaneously

the time of your distraction. The coming annihilation indeed presupposes your distraction, your undecidedness to live. The distracted Anyone is the mode of our existing, through which *we ourselves* are stuck in the universal contexts of death and cooperate with the death industry. I want to maintain that Heidegger holds the beginning of the thread to a philosophy of armament in his hands, for armament means to subjugate oneself to the law of Anyone. One of the most impressive sentences in *Sein und Zeit* reads: "Anyone does not allow the courage to fear death to rise up" (p. 254). Those who arm themselves substitute the "courage to fear one's own death" by military activity. The military is the best guarantor that I do not have to die my "own death"; it promises me help in the attempt to repress the "I die" so that I can put in its place an Anyone-death, a death in absentia, a death in political inauthenticity and anesthesia. One arms, one distracts oneself, one dies.

In Heidegger's "I die," I find the crystallization point around which a *Realphilosophie* of a rejuvenated kynicism can develop. No end in the world may ever remove itself so far from this kynical a priori, "I die," that our deaths become the means to an end. The meaninglessness of life—about which so much stupid nihilistic prattle winds itself—in fact provides the foundation for its full preciousness. Not only despair and the nightmare of an oppressive existence are attributed to what is meaningless, but also a celebration of life that endows meaning, energetic consciousness in the here and now, and oceanic festival.

That with Heidegger himself things proceed more gloomily and that his existential scenery unfolds between the nuances in gray of everydayness and the glaring flashes of fear and the colors of death is well known and explains the melancholy nimbus of his work. But even in the pathos of being unto death, a grain of kynical substance can be discovered, for it is a pathos of *asceticism,* and in this pathos the kynicism of ends can make itself heard in a language of the twentieth century. What society prescribes for us as ends in its process already binds us to inauthentic existence. The world process does everything to repress death — whereas "authentic" existence is ignited only when I alertly recognize how I stand in the world, eye to eye with the fear of death that makes itself felt when, in advance, I radically carry through the thought that I am the one whom, at the end °f my time, my death awaits. Heidegger concludes from this an original eerie unnomeliness *(Un-heimlichkeit)* of existence. The world can never become the secure and security-endowing home of human beings. Because existence from the start is unhomely, the "unhoused human being" (who, above all in philosophy after the Second World War, wandered through the devastated country) feels an ᵘʳge to flee into artificial dwelling places and homes and to withdraw out of fear into habits and habitats.

Of course, such statements, although intended to have universal validity, have ᵃ concrete[50] connection to the phenomena of their historical moment. Not for nothing is Heidegger a contemporary of the Bauhaus, of New Living, of early
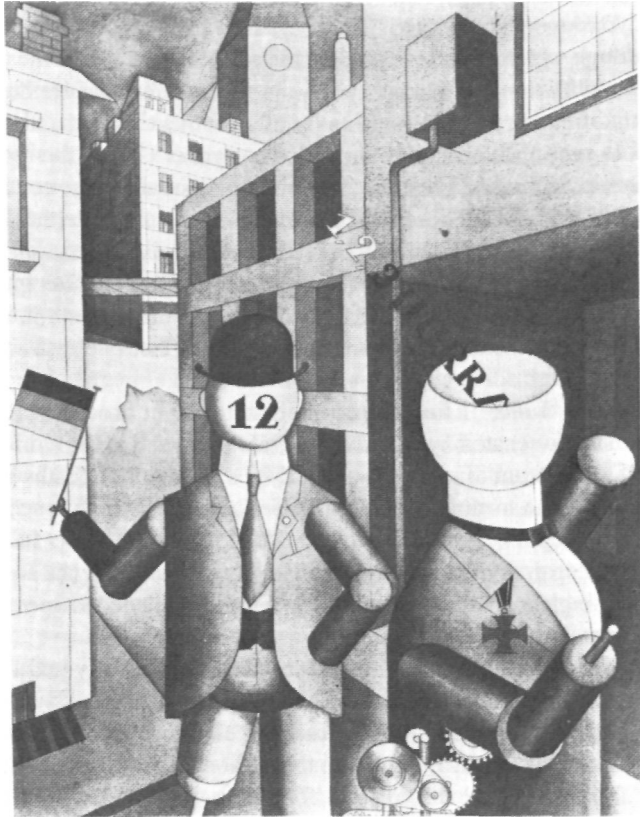
George Grosz, *Republican Automatons,* 1920. (©S.P.A.D.E.M., Paris/
V.A.G.A., New York, 1987.)

urbanism, state housing, the theory of settlement and the first rural communes.
His philosophical discourse surreptitiously draws on the modern problematics of
feelings toward one's domicile, of the myths of the house and the city. When he
talks of the unhousedness *(Unbehaustheit)*[51] of human beings, this idea is
nourished not only by the horror that the incorrigible provincial feels toward
modern forms of urban life. It amounts to a rejection if the house-building, city-
building Utopia of our civilization. Socialism really means, insofar as it must
affirm industry, an extension of the urban "spirit of Utopia." It promises to lead
us out of the "inhospitableness of the cities," however, it proposes to use urban
means and envisages a new city, the ultimate humane city and home. Thus, in
socialism of this type, there is always a dream partially nourished by urban mis-
ery. Heidegger's provincialism has no understanding for this. He views the city
with the eyes of an "eternal provincial" who cannot be convinced that there could

ₑver be something better to take the place of the country. Heidegger, as the well-meaning interpreter may say, breaks through modern fantasies about space in which the city dreams of the country, and the country of the city. Both fantasies are equally restricted and equally distorted. Heidegger carries out, in part literally, in part metaphorically, a "posthistorical" return to the country.

Precisely in the years of the most desolate modernization—the so-called Golden Twenties —the city, once the site of Utopia, begins to lose its magic. Berlin especially, the principal city of the early twentieth century, played its part in plunging the euphoria of the metropolis into a disenchanted light. As the focal point of industry, production, consumption, and mass misery, it is at the same time the most exposed to alienation: Nowhere is modernity paid for so dearly as in the mass cities. The vocabulary of Heidegger's Anyone analysis seems especially well suited to express the discontent of developed cities in their own form of life. Culture of distraction, talk, curiosity, unhousedness, habituatedness (one can think here of all sorts of vices), homelessness, fear, being-unto-death: All that sounds like the misery of the city, captured in a mirror that is somewhat cloudy and somewhat too subtle. Heidegger's provincial kynicism has a marked cultural-critical tendency. But it not only attests to a hopeless provincialism when a philosopher of his stature takes leave of the bourgeois urban and socialist Utopias, but points to a kynical turn in the sense that it abrogates the great goals and projections of urban social space. The turn to the province can also be a turn to real macrohistory that more closely attends to the regulation of life in the framework of nature, agriculture, and ecology than all previous industrial world images could. History written by an industrial historian would necessarily become microhistory. The history of the country knows the pulse of a much greater temporality. Reduced to short formulas, the city is not the fulfillment of existence; nor are the goals of industrial capitalism; nor scientific progress; nor more civilization, more cinema, more home beautiful, longer vacations, better eating: None of these things is the fulfillment of existence. What is "authentic" will always be something else. You must know who you are. You must consciously experience being-unto-death as the highest instance of your potentiality: it attacks you when you are afraid, and your moment has come when you are courageous enough to hold your ground in the face of the great fear.

Authentic fear is . . . rare under the hegemony of habituatedness and the Public sphere" *(Sein und Zeit,* p. 190). Those who choose what is rare make an ᵉhtist choice. Authenticity is thus, according to Heidegger, a matter for the few. ᵂ"at is that reminiscent of? Do we not hear again the Grand Inquisitor as he distⁱⁿguishes between the few and the many—the few who bear the burden of great •ᵉedom, and the many who want to live as rebellious slaves and are not prepared ᵗ° encounter real freedom, real fear, real being? This completely apolitically inended elitism, which assumes an elite of those who really exist, had to slide alᵐost inevitably into the social and guide political options. In this, the Grand In-

quisitor possessed the advantage of an undeceived and cynical political conscious-ness. Heidegger, by contrast, remained naive, without a clear awareness that the traditional mixture of academic apoliticism, elitist consciousness, and heroic atti-tude leads, almost with blind necessity to, unforeseen political decisions. For a time he-one would like to say, *therefore* -fell into the cynicism of the populist Grand Inquisitor. His analysis proved to be true inadvertently about him himself. Everything *looks as if.* It sounds as if it has been "really understood, grasped and spoken, but basically it is not." National socialism—"movement," "uprising," "decision"—seemed to resemble Heidegger's vision of authenticity, decisiveness, and heroic being unto death, as if fascism were the rebirth of authenticity out of habituatedness, as if this modern revolt against modernity were the real proof of an existence that had resolutely decided for itself. One has to think of Heidegger when one cites Hannah Arendt's sublime remark about those intellectuals in the Third Reich who, to be sure, were not Fascists, but "let something occur" to them on the theme of national socialism. In fact, Heidegger let many things occur to him until he noticed what the case "authentically" was with this political move-ment. The delusion could not last long. The Nazi movement was supposed to clar-ify what the populist Anyone has up its sleeve—Anyone as Master Human, Any-one as simultaneously narcissistic and authoritarian mass, Anyone as murderer for pleasure and official responsible for killing. The "authenticity" of fascism-its sole authenticity —consisted in transforming latent destructiveness into manifest destructiveness, thereby participating in a highly contemporary way in the cyni-cism of open "expressedness" that no longer conceals anything. Fascism, espe-cially in its German version, is the unconcealment of political destructiveness reduced to its most naked form and encouraged by the formula of the "will to power." It happened as if Nietzsche, in the manner of a psychotherapist, had said to capitalist society: "Basically, you are all consumed by a will to power, so let it out openly for once and confess to being what you are in any case!"[52] Where-upon, the Nazis, in fact, proceeded to let "it" *(es =* id) out, not under therapeutic conditions, however, but in the middle of political reality. It was perhaps Nietzsche's theoretical recklessness that allowed him to believe that philosophy can exhaust itself in provocative *diagnoses,* without at the same time thinking seriously about *therapy.* The Devil can be called by his real name only by those who know of an antidote to him. To name him (whether as will to power, as ag-gression, etc.) is to acknowledge his reality, and to acknowledge this reality is to "unleash" it.

Since Heidegger, there is another offspring of the ancient kynical impulse, strongly encoded but nevertheless legible, on the point of intervening in social happenings with a critique of civilization. It leads modern consciousness of tech-nology and domination ultimately *ad absurdum.* Perhaps existential ontology can be robbed of much of its pretentious gloominess when it is understood as a philo-sophical Eulenspiegel game. It pretends all kinds of things to people in order to

get them into a position where they no longer allow themselves to be deceived. It pretends to be frightfully unyielding in order to communicate the simplest things. I call it the kynicism of ends. Inspired by the kynicism of ends, life that has learned the coldness of producing, ruling, and destroying through the cynicism of means could become warm again for us. The critique of instrumental reason presses for its completion as a critique of cynical reason. Its chief task is to loosen Heidegger's pathos and break its tight hold on the mere consciousness of death. "Authenticity," if the expression is to have any meaning at all, is experienced by us rather in love and sexual intoxication, in irony and laughter, creativity and responsibility, meditation and ecstasy. In this release, that existential individual *(Einzige)* who believes its most intimately genuine *(eigenst)* possession is its own death disappears. At the summit of potentiality we experience not only the end of the world in lonely death, but even more the demise of the ego in its surrender to the most communal world.

Admittedly, death overshadowed philosophical fantasy between the world wars and claimed the right to the first night with the kynicism of ends for itself, at least in philosophy. However, it does not shed a good light on the relationship of existential philosophy to real existence when only "one's own death" occurs to it when it is asked what it has to say about real life. Actually, it says that it has nothing to say-and to this end it must write nothing with a capital *N*. This paradox characterizes the enormous movement of thought in *Sein und Zeit:* Such a great wealth of concepts was hardly ever employed before to convey a content so "poor" in the mystical sense. The work beseeches the reader with a lofty call to authentic existence but veils itself in silence when one wants to ask, How then? The only, and to be sure, fundamental answer that can be drawn out of it must read, deciphered (in the foregoing sense): *consciously.* That is no longer a concrete morality that instructs us as to what to do and what not to do. But if the philosopher is no longer able to give directives, he can still give an urgent suggestion to be authentic. Thus: You can do what you like, you can do what you must, but do it in a way that you can remain intensely conscious of what you are doing. Moral amoralism—the last possible word of existential ontology to ethics? It seems that the ethos of conscious life would be the only ethos that can maintain itself in the nihilistic currents of modernity because it is basically not an ethos. It does not even fulfill the function of a substitute morality (of the kind in Utopias that posit the good in the future and help to relativize the evil on the way there). Those who really think from beyond good and evil find only one single opposition that is relevant to life; it is at the same time the only one over which we have Power stemming from our own existence without idealistic overexertions, namely, that between conscious and unconscious deed. If Sigmund Freud in a famous challenge put forward the sentence: Where it *(Es)* was, ego *(Ich)* should become, Heidegger would say: Where Anyone was, authenticity should become. Authenticity —freely interpreted—would be the state we achieve when we pro-

duce a *continuum of being conscious* in our existence.[53] Only that breaks the spell of being-unconscious under which human life, especially as socialized human life, lives. The distracted consciousness of Anyone is condemned to remaining discontinuous, impulsively reactive, automatic, and unfree. Anyone is the must. As opposed to this, conscious authenticity —we provisionally accept this expression —works out a higher quality of awareness. Authenticity puts into its deeds the entire force of its decisiveness and energy. Buddhism speaks about the same thing in comparable phrases. While the Anyone ego sleeps, the existence of the authentic self awakes to itself. Those who examine themselves in a state of continual awakeness discover what is to be done for them in their situation, beyond morals.

How deep Heidegger's systematic amoralism[54] reaches is shown in its reinterpretation of the concept of conscience *(Gewissen):* Heidegger construes, carefully and revolutionarily at the same time, a "conscienceless conscience." If, through the millennia of European moral history, conscience was held to be an inner authority that tells us what good and evil are, then Heidegger understands it now as an *empty* conscience that makes no statements. "The conscience speaks solely and continually in the modus of keeping silent" *(Sein und Zeit,* p. 273). Again, Heidegger's characteristic figure of thought appears: intensity that says nothing. Beyond good and evil there is only the "loud" silence, the intensive nonjudgmental consciousness that restricts itself to alertly seeing what the case is. Conscience—once understood as a substantial moral authority— now approaches pure conscious being *(Bewusst-Sein).* Morality, as participation in social conventions and principles, only concerns Anyone's behavior. As the domain of the authentic self there remains only pure, decisive consciousness: vibrating presence.

In a sublime line of thought, Heidegger discovers that this "conscienceless conscience" contains a call to us —a "call to be guilty." Guilty of what? No answer. Is "authentic" living in some way a priori guilty? Is the Christian doctrine of original sin secretly returning here? In that case we would have only apparently taken leave of moralism. If, however, authentic self-being is described as being unto death, then the thought suggests itself that this "call to be guilty" produces an existential connection between one's own still-being-alive and the death of others. Life as causing-to-die. Authentically living persons are those who understand themselves as survivors, as those whom death has just passed over and who conceive of the time it will take for a renewed, definitive encounter with death as a *postponement.* Heidegger's analysis, in essence, penetrates into this most extreme boundary zone of amoral reflection. That he is conscious of standing on explosive ground is revealed by his question: "Calling on others to be guilty, is that not an incitement to do evil?" Could there be an "authenticity" in which we show ourselves as the decisive doers of evil? Just as the Fascists cited Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* in order to do evil emphatically in this world? Heidegger recoils

from this consequence. The amoralism of "conscienceless conscience" is not meant as a call to do evil, he assures us. At least the Heidegger of 1927 is worried by this vague premonition, but in 1933 he misses the moment of truth—and in this way he let himself be deluded by the activistic, decisionistic *{dezisionistisch),* and heroic husks of slogans of the Hitler movement. The politically naive Heidegger believed he had found in fascism a "politics of authenticity"—and permitted, unsuspecting as only a German university professor could be, a projection of his philosophy onto the national movement.

However, it should be noted that Heidegger, with respect to his central philosophical achievement, would still not be a man of the Right even if he had said still more politically muddled things than he actually did. For, with his, as I call it, kynicism of ends, he is the first to burst through the Utopian-moralistic grand theories of the nineteenth century. With this achievement he remains one of the first in the geneaology of a new and alternative Left: of a Left that no longer clings to the hybrid constructions in the philosophy of history of the past century; a Left that does not, in the style of the dogmatic Marxist grand theory (I prefer this expression to the word "Weltanschauung"), see itself as the accomplice of the world spirit; a Left that has not sworn allegiance to the dogmatics of industrial development without ifs and buts; a Left that revises the narrow-minded materialist tradition that burdens it; a Left that not only assumes that the others must die for one's "own cause" but lives with the insight that the living can only rely on themselves; a Left that in no way still clings to the naive belief that socialization *(Vergesellschaftung)* would be the wonder cure for the maladies of modernity. Without knowing it and, for the most part, even without wanting to know it (in this country even with an outraged resoluteness not to recognize it), the New Left is an existential Left, a neokynical Left—I risk the expression: a *Heideggerian Left.* This is, particularly in the land of Critical Theory, which has hung an almost impenetrable taboo on the "fascist" ontologist, a rather piquant discovery. But who has exhaustively and rigorously investigated the processes of repulsion between the existential tendencies and Left-Hegelian critical social research? Is there not a wealth of hidden similarities and analogies between Adorno and Heidegger? What grounds are there for their striking refusal to communicate with one another? [s] Who could say which of the two had formulated the more "melancholy science"?

And Diogenes? Did his existential-ontological adventure pay off for him? Has his lantern found people? Has he succeeded in instilling the unspeakably simple m our heads? I think he himself doubts it. He will consider whether he should not give up the enterprise of philosophy altogether. It makes no headway against the sad complicatedness of circumstances. The strategy of collaborating in order to change entangles the changer in the collective melancholy. In the end, those who were the more fully alive are only sadder, and it could hardly be otherwise.

Diogenes probably will resign one day from his professorship; soon after, we will find a notice on the bulletin board saying that Professor X's lectures are canceled until further notice. Rumor has it that he was seen in an army surplus store where he bought himself a sleeping bag. He was last reported seen sitting on a garbage bin, pretty drunk and giggling to himself like someone whose head is not quite in order.

Notes

1. The enormous interest shown by intellectuals in de Sade betrays a progressive dawning in which bourgeois cynicism begins to recognize itself again in late-aristocratic cynicism. It could be that in the future, Flaubert will take the place of de Sade.

2. "Those who give me a gift, I wag my tail at, those who give me nothing, I bark at, and scoundrels I bite" *(Diogenes Laertius,* vol. VI, p. 60).

3. [The metropolitan Indians (also mentioned in chapter 5) were a movement in the second half of the seventies in Western Europe of fringe dwellers who emulated American Indian culture and wanted to subvert the capitalist urban culture from within with (unarmed) cultural guerrilla tactics. As such, they are the politicized forerunners of the punks.—Trans.]

4. Shaving was a custom of the Macedonia military, taken over by Hellenic and Roman society. From then on the beard becomes a philosophical status symbol, a sign of nonconformism.

5. A modern counterexample: "No one should let himself be infected by the scientists of the Club of Rome, who have told us that we should turn back to a simple life. For this we have not come into office and we also do not work towards this. Diogenes could live in a tub and was satisfied with that. But he was a philosopher, and most of the time we are not." Here we have Chancellor Helmut Schmidt in 1976, who is speaking as a cynic warning us about the kynics.

6. See Hegel, *Vorlesungen tiber die Geschichte der Philosophie.* Collected Works, vol. 18 (Frankfurt, 1971), pp. 551ff.

7. Another version shifts this story to Corinth. The sources are few and fragmentary. For this reason one wants to lay every tiny particle recovered on the philologist's assaying scales and carefully weigh every letter. However, the ultimate wisdom often lies in not taking what has been handed down too literally. In this there is also a great hermeneutical chance, and we make unrestrained use of it.

8. See Regis Debray, who recognizes that a cultural history of scientific claims, to be properly founded, must be built on the basis of a sociology of ambitions. *Le pouvoir intellectuel en France* (Paris, 1979).

9. ". . . which neither sought a place to rest nor avoided the dark, nor showed any desire for so-called delicacies. That gave him a helpful tip for his needy situation." *(Diogenes Laertius,* vol. VI, p. 22).

10. [A famous German clown of the twentieth century—Trans.]

11. There is one derivation of kynicism from *kyon,* the Greek for "dog," and another from the gymnasion *Kynosarges* in which Diogenes' purported teacher, Antisthenes, is said to have taught.

12. Words like drop-out, *Aussteiger* [escapist; literally, one who climbs out, "alighter"; —Trans.] and others hint in the same direction.

13. Kynicism even begins historically with an apparent enmity toward pleasure, if it is true that Antisthenes "would rather have gone mad than feel pleasure." Self-control, however, is not self-torture.

14. Laertius maintains that there was a writing by Diogenes on the state *(Politeia).* Like everything else, it has been lost. Its possible content can easily be surmised, however. The idea of a world-state, in which the later Stoic political philosophy culminates, is of kynical origin.

15. [This phrase comes from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right,* Part 3, section 2.-Trans.]

16. Here an enticing comparison with the doctrine of long life in Chinese Taoism could be filled out. Meiner's edition of Laertius gives Diogenes' life span as 404-323 B.C., i.e., eighty-one years.

17. With Diogenes, under the slogan Remint the Coins, there begins what will be called by the neokynic Nietzsche "the revaluing of all values," the cultural revolution of the "naked truth." Nietzsche, of course, ruins the point. His revaluation turns the kynical rejection of power into a will to power; with this he changes sides and provides the powerful with a philosophy of disinhibition.

18. Feminism thus has an originally kynical side; indeed, it is perhaps the present-day core of neokynicism. For example, it encourages women to discover masturbation so as to detach themselves from the compulsions of marriage.

19. Helmut Schmidt still cites his ethics.

20. This image prevails from about the time of Nero. In Cicero's time, the sects, which dominated the ideological scene for a hundred years, are scarcely mentioned.

21. The interpretation of the late-ancient existential anxiety-among other things, a premise of Christianity—is still a challenge to psychohistory.

22. Modern analogy: rival depth-psychological sects (Freudians, Jungians, Reichians, Adlerians, Janovians, Perlsians, Lacanians, etc.).

23. Christoph Martin Wieland, too, the best scholar of kynicism in eighteenth-century Germany and the translator of Lucian, probably sensed that there was something inauthentic in Lucian's contempt for Peregrinus. In his novel, *Die geheime Geschichte des Peregrinus Proteus* (The secret story of Peregrinus Proteus) (1788-89), he thus draws a kinder picture of the philosopher.

24. See chapter 23, "On the German Republic of Impostors," as well as the section in chapter 10 entitled "Knowledge of War and Espionage."

25. Recall the theses on art as the form of expression of bourgeois neokynicism in chapter 5. The arts possessed an exceptional capacity to process negativity. The concept "realism" refers to this investigatory power of art.

26. Since Marx we know that the moving force that plunges modernity into its apparent progressive historicity is based on the alliance between capital and science. At the same time we are forced to distinguish more sharply between continuance *(Fortgang)* and progress *(Fortschritt).*

27. ". . . you *call.* . . evil": The Devil is not only an evolutionist but also a nominalist. "Evil" understands itself in another way: as a "power," as a phenomenon of energy, as a position in a natural polarity. Konrad Lorenz, still arguing in the schema of evolution, nowadays treats the phenomenon of aggression consistently from this standpoint: "so-called evil."

28. Not actionism but "contemplative praxis," to act in order to become conscious.

29. Nietzsche, who initially again consciously called himelf a *Cyniker,* also coined the phrase "live dangerously." It is the motto of kynical empiricism toward which Faust orients himself.

30. In its sharpest formulations, Adorno's *Minima Moralia,* the main work of moral critique in postwar German philosophy, speaks without reserve of the disgrace of surviving; it would be shortsighted to understand this merely as the reaction to Jewish experiences in those years (1943 on). On the morality of survival see also Elias Canetti, *Masse undMacht* (Munich, 1976) (Crowds and power; 1962).

31. In chapter 10, the way of seeing that leads to the "black empiricism" of the enlightenment sciences will be described.

32. "Boogie-woogie of the hormones" (Arthur Miller).

33. We are reading it here without regard to its context in the novel.

34. One hundred years after Dostoyevsky wrote this, the full implications of this reflection seem to be coming to light, since, in Western leftist traditions, a departure from the "spirit of the (Christian) Utopia" is being carried out with a previously unknown profundity and since the intelligentsia experiences, directly and on its own responsibility, the ineluctability of the principle of power and of the reason of state. The Left in political power: With this, moral-political and psychic complications with a new degree of complexity begin.

35. "The world is everything that is the case," positivism will say later. If one takes the expression "the case is" somewhat more generously, the great realists of the nineteenth century are thoroughly positivistic—or at least "on the way" to positivism. For Marx, class struggles (although a universal concept) are the case; for Nietzsche, the will to power; for Freud, drives.

36. That is certainly no longer the biblical Jesus but a Jesus from the perspective of Judas, a Judas who seeks disburdening. His tragic cynicism evades an unbearable guilt; psychoanalytically, this probably belongs to the psychodynamic of the patricidal son, who can continue to live without suffocating on his guilt only by finding reasons for why he had to kill.

37. Here we approach the third level of the development of the concept of cynicism which will be presented in Part III.

38. Historicism contributes something decisive to this by educating us to see all phenomena of consciousness as a "product of their time"; it can easily be combined with psychologism as well as sociologism.

39. For this reason, conservatives often have a clear consciousness of "semantics."

40. See "Minima Amoralia," in chapter 9.

41. Applied to the area of (church) politics, this dualism is expressed as power and spirit.

42. Overcoming of nihilism? "The results of the overcoming . . . are always worse than what is overcome"; Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt, 1966), p. 371.

43. Christian substitute: One does it for the good of others.

44. Only once has Diogenes been seen in this way in modernity. Nietzsche's metaphysical happening in which the "crazy person" with the lantern announces: "God is dead" was the signal of neo-kynicism.

45. In Part IV, I pursue this "translation" further and investigate what subjugation and being subjugated mean for epistemology.

46. Mephistopheles: "If I had not reserved fire for myself/1 would have nothing apart for myself."

47. [Heidegger's term has many connotations. *Verfallen* can mean "degenerated," "lapsed," "decayed," "addicted," "fallen." The sense of having fallen ("fallenness") into the habit of everydayness seems to predominate.—Trans.]

48. Nihilism? For a long time, the Marxist critique of Heidegger wanted to see in him nothing other than the swan song of the decadent bourgeoisie that had been left stranded even by the will to a future. Heidegger as speaker for a fascistoid nihilism and cult of death? Hardly. Rather, he contributed an impulse against the socialisms of the "great tomorrow," against Utopias of endless sacrifice.

49. Here I take up a motif of Michel Foucault's.

50. Concreteness does not exclude vagueness.

51. [*Unbehaustheit* recalls, among other things, Diogenes and his tub and suggests the original-fundamental insecurity of all existence, naked ejection into the world. —Trans.]

52. An assessment of Nietzsche will always depend strongly on how one conceives of the "will to power." Encouragement to imperial cynicism? Cathartic confession? Aesthetic motto? Self-correction of an inhibited person? Vitalistic slogan? Metaphysics of narcissism? Propaganda of disinhibition?

53. This is a modern equivalent for the Delphic "Know thyself." The Freudian ego is attributable rather to Anyone. Is the psychoanalyzed person an accommodated person, someone cut down to size?

54. This reflected amoralism, which, paradoxically, carries the mute promise of an authentic ethical life within it, has found its opponent in socialist moralism. The more recent Critical Theory has also renounced the sensitivistic quasi-amoralism of Adorno's "aesthetic theory" and steers with direct argumentation toward a positive ethics. That may signify an advance in a certain respect—if it avoids falling behind the radical modernity of existential and aesthetic amoralism. The latter already works on modern experiences with every morality and all categorical imperatives: Because these forms of "Ought" result in idealistic overexertions, imperative ethics comes with its own gravedigger-skepticism, resignation, cynicism. Moralism, with its "you should" inevitably drives us into an "I

can't." Amoralism, by contrast, which proceeds from the "you can," realistically banks on the chance that what "I can" in the end will also be the right thing. The turn to practical philosophy that happily characterizes every present-day fundamental thinking that is world-wise should not tempt us to again let loose at being with a categorical imperative. Kynical reason, therefore, develops a nonimperative ethics that encourages the Can, instead of entangling us in the depressive complications of the Ought.

55. Recently, Hermann Morchen's extended study of Heidegger and Adorno has taken on these questions.

II. Phenomenological Main Text

Chapter 8
The Cardinal Cynicisms

*In hasty ill humor, I have ripped the fig leaves from some
naked thoughts.*
　　　Heinrich Heine, preface to *Germany, a Winter's Tale*

From what we have seen then, the concept of cynicism contains more than a first
glance would lead us to expect. It is one of those things that, if given an inch,
will take a mile. Our curiosity aroused, we wanted at first to "see what's really
in it," and thereby —we noticed it too late—we experienced something that bog-
gles our minds. We wanted to learn something about cynicism and discovered in
doing so that it has long since brought us under its domination.

To this point, we have presented the concept of cynicism in two versions, and
a third clearly emerges after chapter 7, "The Cabinet of Cynics." *The first* says:
Cynicism is enlightened false consciousness—unhappy consciousness in modern-
ized form. Our approach here is intuitive, starting with a paradox; it articulates
an uneasiness that sees the modern world steeped in cultural insanities, false
hopes and their disappointment, in the progress of madness and the suspension
of reason, in the deep schism that runs through modern consciousnesses and that
seems to separate the rational and the real, what we know and what we do, from
each other for all time. In the description we achieved a pathography that probed
schizoid phenomena. It tried to find words for the perversely complicated struc-
tures of a consciousness that has become reflective and is almost more melancholy
than false; it is a consciousness that, under the compulsions of self-preservation,
continues to run itself, though run down, in a permanent moral self-denial.

In the *second* version, the concept of cynicism assumes a historical dimension.
A tension becomes apparent that, in the ancient critique of civilization, had first
found expression under the name of kynicism: the urge of individuals to maintain

themselves as fully rational living beings against the distortions and semirationalities of their societies. Existence in resistance, in laughter, in refusal, in the appeal to the whole of nature and a full life. It begins as plebeian "individualism," pantomimic, wily, and quick-witted. Some of this trickles through to the more serious Stoa; iridescent transitions to Christianity are effected but die out to the extent that Christian theology negates and even damns the ancient-heathen inheritance. We reserved the concept of cynicism for the reply of the rulers and the ruling culture to the kynical provocation. They definitely see that there is an element of truth in it, but proceed with oppression. From now on, they know what they do.

The concept here undergoes a split into the dichotomy: kynicism-cynicism that, in substance, corresponds to resistance and repression, or more precisely, self-embodiment in resistance and self-splitting in repression. The phenomenon of kynicism is thereby separated from its historical origin and becomes a type that crops up again and again historically whenever, in crisis civilizations and civilization crises, consciousnesses clash with each other. Kynicism and cynicism are, accordingly, constants in our history, typical forms of a polemical consciousness "from below" and "from above." In them, the opposition of high culture and people's culture is lived out as the exposure of paradoxes within high-cultural ethics.

Here, the *third* version of the concept of cynicism continues on to a phenomenology of polemical forms of consciousness. The polemic always revolves around the correct conception of the truth as "naked" truth. Cynical thinking, namely, can arise only when two views of things have become possible, an official and an unofficial view, a veiled and a naked view, one from the viewpoint of heroes and one from the viewpoint of valets. In a culture in which one is regularly told lies, one wants to know not merely the truth but the *naked* truth. Where that cannot be that is not allowed to be, one has to draw out what the "naked" facts look like, no matter what morality has to say about it. In a certain way, "ruling" and "lying" are synonyms. The truth of rulers and that of servants are different.

In this phenomenological sighting of contestable forms of consciousness, we must "sublate" *(aufheben)* the bias in favor of the kynical standpoint. At first, we will have to patiently and somewhat dryly look at how, in six great arenas of values-the military, politics, sexuality, medicine, religion, and knowledge (theory)—kynical and cynical consciousnesses confront, attack, retaliate against each other, qualify each other, provoke each other, and finally get to know and neutralize each other. In the cardinal cynicisms, the contours of a combative history of ideas emerge. Such a history describes that "labor on the ideal" that stands at the heart of high-cultural ethics. That this is not a "phenomenology of spirit" in the Hegelian sense will become clear.[1] Likewise, it has little to do with Husserlian phenomenology apart from the irrepressible philosophical battle cry: "Let's get down to things!"
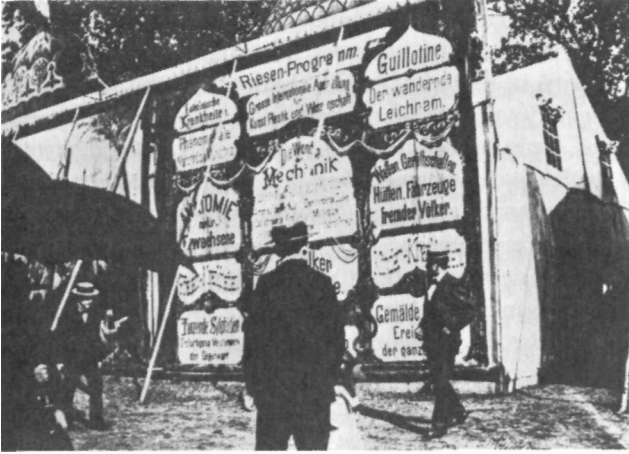
Heinrich Zille, *Riesenprogramm* (Gigantic program). Variety tent on a Berlin fairground around 1900.

Military Cynicism

Five minutes' cowardice is better than a life long dead.
                                        Soldier's saying

*Even the Prussian prime minister, von Bismarck, was horrified
by the atrocities. "War is hell, and whoever lets it loose with
the stroke of a quill is a devil!" he exclaimed, without consider-
ing how tirelessly he himself had contributed to it!*
                                        W. Stieber[2]

Anthropological research says that flight is older than attack. Accordingly, the human being would be, admittedly, partly predator (hunter), but not a priori a warring animal. Nevertheless the discovery of weapons —for beating, throwing, shooting (development of distance, neocortical development)—plays a key role in anthropogenesis. If one can assume anything at all about the original tendency of the human psyche regarding struggle and war, one can assume at least this much: It prefers avoidance to striking. "Cowardly but happy" (G. Kleemann, subtitle: Why the contemporary primitive human being does not want to fight; Frankfurt-Berlin-Vienna, 1981). Those who avoid can initially better secure their chances for survival than those who confront. If cowardice is neutrally understood as the primary inclination to avoid confrontation, in the economy of human dr'ves it must have priority over the desire to fight. Initially it is smarter to flee than to hold one's ground. "The smarter person yields."

But at some point in the process of civilization it becomes smarter to stand firm than to flee. How this came to be is not our topic here —a couple of historical conceptual lumps may mark out the problem: ecological competition, increase in population density, neolithic revolution, the division between mobile herding cultures and sedentary agricultural cultures, and so on. The path to "history," to higher cultures, leads through the militarization of tribes and beyond to the state.

Military cynicism can emerge when three male martial character types have assumed clear contours in a society: the *hero,* the *hesitater,* and the *coward.* (This can even be seen in a rudimentary form in animal species with high intraspecies aggression, e.g., in deer populations.) An unambiguous hierarchy of values is established at whose summit the hero stands; everyone *should* be basically like him. Heroism is internalized as a model by the males in a combative civilization. But hereby, a new sociopsychological training of human beings also becomes necessary, with the aim of acquiring a distribution of martial temperaments not found in nature. Cowardice, present in large quantities as raw material and in everyone, must be reworked into battle-hungry heroism, or at least into brave, battle-ready hesitancy. All training of soldiers in the history of combative civilizations works to produce this unnatural alchemy. The noble family contributes to it just as much as the armed peasant family, as do, later, royal courts, military schools, barracks, and public morals. Heroism became and remained, in part to the present day, a dominant cultural factor. The cult of the aggressive, triumphant warrior runs through all of recorded history. Where we begin to find written records, there is a high probability that it is the story of a hero, of a warrior who has been through many adventures. Where written records are not found, tales of heroes continue indefinitely back to obscure oral origins.[3] Long before the descendants of those fighters who intervened in European history as early Carolingian armored knights wrote about themselves so glowingly in chivalrous poetry, fascinating stories of the great warriors in the times of migrations (the era of the Nibelungen) were told by the tribes.

The division of labor in military temperaments seems to make sense in social terms. The three types represent the advantages of three different "tactics" or styles of fighting. Heroes make use of the advantages that attack offers in many situations where there is a compulsion to fight. Thus, attack is the best defense. Hesitaters constitute the main mass of a "reasonable middle position"; they fight when they have to, and then they fight energetically, but they also know how to curb the danger that can come from the bravado of heroes. Cowards, finally, can occasionally save themselves when all others who "stand firm" are doomed to perish. But that is not supposed to be mentioned, and the coward must be held in contempt because otherwise the alchemy that is held to make battle-hungry fighters out of timid deserters cannot succeed. Mercilessly, the heroic model of the military group of men is forced on all. The hero stands in the limelight; to him, the demigod in armor, all honor, acclamation, and esteem are accorded.

There are three attitudes of consciousness to this psychic ideal and exemplary •$_{ma}$ge, according to which one you are. The hero, whenever success raises him above self-doubt, experiences himself as the one who lives at the zenith of his own ideal, radiant and self-confident, a man who can fulfill his own and collective dreams. He will sense the "glory" of a demigod in himself; the thought of losing does not enter his mind. Hence the breathtaking bigmouthedness of heroes who are certain of victory, at the beginning of the battle and after the victory. It speaks for the psychology of the war-experienced Romans that they granted the returned triumphant general a victory procession through his town, where he could experience his own deification in the state—and with him, the people who in this way learned to stay "in love with success"; but they also put a slave on the victor's chariot who continually had to call him: "Reflect, victor, that you are mortal!" This apotheosis of the victor, the cult of success, of divinity through battle, and of happy success is part of the sociopsychological inheritance of humanity from antiquity—and even today, this experience is repeatedly staged and peddled from sports fields to the Olympics. Pictorially, heroes are almost always represented as youths; the misfortune of heroes is that they die young.

The second attitude toward the ideal is that of the hesitater, of the relative hero. He probably sees himself as someone who fulfills and obeys the morality of the hero but who does not enjoy the glamor of success. To be sure, the ideal rules him, but it does not make him into an exemplary case. He fights and dies when there is no way out of it, and he can console himself with the certainty that he is prepared to do what is necessary. He does not feel the continual need to prove himself as does the topnotch hero, who must even seek out danger simply to keep up his self-image.[4] The hesitater, however, pays for this with a certain mediocrity; he is neither right at the top nor right at the bottom, and when he dies his name is summarily listed among the dead heroes. Perhaps it is a good sign that modern armies cultivate, right up to the top ranks, the soldier of the hesitater type (obedience plus thinking for oneself, the "citizen in uniform"), one who does not have an inner urge to fight. Only in certain military and political leaders is there still a tendency toward the characteristic offensive mentality —"falcons," heroes of armament, those hooked on hegemony.

The third stance toward the heroic ideal is adopted by the coward. Of course, under the unavoidable pressure of the heroic image, he must seek refuge in the hesitatingly brave masses. He must hide the fact that he is really the anti-hero; he must camouflage himself and make himself as unobtrusive as possible. As muddler, improvisor, and man of few words, he cannot even afford to internalize the image of the hero in any rigid way because otherwise self-contempt would crush him. In him, a slight decomposition of the "superego" is already under way. In the coward's consciousness lie simultaneously the germs of military kynicism and of a higher critical realism! For through his experience and self-experience,

the coward is forced to reflect and look twice. He can confess his cowardice aloud just as little—otherwise he would be even more despised —as he can simply give it up. In him, to be sure often poisoned by a drop of self-contempt, a critical potential against the ethics of heroes begins to grow. Because he himself has to dissemble, he will be more sensitive to the pretense of others. When heroes and hesitaters succumb to a superior power, the coward, who allows himself to flee, is the sole survivor. Hence the sarcastic saying: Horses are the survivors of heroes.

We now drop the fiction that we are speaking of a socially homogeneous army. It becomes volatile for soldiers' cynicism when consideration is given to military hierarchies, which correspond roughly to the class structure of society. In feudal military structures we find, besides the troop of knightly heroes, mostly an acquired troop of paid knights or mercenaries and below them the troop of orderlies and aides. Each of these groups also has its own combat morality that corresponds approximately to the three military temperaments. For the knight, combat, even if it is about tangible material interests, belongs to his social status and to the aristocratic self-image. In his combat morality, therefore, "honor" must be given special consideration. Where honor is at stake, there is an excess of motivation over and above the small and concrete causes—up to fighting for the sake of fighting. This is not the case with mercenaries, who have made war their profession: the motley mob of the times of the mercenaries, paid knights, but mainly infantry, foot troops, peasants' sons from Switzerland bought to engage in wars, etc. Their motive to fight cannot be heroic because the paid soldier (Italian *soldi,* money) conceives of war as a workplace, not as a heroes' stage, which does not exclude collaborating with the military spectacle of heroes or even a certain heroism lowered to the level of a craft. Mercenaries are professional hesitaters. They wage war because war feeds them, and they intend to survive the skirmishes. The metier as such is already dangerous enough; one does not have to, in addition, challenge death with heroic frills. At the lower end of the hierarchy, finally, the orderly fights, above all because an accident of birth made him the serf of a knight who, without him, could neither mount nor dismount a horse and could not even get out of his armor without help. The aides act as a kind of a military proletariat whose invisible and unappreciated labor is sublated in the victories of their masters like swallowed surplus value. Entanglements in masculine ideals aside, the servant has no "intrinsic" motivation to fight except, as far as possible, to keep himself alive during the fighting. For him it would be realistic to be cowardly from the bottom of his heart.

The military cynical process can now be set into motion, and as always it begins at the lower kynical-realistic position. Sancho Panza is its first "great" representative. Without much reflection, this clever little peasant knows that he has a right to cowardice, just as his poor noble master, Don Quixote, has a duty
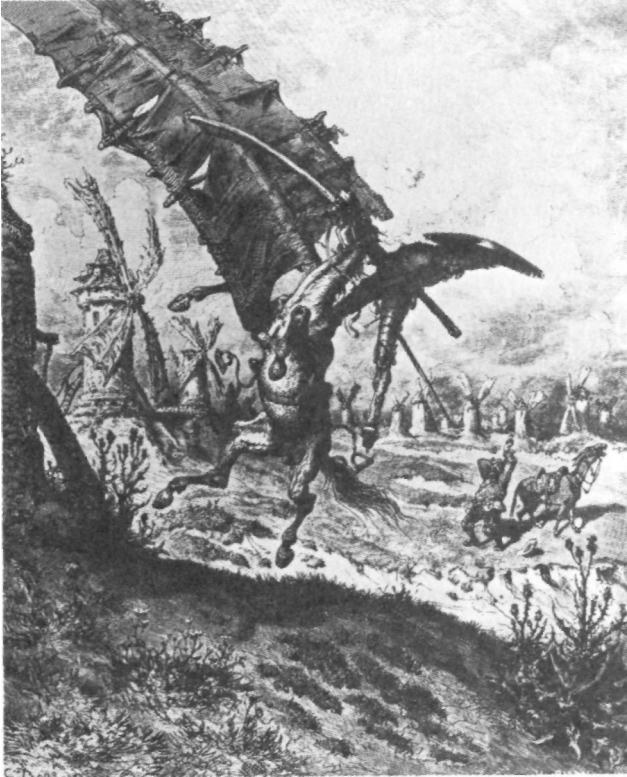
Gustave Dore, *Don Quixote.*

toward heroism. But those who view the heroism of the master with Sancho Panza's eyes inevitably see the craziness and blindness of heroic consciousness. This cheeky military enlightenment, which Cervantes unrelentingly lays out, reveals that the old desire for a hero's fight is an anachronism and that all purportedly noble occasions to fight are nothing more than pure projections of the knight's imagination. Thus windmills stand for giants, prostitutes for ladies to be heroically loved, and so forth. To be able to see this, the narrator himself requires the realistic, foot soldier's, plebeian perspective —and beyond this social permission to speak a language befitting this perspective. This could not have happened before the late Middle Ages, when the knights lost their technical superiority in weaponry to the plebeian infantry and when armed mobs of peasants more and more frequently served troops of knightly heroes annihilating defeats. Since the fourteenth century, the heroic star of armored horse combat was in any case in descent. With this, the moment had arrived when anti-heroism found its language and when the cowardly view of heroism became publicly possible. Once the
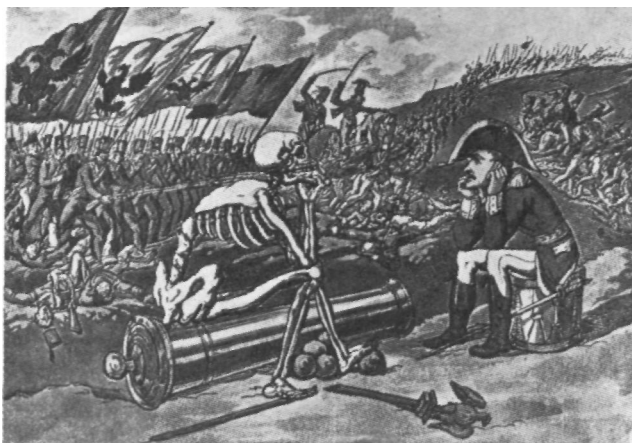
Thomas Rowlandson, *The Two Kings of Terror.* English caricature of Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig, 1813.

masters had to swallow their first defeats, the servants sensed their real power. Now, one can laugh realistically.

The constitutions of armies after the Middle Ages up to Napoleonic times, indeed even up to contemporary times, reveal a paradoxical distortion of the original connections between combat morality and the type of weaponry. The ancient hero was a lone fighter just as the knight was in feudalism. He sought to prove himself in the duel, but best of all in the constellation of one against many. Modern warfare, however, tendentially depreciates the individual fight. Wars are decided by formations and mass movements. Using the Roman legion as its model, the modern organization of armies pushes the genuinely heroic functions—combined assault, standing firm, man-to-man combat, etc.-toward the bottom. This means that the demands made of heroes fall more and more on those, who, according to their nature and motivation, tend to be hesitaters or cowards. In modern infantries, then, a schizoid drill in heroism —the instilling of an anonymous and unacknowledged courage to die —must be carried out. The top officers, who by virtue of their strategic position, are not as endangered, shove the risk of heroism, death in the front line, more and more onto those who actually have nothing at stake in the war and who often were only acquired as troops accidentally or by force (compulsory conscription, extortion of the poor, enticement with alcohol, a way out for superfluous peasants' sons, etc.).[5]

As soon as some space had been made in modern soldiery for the well-founded realism of the cowards (kynicism), the military cynical process is stepped up to a higher level: the answer to it now comes from the modern cynical realism of

royalty. Of course, this realism also knows that not one of the poor devils in uni-
form can have heroic motives. But they should be heroes nevertheless and look
the so-called hero's death in the face, as normally only aristocrats do. For this
reason, armies after the Middle Ages are the first social organs that methodically
cultivate schizophrenia as a collective condition. In them, the soldier is not "him-
self but another, a piece of the heroic machinery. From time to time it also hap-
pens that a leader lets his mask fall and reveals that he indeed sympathizes with
the poor devils' wish to live, but he cannot acknowledge this wish. "Dogs, do you
want to live forever!" The cynic has thoroughly understood his kynical dogs, but
nevertheless people have to die. When Frederick II of Prussia speaks thus, in a
patriarchal, humorous tone of voice, we are listening to an enlightened master's
consciousness in the second round. It has understood the hero humbug but needs
the hero's death for the time being as a political tool —here, for the sake of Prus-
sia's glory. On this note, have fun being blown to smithereens! From now on, all
battles, no matter how nobly advertised, are overshadowed by this cynical self-
denial.

The modern development of types of weaponry contributes a good deal,
directly and indirectly, to the tension between the consciousness of heroes and
that of cowards. In the dispute between cavalry, infantry, and artillery over
precedence, this tension has a subliminal effect. For it generally holds that the
more horrifyingly a weapon works even from a distance, the more cowardly, in
principle, its user can be. Since the late Middle Ages, we have witnessed the as-
cent of long-range weapons to systems that decide wars. With a rifle, the infantry
soldier, without great risk, can bring down the most noble knight; thus, world
history has voted for the technology of gun powder and against the type of
weapons used by cavaliers. With a field cannon, in turn, a whole pile of infantry
soldiers can be blown to bits. From this has resulted the strategic primacy of ar-
tillery, that is, of the "scientific" type of weapon that in the best schizoid manner
produces the most terrible effects from a hidden position and great distance.[6] To-
day's air force and missile systems are, for their part, only extrapolated artilleries,
the latest consequences of the technical principle: shooting. Napoleon was not a
representative of this type of "thinking" for nothing, and it is no accident that,
since the First World War, war is waged under the sign of artillery battles of
materials. Contemporary literature after the First World War puzzles about the
schizophrenia of the "unknown hero," who bore the horrors of war but was essen-
tially more technician than fighter, more civil servant than hero.

What we have now described as the "first round" between the kynicism of sol-
diers and the cynicism of the generals has been continually repeated since the
"bourgeois age" on a higher level and on a greatly extended scale. The bourgeoisie
inherited a bit of the heroic tradition from the feudal era, carrying it on into the
broad patriotic masses. "The citizen as hero"-a standard problem of the last two
hundred years. Is a bourgeois heroism possible? We find the answers in the mili-

tary traditions of the last centuries: Naturally the militarized bourgeoisie put everything into developing its own heroic tradition, and equally naturally, the neokynical, bourgeois-proletarian strand tried to make its case against it. On the one hand, therefore, we find much "genuine idealism," "Prussianism," boasting, and lies; on the other, a lot of critical realism, laughter, irony, satire, bitterness, and resistance.

How did this come about? In the Napoleonic era, a previously unimaginable militarization of the masses began in Europe: Bourgeois society arose not only through the expansion of capitalist forms of trade and production but, at the same time, politically through a broad, "patriotically" motivated self-recruiting of society into the army. The nation became the armed fatherland, a type of super weapon that welded political egos together. It is said that in the revolutionary wars of the 1790s, there was for the first time something like a national volunteer army, that is, practically a mass heroism that mobilized the type of weapon called souls, patriotic hearts. The "nationalization of the masses" (Mosse) implies not only an ideological event but above all the greatest event of modern military history. With it, collective schizophrenia reached a new historical level. Whole nations mobilized themselves in external wars. From then on the tendency to total war increased, in which the entire life of society could become, implicitly or explicitly, a means for war-from the universities to the hospitals, from the churches to the factories, from art to kindergartens. On this level, however, the kynicism of the coward and the cynicism of the citizen-hero became entangled in far more complicated tensions with each other than before. The "cowardly" wish to stay alive sought new forms of expression in the nation-state: explicitly as pacifism or internationalism (e.g., of the socialist or anarchist type); implicitly as the Schweik principle, muddling through; the ethos of "malingerers" (systeme D).[7] In Europe between, say, 1914 and 1945, whoever wanted to represent the "party of one's own survival," inevitably had to take something from the socialist, the pacifist, or from Schweik.

The sort of entanglements the kynical and the cynical attitude to soldiery can lead to in the twentieth century is shown by the German example. In the autumn of 1918, the German Empire collapsed in an anarchic spectacle. All types screamed out their views and self-representations all at once: the militaristic nationalists as heroes who did not even quite want to see that the war had really been lost; the Weimar parties as civil mediating forces and procrastinators who wanted to prevent the worst and try a new beginning; and finally the Spartacists, Communists, expressionists, pacifists, Dadaists, etc., as the "cowardly" fraction, now on the offensive, who damned war without qualification and demanded a new society based on new principles. One has to be familiar with these collisions in order to understand how German fascism of the type shown in the Hitler movement received its unmistakable quality that can be precisely localized in history. Hitler was one of those fanatical champions of a petit-bourgeois heroism that, in the fric-

tion with the absolutely unheroic, "cowardly," life-affirming currents and mentalities during the time of the collapse between 1917 and 1919, culminated in the most advanced position of military cynicism for that time, namely, *fascism,* as reaction of the German soldiers returned from the world war against the collective "destructive" realisms of the contemporary Schweiks, pacifists, civilians, socialists, "Bolshevists," and so on.[8] Fascist military cynicism is a late chapter in the problem of the "citizen as hero." It presupposes a high level of schizoid distortions, until finally even a declassed petit-bourgeois like Hitler could cling to the image of the hero—especially to an image that was nihilistically ravaged by the war. They wanted to lose their egos in this image *(Ich an es).*

These interconnections are as complicated as they are saddening. They are so because they reflect a systematic confusion of the will to live. This will to live, with its hopes and identifications, clings on to the militarized nation-states, from which the greatest threat to life expectancy emanates. In the schizoid society, individuals can, in fact, hardly still know how they can pursue their own authentic vital interests and when they are making themselves into a component of a defensive-destructive machinery of the state and military. Driven by the desire to obtain protection and security for themselves, they tie themselves almost irrevocably to the political-military apparatuses that sooner or later will bring about, or at least slide into, conflict with rivals.

But even militarized fascism lies far below the convoluted windings of military cynicism in the age of nuclear strategy. With the emergence of global weapons of annihilation, weapons that make any question concerning heroism illusory, the tension between heroes, hesitaters, and cowards enters into a completely chaotic phase. Defensive motives apparently gain the upper hand everywhere. Each of the nuclear superpowers openly includes the heroic, hesitating, and cowardly motives of the other in its strategic calculations. Each has to accept that the opponent, in the last analysis, builds up its strategy on the other's cowardice, which is, of course, an armed cowardice having at its disposal a battle-ready hero apparatus. The world situation today has brought about a permanent military eye-contact between two cowardly-heroic hesitaters who both arm themselves unrestrainedly to show the other side that being cowardly will remain the only sensible stance —and that it will never be able to be anything more than a hesitater. The position of the hero remains unoccupied. The world will not see any more victors. This implies a revolutionarily new kind of duel because duelers in the past regarded each other as potential heroes. Today, everyone knows about the opponent's realistic and even indispensable cowardice. The world still lives on because East and West think of each other as cowardly, highly armed Schweiks who, after all the loudmouthed boasting has been vented, have only one thing in mind, namely, to live on this planet a little longer. But since the military process on the global level has arrived at this nadir of an heroic-cowardly hesitation, the previous system of values has been completely unhinged. The tension, at least theoretically, has dis-

solved into an open equivalence of all temperaments. Heroism may be quite good, but hesitation is at least as good, and cowardice is perhaps even better. The old negative has become as positive as the old positive has become negative. On the summit of military escalation, then, has the real fight become superfluous? The military alone cannot answer this question, especially not in an age that everywhere has proclaimed the (illusory) primacy of politics over the military.

The danger will continue to grow as long as political systems produce the means, ends, and ideas to come into a military, hegemonic, and annihilating contest with one another. The dynamics of armament in the strategic and scientific area, as mad then as it is now, proves that this is still, undiminished, the case. Now as then, each side fantasizes that the ability to survive can only mean being able to defend oneself; that defensiveness as such has become the greatest threat to survival is perceived —not head-on, clearly, in a way demanding consequences, but only secondarily, obliquely, unclearly. Each side assumes that only a balance of progressive terror can secure so-called peace. This conviction is simultaneously realistic *and* absolutely paranoid; realistic because it is adapted to the interaction of paranoid systems; paranoid because in the long run and essentially, it is completely unrealistic. In this system of games it is thus realistic to be mistrustful to the point of a constant state of alert; at the same time, mistrust sustains the pressure to permanently continue the buildup of arms, more weapons could obviate mistrust. Modern politics has accustomed us to looking on a massive *folie a deux* as the quintessence of realistic consciousness. The way in which two or more powers, in intricately thought-out interaction, drive each other crazy provides contemporary human beings with their model of reality. Those who accommodate themselves to this modern-day society, as it is, accommodate themselves in the last instance to this paranoid realism. And because there is probably no one who, at least subliminally and in "clear moments,"[9] does not understand this, everyone is caught up in modern military cynicism —if they do not *expressly and consciously resist* it. Those who resist have to, today and probably for a good while longer, put up with being defamed as dreamers, as people who, although perhaps led by good intentions ("The Sermon on the Mount"), have nonetheless begun to flee from reality. But this is not true. The concept of "reality," like no other concept, is used falsely. We must first *flee into reality* out of the systematized paranoia of our everyday world.

Here, in the middle of military-political considerations, a therapeutic problem clearly emerges that possesses both political and spiritual dimensions. How can subjects of power, sick with mistrust but nonetheless realistic, break down their destructiveness and their projections of hostility as long as the interaction of these systems until now has proved that weakness in the face of the opponent has always been exploited as an opportunity to strike again? Each thinks of itself as an essentially defensive power and projects aggressive potentials onto the other. In such a structure, relaxation of tension is a priori impossible. Under the conditions of

the mania for making enemies it remains "realistic" to stay tense and ready for battle. Neither power can show any weakness without provoking the other's strength. With never-ending exertion the opponents must work for a small terrain on which something like self-limitation becomes possible, that is, a weakening of the consciousness of being strong, a relaxing of the feeling of being inflexible. This tiny terrain of self-limitation is, to date, the only bridgehead of reason in the military-cynical process. Everything will depend on its growth. For human beings it was difficult enough to learn how to fight, and everything they so far have achieved they have done so as fighters who have accepted challenges and through them developed into themselves (see Toynbee's concept of "challenge"). But to learn how not to fight would be even more difficult because it would be something completely new. Future military history will be written on a completely new front-there, where the struggle to desist struggling will be carried out. The decisive blows will be those that are not struck. Under them our strategic subjectivities and our defensive identities will collapse.

The Cynicism of State and Hegemonic Power

Je n'ai rien, je dois beaucoup,
je donne le reste aux pauvres.[10]
　　　　Testament of an aristocrat

Does an emperor go to the toilet? I think about the question a
lot and run to mother. "You'll end up in prison," says mother.
So, he doesn't go to the toilet.
　　　　Ernst Toller, *Eine Jugend in Deutschland* (1933)

War and preparation for war go together with: tricks of
diplomacy, the suspension of moral concepts, holidays for truth
and a field-day for cynicism.
　　　　Stanley Baldwin, British prime minister (1936)

The subjects of political reality, states and monarchical powers, can be compared with what the heroes were in military reality. The further back we go in history, the more similar the images of heroes and kings become—until they merge in the idea of heroic monarchy. In ancient times, many monarchical houses and emperors traced their lines of descent directly to the gods. In old traditions, the ascent through heroic achievements to monarchy had to be complemented by a divine descent, as descendancy from the divine. One became king, on the one hand, through heroic power and on the other, through "God's grace"; earned from below through triumphs, illuminated from above by a cosmic legitimation.

One cannot say of the early monarchies that they were meek in their public

self-portrayal. Everywhere noble rule, monarchy, and state were established, an intensive training in arrogance began in the ruling families. Only in this way could the consciousness of standing at the summit be consolidated in the psyches of the powerful.

Grandiosity thus became a political-psychic style. The leap from power to grandeur, from the naked superiority of force to sovereign glory, was made. The primeval kings, pharaohs, despots, caesars, and princes secured their self-confidence by means of a charismatic symbolism. A functionally useful megalomania was at work in the monarchies, i.e., grandiosity as a structural factor in domination. Through their renown, princes staked out their symbolic domains, and only through this renown —the medium of media—do we today know of the existence of many a realm and of the names of their rulers. To this extent the luminescence of ancient kingly arrogance has not quite died out, even to the present day. Not only did Alexander the Great carry his name as far as India; he expanded it through the medium of traditions into the depths of time. Around many a power and ruler a radiant crown forms, emanating energy for millennia.

With the emergence of such lofty political-symbolic positions, however, the scene was also set for the process of the cynicism of power to be put into motion-of course, here too from below, through the provocation of the splendid hegemonic power from the cheeky position of a slave. The subjects of the first political kynicism were therefore people who were led into or threatened with slavery, people who were oppressed but whose self-consciousness was not completely destroyed. For them it was natural to view the arrogant poses of superior power without awe and in doing so to recall the devastation and massacres the victor inflicted before he could strut around so. In the slave's eyes, the reduction of the king's right to pure force and of majesty to brutality was already begun.

The inventors of the original political kynicism were the Jewish people. In "our" civilization, they have provided the most powerful model to date of resistance against violent superior powers. "Cheeky," resolute, militant, and capable of suffering at the same time, they are, or were, the Eulenspiegel and the Schweik among peoples. To the present day in Jewish wit, something of the original kynical twist of oppressed-sovereign consciousness lives on—a reflective flash of melancholy knowledge that slyly, insolently, and alertly positions itself against powers and presumptions. Whenever the Israelite dwarf has once again beaten the modern Goliath, an irony of three thousand years lights up in the victor's eyes: How unfair, David! (Kishon). As a people, the descendants of Adam were the first to have eaten of the tree of political knowledge—and it appears to have been a curse. For with the secret of self-preservation in one's head, one risks being sentenced, like Ahasver, to not being able to live or die. During the greater part of their history, the Jews were forced to lead a life that was survival on the defensive.

The political kynicism of the Jews is borne by the knowledge, both ironic and

Rudolf Schlicher, *Blind Power,* 1937.

melancholy, that everything passes, even tyrannies, even oppressors, and that the °nly immutable thing is the pact between the chosen people and their God. There-fore, in a certain respect, the Jews can be held to be the inventors of "political •dentity"; it is a faith that, inwardly invincible and unshakable, has known how to defend its continued existence through the millennia with kynical renunciation and an ability to suffer. The Jewish people were the first to discover the power of weakness, patience, and sighing. Their survival, in a millenium of military

conflicts and always in the weaker position, depended on this power. The significant break in Jewish history, the dispersion after 134 A.D., with which the age of the Diaspora began, led to a change in the model figure for the small, valiant people. The first half of Jewish history stood under the sign of *David,* who defied Goliath and passed into history as the first representative of a "realistic" kingdom without exaggerated glory. In threatening times the people could lean their political ego on this majestic Eulenspiegel and hero figure. From him stemmed an alternative image of the hero—the humanized heroism of the weaker who stands his ground when resisting a superior power. From Judaism, the world inherited the *idea of resistance.* This idea lived on in the Jewish people as the messianic tradition, which, full of hope, anticipated the promised holy king from the house of David who would lead the unhappy people out of all turmoil to themselves once again, to their home, their dignity, their freedom. According to Flavius Josephus's account *{The Jewish War),[11]* Jesus was nothing more than one of numerous messianic critics of the authorities and religious guerrillas who had proclaimed their resistance to Roman domination. From the Roman conquest of Palestine until the collapse of the Bar Kokhba uprising in 135 A.D., messianism must have been truly epidemic on Jewish soil. The charismatic rebel, Simeon bar Kozibe (Bar Kokhba, son of the stars), like Jesus, had claimed that he was a descendant of David.

With Jesus and the consolidation of the Christ religion, the David tradition was continued in new dimensions. While the Jewish people were being beaten and driven from their homeland and were entering the bitter second half of their history—in which Ahasver might be their model figure rather than David-Christianity continued the Jewish resistance against the Roman Empire on another level. At first, Christianity became a significant school of resistance, courage, and embodied faith. If it had been then what it is today in Europe, it would not have lasted fifty years. During the period of the Roman emperors, Christians formed the nucleus of inner resistance. To be a Christian once meant not allowing oneself to be impressed by earthly power, and especially not by the arrogant, violent, and amoral Roman god-emperors, whose religious-political maneuvers were all too transparent. Early Christianity may have been helped in this by having inherited from the Jews that historicizing kynicism that knew how to say to all bearers of power and fame and imperial pretension: We have already seen a dozen of your sort perish: hyenas and almighty time, which obeys only *our* God, have been gnawing for a long time on the bones of earlier despots. The same fate awaits you. The Jewish view of history thus contains political dynamite: It discovers the transitoriness of others' empires. The primary "theoretical" kynical-cynical consciousness (cynical too because in alliance with the more powerful principle, i.e., here, historical truth and "God") is the historical consciousness: that so many powerful and grandiose empires have decayed into dust and ashes.

In Jewish consciousness, historical knowledge becomes the narration of the downfall of others and of its own miraculous survival. From the Jews, the early Christians inherited a knowledge of what it was like in the hearts of the oppressors, a knowledge of the hubris of naked power. In the tenth Psalm, Jewish consciousness puts itself in the interior of evil power and eavesdrops on its haughty conversation with itself:

2 Because the wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor, let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.
3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire . . .
6 He hath said in his heart, "I shall not be moved, for I shall never be in adversity."

The Jewish kynic follows the invulnerability fantasies of military despots into their innermost marrow. There, he then speaks his denial. He will not be among those who praise the powerful rulers. Since that time, despots have to live with this torment. There will always be a group that takes no part in deifying the powerful. This is how the psychopolitical dynamics of the "Jewish question" function. Jewish-kynical consciousness feels on its own beaten and burned skin the violent nature *(Gewaltwesen)* of glory and splendor. The back that has counted the lashes will, it is true, bow down because that is the smarter thing to do, but there will be an irony in its bowing that drives those hungry for greatness into a rage.

In the tension between hegemonic powers and the oppressed, two positions thus initially present themselves: here, the "splendid" power with its pompous facade; there, the immediate experience slaves have of the violent core of power and of the facade of pomp. A midpoint between the two is established through the political-legal achievements of the hegemonic power, from which it draws its legitimation. At this midpoint—the achievement of law and state—the consciousness of the master and the slave can meet. To the extent hegemonic power legitimates itself through a *good* exercise of power, it overcomes its initially violent character and can find its way back into a relative innocence, namely, to exercise the art of the possible in a world of necessities. Where hegemonic power really legitimates itself, it subjects itself to a higher and more universal interest, to the support and continuance of life. For this reason, peace, justice, and protection of the weak are the holy words of politics. Where a hegemonic power can *justifiably* say of itself that it has furthered peace, brought forth justice, and made the protection of the most fragile life its noblest cause, there it begins to overcome its own core of violence and to earn a higher legitimacy. But here more than anywhere else, the words must be measured against reality. As a rule, the language of power changes the meaning of expressions: It calls the postponement of war peace; it says "creation of order" when it suppresses unrest;[12] it boasts about its

social-mindedness when it has handed out alms that are mere window dressing; and it says "justice" when it administers laws. The dubious justice of power is reflected in Anatole France's great sarcastic remark: "The law, in its elevated equality, forbids beggars and millionaires alike to sleep under bridges."

The political original sin, the bloody, violent, and extortionary beginnings of domination, can only be overcome through legitimation in the sense just described and purified through broad assent. If this fails, the violent core of hegemonic powers resurfaces; unveiled. This occurs continually in legalized form through the exercise of the punitive force that intervenes whenever the law of hegemonic powers is broken. Punishment is thus the Achilles' heel of the legality of violence.[13] Anyone who observes hegemonic powers as they punish learns at the same time something of their essence and his or her own; their core of violence and his or her attitude toward it.

Just as cowards have to hide themselves in the mass of hesitaters, the subversive consciousness of slaves keeps itself alive by learning the language of slaves (of acknowledgment, of the illusion of legality and of glorification) so well that the ironic tone is not immediately perceived. The Roman Petronius, if tradition portrays him accurately, is supposed to have been a genius at servile irony. In his encounter with the arrogance of a Nero, he carried the art of scathingly ironic flattery to an extreme. He knew how to serve his poisoned veneration to his majesty in such sweet compliments that power could not restrain itself from swallowing them. Of course, for the ironic, self-aware patrician in the age of the emperors, there remained in the end no other way out than to consciously die. This *savoir mourir,* which knowingly calculates its own death as the possible final price for freedom, links the disempowered but proud Roman patriciate with Christianity, which over the centuries had grown into the greatest provocation to the caesars. With it emerged a consciousness of existential sovereignty that, even more than Stoic ethics, neutralized the question whether one stood at the top, in the middle, or at the bottom of society. Under its sign, slaves could become more fearless of death than the masters. The power of embodiment in early Christianity was so strong that in the end, it won the greatest power structure in the ancient world over to its side. It had its roots in the consciousness of freedom that emerges when the naive veneration of power ceases. To never again be forced to respect a mere worldly, external, violent power—this became the kynical core in the Christian attitude toward hegemonic power. Friedrich Schlegel was one of the first modern thinkers to again achieve a clear picture of the kynical-cynical quality of radically embodied Christianity. In his *Athenaeumsfragmente* of 1798 he noted: "If the essence of cynicism consists in . . . having an absolute contempt . . . for all political splendor . . . , then Christianism is probably nothing other than universal cynicism."[14]

The truth of this thesis is shown in the way the splendid Roman state met and reflected the kynical-Christian challenge. At first, the Roman state had no alterna-

tive than to suffocate with brutal force the self-aware light that irritated it, as demonstrated by the waves of persecution of Christians over the centuries. When these were unsuccessful, and the power of embodiment in the new faith grew with repression, there occurred, after three centuries of friction, a turn in world history: Imperial power submitted to Christian kynicism in order to tame it. This is the significance of the Constantinian turning point. With it, the Christianization of power began—and herewith, viewed structurally, the refraction of the kynical impulse into cynicism. Since Constantine, the history of nation-states in Europe is essentially the history of Christianized state-cynicism that, after this epoch-making change of positions did not cease to dominate and afflict political reflection in the form of a schizoid masters' ideology. This, by the way, is (initally!) not a theme that would require a psychology of the unconscious. The divisions discussed here run through consciousnesses on the surface. That power cannot become pious appears to those ruling, not in nocturnal bad dreams but rather in their daily calculations. There is no unconscious conflict between the ideals of faith here and the morality of power there, but, from the beginning, a limited faith. With this, the cynicism of hegemonic power counterposes itself to the kynical impulse of oppositional power. The former already *begins* as doublethink.

Christian doublethink reached its first peak in the Augustinian philosophy of history that, despairingly realistic and confronted with the decayed monster of the Christianized Roman Empire, saw no other way out than to make a comprehensive program out of the splitting of reality (and implicitly of morality). Thus arises the fatally realistic doctrine of the two realms *(de duabus civitatibus),* the divine realm *(civitasf!] dei)* and the temporal realm *(civitas terrena),* which are conspicuously embodied in the Catholic church and the Roman Empire. The temporal organization of the church, as an appendage of the divine spheres, reaches down to earth. With this, dualisms are described from which there has been no definitive break either in the history of European nation-states or in philosophical thought concerning the state. Even in the twentieth century, state and church stand in a conflict-laden relationship—as accomplices and contracting parties. The thousand-year-old wrangle between state and church provides the picture book of pugilism illustrating all positions, holds, throws, hugs, and scissors that are possible between two wrestlers whom fate has wound inseparably together. Not even on the surface can the Christianized state organize itself as a unified entity (aside from Byzantinian Christianity). According to its inner and outer structure, it has long since been condemned to being two-faced and to splitting truth. Thus a double system of law (church law, state law), a double culture (spiritual, worldly) and even a double politics (church politics, state politics) develop. In these doublings is hidden something of the secret of the rhythm of Western European history, which produced the bloodiest, most disruptive, most conflict-laden, but at the same time, the most creative and "fastest" history that has ever taken place in such a relatively short time on such a small continent. The kynical-

cynical logic of conflict is one of the forces or "laws" that drive the tumultuous process of the history of European states, classes, and cultures to its unequaled brilliance. Almost from the beginning, everything is "doubled" here-a mighty potential for antitheses ripe for execution, for embodied powers of reflection, and for armed convictions.

Here, we do not want to get into historiography. A few catchwords may illustrate the tensions just described as they developed. As is well known, the bishopric of Rome, with its provincial dependencies, was the only parastate structure that survived the disintegration of the Western Roman Empire. Around 500 AD., Christianity conquered the new Northern European group of powers when Regimus of Reims succeeded in christening the Frankish Merovingian chief, Chlodwig (Clovis). For this reason, even today, the French church proudly calls itself *fille ainee de I'eglise* (the eldest daughter of the church). That Chlodwig himself was incidentally also one of the wiliest and most bestial and power-hungry figures of early European history — surely of the same stuff as a Genghis Khan or a Tamerlane, only with lesser means —may be taken as a hint of what could be expected from Christianized monarchical powers. To live with a schism in one's head became the fundamental problem of Christian domination. Moreover, as a last consequence, the doctrine of Christianity had to split itself, namely, into a doctrine for "half and "whole" Christians, for split and intact Christians. This tendency, of course, had already begun in the times of persecution, when Christian communities started to polarize into religious elites —saints, martyrs, priests —and "ordinary" Christians.

The schizoid development of Christianity can be explained essentially through three great movements: first through the transformation of religion from a way of life for communities to the metaphysical dress rehearsal of ruling powers, that is, through the structuring of religious politics; second, through the establishment of spiritual governments in the form of papal, episcopal, and monastical (abbies, priories) landed dominions; and third, through the forced and superficial Christianization of the broad population. The kynical core of Christianity also presents itself in a threefold way, when, still under the sign of Christian domination, it resists *mere* domination and tries to live against the splits: first, in the great orders of Western monasticism, which, since Benedict of Nursia, carried on the synthesis of prayer and labor, and later too in the contemplative and ascetic movements of the high Middle Ages: second, in the heretics who unrelentingly filed suit for the embodiment of the Christian commandment to love and frequently became martyrs in the "Christian" persecution of Christians; third, in the attempts of some Christian monarchs to bridge the tensions between the worldly "office" and Christian doctrine through a princely humanitarianism (we will leave aside the question of the extent to which this could succeed). Charlemagne cynically and brutally pursued his Frankish-imperialist politics in the name of Christianity, for which reason he is rightly called the Father of the Occident. The Ottonians and Salians

eveloped the business of political rule by means of churchmen so thoroughly that under them the bishoprics became the supporting struts of German imperial politics (cf. the imperial program of the high Middle Ages, the Christian and Germanically transformed idea of empire and emperor, and the political duels between the monarchy and the papacy).

The eight great European *crusades* can probably be understood only against this background. What happened between 1096 and 1270 under the concept of *croisade* constituted an attempt of the Christianized feudal dominions to act out the masters' cynicism of their own consciousness, which had become unbearable. After centuries of Christianization, the religious commandments had created a matrix of internalizations in the ruling military-aristocratic strata that then intensified the contradiction between the Christian commandment to love and the feudal ethics of war to the point of bursting. The unbearable pressure of the contradiction —which had become internalized—explains the violence with which, for centuries, Europeans could pour their energies into the pathological idea of the crusade. The Crusades—proclaimed to be holy wars —were sociopsychological explosions of a proto-Fascist quality. They channeled the energies that had been blocked in the conflict between two mutually negating ethics in the individual and collective soul. In the holy war, the opposition of a religion of love and an ethics of heroism that could not be lived out turned into a call that *could* be lived out: God wills it. In this fiction, enormous tensions were discharged —to the astonishment of a posterity that can discover neither military nor economic nor religious reason in the unspeakable torments and shows of bravado in the Crusades. The idea of the crusade offers (besides the persecution of witches, anti-Semitism and fascism) one of the strongest examples of how an officially proclaimed, collective mania saved countless individuals, in whom the conflict between religious love and militarism churned, from going privately mad. Since 1096, the holy war functions in Western civilizations as a safety valve. Under the pressure of their own inner contradictions and madnesses, people have since then sought external, diabolical enemies and have waged the holiest of wars against them. The psychogram of Christian civilizations carries this—proto-Fascist—risk within it: In times of crisis, when the unlivability of opposed ethical programmings comes to be felt more acutely, a moment regularly arrives when the pressure explodes. That the persecution of the Jews in the Rhineland began simultaneously with the Crusades underlines the interconnections between the various cultural-pathological phenomena. Jews, heretics, witches, Antichrists, and Reds are all victims of a primarily inner formation of fronts that emerge during highly schizoid periods of pressure, when the irrationality of the whole society seeks an outlet for contradictory ethics.

In addition to channeling Christian masters' cynicism into the Crusades, the Middle Ages showed a second way out of the tension: A semisecularized courtly sphere was set up in which the ethos of the aristocracy and the military could be

indulged in with a free conscience. The early Arthurian legend was nourished by the momentum released by this discovery; chivalrous romances like the *chansons de geste* pretty clearly gave the heroic ethos priority over the Christian ethos. Here, chivalry removed itself a couple of steps from the "chains" of the Christian commandment to be loving and peaceful by indulging in an autonomous, worldly celebration of skill in the use of weapons, courtly festivity, and a refined erotics, not caring what the priests had to say about it: the culture of tournaments, feasts, hunting, gluttonous banquets, chivalrous love. Aristocratic hedonism played a significant role into the nineteenth century by protecting the worldly joy in living from the masochistic aura of Christian monasteries. He who slew the most opponents and conquered the most beautiful woman was considered the grandest fellow. Even Nietzsche, in his anti-Christian song of praise for the "blond beast" and powerful figures, had in mind such secularized, rowdy aristocrats, later condottieri-the type of men who act, take what they desire, and can be "splendidly" ruthless. The courtly neoheroism, however, achieved only an illusory emancipation from Christian ethics. In a more sublime way, Arthur's knights were also, of course, Christian knights; this is obvious in the case of Percival. With the myth of the knight in search of the Holy Grail, the Christianization of the military is extended into metaphorical and allegorical spheres and ultimately stripped of reality in a pure mysticism of chivalry that absorbs combat into spiritual dimensions. During the late Burgundian period, chivalrous culture resembled a literature living itself out.

In the symbolic haze of Christianized ideologies of the empire, the knight and the state during the late Middle Ages, which hovered over the incessant feudal, city, church, and state wars of Europe, Machiavelli's ideas must have had the cleansing effect of a storm. Machiavelli's *Prince* has always been read, especially in bourgeois times, as the greatest testament of the cynical technique of power. As an insurpassable declaratory oath of political unscrupulousness, it was indicted on moral grounds. What religion fundamentally and unconditionally condemns —murder—is here openly recommended as political means. Of course, over the centuries, many have employed this means. This is not what is innovative in Machiavelli's doctrine. But that someone now comes forth and advocates it openly-that creates a new moral standard that can be sensibly treated only under the concept of cynicism. Masters' consciousness arms itself for a new round and in doing so checks the supplies. Someone was almost bound to come along and express the new standard unmistakably, cheekily, unrestrainedly, clearly, etc. The act of expressing, even to the present day, is considered more scandalous than what is expressed.

Machiavelli's political "amoralism" presupposes the unending tradition of war and the feudal and political chaos of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. As a historian, Machiavelli saw that the last remnants of legitimation had been torn from the splendid gown of the Christian state, since no ruler was any

longer in a position to fulfill, even illusorily, the most primitive tasks of state — securing peace, upholding the law, protecting life—in the never-ending confusion of warring minor powers. Here, the thought of a central power presses to the fore since it would be in a position to end the chaos of individual powers and to again make civil and state life possible. The ideal prince of such an imaginary, still nonexistent central power would, without regard for the constraints and intricacies of Christian morality, have to learn to exercise power radically as an effective force of law, peace, and protection within a homogenized state territory. Politically, Machiavelli, with his cynicism, saw decidedly more clearly than the authorities of the land, empire, and town in the late Middle Ages who simply went on running things with a brutality cloaked in Christianity. The Florentine's prince theory posits for the statesman a duty to unconditional hegemonic power whereby the disposal over *every* means is automatically implied. Such a cynical technology of power can be valid only in situations in which the state, the political vessel for survival, has been smashed and the central power, if it still exists at all, has fallen into the role of a whipped dog with which a pack of brutal, greedy, and chaotically quarreling minor powers play their game. In such a situation, Machiavelli's cynicism can speak the truth. For a minute in world history, this is how a cheeky, sovereign spirit sounds who expresses precisely the right point in amoral tones and can speak for more general vital interests. To be sure, this cynical consciousness of power is already so reflexively convoluted and precariously unrestrained that this voice cannot be readily understood, neither from above nor below, neither by those who wield power nor by the general population. A residue of uneasiness remains when a princely sovereignty is described here that does something "good" for itself and for the nation's people as a whole by risking, beyond good and evil, the most infamous crimes against individuals.

One might think that the politics of the absolutist states and territories in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe fulfilled Machiavelli's ideas with a grain of salt. The absolutist state indeed set itself above the quarreling minor powers, above regional sovereigns, and especially above the religious parties that were bloodily entangled in one another. (The "politicians" were initially those who tried to maneuver tactfully and to remain relatively neutral vis-a-vis the warring religious camps.) But scarcely established as new, relatively stable hegemonic powers, the absolutist states began to present themselves in a cloud of self-adulation. They too did their utmost to veil their core of violence in a grandiose rhetoric of legality and God's grace. However, no amount of boastful claims on God's grace can make critical subjects completely forget that in reality it is also a domination by the grace of murder and manslaughter as well as oppression. No modern state has completely succeeded in masking its core of violence, as the Utopia of legality dreams of doing. The first great resistance against the modern (absolutist) state was borne, sensibly enough, by the former free high nobility and the landed aristocracy that feared the court's sovereignty-that is, a group of peo-

Lorenzo Leonbuono, *Allegoria della Fortuna.* This allegorical politology shows Tyrannis (power) surrounded by Envy, Ignorance, Suspicion, Ungratefulness, Dissimulation.

pie who, because they were themselves all too arrogant, clearly perceived the arrogance of the central power. That could almost be written up as an unintended, "popular" success of Machiavelli, who revealed the trade secrets for all modern central powers. The cynical amoralism of hegemonic powers can no longer be dismissed. Since then, states have lived in a cynical twilight of semilegitimation and semipresumption. A relative excess of violence, oppression, and usurpation accompanies even those states most concerned about legitimacy and the rule of law. Under even the most solemnly sworn achievement of peace by a state, its military undergarments can be seen (modern people say, as did the ancients, *"Si vispacempara bellum"* [If you want peace, arm for war]). Even in the best legal system, raw facts like class privileges, misuse of power, caprice, and inequalities pierce through time and again. Behind the juridical fictions of the free exchange of goods, free labor contract, and unregulated prices, inequalities in power and extortion come to light on all sides. Under the most sublime and free forms of aesthetic communication, the voices of social suffering and cultural barbarities

still cry out. (In this respect, Walter Benjamin's statement holds: There is no evidence of culture that is not simultaneously evidence of barbarism.)

Since the eighteenth century, the political atmosphere in Central Europe has been rife with "open secrets." Partly *discreetly,* in a private or secret setting, partly in the form of an open publicistic aggression, the secrets of power are now given away. Power is once again supposed to answer to morality. The origin of absolutism and its political wisdom, which was based on the prince's capability to suppress minor war and religious massacre, has here long since sunk into the dim past. Convinced that it would handle power in a morally unobjectionable way, if it only had power, the political-moral critique of the eighteenth century resisted absolute "despotism." A new social class, the bourgeoisie, now made itself, under the name of the people, a candidate for the assumption of power ("commoners," the "Third Estate," etc.). The French Revolution, in its regicidal phase, carried a government of the "people" to the summit of the political system. However, what had made the revolution in the name of the "people" established itself in the following era as the bourgeois aristocracy, as an aristocracy of finance, culture, and entrepreneurship; moreover, through marriage, it was interwoven a hundredfold with the older hereditary nobility. It could not be long before this new stratum of masters, which called itself the people and cited the sovereignty of the people as its legitimating principle, experienced the contradictions of ruling for itself. For those who use the people for legitimation call forth the people and invite them to take an active interest in the machinations that are employed in their name and against them.

The contradictory nature of the Christianized state now repeats itself, on a higher historical level, in the contradictions of the bourgeois state, which bases itself on the sovereignty of the people and makes the authorities dependent on universal elections (or makes it appear so). For, just as little as the Christian "state" in the Middle Ages realized the Christian ethics of love, reconciliation, and free fraternity could the modern "bourgeois" states convincingly represent their maxims ("freedom, equality, fraternity, solidarity") or even the vital interests of the broad masses. Those who study the situation of the peasant populations in the nineteenth century, or even more, that of the growing industrial proletariat and the development of pauperism in the age of bourgeois rule (and in addition, the situation of women, servants, minorities, etc.) — those who do this must notice that a garbled and truncated concept of the people underlies the legitimating appeal to the people.

At this point, socialist movements become possible and necessary. They demand that whatever happens in the name of the people should also happen through and for the people. Those who base their authority on the people must also "serve the people," to start with by not involving them in those murderous "people's wars" that were typical of that age when bourgeois or feudal-bourgeois classes

ruled "in the name of the people"; and ending by allotting them a just proportion of the wealth they produce through their own labor.

In the secular conflict of the socialist movements with, let us say, the "bourgeois" nation-state,[15] two new turnings and polemical-reflexive convolutions of political consciousness were perpetrated that to a large extent govern the twentieth century. Both are late, complex forms of cynical consciousness. The first is what we *call fascism.* It goes so far as to confess in a relatively unabashed way its allegiance to a politics of pure violence. In a cynical manner, it simply dispenses with the effort of legitimation by openly proclaiming brutality and "holy egoism" to be political necessities and historical-biological laws. Hitler's contemporaries found him to be a "great orator," because, among other reasons, he began to articulate with a clear tone of naked realism that which had displeased the German temperament for a long time and that which it had wanted to do away with in accordance with its narcissistic and brutal ideas of order, namely, the hopeless Weimar parliamentarianism, the infamous Treaty of Versailles, etc., and in particular the "guilty" ones and the troublemakers—socialists, Communists, trade unionists, anarchists, modern artists, gypsies, homosexuals, but above all the Jews, who had to bear the brunt of it all for being the intimate enemy and universal projection figure. Why precisely them? What is the meaning of this uniquely malicious animosity? Through the mass murder of the Jews, the Fascists sought to smash the mirror that the Jewish people, by their mere existence, held up to Fascist arrogance. For the Fascist, the heroically arrogant Nobody, must have felt that no one saw through him more than did the Jews, who by virtue of their tradition of suffering, almost as if by nature stand in ironic juxtaposition to every superior power. The central figures of German Fascism must have sensed that their arrogant thousand-year Reich would never be able to believe in itself as long as there remained in a corner of their own consciousness the memory that this pretention to power was a mere pose. It was the Jews who reminded the Fascists of this. Anti-Semitism betrayed the kink in the Fascists' will to power. This power could never become so great that it would overcome the kynical-Jewish denial of it. "The *impudent* Jew" became the catchword for beating, stabbing, and murdering *(Schlag-, Stick-, und Mordwort)* under fascism. Out of its legacy of resigned resistance, covered over by apparent accommodation, modern Judaism radiated such an intense negation of the arrogance of power into the center of Fascist consciousness that the German Fascists, bent on their own grandiosity, built extermination camps in order to eliminate what stood in the way of their presumptuousness. Did not these people live with the melancholy knowledge that all messiahs, since time immemorial, had been false? How could the German messiah out of the Austrian night-asylum, who let himself be celebrated as the returned Barbarossa from Kyffhauserberge, believe in his own mission as long as he himself looked over his shoulder with the eyes of the "evil Jew," who "undermines every-

thing"? No will to power can endure the irony of the will to survive this power too.[16]

To be sure, it is inadmissible simply to characterize the Fascist state of the twentieth century as the typical representative of the modern, "bourgeois" state based on the sovereignty of the people. Nevertheless, fascism develops one of the latent possibilities of the "bourgeois" people's state. Its rampant antisocialism makes it clear that there is in fascism a political phenomenon of disinhibition, namely, a master-cynical defensive reaction against the impudent socialist demand to let the people have what they were promised, what is due to them. Fascism, it is true, also wants "everything for the people," but first it swindles through its false concept of the people: the people as monolith, as a homogeneous mass that obeys a single will ("One people, one Reich, one Fuhrer").[17] With this, liberal ideology is given a good, swift lesson. Individual freedoms, individual will? Individual opinion *(Eigensinn)?* Nonsense! And this nonsense is all the more annoying the further "down" it appears. Fascism realizes the tendency of the "bourgeois" state to push through, with the "necessary force," *the particular* "interests of the whole" rather than individual interests. In doing this it distinguishes itself through its unrestrained brutality. For this reason, it could occur to some substantial non-Fascist interest groups with political influence (in the economy and parliament) to support the Fascists when they seized state power and to think of them perhaps as the new broom with which disruptive "individual" interests (down below) could be thoroughly swept away. Were there really people who were cynical enough to believe that they could buy off Hitler and his cynical party of brutality? (One of them — Thyssen—in fact wrote memoirs under the title / *Paid Hitler.)*[n] The Fascist state, with its stifling confusion of capital and folk ideology, idealisms and brutalities deserves a unique philosophical predicate: the cynicism of cynicism.

The second complicated convolution of modern political consciousness occurred in recent Russian history. There seems to be a tendency for the militance and radicalness of socialist movements to develop proportionally to the level of oppression in a country. The more powerful a workers' movement was able to become in Europe, especially in Germany —corresponding to the real growth of the proletariat in the process of industrialization —the more established ("bourgeois") it presented itself in its average political behavior, the more it trusted in a gradual victory over its opponents, the forces of the late-feudal and bourgeois state. Conversely, the more powerful and unconquerable a despotic-feudal state power really was, the more fanatically it was confronted by the "socialist" opposition. One might try to express it in the following way: The riper a country was for the insertion of socialist elements into its social order (high development of the productive forces, high degree of employment of wage labor, high degree of organization of "proletarian" interests, etc.), the more calmly the leaders of the workers' movements waited for their chance. The strength and weakness of the

social democratic principle was always its pragmatic patience. Conversely, the less ripe[19] a society was for socialism (thought of as postcapitalism), the more unrelentingly and successfully radical socialism knew how to place itself at the head of subversive movements.

If there is a law governing the logic of struggle that says that in long conflicts opponents assimilate each other, then this law has been substantiated in the conflict between the Russian Communists and the czarist despots. What was played out between 1917 and the XXth Party Congress must be understood as the cynical and ironical testament of czarism. Lenin became the testamentary executor of a despotism whose representatives had possibly been extinguished, but not its procedures and inner structures. Stalin raised the traditional despotism to the technological level of the twentieth century, in a way that would have made any Romanov blanch. If, under the czars, the Russian state was already a much too tightly fitting shirt for its society, under the Communist party it became a real straitjacket. If under czarism a tiny group of the privileged had held an enormous empire terroristically under control through their apparatus of power, after 1917, it was a tiny group of professional revolutionaries who, riding the wave of disgust with the war and the hatred the peasants and proletariat had for "those at the top," overthrew Goliath.

But was Leon Trotsky not, as a Jew, the inheritor of an ancient tradition of resistance and self-assertion against arrogant power? Trotsky had to let himself be banished and murdered by his colleague, who had become the Goliath. Is not in Stalin's murder of Trotsky the same cynical reply of presumptuous hegemonic power at work as in Fascist genocide? In both cases it is a matter of the revenge of presumptuous force on those whom it knows will never respect it, but rather for all time will cry out to the bugaboo: Legitimate yourself or you will be overpowered! In Trotsky's idea of permanent revolution was hidden something of the knowledge that political force must justify itself every time it is used in order to differentiate itself from criminality. Power must prove that it is a force for peace, law, and protection within its territory in order to make possible a new abundance of *autonomous* life. The idea of a permanent revolution is not an appeal for continual chaos but stands rather as a code for the Jewish consciousness that every mere arrogance of state will be humbled—even if that means by being reminded of its crimes for as long as it exists. If Russian resistance even today expresses itself in the language of Christian and human rights, it does so because the process of .^//-liberation in Russia came to a halt at that point where it had arrived between February and the Red October of 1917: the demand for human rights as the universal formula of bourgeois freedoms. A country that wants to leap over the "liberal phase" will, when it jumps from despotism to socialism, land back in despotism again. The Russian people let themselves be made into the tools of a future that never wanted to arrive and that, after all that has happened, can no longer come in the way it was promised. It has sacrificed its rights to life and its

demands of reason for the present—in an act of orthodox masochism and scared confessional torment—on the altars of consumption of distant generations. It has exhausted its vital energies in the race to catch up to the madness of consumption and Western weapons technology.

As far as the real socialist apparatus of state is concerned, most observers assure us that ideologically it has been in the meantime totally drained. Everyone feels the gulf between the phraseology of the Leninist tradition and everyday experiences, particularly those who are forced to speak this phraseology because of their position. The world falls into two separate dimensions. One reckons everywhere with a split reality. Reality begins where the state and its terminology end. The conventional concept of "lie" does not adequately describe the situation in the East with its floating, schizoid diffusions of reality. For everyone knows that the relation between the "words" and the "things" is disrupted, but without control through public discussion, the disruption establishes itself as a new normality. People therefore no longer define themselves in terms of socialist values and ideals; rather their definitions proceed from the lack of any alternative or escape from what is really given, that is, from a "socialism" that one endures like an evil, together with its radiantly true, but unfortunately only rhetorical, side. If cynicism—according to the prototype of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor—can turn into tragedy, then it does so here, where the word "socialism," which everywhere else in the world delineates a hope for people to become the masters of their own lives, has frozen into a symbol of futility. This represents a cynical speech disturbance of epochal proportions. Even from the outside it is obvious that the politics of the socialist powers no longer holds any hope of socialism whatsoever. In Marxist-Leninist terminology, the East exemplifies naked hegemonic politics, and one hesitates to laugh or hiss only because one cannot know what would happen when the emperor notices that he has been walking naked across the street for a long time now. The other also has long been this way, but what will happen when it becomes known? Why has the greatest military power in the world been built up in order to protect a Active otherness?

If we try to imagine what a Machiavelli at the end of the twentieth century would say after a careful study of the political situation, it would probably be a cynical piece of advice to the super powers to declare with unscrupulous openness the bankruptcy of the systems on both sides, first, to motivate each to aid the other, second, to move their politically tired subjects to a great offensive of inventive self-help, and third, because the bankruptcy has probably in fact come about. As a good positivist, Machiavelli would observe that a majority of the so-called political problems around the year 2000 are "illusory problems," stemming from the antagonism between two power blocs that confront each other because one of them tried to organize a social system that bypasses capitalism without having ever really known it; the other is a brittle, old, "overripe" capitalism that cannot go beyond itself because the house named "socialism" into which it could move

is already occupied. Accordingly, the competition between East and West is-Machiavelli would recite this with his well-known dry malice—neither a productive competition between powers in the usual sense nor a classic hegemonic rivalry, but rather an aborted conflict of a complicated type. "Socialism" has become the chief hindrance to capitalism's transition to it; at the same time, the capitalism of the West, "nailed down" in this way, is its own chief hindrance to an open joining with systems in the East. Thus, while the East systematically lives beyond its means by pretending to be socialism, the West systematically does not live up to its potential because it has to formulate its ideas of the future defensively; namely, under no circumstances does it want *this* socialism—which is understandable because no system can take what it has long since surpassed as its goal. For capitalism, a disguised and crippled state capitalism of the Eastern type cannot be an idea for the future.

If we want to resolve the conflict, we first must have a precise understanding of this uniquely paradoxical type of conflict. On this point Machiavelli would concur with the views of his colleague Marx, who provided the initial steps for a Universal (historical-political) Polemic.[20] This Marxian Universal Polemic allows us to differentiate between conflicts based on rivalry between similar systems and conflicts based on evolutionarily dissimilar systems, differing from each other in the degree of their development. In the latter case, the conflict is between the less developed and the more developed system whereby the latter necessarily grows out of the former. *Ideally,* the conflict between capitalism and socialism is of the latter kind. Seen logically, it can only be a conflict of overcoming in which the old resists the new, even though the latter undeniably emerges out of the former. The new becomes necessary when the old has become a fetter. This is precisely what Marx assures us of concerning the essence of fully developed capitalism: Once it has first become completely developed, it becomes itself a barrier to the human productivity that it had previously impelled. This barrier must thus be lifted: socialism. Socialism, on all levels, releases human productivity from its restrictive capitalist conditions, i.e., above all from capitalist property relations. If we now observe what presents itself today as the conflict between capitalism and socialism, it can be seen at once that this is in no way the conflict between the old and the new studied by Marx but is instead a conflict based on the rivalry between two empires. Thus nothing new under the sun? What is new arises through the turning of this rivalry about its own sociological and historical axis. The Marxist attempt to guide history through socioeconomic insight has led to a complete distortion of historical perspectives on the future as a whole. The claims to control the history of the system, instead of letting it take its (known) course, has brought it drastically out of step. For indeed the future of capitalism is not an eternally new capitalism, but rather something grows out of it and out of its achievements that comes after it, overcomes it, inherits it, and will make it into prehistory. In a word, it makes possible its own ascent into a postcapital-

ism, and if we call this socialism, then what this means should now be clearly enough defined from all points of view: after-capitalism, grown out of an overripe capitalism.

Now one must not dream that one could "force" the development simply because one has recognized these interconnections. What gave Lenin the right to believe or want to believe that Russia offered a case for the application of this Marxist theory of development and revolution will remain a puzzle. The puzzle lies not in Lenin's authentic revolutionary motivations but in the way in which he forced the application of a Western political-economic theory on a semi-Asiatic, scarcely industrialized, agrarian empire. I believe there can be no other answer: Here was an absolute will to revolution in search of a halfway suitable theory, and when it became evident that the theory was not really appropriate due to the lack of the real preconditions for its application, a compulsion to falsify, reinterpret, and distort arose out of the determination to apply it. In Lenin's hands, Marxism became a theory of legitimation for an attempt to violently force reality to a point at which, later, the preconditions for the application of Marxian theory would be given, namely, in late-capitalist relations that would thus be ripe for revolution. How? Through forced industrialization. To the present day, the Soviet Union is in search of the causes of the Second Revolution of 1917. It would like, in a sense, to provide "after the fact" the necessity for a socialist revolution and, if all signs do not deceive us, it is on the best road for doing just that. For it is there, as in scarcely any other country, that, in Marx's formulation, the relations of production have become a fetter to the productive forces. If this incongruity provides the general formula for a revolutionary tension, then it is given here in an exemplarily crass form.

What in the current world situation is a conflict within the system presents itself in an absurd way as a conflict *between* two systems. At the same time, this externalized conflict between the systems has become the main fetter to the liberation of human productivity.[21] The so-called system conflict takes place between two mystified mystifiers. By means of a paranoid politics of armament, two real illusory opponents force themselves to maintain an imaginary system difference solidified through self-mystification. In this way, a socialism that does not want to be capitalism and a capitalism that does not want to be socialism paralyze each other. Moreover, the conflict confronts a socialism that practices more exploitation than capitalism (in order to hinder the latter) with a capitalism that is more socialist than socialism (in order to hinder the latter).[22] In the spirit of the Marxian Universal Polemic, Machiavelli would conclude that the developmental conflict has been neutralized by an externalized, distorted hegemonic conflict. Two giants of production expend enormous amounts of their socially produced wealth to solidify militarily a demarcation of systems that is basically untenable.

Thus, as was said, at the end of the twentieth century, Machiavelli would probably recommend a general declaration that the systems are bankrupt. This decla-

ration must precede so-called disarmament. For what causes the systems to arm is the idea that they are fundamentally opposed and that they each want something quite different that must be defended at all costs. Relaxation of tension through disarmament—that is yet again one of those fatally dangerous mystifications that see everything in inverted order. Relaxation of tension can only happen as an uncramping from within, that is, as *insight* into the fact that the only thing we have to lose is the unbearable, armed illusion of a difference between systems.

Perhaps Machiavelli would again write a small pamphlet on the art of governing, this time not under the title *The Prince* but under the heading *On the Weak State*. Posterity would doubtless again agree that this brochure is a scandal. Machiavelli perhaps would not have entirely stripped off his Florentine humanism and thus would write his treatise in the form of a dialogue between two partners—David and Goliath. A passage from it might read as follows:

David: Well, Goliath, always fit, always ready for a fight? I hope you're in shape for another duel.

Goliath: How unfair, David! You can see I'm somewhat indisposed today.

David: How come?

Goliath: It's a long story.

David: I love stories! How would it be if, for today, we tell stories instead of dueling? The winner would be the one who can tell the crazier story, on the condition that it's true. Do you want to begin?

Goliath: Hmm, if you like. Stories as a substitute for fighting . . . what a funny idea. Okay. Let me think . . . Well, some time ago, something happened that unsettled me so much that I can still scarcely relax.

You know, after the Great War, I defeated the giant Caput and wiped out his entire following. That was quite an achievement, for there were a lot of them and it wasn't easy for me to track them all down. They had artfully hidden themselves in my own ranks. In the end, I had created calm and order, and everything seemed to run smoothly again. One day I met a giant who, upon seeing me, at once cried: "You are Caput, I will conquer you!" And thereupon, he began a horrifying arms buildup. In vain I tried to make clear it to him that I was not Caput, because / had killed him with my own hands. But he would have none of it. Incessantly, he piled up the most frightening tools of war so as to be armed against me—whom he held to be the murderous Caput. He armed without letup, so that I myself had no choice but to arm without stopping. Nothing I said could convince him that I was not Caput. He nailed me down to it. Both of us were convinced that Caput was terrible and had to be subdued at all costs, but I could *not* make him see that I was not Caput. Indeed, in time I myself became uncertain whether I had killed the real Caput. Perhaps the one I slew was not Caput at all; perhaps this guy, the one who is attacking me

and trying to drive me mad by insisting that /am Caput—perhaps *he* is Caput. But I won't let him get the better of me. I'm on my guard. We spy on each other day and night. Our fleets are always on the seas, and our planes are constantly in the air so as to be able to strike the instant the other makes a move. I don't know who he is, and I still maintain that he's confusing me with someone else, perhaps even intentionally. In any case, the one thing that is certain is that we are arming against each other, and keep on arming and arming.

David: That really *is* a nasty story. I'll have to exert myself to find a crazier one. And you also maintain that it's true?

Goliath: Absolutely. I wish it *were* made up. I'm sure things would then be only half as bad for me. Because of all this armament, I'm on the point of throwing up. I can't even move around freely anymore because of all the armor and the electronic contacts that would set off the bombs if they were touched.

David: Damn! Then you can't even really fight anymore. You'd only blow yourself to smithereens. Why didn't you tell me that in the first place? I almost tangled with you just now, just like back then, when you were still a *real* opponent.

Goliath: Before, I would have punched you in the mouth for such cheeky talk. But somehow you're right. As an opponent, I'm useless now. To tell you the truth, I'm already so miserable that I don't know how to go on. Every night brings nightmares that take their toll on my nerves, nothing but bombs, craters, corpses —I feel like I'm suffocating.

David: And I wanted to brawl with someone like that? You're no giant, you're a basket case. Are you finished?

Goliath: Not quite. Since we're on the subject, you may as well hear everything. Recently I've been having the same nightmare: I dream that I'm a mouse who wants to die because life has simply become too much for it. I look for a cat who will do me the favor. I sit down in front of the cat and try to get it interested in me, but it remains lethargic. "That is not fair of you," I say to the cat, "for I'm still young and must taste pretty good, especially since I've been well fed." But the cat, the blase beast, merely answers: "I'm well nourished too, so why should I bother? That wouldn't be normal." Finally, with great difficulty, I talk the cat into it. "I'll help you out this way," it says. "Put your head in my mouth and wait." I do what it says. Then I ask: "Will it take long?" The cat replies: "Just as long as it takes for someone to step on my tail. It must be a reflex action. But don't worry, I'll stretch my tail out." So, that is death, I think to myself, my head in the cat's mouth. The cat stretches out its bushy tail across the sidewalk. I hear steps. I squint sideways. What do I see? Twelve little blind girls from the Pope Julius Orphanage come singing down the street.[23]

David: Almighty God!

Goliath: At this moment I usually wake up, bathed in sweat, as you can imagine.
David (reflecting): Well, that's it!
Goliath: What do you mean?
David: You've won. I can't top your story. It makes me shudder, the state you're in.
Goliath: Really? Well now, a victory in storytelling, that is something after all.
David: Perhaps it will be your last.
Goliath: Anyone as big as I am will still often win.
David: Big, what's that?

Sexual Cynicism

> *Love is a way to pass the time,*
> *To do it you go 'neath the belly line.*
> Erich Kastner, *Fabian* (1931)

> */ do it with my hand, Madam . . .*
> Popular parody

> *Woman is a being that dresses,*
> *babbles, and undresses.*
> Voltaire

The stage for the appearance and grimaces of sexual cynicism is set by an idealistic ideology of love that attributes to the body a lesser role in relation to "higher feelings." How this separation of body and soul and the construction of a hierarchy came about in detail would be a complicated chapter in the history of customs and the psyche. We must begin with the result of this history, with the doubleness and dualism of body and soul, heart and genitals, love and sexuality, above and below —even if we want to admit that these dualisms do not necessarily imply universally hostile antagonisms.

Even Platonism — which continues to be influential (together with Christianity) as the most powerful Western theory of love—takes up the question of the origin of the split between body and soul and the separation of the sexes. Because Plato does not want to or cannot dwell on this chapter, he takes a shortcut. Whenever one does not want to tell long-winded stories, one resorts to small myths that use images to string together the essential points. Let us listen to the fairy tale from Plato's banquet about the hermaphrodite.

In the beginning, so it goes in the mythical poem told by Aristophanes as one of the company, the human being was sexually self-sufficient and complete, a hermaphrodite with all the attributes of both the female and the male. The original human being had four legs and four arms, two faces and a rounded shape, as well

as the genitals of both sexes. Who would be surprised then that this androgynous wonder-animal was extraordinarily enraptured in itself? The envious gods, however, began to consider how they could punish the hubris of this creature. With a saw, the original human being was simply cut in two. Each half was called, respectively, man and woman and condemned, with bleeding soul, to run after the other half, now separate, so as to comprehend that the part is not the whole and that the human being is not god. Since that time, both halves seek help from Eros, who can unite those who belong together and return human beings to themselves.

This sarcastic account can be misunderstood only in one way, namely, when it is understood as an expression of naivete. The fairy tale of the hermaphrodite, in its series of speeches about Eros, constitutes the ironical-poetical station, that is, a mere moment or a phase of the truth. This truth must, of course, necessarily be expressed in this way *also,* but by no means *only* in this way. In the Platonic dialogue, a reciprocal and ironic deciphering of poetry and philosophical language takes place —the translation of the enthused into the sober and of the sober into the enthused (which holds for many synthetic mythologies, i.e., mythologies that reflect on themselves in a rational alternative language). Only if one recalls the extent to which Greek culture idealized and venerated the human body does one understand completely the poetical cynicism of this story. The narrator serves up to his friends at the banquet a Hindu monster with eight extremities and two faces as the original image of the complete human figure (and on top of that, round as a ball, incapable of walking upright) on which the Greek ethics of the body put so much weight. It's hard to imagine what a figure it would make at the Olympic Games.

The point of the story is revealed as soon as one sees that here completeness again appears as deficiency —namely, as a lack of beauty. The gods' cruelty, which cuts the original narcissistic monster apart, thus has, on the one hand, a punitive aspect, but on the other, a creative perspective. For with the separation of man and woman arises at the same time, with divine irony, the beauty of the human body. Only this beauty can point the direction for a yearning love. Undivided, the spherical creature cannot yet experience love because there is as yet no beauty in it that is worth yearning for in love. For this reason, only in the second unity, which arises out of the unification of the separated, is a real completeness possible that in the first unity, due to a lack of beauty, was still missing. From now on, Eros, the god of the desire to unite and of infatuation with beauty, must also be part of the game if unification is to occur.[24] Only after the separation can human bodies embrace and straddle *(umarmen und umbeinen)* each other with desire.

One then imagines a curious scene: a circle of clever Greeks who rave about Eros's ability to draw a man and a woman to each other, and who, at the same time, do not allow any women to be present among them. At the banquet, in pub-

lie life, in the academy, everywhere, the men and their erotic theories are among themselves. Are they really? Do they suspect that the female aspect is not represented in their circle? Do they sense a lack of oppositions, stimuli, love objects, and targets for yearning when they are among themselves? It does not appear so. They obviously feel themselves to be complete, intellectually as well as sexually. As a closed company of men, they enjoy the consciousness of a complete and mutually complementary group in which the masculine and the feminine, the hard and the soft, the giving and the taking, etc., are present. In the circle of friends of the same sex, indeed, all countersexual forces are at hand, and what appears to be a homosexual community contains within itself a broad spectrum of bisexual experiences. Only in this way can one visualize the vibrancy of original Platonism. A vibrating atmosphere of wanting to understand fills the academy, this temple of clever male friendships. The longing for insight among them takes on the same tonal color as the longing for a loved one, and understanding itself can be experienced in the same way as the ecstasy of love in which the usual ego vanishes because something larger, higher, more comprehensive has replaced it—enthusiasm, the inner moment with God. One must have seen Mediterranean men dancing together—those auspicious moments of a naive and clear bisexuality, when strength and gentleness combine. Between master and pupil, this glimmer must have been present, with which the younger soul, in perceiving the spiritual glow and mental alertness of the master, and anticipating its own unfolding and future, spreads its wings and experiences, beyond itself, itself in an approaching-present magnificence that the master, as someone who is fulfilled, guarantees. The erotic aura gives the school its unmistakable style. It constitutes the spirit of the dialogues through which, throughout all argument and counter-argument, an erotic-dialectical affirmation of all positions and turns of consciousness pulses. With its comical movement of opinions, the dialogue becomes a river that, through an energetic and perplexing dephlegmatizing of minds, frees consciousness for the experience of experiences, that ecstatic intensification that lights up in the soul simultaneously as truth, beauty, and goodness.

The dangers inherent in such a rapturous theory of love are clear. As a philosophizing among friends, the theory remains bound to the atmosphere of a rather narrow circle, and each time it is transposed to the universal, it must have a partly incomprehensible, partly irrational, and partly repressive effect. As an idealistic erotics, the theory must seem to all those who do not belong to the circle of friends like perverted effusiveness. Set loose from the erotic force field of the school, Platonism seems like the teachings of an insipid spiritualism. The love of wisdom becomes from then on increasingly sexless; it loses the region below the belly line and its energetic core. From the degeneration of Platonism to a mere idealistic literalism onward, philosophy suffers disturbances in potency, and in the age of Christianization, under the protective umbrella of theology, it becomes nothing more than an organized realm of eunuchs. Materialist counterstrikes are

inevitable. Because of their pugnacious tendency, they possess a kynical quality. But because men and women experience the presumptions of masculine idealism in different ways, we must take account of two different kynical replies to the idealistic disdain for the body. In fact, for both there are illuminating examples: Sexual kynicism is just as much at play when Diogenes jerks off in front of everybody as when housewives or courtesans give the all-too-clever philosophers a taste of womanly powers.

1. With Diogenes' masturbating in public another chapter of sexual history begins. In this first Happening of our civilization, ancient kynicism shows its sharpest claws. They are partly responsible for the fact that in Christian-idealist usage, the word "cynical" describes a person to whom nothing more is sacred, who declares himself to be no longer ashamed of anything, and who embodies "evil" with a scornful smile. Those who want to make a plea for sublime love, for the partnership of souls, etc., come up against a radical counterposition here. This position teaches sexual self-sufficiency as the original possibility for the individual. The officially sanctioned married couple is not the first to have a chance to satisfy sexual urges; the individual human being, the laughing masturbator in the marketplace of Athens, is already in a position to do so. Plebeian onanism is an affront to the aristocratic soul-to-soul game, as well as to love relationships in which individuals, for the sake of sexuality, subjugate themselves to the yoke of a relationship. The sexual kynic, from the start, counters this with a self-satisfaction unburdened by scruples.

As soon as the kynic meets someone who wants to impress upon him that he is not an animal, Diogenes pulls out his organ from underneath his toga: Now, is that animalistic or not? And anyway, what do you have against animals? When someone comes who wants to dissuade human beings from their animal foundations, the kynic must demonstrate to his opponent how short the way is from the hand to the organ. Did human beings not initally through their upright stature find themselves in the position where their hands were precisely level with their genitals? Is the human being —seen anthropologically — not the masturbating animal? Is it not possible that human consciousness of autarky —more than is generally surmised — comes from the consequence of the upright stature just mentioned? The quadrupeds, in any case, have been spared this anatomical-philosophical complication. Indeed, masturbation accompanies our civilization like an intimately philosophical as well as moral "problem." Masturbation is to the libidinous region what self-reflection is to the intellectual region. It constitutes at the same time a bridge from male kynicism to female kynicism, especially to the kynicism that can be observed in the present-day women's movement. Here, too, onanism is considered an aid to emancipation. Here, too, it is praised and practiced as a right that one claims for oneself just as much as a joy for which one is not indebted to anyone else.

2. To speak of a female kynicism is methodologically risky because the history

of "female consciousness" for the whole of ancient times is documented only in-
directly, in the medium of male traditions. Nevertheless, some traditional anec-
dotes can be examined from a female-kynical perspective. They are, of course,
stories told primarily from a male perspective that from the beginning view fe-
male images from a master-cynical angle—stories about women as whores and
as evil matrimonial dragons. Nevertheless, in some cases a slight displacement
of the viewing angle suffices for the same anecdotes to show a pro feminine mean-
ing. As a rule, they mirror typical scenes out of the "battle between the sexes,"
where it happens that the man slips into the weaker position. This happens to him
especially in two areas: sexual dependence and household management.

The first example treats Aristotle in the role of a fool in love. One anecdote
says that one day he fell so passionately in love with the Athenian courtesan
Phyllis that he completely lost his own will and surrendered himself blindly to
her whims. The famous whore thus commanded the thinker to crawl on all fours
in front of her and he, willingly without will, obeyed and let himself be made a
fool of. Humbly he crawled on the ground and served his mistress as a mount.
This anecdotal motif[25] was captured by Hans Baldung Grien in 1513-the time
of Eulenspiegel—after the *Lai d'Aristote* of a French poet of the Middle Ages. The
white-bearded philosopher crawls on all fours in a walled garden, while Phyllis,
with a broad behind and obtruding belly, sits on his back. In her left hand she
holds the reins, which run through the mouth of the thinker with the receding hair-
line; in the right hand, with a delicately extended little finger, she holds a dainty
riding crop. Unlike the humbled philosopher, who looks urgently toward the
viewer, Phyllis looks at the ground, an Old-German bonnet on her tilted head.
Her shoulders are rounded, her body corpulent and melancholy. The kynical
meaning of the story is clear: Beauty swings its whip over wisdom, the body con-
quers reason; passion makes the spirit pliable; the naked woman triumphs over
masculine intellect; against the persuasive power of breasts and hips, understand-
ing has nothing to offer. Naturally, here the usual cliches about femininity crop
up, but the point lies not in them but rather in the fact that an opportunity for fe-
male *power* is depicted. In Grien's picture, the element of reflectiveness has
passed from the philosopher to the courtesan. Admittedly she is "only a whore"
but nonetheless it is not a "shame that she is a whore." She seizes thereby a possi-
bility for her own sovereignty. Whoever rides on Aristotle may perhaps be a dan-
gerous woman, but certainly one who remains above contempt. That a Phyllis
wants to ride on the clever man is supposed, on the one hand, to serve him as
a warning, but on the other hand, it should also show him where that can lead.
She, with her head tilted thoughtfully to one side, sees coming what he, down
under, still seems to fear. To her it is clear that this is only the beginning and that
Aristotle will probably not be so stupid in the long run. Admittedly, for him it
begins on all fours, but if he is as clever as people say, it will end up with him
on his back.

Hans Baldung Grien, *Beauty Swings Her Whip over Wisdom,* woodcut, 1513.

The cleverer a man is in his occupation, the greater an idiot he is at home. The more respected he is in society, the more contemptible he appears within his own four walls. This could be the moral of the story of Socrates and Xantippe, if it is tentatively read from a female-kynical perspective. This philosopher has been included in history not only because of his talent for posing questions and leading penetrating dialogues, but also because of his notoriously horrible marriage. Because she is said to have made a domestic hell on earth for her husband, Xantippe is no longer merely a name but has become a generic term for a tyrannical, quarrelsome wife. But a small alteration in point of view suffices to see the relationship between Socrates and Xantippe in another light. Xantippe, the evildoer, then appears rather as the victim of her apparent victim, and the latter becomes recognizable in a significant way as the "true" culprit. From today's perspective, every-

thing speaks for defending Xantippe against her bad reputation. One really has to ask oneself how Socrates managed to maneuver himself into such conjugal misery, and this question can be posed in several variations. If Xantippe really was from the start the kind of woman the legend says she was, we would show very little understanding for our great philosopher because then it was his own carelessness that led him to choose precisely her and no other woman. Or is he supposed to have thought, ironic as he was, that a surly woman is just what a thinker needs? If, from the beginning, he recognized her "true nature" and put up with it, then this indicates deplorable marital behavior on his part because he thus unreasonably expected a women to spend her whole life with a man who obviously at best endured her but did not appreciate her. Conversely, if Xantippe had become as she is described only during her marriage to Socrates, then the philosopher would really come into a questionable light because then indisputably he himself must have caused his wife's vexation without having interested himself in it. No matter how the story is turned, Xantippe's moods fall back on Socrates. This is a genuine philosophical problem: How did the thinker and questioner manage *not* to solve the puzzle of Xantippe's bad temper? This great midwife of truth was obviously unable to let his wife's rage express itself or to help her find a language in which she would have been able to express the grounds and justifications for her behavior. The failure of a philosopher often consists not in false answers but in neglecting to pose the right questions —and in denying some experiences the right to become "problems." His experiences with Xantippe must have been of this kind—a misery that is not given the dignity of obtruding into the male problem-monopoly. Philosphers fail when they endure as a naturally given evil that for which they are to blame; indeed, their capacity for "wisely" enduring it is itself an intellectual scandal, a misuse of wisdom in favor of blindness. With Socrates, it seems, this misuse immediately avenged itself. When a thinker cannot refrain from equating humanity with masculinity, reality will strike back in the philosopher's marital hell. The stories about this thus have, I think, also a kynical meaning. They reveal the real reason for philosophical-clerical celibacy in our civilization. A definite dominating kind of idealism, philosophy, and grand theory becomes possible only when a certain "other kind" of experience is systematically avoided.

Just as it is impossible to speak of European state-cynicism without dealing with Christian ethics, it is also impossible in our culture to speak of sexual cynicism without talking about the Christian way of treating sexuality. The really crass "cynical" gestures can arise only on a foundation of idealism and oppression—the idealism of oppression. Because Christian sexual morality is based on sublime lies, speaking out against it acquires an aggressive, partly satirical, partly blasphemous character. If the Catholic church had not maintained that Mary had brought Jesus into the world while still a virgin, then countless men,

furiously satirical, would not have hit on the idea of indulging in whore baiting with this peculiar kind of virgin. *Santissima puttana!* To get pregnant by the Holy Spirit alone —that really is a bit much! Naturally, one would like to know how the Holy Spirit goes about doing it and how the white dove, the most remarkable of all birds, wriggles out of the affair. Is he not already too spiritualized? In the end, does he not do it with the hand of providence?

Enough of that. Jokes of this kind come from Christian mythology almost with the necessity of a natural law. As soon as idealism has gone too far, realism will strike back blasphemously. The question can even be posed, as some psychoanalysts have done, whether in the psychostructure of the Western Christian man, particularly the Catholic man, who grows up under the halo of a mother-madonna, a sexual-cynical phase is almost unavoidable, for at some time or another, the thought reaches the consciousness of every boy that his mother has been his "father's whore."

Does Christian, dualistic metaphysics offer any chance at all for the unqualified affirmation of the sexual-animal side of human beings? Has the corporeal and especially the lusty aspect, from the start, fallen on the wrong side? There are two reasons why complaining about the hostility of Christian dualism toward the body does not quite exhaust this subject: First, in this religion there have been remarkable attempts to "Christianize" the body and even the sexual act and thus to draw them onto the side of the "good"; and second, there is obviously an old tradition of cynical double standards in which clerics are particularly noticeable because they, in Heinrich Heine's words, secretly drink wine and publicly preach water.

If, in the Christian ritual, there is something like a "weak point" predisposed to the bodily pleasure principle, it is to be found in Holy Communion and the Easter liturgy. In commemorating the bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead, there is a chance for the resurrection of the believing flesh to a holy shamelessness. Scattered documents from the early Christian period seem to show that in various sects, the agape, as a matter of consistency, was celebrated bodily. A contemporary report describes practices of a Gnostic sect from the Near East in the fourth century. Although Christians, they prayed to a god who had a daughter called Barbelo who in turn gave birth to a son called Sabaoth. When Sabaoth rebelled against the authority of his divine mother and grandfather, in order to catapult himself to dominion over the world, Barbelo began to seduce the priests with her sensual charms and, by gathering human semen in her body, began sucking back the scattered life force of the creatures into herself. In an outraged and precise letter to the bishop of Alexandria, the heretic-hunter Epiphanius, a Christian priest who had secretly slipped into a Barbelo feast, recorded what took place in such a liturgy.

They distribute their women among themselves, and as soon as a stranger joins them, the men give the women, and the women give the men a special sign. By extending their hands and stroking their palms, they indicate that the stranger is a member of their religion. As soon as they have identified themselves in this way, they seat themselves at the table. They pass around select dishes, eat meat, and drink wine, even the poor. When they have satiated themselves completely and, if I may say so, have filled their arteries with additional power, they proceed to debauchery. The man leaves his place beside his woman and says to her, "Stand up and execute the agape (the communion of love) with your brother!" The misfortunate ones then all begin to indulge in fornication with one another and, although I redden at the mere thought of the description of their impure practices, I am not ashamed to say them out loud, since they are also not ashamed to commit them. Now then, as soon as they have joined again as a group, they elevate their own disgrace to the heavens, as if this misdeed of prostitution were not enough: Man and woman take the man's semen in their hands, step forth, their eyes raised to the heavens, and offer the shame on their hands to the Father with the words: "We offer up to you this gift, the body of Christ." They then eat the sperm and partake of their own semen, with everyone saying, "This is the body of Christ, this is the Easter feast for which our bodies suffer and for which they confess to Christ's suffering." They do exactly the same with the women's menstrual flow. They collect the blood of her impurity and partake of it in the same way, saying, "This is the blood of Christ." In all their numerous excesses, however, they teach that one is not allowed to bring any children into the world. Out of pure wantonness, they perform these disgraceful acts. They commit the act of lust to the point of satisfaction but collect their sperm in order to hinder it from penetrating further, and then consume the fruit of their shame. . . . As soon as one of them has by accident let his semen penetrate too far into the woman, and the woman becomes pregnant, then listen to what still greater abomination they then commit. They tear out the embryo as soon as they can grab it with their fingers, take the abortion, grind it in a kind of mortar, mix honey, pepper, and various spices, as well as scents, with it, in order to overcome their repugnance; then they gather—a true congregation of swine and dogs—and each takes communion with his or her finger by eating from this abortion paste. As soon as the "supper" is over, they conclude with the prayer: "We have not allowed the high master of lust to play his game with us, but have taken up the error of our brother into ourselves." In their eyes, this signifies the consummate Easter feast. Beyond this they practice all kinds of abominations. When they fall into an ecstatic state during their union, they soil their hands with the shame of their semen, distribute it all around, and pray with these soiled hands, the body competely naked, to obtain through this act

free access to God. (Quoted from J. Attali, *L'Ordre cannibale* [Paris, 1979], pp. 52-53.)

The witness himself has already provided the key phrase: "true congregation of swine and dogs." We are on kynical terrain. This document—even though it can scarcely be very representative—evidences a radical, Christianized, sexual kynicism: no longer the initial and simple kynicism of Greek philosophy with its public onanism and nuptials but already an artificial and religiously involved kynicism, one that, with its perverse aspects, already makes concessions to the Christian religion. However, no matter how remarkable these practices may have been, the main shock that its description conveys lies not in the details but in the otherwise unthinkable fact that shines through the whole phenomenon: *There is such a thing as Christian orgy,* an unrestrained, innocent, indeed, a holy and wild release and a wallowing in male and female juices that pleases God. At least on this one occasion, Christianity showed itself as a naked tumult of drunken Christian bodies that celebrate their lust. This is what makes Epiphanius's face turn red—of course, it is uncertain whether it is the red of shame or the red of someone infected by shamelessness. After all, he is infected at least to the extent that he, as priest, hazards to write these things down, and how he himself behaved in the middle of this holy group sex remains his secret. The bishop of Alexandria does not have to know everything. Even more shocking perhaps is that here God's son is replaced by a daughter who is described as the anti-type of the mother of God, Mary. Barbelo is the sucking, gathering, and flowing cunt of God, whereas the Virgin Mary cannot hover over Catholic altars with her belly or anything lower showing.[26] Here, an alternative extreme within the possibilities of Christian mythology is reached. And if the blood of the woman is ritually equated with the blood of Christ, then the Gnostic liberation of the female body has ventured further than modern feminist mysticism has ever dreamed of doing.

In connection with this description of the Barbelo ritual, it is also documented that, upon Epiphanius's denunciation of this sect to the bishop of Alexandria, eighty Gnostics were excommunicated. We may take this as an indication of the historical chances and fates of Gnostic and other groups that tried to realize "psychosomatically" the commandment of love in the Christ religion and to overcome dualism with dualist metaphysics. Wherever such phenomena occurred they were in general violently eliminated.

At the height of the Middle Ages—insofar as one can say anything about such mutilated and cabalistic traditions-the possibilities of a Christianized sexuality seem to have been rediscovered. In the language of the mystical "love" *(Minne)* of God, an erotic metaphorics emerges in which the figurative meaning can be only speculatively distinguished from the literal component of meaning. If the love lyrics in places bordered on blasphemy by comparing the appearance of a
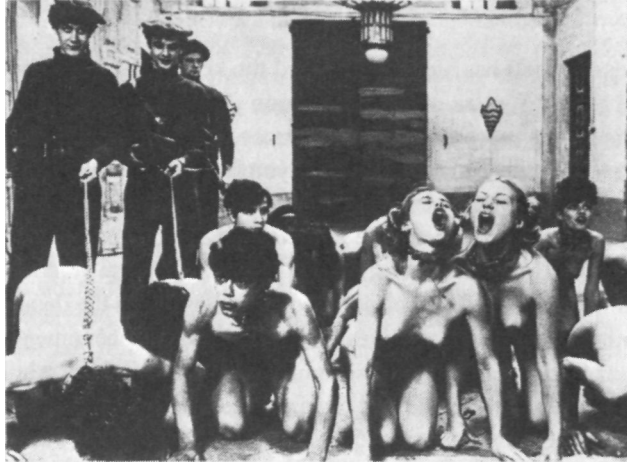
Scene from Pasolini's *Said, or the 120 Days of Sodom,* based on the novel by the Marquis de Sade. "Late-aristocratic pornography lays bare the core of violence in sexuality. In order to develop the connection between disinhibition, terror, and discretion, it banishes loose living to a closed space. De Sade puts an end to the age of aristocratic eroticism, which began with the idealism of chivalrous love, in a materialism of rape."

lover with the dawn of Easter morning, it is still not known how direct or indirect the connections between such linguistic and possible carnal audacities may have been. We also do not know exactly what sexual consequences the mysticism of the brotherhoods of the Free Spirit had. (See Norman Cohn, *Das Ringen um das Tausendjahrige Reich* [Bern, 1961].) Only when, in the merry tales of the late Middle Ages, women come to the conclusion that the soldier is not as good a lover as the *clericus* can we be sure that this assertion was supported by diligent observation.

In the bourgeois age, the stage was set for sexual cynicism in a new form. The bourgeoisie did not make claims on cultural hegemony without at the same time setting up its own model of ideal love: marriage for love. Countless novels do their part in stamping the templates of bourgeois erotic idealism indelibly into the minds of the reading public, especially the female public. With this, a cultural languor of unknown extent sets in. For on the one side, the "bourgeois soul" wants to partake of the joys of love and is hungry to experience the adventurous, vitalizing, fantastic, and even sensual-passionate power of love. But the other side, the bourgeois soul must take care that love remains strictly confined to marriage, that the "animal side" plays no role, and that even in the most extreme case, the bodily aspect can be regarded as an "expression" of the passion of the soul. This erotic lay idealism (it is not clerics who preach it) provokes sexual-cynical antitheses

in virtually epidemic dimensions. As in many other things, the bourgeois is, in sexual matters, an almost-realist who indeed risks taking a look at the real, without, however, forsaking his idealizations and value phantoms. His ideas are therefore continually undermined by realistic premonitions, and it is this tension that makes the bourgeois man particularly receptive to sexual-cynical jokes, to dirty keyhole realism and pornography. For the bourgeois, the crucial point is to "cherish his values" without forgetting how things happen "down there in reality." Hence the cynical smile. One knows all about it. One knows the business. I too was in Arcadia. But this is not "our level." We will not so easily be made to confuse above and below. Admittedly, the bourgeois does not unwillingly visit the brothel and convince himself there of the common denominator between whores and ladies, but reality remains divided, the differences are defended. It may well be the cultural strategy of bourgeois literature and art to conquer the public sphere with a depiction of private life, but simultaneously, a dividing wall is erected in the private sphere between idealized private life and animal private life. When the bourgeois knows himself to be protected by a curtain, then he is in his animality more cynical than kynical, more swine than dog. He knows how to distinguish the human from the all-too-human. He can, on the one side, certainly confess "human weaknesses," but on the other, ideal side, he is resolute in preserving "composure"; to quote Bismarck; "politeness to the last rung of the gallows." A definition of a lady has even been attempted according to whether she knows how to make the "right face" when a dirty joke *(Herrenwitz)* is told in her presence. The right face betrays that the person knows what it is about but also that she "stands above it." To the cultivation of a lady belongs the tolerant-ironical note in dealing with inevitable male cynicism.

Through psychoanalysis, we have become used to connecting psychological enlightenment automatically with sexual enlightenment. In this there is something right and something wrong. The psychoanalytic attempt to overcome bourgeois semirealism in sexual matters and to develop it into a full realism appears to be right. However, the tendency of psychoanalysis to confuse the unconscious with the secretive is wrong. Of course, sexuality is an area in which this confusion almost inevitably occurs. When psychoanalysis began to interpretatively explore the so-called unconscious, it entered in fact into that area that in bourgeois society was the secret topic par excellence. It took the self-experience and the self-suspicion of the bourgeois as *animal* seriously. It went on to neutralize the animal-sexual area and to bring it back into the sphere of nonsecret matters. For this reason, contemporary readers were able to sometimes ask themselves when studying psychoanalytic publications whether these should be assigned to the genus of science or to that of pornography. Two generations of analysts as well as patients have been plagued by the tendential confusion of the secretive with the unconscious. For the airing of sexual secrets in late-bourgeois culture as a whole has in no way led to the elimination of neurosis from society—because pathogenic

Michael Voltz (?), *Animal Magnetism.* A serious preoccupation for thinkers and believing souls. "The suspicion bourgeois individuals have of themselves being animals creates the cultural framework for modern depth psychology."

sexual secrets constitute only a tiny fraction of the individual as well as of the social unconscious.[27]

Psychoanalysis is a historical hybrid. With its sexual-pathological foundation, it looks into the past; with its conviction that the unconscious is produced, it looks into the future. In the manner of a cultural detective, it has turned the early-bourgeois suspicion into a certainty: The human being is based on the animal- This suspicion has been, at least since the eighteenth century, with people in bourgeois society, a society that, on the one hand, began with the final taming of the inner animal by reason, enlightenment, and morality, but which saw, as a by-

product of this taming, an ever-larger and threatening animal shadow emerge from below. Only the fully civilized, "deanimalized" bourgeois semirealist can have such a persistent and eerie self-suspicion of its interior and its lower parts. This self-suspicion of the bourgeois animal flares up in romantic literature—with all its gloomy, mysterious metaphors of the animal abyss leading inward and downward. The romantics know that two paths are open to the bourgeois, one in the bourgeois light, the other in the unbourgeois depths. The first marries, becomes a respectable man, begets children and enjoys middle-class peace—but what does he know of life?

> To the second sang and lied
> The thousand voices in the ground
> Tempting sirens, and drew
> Him into the wanton billows
> Of the colorfully ringing chasm.
>   (Fourth verse of J. v. Eichen-
>   dorff s poem
>   *Die zwei Gesellen* [The two
>   bachelors, 1818])

The second is the inner other, the still unchainable animal that risks the descent into its own secrets and the crevices of its soul—in the colorful chasms of animal lust. Only those who try to completely banish the animal element in themselves sense in themselves a growing danger, which should be handled carefully. A variant of such carefulness is encountered in the psychoanalytic vocabulary that designates the area of the "repressed," dangerous, animal element with a true lion tamer's expression: the "unconscious." Psychoanalysis has a bit of the air of a pseudomedical domesticating science about it—as if it were a matter of chaining the "unconscious" with the fetters of insight.

When Freud speaks of a "sexual chemistry" and treats orgasm as a discharge of tension, it is difficult not to think of men in a brothel who, in "making love," don't even take off their trousers because it is only a "discharge." This too is a silencing, a disenchanting, an unjustified objectification and neutering of sexuality. It constitutes the unarbitrary counterpart to the equally unjustified and unavoidable demonizing of the inner secret area whose expression we find, almost at the beginnings of bourgeois culture, in the romantics. They created the stage on which the demonology of "sexual unconsciousness" begins its play. The demon is nothing other than the inner animal. What the "unconscious" is in its essence was expressed more clearly by the romantic Eichendorff than by the neoromantic scientist Sigmund Freud: "But take care not to awake the *wild animal* in your breast, so that it *(Es,* id) does not suddenly break out and tear your Self apart" *(Das Schloss Durande).*
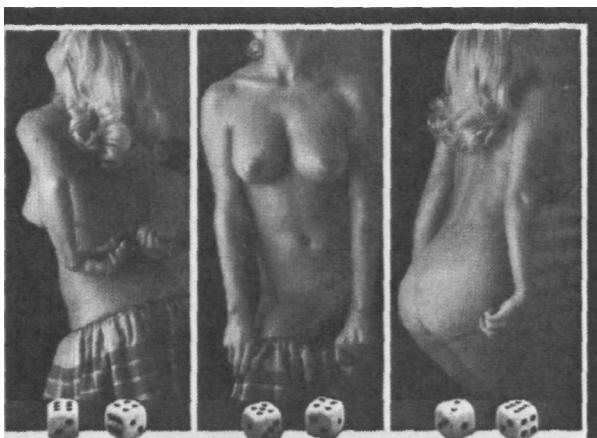
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The late-bourgeois cultural situation is markedly different from the nineteenth century, which found its expression in the psychologies of the unconscious. No contemporary still believes in or practices the separation of ideal and animal love. Thus a basic precondition for sexual-kynical attacks has been voided. A "wo/man" does not laugh at "dirty jokes" any more, nor does pornography have an aggressive bite. Today, both are completely backward. However, it would be naive to think that this means the game is over. Whenever kynicism has asserted itself, new cynics can be found who can, as usual, make a dirty business out of the no longer "dirty" truth. Pornographic shock is admittedly over once and for all, but the business of pornography is still flourishing. For a long time now there has not been in late-bourgeois pornography any spark of a personal reckoning with inhibitions, erotic idealisms, and sexual taboos. Rather, it consciously

"Bourgeois pornography exposes the commodity aspect of sexuality. Out of principled *indiscretion,* it bursts the closed rooms, makes nakedness and venality into synonyms, and brings visual drugs onto the 'free market.'" 'Brothelization of minds' as a relation of production? (See chapter 9, 'Exchange Cynicism')."

produces backward consciousness by citing, with a wink, taboos "as if," in order to break through them with a false gesture of enlightenment. The cynicism of our tit-and-thigh press consists not in exposing more or less pretty, naked women to the general view but in unrelentingly restoring superseded sexual relations and working with a high degree of consciousness toward artful stupefactions. For this reason the kynical, enlightening, realistic momentum today is to be found in some feminist groups that as a public protest smash the display windows of porno shops.

Late-bourgeois pornography serves in capitalist society as an initiation into the not-now structure of schizoid life, swindled out of its own time. It sells the original, given, and self-evident as a distant goal, as Utopian sexual stimulus. The beauty of the body, which in Platonism was recognized as a signpost for the soul to the highest enthusiastic experience of truth, in modern pornography serves to reinforce the lovelessness that in our world has the power to define what reality is.

Medical Cynicism

Doctors have two enemies: the dead and the healthy
Proverb

In every culture there are groups of people who, through their professional tasks, are led to develop various realisms in their dealings with dying or dead bodies: the soldier, the executioner, the priest. In medical practice, however, the most thorough realism of death is constructed—a consciousness of death that, technically more intimate than any other, knows of the body's fragility and reveals the death-oriented course of our organism, no matter whether it is called health, sickness, or aging. Only the butcher possesses a comparable and similarly craftsmanlike knowledge, anchored in routines, of the material side of our death. Medical materialism is able to intimidate even philosophical materialism. The corpse would be thus the properly qualified teacher of an integral materialism. To keep pace as a layperson with the medical realism of death, one would have to stock up on a large ration of sarcasm, black humor, and romantic mischievousness, and not shrink back from a philosophical view of the corpse. To expose oneself with open nerve endings to the impact of a postmortem—only that can provide the experience of "naked" death. The anatomical gaze, "more cynical" than any other, knows a second nakedness of our body, when, on the surgeon's operating table, the exposed organs present themselves in an "ultimate" shameless nakedness. The corpse too has long known the titillation of putting on a show —exhibition of corpses, nudism of death, existential night plays in the Callotian manner. An archaic desire to look, suffused by horror, is directed at the corpse, as earlier executions demonstrate, as do public burnings, the mortuary romanticism of long ago, and the lying-in-state of political cadavers.

Part of today's crisis in medicine comes from the fact that, and the way that, it has surrendered its once functional connection with the priesthood and since then entered into a convoluted, ambivalent relationship with death. In the "struggle between life and death," priests and doctors are now in opposing camps. Only the priest, without becoming cynical, can take the side of death with a kynically free perspective on reality because, in living religions and cosmologies, death is held to be the self-evident price for life and one phase in the grand designs with which the knowledge of priests once knew itself to be conspiratorially (etymologically: "breathing together") connected. Mortality in general must embarrass the priest just as little as the individual fight against death in particular. In both, a facticity of a higher type is effective in which our will plays no part. For the doctor things are different. Doctors define themselves through having to take the side of life. All of medical idealism derives from this unconditional partiality; it is this idealism that even today, down to the most cynical twists, guides the absurd struggles of medicine for the life of moribund bodies, long since decayed. The doctor takes the side of the living body against the corpse. Because living bodies are the source of all power, the body's helper is a man *(Mann)* of power. To this extent, the helper himself becomes a kind of wielder of power, since he gains a share of the central authority of all hegemonic powers, the power over the life and death of others. Thus the doctor comes into a mediating position: on the one hand, an "absolute" supporter of life; on the other, a partaker in the power of hegemonic powers over life. Herewith, the stage is set for the appearance of medical cynicism. Sure, why shouldn't medical students bowl in the corridor of the anatomical institute with skulls? We were not particularly upset when our biology teacher brought a skeleton into the classroom for demonstration purposes, let its jaw snap, and explained that it had been only a criminal anyway. I wish the whole of medical cynicism, like these examples, could be treated under the rubric of black humor. But because medicine for the most part participates in the exercise of power, and because power, in a philosophical respect, can be defined by its virtual lack of humor, there is nothing humorous about medicine and its cynical tendency.

All power proceeds from the body, it was said earlier. How does this apply to medical power? There are three possible answers to this question.

1. Doctors' work is based on their alliance with the natural tendencies of life toward self-integration and the avoidance of pain. Two allies aid them in this: the will to live and artificial medical means. Physicians who know how to use both can regard themselves as competent helpers. Medical power is legitimated and confirmed in the effectiveness of vital suggestion (whatever that may mean) and in practical measures for treatment (medicaments, surgery, dietetics). Healthy societies will be recognized, above all, by the way in which they remunerate their helpers and integrate them into the social framework. One of the most profound ideas of traditional Chinese village medicine was the custom of paying the helper

as long as one was healthy, and of stopping payment when one became sick. This institution cleverly hindered the splitting of the power of the helper from the vital interest of the communities. For us it is especially significant that the Chinese example represents *a folk* medicine tradition. For it is this that, in medical matters, embodies what we called in the other domains of values the kynical impulse. Here the art of helping remains under the control of a communal consciousness that, for its part, commands the art of dealing with the helper's power. Above it, however, stretches an old line of *masters' medicine* that always knew how to escape the control of remuneration from below. It always preferred payment in the case of sickness and thus created for itself a powerful lever for extortions. Of course, there is also a productive perspective in this. The freedom of medicine, where such freedom exists, is based not least of all on the economic autarky of the doctors, which they know how to protect through their demands for fees. (To this extent, there is a parallel between Greek medicine and Roman law, namely, the principle or private consultation and payment for each case, which is supported by the idea of a "contract for treatment."

2. The will to live, an important agent in any healing, feels threatened by self-doubt in the case of "serious" illnesses. Where the tendency toward life grapples with that toward death, sick persons need an ally in whose unconditional pact with life they can believe. Patients thus project the self-healing powers of their bodies onto the doctor, who knows better how to stimulate and strengthen these powers than the patients alone, in their debility and anxiety, could do. In a crisis, patients who can believe in their own will to live, concentrated in the helper, have a decisive advantage over the person who is left alone and who thus wrestles simultaneously with sickness and doubt. In this drama, sick persons who can trust place all of their own strength in the hands of the one who is helping them. Perhaps this way of looking at things sheds light on the quite amazing successes of old magical medicine, e.g., shamanism. In the magic healing ritual, the shaman extracts the "evil" from the sick body, perhaps in the form of a skillfully placed foreign body — a worm, a larva, a needle. In cases in which the ritual was successful, such extractions, often performed at the height of a crisis, formed the turning point at which the self-healing processes began to take over. (To a certain extent, the extractions were enactments of the inner dynamic drama.) Up to the present day, doctors draw their magical status from such, and similar, mechanisms, insofar as demoralization and cynical body technocracy are not readily apparent in them—which, by the way, is happening more and more. Wanting to completely take such magic functions away from doctors would mean to dump the prevailing system of medicine. That there are good grounds for such radical demands is a common topic in magazine articles. For the less credibly the pact with life and the healing-magical motive is embodied by today's doctors, the stronger will be the incentive to reflect and to seek ways of self-help. Once they know how the

Thomas Rowlandson, *Lecture with Doctor Gall.*

suggestive part of healing functions, then gradually the time becomes ripe for pa-
tients to draw the outwardly directed projections of the will to live back into them-
selves. A broad field of alternative help will open up here.

3. The power of physicians reached its apex through royal bodies. If the king
fell ill, then for a time the physician ruled de facto over the "body of power." The
ability to cure princes raised the art of healing for the first time completely to the
level of masters' medicine. The ruling medicine is thus the medicine of the rulers.
Those who heal the powerful themselves become central bearers of power. In old
theocracies and priest-controlled dominions, this connection was still direct by
virtue of the personal unity of ruler and healer. Later, the healer was differen-
tiated from the prince, and this precisely to the extent that the art of healing devel-
oped into an art with a technical core of experience that could be distinguished
from magical manipulation. The German word *Arzt* (doctor), according to *Duden*
[the authoritative German-language reference books;-Trans.], comes from the
adoption of the Greek word for the ruling medico, *arch-iatros* — the chief doctor.

Pitt and the king of Sweden consult Doctor Gall incognito.

This was the title of court physicians of ancient princes, first established for the Seleucids of Antioch. The word came to the Frankish Merovingians through Roman doctors. From the monarchs' courts, the title then went over to the physicians of spiritual and temporal dignitaries and became the general name for the profession in Old High German times. Significant in this word migration is, above all, that the title "doctor" *(Arzt)* suppressed an older name for the healer, namely, *lachi,* which means roughly "the conjurer." The change of words signifies a change in praxes: The quasi-rational masters' medicine began to suppress the magical folk medicine. The statement in *Duden* that *Arzt* was never really used by "the folk" can give cause for reflection. The word "doctor" *(Doktor),* however, has been in common use since the fifteenth century. The "doctor"-as the learned exorciser of sickness—to the present day is more likely to gain trust than the "archiater," the masters' medico. There is, in fact, a kind of medicine that has always been recognized as a dubious shadow of power.

Medical kynicism begins at that moment when the helper, as supporter of life, uses his knowledge of the body and of death frivolously and realistically against the delusions of sick people and the powerful. Often the doctor is dealing not with a fateful suffering but with the consequences of unawareness, carelessness, arrogance, idiocy with the body, "stupidity," or an unhealthy life-style. Against evil of this kind, the kynical medico's intimacy with death can serve him as a useful weapon. This is portrayed nowhere more spendidly than in Johann Peter Hebel's *Der geheilte Patient* (The healed patient). A clever doctor had given advice to a

rich, overstuffed citizen of Amsterdam that, in its kynical coarseness, left nothing to be desired. Because rich people have to endure diseases "that, God be praised, the poor man does not know of," this doctor thought up a particular form of therapy: "Wait, I soon will have cured you." So he wrote the patient the following exemplary letter:

> Good friend, you are in bad shape, but you can still be helped, if you want to follow. You have a nasty animal in your belly, a dragon with seven mouths. I have to speak with the dragon myself, and you must come to me. But you are not to drive or to ride a pony; come instead on the shoemaker's mare, otherwise you will shake the dragon and it will bite off your intestines, seven intestines, completely ruined in one stroke. Second, you're not to eat more than twice daily, a plate full of vegetables; at lunch you can have a bratwurst with it, at night an egg, and in the morning a cup of bouillon with chives sprinkled on top. What you eat in excess of this will only make the dragon larger, so that it will squash your liver, and the tailor won't have to measure you any more but the carpenter will. This is my advice, and if you don't follow it, you will not hear the cuckoo sing next spring. Do what you like."
> (Johann Peter Hebel, *Das Schatzkastlein des Rheinischen Hausfreundes,* 2nd ed. [Munich, 1979], p. 153).

What modern doctor would dare speak to his civilized patients in this way? And how many patients are put into the situation of having to admit on the day of a consultation, "I could not have picked a more inopportune time to become healthy than now, when I'm supposed to go to the doctor. If only my ears would ring or I would bleed someplace." And what doctor today, when he asks the patient what is wrong; gets an answer like, "Doctor, God be praised, there's nothing wrong with me, and if you are as healthy as I am, then I'd be glad." The extent to which Hebel's sarcastic story closely follows a folk-medicine way of thinking is revealed also by its conclusion, which says that the rich stranger "lived 87 years, 4 months, 10 days, as healthy as a fish in water, and every New Year sent the doctor 20 doubloons as a greeting." The sick/ee has become the New Year's *greeting* of a healthy person. Could there be a better indication of that "other helping" in which the healers are rewarded for doing their bit so that their fellow human beings do not get sick in the first place?

To today's popular realism, in spite of science, in spite of research, in spite of grand surgery, doctors appear only as questionable supporters of life, and one sees all too often how easily they can change over to the side of sickness. For a long time it has been a distinguishing feature of masters' medicine that it is interested more in the sicknesses than in the sick person. It is inclined to establish itself smugly in a universe of pathology and therapy. Medicine's clinical way of living increasingly robs doctors of an orientation toward health and destroys the roots of healer consciousness in a life-affirming realism that would really rather

George Grosz, *The Faith Healers or the K. V. Machines,* 1916-17. (©S.P.A.D.E.M., Paris/V.A.G.A., New York, 1987.)

have nothing at all to do with medicine. Doctors like the one in Hebel's story belong to a dying species —doctors who show the candidate for sickness how superfluous medicine is for people who suffer not from a disease but from the inability to be healthy. It used to be said that the best doctors were often those who wanted to be something else, such as a musician, writer, captain, pastor, philosopher, or vagabond. It was still understood that those who know everything about sicknesses do not necessarily know anything about the medical art. The inclination "to help willingly" is as human and joyful as it is joyless and suspect when the helping bears some relation to evils that arise from self-destructive tendencies in civilization. A doctor will be all too easily pushed into the camp of masters' cynicism when, like the great Doctor Hiob Praetorius of Curt Goetz, he is no longer allowed to oppose self-destructive "stupidities" that frequently underlie the "sick raw material." The more sicknesses are produced by the political relations in civilization, indeed even by medicine itself, the more medical praxis in our society is caught up in the twists and turns of a higher cynicism that knows that it itself furthers with the right hand the evil for whose cure it takes in money with the left. *If doctors,* as learned supporters of life, really saw their task in hindering

sicknesses *at their source,* instead of accommodating themselves to them parasiti-cally (and, in effect, helpingly), they would have to open up for candid discussion again and again their relation to and use of power. Today a medicine that radically insisted on its pact with the will to life would have to become the scientific core of a general theory of survival. It would have to formulate a political dietetics that decisively intervenes in the social relations of labor and life. However, in general, medicine lurches ahead in a cynical shortsightedness and interprets its pact with the will to live in such a dubious way that only from case to case could one specify the position in the kynical-cynical spectrum to which it relates. Is it the kynicism of simplicity, as practiced by the good parson Kneipp? Is it the cyni-cism of complicatedness as started recently by Professor Barnard with his heart transplants? Is it the kynicism of a medical resistance that refuses to collaborate with self-destructive institutions and mentalities? Is it the cynicism of a medical collaboration that gives the causes a free hand in order to profit from the effects? A kynicism of the simple life or a cynicism of the comfortable death? A kynicism that healingly pits the threatening certainties of death against unawareness, self-destruction, and ignorance? Or a cynicism that collaborates with the repression of death, which is constitutive for the system in overmilitarized and overstuffed societies.

Because doctors must protect their hearts from the many hardships of the profession, popular reason has always granted them a bit of cynical coarseness that it would never have tolerated in others. The people recognized its real allies in those who possessed enough heart to hide it behind black humor and coarse manners. Medical jokes —more cynical than any other kind —always had an ac-cepting audience of laypeople who, on the basis of the strong cynicism of their helpers, could convince themselves of the latters' good intentions. Icy coldness surrounds the medicine that no longer knows any jokes and has completely con-gealed into the exercise of its own and delegated power. There is a medicine that is nothing other than archiatry—the realm of chief doctors. As was the case for all battered masters' mentalities striving for disinhibition, the hour for this medi-cal cynicism arrived when fascism came to power. The latter created the scenario in which all those unperpetrated brutalities could emerge with which repressively civilized society is laden. Just as there was an older, camouflaged, cynical com-munity of interests between the execution of punishment (which left a trail of corpses behind it) and scientific anatomy (which is notoriously hungry for corpses), so there was a community of interests between medical masters' cyni-cism and Fascist racism that at last allowed it to satisfy its hunger for corpses on its own. Those who have the nerve should read the protocols of the Nuremberg trials in which the crimes of German *medical fascism* against humanity were heard. I do not choose this expression lightly; the phrase "medical fascism" does not come from a critical whim but encapsulates a phenomenon as pregnantly as possible. What was swept to power in medicine at camps and universities between

1933 and 1945 reveals not the accidental straying of individual doctors to Nazi ideology but rather an old, masters' medical tendency, which was encouraged by fascism to reveal itself; this tendency had always found that there were too many people whose treatment was not "really" worth the trouble and who were just good enough to become experimental objects. Alexander Mitscherlich wrote on this.

> Of course, one can do a simple calculation. Of about 90,000 doctors active in Germany at that time, around 350 committed medical crimes. That is still a considerable number, especially when one thinks of the enormity of the crimes. But in relation to the entire medical profession, it was still only a fraction, about one in three hundred . . . every third hundredth doctor a criminal? That was a proportion that never before could have been found in the German medical profession. Why now? *(Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit, Dokumente des Niirnberger Arzteprozesses,* ed. A. Mitscherlich and F. Mielke [Frankfurt, 1962], p. 13)

Mitscherlich shows that behind the criminal leaders stood a large medical apparatus that had already step by step advanced to a considerable extent the transformation of patients into human raw material. The criminal doctors "only" had to take one more cynical leap in the direction in which they were already headed. What today goes on quietly without being seriously disturbed by anyone—torture research, genetic and prosthetic research, military-biological and war-pharmacology research—already has within it everything that will provide the tools for the medical fascism of tomorrow. The horrifying living experiments and notorious collections of skeletons in Nazi medicine will be "nothing by comparison." *"Nothing by comparison":* That is cynical one-upmanship, yet it simply articulates a tendency of reality. In the area of cleverly thought out cruelty, the twenty-first century has already begun.

What will help against the masters' helping profession of today and tomorrow? Several answers are conceivable.

First, from a society with the will to live and from its philosophy—to the extent that it captures the will to live of its time in concepts—must come an offensive that rehabilitates the idea of the "good doctor" and brings a "helping at the source" into battle against the universal, diffuse cynicism of modern medicine. What good help and what a real healer are, medicine by itself has never been able to define. A social order like ours furthers almost by necessity a medicine that, in turn, tends to further the system of sicknesses and of making people sick rather than life in good health.

Second, only self-help helps against masters' helpers. The only defense against false or questionable help is to have no need for it. Moreover, for a long time now we have been able to observe how capitalist masters' medicine attempts to

bring self-help traditions in folk medicine under its domination—after centuries of defamation and rivalry—by absorbing them as part of orthodox medical reason. ("It's been scientifically proven: There really is something in some herbs!") The interest of the institutionalized medical profession works with all possible means toward a state of affairs in which everything corporeal will be totally medicalized—from occupational medicine, sport medicine, sexual medicine, digestive medicine, nutritional medicine, fitness medicine, accident medicine, criminal medicine, and war medicine to the medicines covering the competency to supervise healthy and unhealthy breathing, walking, standing, learning and newspaper reading, to say nothing of pregnancy, birth, dying, and other caprioles of human corporeality. The "health" system is heading toward a state of affairs in which the masters' medical control of the somatic dimension will become totalitarian. A point can be imagined at which private bodily competencies will be expropriated completely. In the end, one will have to attend urological classes to learn how to piss correctly. The central question in the current medical-cynical process is whether "orthodox medicine" will be able to destroy the lay helper movements that have arisen for numerous cultural reasons (self-actualization, the women's movement, ecology, rural communes, new religions, etc.). This question runs parallel to the question of the intramedical chances of "political" tendencies in professional medicine: psychosomatic internal medicine, occupational medicine, gynecology, psychiatry, and so on. These are the professional medical disciplines that, for logical reasons concerning their occupations, should know best that everything they do runs the risk of harming more than helping, as long as another direction for helping—coming from life, freedom, and consciousness—is not pursued.

Third, in the last instance, only the conscious embodying of our fragility, our being sick, our mortality, can help against the medical splitting off of responsibility for our own bodily existence. I do not have to say how difficult that is, for the fear, when it becomes great, makes us all the more inclined to repress our responsibility for the life and death of our own body or to delegate it to doctors, not considering that even the most perfect conservation medicine, in the end, hands back to us the entire responsibility and unsharable pain in our most helpless moment. Those who recognize that the circle of alienation and flight must always finally close in one's own death must also be aware that it would be better to reverse toward life rather than anesthetization, toward risk rather than security, toward embodiment rather than splitting.

Religious Cynicism

And what will you do with the grail when you have found it?
Benjamin Disraeli

> *. . . even grinning is mixed in with it, like that of the skull it-*
> *self: because the fact that long-planning human beings depart*
> *like cattle is also somehow funny.*
>
> Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hojfnung* (p. 1299)

Suddenly, someone leaves the visible and continuous world common to all and ceases to share existence with us. His breathing has stopped, his movements have ceased. At first, death manifests itself negatively; something is extinguished and passes over into stillness. A little later, this cessation shows also its positive side, the body becomes cold, starts to putrefy, rot. The skeleton then steps forth as the part that resists decomposition longer than the other parts. It takes over the representation of what remains of us *in materia,* hence the skeleton as death imago. The framework of bones symbolizes the end that all who live already carry within themselves. Everyone of us is our own friend Mr. D., the bony forerunning of one's own departure.

From the perspective of this side of death, the only one usually observable, the idea imposes itself on living persons that an invisible force is at work in animated bodies that allows them to breathe, jump about, and remain form-coherent, whereas this invisible something must have departed from the dead, so that they grow stiff and decay. The invisible something stimulates breathing, movement, feeling, alertness, and the maintenance of the body's form —it is the epitome of intensity and energy. Its activity creates, although not visibly or in a way that can be isolated, the most real reality. This invisible force has many names: soul, spirit, breath, ancestors, fire, form, God, life.

Experience teaches that animals like us are born and die, that plants germinate and pass away, and that they too, in their own way, participate in the rhythm of death and life, form constitution and form dissolution. Without doubt, the human "soul" is surrounded by a cosmos of animal and plant life and by mysterious energy subjects that are active behind day and night, storm and calm sky, heat and cold. In nothing does this being surrounded suggest a "domination" of humankind over nature and the environment. Rather, the naked biped appears as a being that is tolerated and endured by the whole, insofar as it controls the interactions with the bringers of bounty and danger from the animal and plant world.

Life and death, coming and going, they are initially natural constants, pulsating beats in a rhythm in which what is pregiven outweighs what is added later. In the course of civilization, however, the relation between submission and action, suffering and doing has shifted —also with regard to the experience of death. What appeared to be an aspect of natural pulsations becomes in more developed societies a more and more profound and more and more embittered *struggle* between life and death. Death is then no longer so much an event that nothing can influence, but is itself something that *our* violence and caprice bring about. Its primary image is no longer the unavoidable coming to an end, nor the peaceful

self-exhaustion or the quiet and unresisted burning down of life's flame, but a contested, horrifying happening imbued with premonitions of violence and murder. The more people think of death as being murdered rather than as being peacefully extinguished, the more violently must the flood of the fear of death swell up in higher and more violent civilizations. For this reason, the historical states and empires, wherever we look, are religious states and empires. They constitute social worlds in which the fear of a violent death is a realistic one. We all have a thousand images of violence before our eyes: surprise attacks, massacres, rapes, public executions, wars, scenes of torture, in which human beings develop themselves into diabolical fiends in order to extract a maximum of agony from the death of others. In addition, class societies suppress the vital energies of subjects and slaves through physical and symbolic violence in such a way that shadowy hollows of unlived life unfailingly open up in bodies, where wishing, fantasizing, the yearning for the divined otherness of a full life begin to brood. This unlived life combines its Utopian energies with the fears of annihilation that are drilled in the individual in violent societies from infancy onward. Only out of this combination comes the absolute defiance of death in civilized human beings, a defiance that seemingly cannot be dissolved by anything. This is the answer to the profoundly terrifying experience of civilization. Our being in society comprises almost a priori the threat that we will not be allowed to realize the vitality with which we were born. Every socialized life lives with the premonition that its energies, time, willing, and wishing will not be at an end when the death knell rings. Life builds residues-an immense, burning Not Yet that needs more time and future than is granted to the individual. Life dreams beyond itself and dies full of defiance. For this reason, the history of higher civilizations vibrates with countless and boundless Not Yet screams-with a million-voiced No to a death that is not the expiration of the dying embers of life but a violent suffocation of a flame that in any case did not burn as brightly as it could have done in a vital freedom. Since that time, devitalized life in class and military societies ponders its compensations-whether in further lives, as supposed by Hindu consciousness, or in heavenly existence as promised by Christianity and Islam - for the thwarted dreams of their believers. Religion is not primarily the opiate of the people but the reminder that there is more life in us than this life lives. The function of faith is an achievement of devitalized bodies that cannot be completely robbed of the memory that in them much deeper sources of vitality, strength, pleasure, and of the enigma and intoxication of being-there must lie hidden than can be seen in everyday life.

This gives religions their ambiguous role in societies: They can be used to legitimate and double *(verdoppelri)* oppression (see the Enlightenment's critique of religion in chapter 3, the section entitled "Critique of Religious Illusion"). They **can,** however, also liberate individuals to a greater power of resistance and creativity by helping them to overcome fear. Thus, depending on circumstances,

religion can be both an instrument of domination *and* the core of resistance against domination; a medium of repression *and* a medium of emancipation; an instrument of devitalization and a precept of revitalization.

The first case of religious Kynicism in the Judeo-Christian tradition has no one less than the original father, Moses, in the role of kynical rebel. He committed the first *blasphemy* of grand dimensions when, on his return from Mount Sinai, he smashed the tablets; "they were tables of stone, written on by the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18). "And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables" (32:16). Moses, who, with the divine laws under his arm, came down from the mountain and found his people dancing around the Golden Calf, set an example for the religious kynic's behavior with respect to the sacred: He smashed everything that was not spirit but letter, not God but idol, not the living but its representation. It is emphasized that he did this in anger and that it was a holy anger that gave him the right and the necessary impertinence to lay violent hands on God's personal handwriting. That needs to be understood. Namely, immediately after he had shattered the tablets, so the biblical account says, Moses seized the Golden Calf, melted it in the fire, "ground it to powder, and scattered it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it" (32:20). Later, Moses had to chisel new tablets so that God could inscribe them a second time. He also received from God the commandment: "Thou shalt make no graven images." Moses' kynical blasphemy came from the knowledge that people are inclined to worship fetishes and to indulge in the idolization of objects. But nothing material can be so holy that it may not be smashed as soon as it becomes apparent that the representations of the sacred have begun to overshadow the spirit of the religion. In this regard it can happen that no distinction is made between the stone tablets of the dear Lord and the Golden Calf. If it is a representation, or idol, then smite it. That is the spiritual-kynical core of the commandment to make no image of "God." Image and text can fulfill their functions only as long as it is not forgotten that both are material forms and that the "truth," as a material-immaterial structure, must always be written and read anew, that is, materialized and, at the same time, immaterialized anew —which means that every materialization will be shattered whenever it begins to force itself into the foreground.[28]

All primary blasphemies are borne by the kynical impulse to not let oneself be made a fool of by any idol. Those who "know" something of the gods know the great rage of Moses and the kynical lightness in dealing with representations of the divine. Religious persons, in contrast to pious persons, are no buffoons of the superego; *it* knows the laws, and religious persons know that it knows the laws, and they let them speak and they obey them too when it seems appropriate-This distinguishes the primary blasphemy of mystics, the religious, and the kynically alive, from the secondary blasphemies that arise from resentment, uncon-

Max Ernst, *The Virgin Disciplines the Christ Child* 1926.
(©S.P.A.D.E.M., Paris/V.A.G.A., New York, 1987.)

scious compulsions for vices and an unfree desire to drag down whatever is elevated.

The first cynicism of the religious type likewise is found in the Old Testament. Significantly, it is contained in the story of the first murder in human history —in **the** story of Cain and Abel. Adam and Eve had two sons among their children. Cain, the firstborn, was a farmer, and Abel, the second, was a shepherd. One day both brought sacrifices to the Lord, Cain from the fruit of his fields and Abel from **the** youngest of his herd. The Lord, however, welcomed only Abel's offering and

cast scorn upon Cain's. "And Cain was very wroth *and his countenance became distorted* . . . Cain talked with Abel his brother: And it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?" (Genesis 4:5-9). With this question, the stage for religious cynicism is set. The art of *dissimulation,* spoken of here for the first time, is directly connected with the cynical turning of a violent consciousness against the other.[29] What can Cain answer? Whatever he said, it would have to be cynical — for, in truth, he does not intend to tell the truth. The communication with the questioner is distorted from the start. Cain could, if he felt he had nothing to lose, answer his God: "Don't be so hypocritical, you know as well as I do where Abel is, for I have killed him with my own hands, and you not only looked on calmly, but even gave me occasion to do it." Cain's real answer, in its brevity, still has enough cynical bite: "I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). An all-knowing and infinitely just God, as Cain's testy retort suggests, should be able to refrain from such prickings of conscience. What kind of God is it who treats people unequally and at the very least provokes them to crime, but then, with pretended innocence, asks questions about what has happened? "God," if one may say so, does not penetrate every consciousness. Cain closes off his conscience to this nonpenetrating God (cf. the psychology of children who grow up under great fear of punishment). He reacts insolently, evasively, impudently. With this first crime, even more than with the fall from grace, as is shown by the myth in the Old Testament, something has happened that makes a deep cleft in the still-fresh creation —things begin to slip away from God. Cruelties occur in the world with which he does not reckon and with whose just atonement he does not yet quite know how to deal. The point of the Cain story, remarkably enough, seems to be that God, as if he had become pensive, not only does not punish the murderer, Cain, but, with the mark of Cain, expressly puts him under his personal protection: "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." For whatever avenges itself would definitely not be a god at the height of what is possible. The god of the ancient Hebrews has many traits of a bad-tempered, embittered, old man who no longer completely understands the world and who, with a jealous and mistrustful countenance, observes everything that goes on down below. Nevertheless, the reprisal for Cain's original crime is postponed until the Day of Judgment. God grants himself and humankind a respite, and the myths about the Day of Judgment emphasize that a considerable amount of time will elapse before it arrives—the time of a great opportunity. It is the time God needs to become just and the time we need to understand what proper living is. Both mean basically the same thing.

How the Christianization of power in the end phase of the Roman Empire, and even more during the European Middle Ages, led to cynical effects, was indicated earlier in this chapter ("The Cynicism of State and Hegemonic Power"). Catholic masters' cynicism reached its peak at the time of the Crusades, in which the ori-

gins of the *Inquisition* are to be found. If we express this concisely with the phrase "the persecution of Christians by Christians," this outlines the reflexive-cynical practice of lying by the master church, whose gloomiest representatives —in the style of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor—do not shrink from incinerating the returned Jesus just as they did those heretics who strove to revive his teachings. They knew precisely what they were doing, and it is probably a romantic simplification to label these gentlemen of the Inquisition Catholic "fanatics," as historiography so creepily puts it. Would that not mean to underestimate them and to declare them to be blind agents of a purported "faith" and a rigid "conviction"? Can we seriously attribute such naivetes to powerful and educated representatives of the Christ-religion? Do they not themselves appeal to God incarnate as their idol who had become conspicuous as a rebel and, for his part, stood in the tradition of the founder of a religion who, in a holy rage, had shattered God's own inscribed commandments on the ground? Don't they *know?* Don't they *have* to know? And, as inquisitors, don't they have daily impressed on their minds that this religion is based on a call to "imitate Christ"—so that the imitators, precisely when they behave "heretically," are possibly closer to the source than the learned and cynical administrators of the letter?

It has already been shown how Friedrich Schlegel conceived of the kynical dimension of the Christ religion; as religious resistance against the power state, in fact, against every form of raw, unreflective, and egoistically insensitive worldliness. As soon as a power state in the robes of Christianity-whether it be as papacy or as the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation —was established and the brutal world of the masters began to become too impudent, kynical ascetics appeared in the Middle Ages who, with the death skull and the Great Reaper tried to cut the haughty men of the world down to size. They tried to provoke power-hungry conquerors of lands to critical self-reflection by pointing out that after they died, they would possess just as much ground as was necessary for burial (a motif in the critique of power that has been kept alive up to Brecht's lyrical cynicisms of the 1920s and beyond). The kynical Christianity of the Middle Ages, resolutely committed to reflection and resistance, with its *memento mori* fought in ever-recurring waves against the tendencies of *luxuria* and *superbia,* of bodily lust and unreflecting worldly greed for life. The great reform movements, whose first wave emanated from the Cluniac monasteries and whose influence stretched well into the raw and chaotic warring feudal systems of the tenth and eleventh centuries, appear to me to be indeed kynically inspired in the religious sense. The second great wave, which in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries spread ascetic and mystical experiences into broader circles, also contained kynical elements. It was no different with the beginnings of reform in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the kynical element was even stronger in the great era of the reformations and reformers, among whom Luther ("the Pope is the Devil's

sow"), who combined in his person kynical prototypes from Moses and David up to Eulenspiegel (his literary contemporary), advanced with a primitive polemical intensity the idea of a self-renewal of religion from the "spirit" and against the idols of tradition.

The late Middle Ages provides examples of the overturning of ascetic motifs —as shown by the following novella:

> A beautiful young woman had been wooed by an admirer for a long time, but, for fear of harming her soul and her chastity, she rejected him again and again. Her resistance against the man's wooing was supported by a priest of the town, who continually admonished her to preserve her virtue. One day when the priest was forced to leave the town to travel to Venice, he made the woman solemnly pledge not to weaken in his absence. She promised, but on the condition that the priest bring her one of the famous mirrors from Venice. During the priest's absence, she in fact withstood all temptations. After his return, however, she asked for the promised Venetian mirror. Thereupon the priest pulled a skull out from under his robe and thrust it cynically into the young woman's face: "Vain woman, here you see your true face! Consider that you must die and that you are nothing before God." The woman was horrified to the marrow. That same night, she surrendered herself to her suitor and from then on enjoyed with him the joys of love. (Unfortunately, I had to relate this story from memory, since I could not relocate the source; therefore, I can vouchsafe only the gist, but not the wording or detail of the novella.)

As soon as Christians recognize themselves in the death skull as in a mirror, they can come to the point where the fear of death recedes before the fear of not having lived. They then understand that it is precisely the climbing into bed with the "whore world" that represents the chance of this irretrievable life.

From the beginning, Christian religion is haunted by a characteristic problem: that of not being able to believe. As organized religion, it is, in its innermost core, already a religion of bad faith, of insincerity, namely, to the extent that it is based not on the imitation of Christ but on the imitation of the imitation, on the *legend* of Christ, the *myth* of Christ, the *dogma* and *idealization* of Christ. The process of dogmatization is marked by bad faith, for there are two dimensions of unavoidable uncertainty that, through dogmatization, are deceivingly turned into certainty. First, what was left behind by Jesus was extraordinarily fragmentary and not comprehensible in its authenticity with final certainty, so that it is all too understandable that in the centuries following Jesus' death, the most diverse interpretations of Christianness could be developed. The mere fact that they developed demonstrate a certain "tradition of inspiration," that is, a handing down of the original experience the first Christians had shared with Jesus —the experience

of an unconditional affirmation that, as love and fearlessness, must have made an indelible impression on all those who encountered the early Christians. The dogmatization arises, according to one point of view, in the competitive struggle of various Christian "organizations" and mythologies, none of which can be sure whether, after all, "the spirit" is not also present in the rival Christian organization and mythology. In the obvious and undeniable plurality of "Christendoms," only a primary bad faith can want to establish itself as the sole true faith. This marks the second dimension of bad faith: In the repudiation of alternative Christendoms and in the corresponding *"theologicaF-intellectual* elaboration of the Christ religion, the antagonism between myth and understanding, between faith and knowledge, had to break out—and the more starkly it broke out, the stronger became the tendency to bridge it with disingenuous self-manipulative acts of consciousness. In the theological dogmatization of the Christ religion, innumerable lies were told in this dimension of the objectively problematic—as if one believed "one's own faith." But the history of Christian theology and dogmatics is at least just as much a history of doubting-but-wanting-to-believe as a history of "believing." Christian theology is the equally immense and spectral attempt to seek certainty precisely where the nature of things does not permit certainty. This theology has a demonstrable autohypnotic dimension; it begins working on what we today call "ideology," that is, the instrumental use of understanding to paralogically legitimate pregiven aims, interests, and identifications. Even in its first moment, theology is a hybrid construction of faith and doubt that wants to lie its way back into the simplicity of "mere faith." It formulates "confessions" in a dogmatically fixed form, whereas a confession by nature can relate only to what is an *immediate* certainty for confessors, that is, their self-experiences and inwardness: In these they do not find primarily the formulated faith as such; they find doubt, not certainty. What we today call "confession" probably circumscribes the sum of things we doubt rather than the things of which we can be sure. This legacy of bad faith has been passed on from the Christian structure of mentality to practically everything that has arisen as ideology and Weltanschauung on Western soil in the time since Christ. There is, on our cultural soil, a tradition that teaches how to present what is uncertain per se in the raiment of "conviction," what is believed as something that is known: the confession as a strategic lie.

This inner problematic of bad faith experienced a dramatic escalation in the wrangle of the Catholic Counter-Reformation with the Protestant movements. These movements, if we observe only their intrareligious historical emergence, had become necessary precisely because of the phenomena connected with bad faith, which, in Catholicism, had resulted in an insufferable amount of corruption and deceitfulness. The reforms were concerned with the miserable credibility of "faith," the hollowness, coarseness, and cynicism in the spectacle of the Catholic church. When the Counter-Reformation then armed itself theologically against the Protestant challenge, it inevitably felt a compulsion to reform because it could

Honore Daumier, *Christian Love—As Practiced in Spain.*

not overcome the opponent without studying its "armament" and its critique of Catholicism. From then on, a mute cynical reflexivity increased within Catholic theology, which practiced thinking the opponent's thoughts without letting its own "confessions" show that it had long since known more than it said and "believed." Talk like the rearguard, think like the vanguard-that became the psychological-strategic secret for the functioning of the Jesuit order, which, like a spiritual militia, constituted the intellectual elite in the struggle against Protestantism. In some areas, this technique is still employed today: The conservative style of ideology —to work with a high degree of consciousness toward an instrumental diminution of one's own intelligence and a self-censorship through artful conventionality—has to the present day something of the former Jesuit manner. In the modern world, being a Catholic really has to be learned for it presupposes the capacity to develop a bad faith of the second degree. Poor Hans Küng. After such brilliant studies he should have known that the Catholic way of being intelli-

gent pays off only when one also knows how to decently conceal that one knows too much.

The history of modern "secularization" also touches on cynical phenomena in religion. In this process of "secularization," the partly kynically admonishing, partly cynically intimidating propaganda of skulls and skeletons comes to an end. In a fully militarized, consumption-oriented society of the capitalist (or "socialist") type, the *memento mori* no longer has a chance. In the death's head, no one any longer sees his "true face." Since the nineteenth century, such death motifs have been forced into a "black romanticism" and have been treated only aesthetically. The tension between religion and worldly society over what constitutes "real living" has (deceptively) dissolved without residue in favor of the "worldly," political, social, cultural forces. Those who demand "more life," a more "intensive life," a "higher life," or a "real life" see themselves, at least since the eighteenth century, presented with a series of nonreligious revitalizations that have assumed something from the positive legacy of religion: art, science, erotics, traveling, consciousness of the body, politics, psychotherapy, and the like. All of them can contribute something to the reconstruction of that "full life" that was the dream and memory core of religion. In this sense, it is justifiable to speak of religion as "becoming superfluous." The living being from whom not so much is taken anymore does not want to get everything back later. Human life that no longer remains so far below its own potentialities has, in fact, less reason to seek a compensatory religiosity. For those for whom "life on earth" is no longer so miserable, heaven itself no longer promises something "completely different." The principal powers of devitalization—family, state, the military —have, since the nineteenth century, created their own ideologies of revitalization (consumerism, sexism, sports, tourism, the cult of violence, mass culture) that the conservative clerical groups cannot match with anything similarly attractive. Modern mass vitalisms contribute a great deal to the circumstance that today's societies, at least on the level of the more robust vital functions, no longer thirst for religion. On the whole, they have become religiously dreamless. When today too little of something is felt, it is expressed in a language of worldly concerns: too little money, too little time, too little sex, too little fun, too little security, and so on. Only recently has a new phrase surfaced: There is too little *meaning —and* with this neoconservative sob, a "demand for religion" is again heard, a demand that has led to a flourishing trade in meaning, without much feel for the fact that it is the addiction to meaning that gives all sorts of nonsense the opportunity to sell itself as the way to salvation. Only so much is certain: The coarser (so-called material) possibilities of revitalization in our culture, precisely when we avail ourselves of them to some extent, expose deeper levels of our being dead that are not really touched by the vitalism of consumption, sport, disco fever, and free sexuality. This inner level of death is what was earlier called "nihilism," a mixture

Standard-bearing trumpeter of the SS Death Head Units.

of disillusionment and violent despair stemming from the feeling of emptiness and arbitrary craving. Without doubt, experiences of this type played a subliminal role in national socialism, that, in some respects, resembles a nihilistic religion. It was, by the way, the only political force in the twentieth century that, in a petulant masters' cynical pose, again dared to appropriate for itself the old symbols of the Christian admonition of death: Its ideological vanguard, the SS, chose, not without a good feel for self-representation, the skull and crossbones as its symbol. In matters concerning disinhibition, absolutely nothing can outdo German fascism. Fascism is the vitalism of the dead; as political "movement," they want to have their dance. This vitalism of death, which characterizes Western cultural institutions to the present day, is embodied, literarily as well as in reality, in vampire figures that, for lack of their own life force, emerge as the living dead among the not yet extinguished to suck their energies into themselves. Once the latter are sucked dry, then they too become vampires. Once they have become devitalized at their core, they crave the vitality of others.

In Christian times, the appeal to reflect on authentic living runs *media vita in morte sumus* — in the midst of life, we are nevertheless already surrounded by death. Today, do we not have to say, conversely, *media morte in vita sumus—in* the midst of all-pervading death, there is nevertheless something in us that is more alive than is lived by our lifeless life?

What do the anxious person, the security person, the wage-labor person, the defense person, the care-laden person, the history person, the planning person know of life? When we add up the contents of our life, we find that there is a lot that is left out and little fulfillment, a lot of dull dreaming and little presence.

Here, life means being not yet dead. To learn to live again leads via a great labor of recollection, but not a labor that only stirs up old stories. The innermost recollection leads not to a story but to a force. To touch this force means to experience a flood of ecstasy. This experience ends up not in a past but in a rapturous now.

The Cynicism of Knowledge

What is truth ?
Pontius Pilate

You can trust a statistic only when you have manipulated it yourself.

Winston Churchill

Cleopatra's nose: had it been shorter, then the entire face of the earth would have been changed.

Blaise Pascal

The main thing in life is simply to go freely, lightly, pleasantly, frequently, every evening to the commode. O stercus pretio-sum! *that is the great result of life in all classes.*

Denis Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew*

All culture after Auschwitz, including the penetrating critique of it, is garbage.

T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*

Diogenes is the real founder of the Gay Science.[30] As such, he is not easy to classify. Should he be counted among the philosophers? Is he similar to a "researcher"? Does he remind us of what we call a scientist? Or is he "only" a "popularizer" of knowledges that have been gained elsewhere? None of these labels quite fit. Diogenes' intelligence is nothing like that of professors, and whether it could be compared with that of artists, dramatists, and writers remains uncertain because, as with the kynics in general, nothing of his own work has been handed down. Kynical intelligence did not assert itself in writing, even if, in the good old days of Athenian kynicism, there were supposed to be all sorts of cheeky pamphlets and parodies from the quills of kynics (as suggested by Laertius). To make use of intelligence in a kynical way, therefore, probably means to parody rather than propose a theory; it means to be able to find ready answers rather than to brood over insoluble, deep questions. The first Gay Science is satirical intelligence. In this it resembles literature more than systematized knowl-

edge. Its insights disclose the questionable and ridiculous aspects of the grand, serious systems. Its intelligence is floating, playful, essayistic, not laid out on secure foundations and final principles. Diogenes inaugurates the Gay Science by treating serious sciences in a tongue-in-cheek manner. How much truth is contained in something can be best determined by making it thoroughly laughable and then watching to see how much joking around it can take. For truth is a matter that can stand mockery, that is freshened by any ironic gesture directed at it.[31] Whatever cannot stand satire is false. To parody a theory and its proponents is to carry out the experiment of experiments with it. If, as Lenin says, the truth is concrete, then saying the truth must also assume concrete forms, which means, on the one hand, embodiment, and on the other, radical dismantling; what was "concrete" will become even clearer once it has been put through the wringer.

Thus, if we are looking for a label for the father of the Gay Science, the first pantomimic materialist, it could be: the *satyr capable of thinking.* His main theoretical achievement consists in defending reality against the theorists' delusion that they have conceptualized it.[32] Every truth requires a contribution from the side of the satyr and satire, of the mobile and mentally alert sense for reality, which is able to restore to the "spirit" its freedom in relation to its own product and to "sublate" *(aufheben)* the known and the acquired — in true Hegelian fashion.

Satire as procedure? To the extent that it is an art of intellectual opposition, it can be learned to a certain degree, when its fundamental gestures and turns of expression are investigated. In any case, it takes up a position against whatever might loosely be called "high thinking": idealism, dogmatics, grand theory, Weltanschauung, sublimity, ultimate foundations, and the show of order. All these forms of a masters', sovereign, subjugating theory magically attract kynical taunting. Here, the Gay Science finds its playing field. The kynic possesses an unerring instinct for those facts that do not fit into grand theories (systems). (All the worse for the fact? All the worse for the theory?) Mentally alert, it finds the reply and the counterexample to everything that has been too well thought out to be true. Whenever the ruling and master thinkers present their great visions, the kynical moles set to work—indeed, perhaps what we in our scientific tradition call "critique" is nothing other than a satirical function that no longer understands itself, namely, the realistic undermining from "below" of grand theoretical systems that are experienced as fortresses or prisons[33] (see chapter 2). The satirical procedure (i.e., the actual methodological core of energy in "critique," as Marx so aptly put it with regard to Hegel) consists in "inverting" things. In the realistic sense that means: from the head onto the feet; but inversion in the other direction can sometimes also prove useful: yoga for flatheaded realists.

Inversion —how is it done? In ancient kynical satire, we discover the most important techniques that, incidentally, are related to the conceptual tools of the First Enlightenment (the Sophists). As soon as high theory says *order,* satire opposes it with the concept *of arbitrariness* (and gives examples). If grand theory

tries to speak of *laws (nomoi)*, critique answers by appealing to *nature (physis)*. If the former say *cosmos*, then the satirists reply, Cosmos may be there where we are not, in the universe, but wherever we human beings turn up, it would be better to speak of *chaos*. The proponent of order sees the great whole; the kynic sees also the little dismembered pieces. Grand theory looks toward the sublime; satire sees also what is absurd. Elevated Weltanschauung wants to notice only what has been achieved; in kynicism, it is also possible to speak of what has been botched. Idealism sees only the true, the beautiful, and the good, whereas satire takes the liberty of considering what is bent, crooked, or lousy also to be worth talking about. Where dogmatics postulates an unconditional duty toward truth, the Gay Science assumes from the start the right to lie. And where theory demands that the truth be presented in discursive forms (argumentatively self-contained texts, chains of sentences), the original critique knows of the possibilities of expressing the truth pantomimically and spontaneously. The latter also often recognizes the best in "grand insights" through the jokes that can be made about them. When the guardians of morality perform a great tragedy because Oedipus has slept with his mother, and then believe that therefore the world is no longer in order and the great law of the gods and humankind is in danger, then kynical satire first admonishes us to stay calm. Let us see whether that is really so bad! Who is really harmed by this copulation that goes against the regulations? Only the naive illusion of law. How would it be, however, if human beings did not have to serve the law, but the law had to serve human beings? Did Isocrates not teach that human beings are the measure of all things? Poor Oedipus, don't make such a long face; remember that for the Persians and for dogs, too, mounting members of the family is also very much in fashion! Chin up, you old motherfucker! Here, in Greek antiquity, an epochal threshold in the cultural history of irony has been crossed. The Sophist sages are so sure of being borne by universal principles that they can raise themselves above any mere conventionality. Only an unconditionally "culture-resistant" individual can become free enough for such apparently vice-ridden liberties. Only where the social *nomos* has already done its work can the deeply civilized person appeal to *physis* and think of the relaxation of tension.

The master-thinkers let the theater of the world —the display of order, the great "law"—pass review before their mind's eye and cast visions that probably also include pain and the negative but that cause them no pain. An overview is achieved only by those who overlook a lot (A. Gehlen). It is always the pain of others that the theoretical grand views of the "cosmos" call for in payment. According to kynical custom, by contrast, those who suffer by themselves must also scream by themselves. We do not have to see our life from a bird's-eye view or with the eyes of disinterested gods from another planet. Diogenes' anti-philosophy always talks in such a way that we realize that here we see a person in his own skin and he has no intention of leaving it. Whenever he is beaten up, Diogenes hangs a sign

around his neck with the names of the culprits and walks through the city with it. That is enough theory, enough praxis, enough struggle, and enough satire.

In addition to its quick-witted, mentally alert way of dealing with the official and linguistically coded cultural wares (theories, systems), kynical anti-philosophy possesses three essential media by which intelligence can free itself from "theory" and discourse: action, laughter, and silence. Nothing is achieved by a mere juxtaposition of theory and praxis. When Marx claims in his famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach that philosophers had previously only interpreted the world in different ways but that the point is to change it (through the world's becoming philosophical, philosophy's becoming worldly), then, although borne by a partially kynical impulse, he remains far below the level of an *existential* di-alectical materialism. Diogenes, the existentialist, would not be able to stop laughing about the way in which Marx again throws himself into the business of grand theory.[34] In the presence of so much rage to "change," Diogenes would ex-hibit a demonstrative silence and, with anarchistic laughter, he would rebuff the impudent demand to make the whole of one's life into a tool of a (good old idealistically) planned "praxis."

If we wanted to write a history of the kynical impulse in the field of knowledge, it would have to take the form of a philosophical history of satire, or better still, a phenomenology of the satirical mind, as a phenomenology of combative con-sciousness and as a history of what has been thought in the arts (i.e., as a philo-sophical history of art). Such a history has not been written and would not be necessary if the principles could be made comprehendible without the historical crutch. In any form of erudition, intelligence risks its life. Those who deal with the past risk fading into the past themselves without having understood what they have lost in it. Those who heed these cautions will find sufficient material for a history of the Gay Science hidden in the archives or dispersed in the research liter-ature. Rich traditions offer themselves for rediscovery: a great European *silen-tium tradition* that was at home not only in the churches, monasteries, and schools but also in the unresearched popular intelligence that is concealed in the eternal silence of the majorities —a silence in which there is also freedom and not merely speechlessness; insight and simplicity, not merely dullness and oppression. There is an even greater European *tradition of satire* in which the freedoms of art, the carnival, and criticism combined into a many-tongued culture of laughter. Here the main strand of a militant intelligence is probably revealed that bites like the kynical dogs without becoming doggedly pugnacious and that strikes more into its opponent's consciousness with its mockery, irony, inversions, and jokes than at the opponent himself. Finally, there is an impressive *tradition of action* in which can be studied the ways in which people have taken their own insights "seri-ously" for the sake of a life whose chances they did not want to waste. That it was frequently an act of resistance is in the nature of things here. The "art of the possible" is not only what statesmen are supposed to master, but always comes

J. Grandville, Models of satirical consciousness: the fool with bow and arrow; the
Naked Truth. Advertisement for the periodical *La Caricature* (detail).

into play where people try, with awareness and intelligence, to protect the chance
of their life. My favorite examples of such action —apart from some pieces of
bravado of the type found in Eulenspiegel, Schweik, and some manifestations of
revolutionary praxis —are provided by those emigrants who (especially) in the
nineteenth century, set out from a hopelessly hidebound Europe to try their luck
in the New World as freer people. In setting out this way there is something of
the kynical force of vital intelligence and of the exodus of consciousness into the
open world, where life still has a chance to be stronger than the suffocating
powers of tradition, society, and conventions. If I were to say which individual
action I hold to characterize an intelligence that not only "knows" but also "acts,"
I would probably choose Heinrich Heine's emigration to Paris in 1831 —this apex
of conscious praxis in which a poet subjected his biography to the necessities and
chances of the historical moment and left his homeland in order to be able to do
what he believed he had to do for his own sake and that of his homeland. "I went
because I had to"-and behind this "had to" there were not yet the police (as in
the case of Marx and other refugees) but rather the insight that in a conscious life
there are moments when we first have to do what we want in order then also to
want to do what we have to do.[35]

The satirical-polemical-aesthetic dimension in the history of knowledge be-
comes important because, in fact, it is the dialectic *en marche.* With it, the princi-
ples of embodiment and resistance penetrate the course of socially organized
thinking: the inexpressible individual element; single persons intuitively in touch
with their existence; the "nonidentical" conjured up by Adorno; the thing-there

that is already mistreated by any mere conceptual designation because it stimulates understanding (and only makes a "case of *X"* out of the singular). Where should this individual reality assure itself better of its existence — apart from the arts —than in satire, in the ironic dissolution of imposed "orders," in playing with what pretends to be "law," in brief, in the embodiment of this highly nonserious matter that, after all, the living being is? Dialectical thinkers —whether philosophers, poets, or musicians —are those in whom polemics and the fierce and unconscionable animosity between thoughts and motives already form the inner workings of their "thinking" process. Their presence of mind suffices, if one can put it this way, for more than one thought. All great dialectical thinkers and artists thus carry within themselves a disputatious, forward-driving, and creative kynic or cynic that, from within, prescribes movement and provocation for their thinking. Dialecticians are the movers of thoughts who cannot do otherwise than to give the antithesis to every thesis its due. We observe in them a partly combatively unsettled, partly epically measured form of discourse that stems from a feeling for the figural, melodic, and thematic in the composition of thought-in the disguised poet Plato no differently than in the philosophizing musician Adorno, in the grotesque and pompous dialectic of Rabelais as in the uninhibited streaming rhetoric of Ernst Bloch. It would be worth the effort sometime to portray the inner kynical-cynical "partner" of the important masters —whether it be with Diderot or Goethe, Hegel, Kierkegaard, or Marx, with Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud, or Foucault. And what really happens when Sartre, the master dialectician of the twentieth century, confronts Flaubert, the grand cynic of the nineteenth century, on the thousands of pages of the *Idiot of the Family* (a confrontation so full of philosophical and psychodynamic morsels that it is obviously impossible to talk about it in an incidental manner).

As we have said, kynicism cannot be a theory and cannot have its "own" theory. Cognitive kynicism is *a form of dealing with knowledge,* a form of relativization, ironic treatment, application, and sublation. It is the answer of the will to live to that which it has suffered at the hands of theories and ideologies-partly a spiritual art of survival, partly intellectual resistance, partly satire, partly "critique."

"Critical theory" tries to protect life from the false abstractness and violence of "positive" theories. In this sense, the Frankfurt Critical Theory too inherited the kynical portions of those grand theories the nineteenth century handed down to the twentieth —of left Hegelianism with its existentialist and anthropological as well as its historical and sociological aspects, and of Marxism, as well as of Critical Psychology, which became well known especially in the form of psychoanalysis. These are all, if properly understood, "theories" that contain within them the kynical form of treating theory (namely, the sublation of theory) and that can be made into "fixed systems" only at the cost of an intellectual regression. Such regressions have happened on a grand scale, and how much stupefaction has been

perpetrated in the late nineteenth century and the whole of the twentieth by vulgar Hegelianism, vulgar Marxism, vulgar psychology, vulgar existentialism, and vulgar Nietzscheanism is all too crassly shown in recent social history. All these systems of stupefaction have dispatched the reflective agility of "Critical Theories," established rigid dogmas as "knowledge," and left nothing of kynical sublation except arrogant presumption. In fact, the kynical sublation of theory stems from a conscious not-knowing, not from a knowing-better. It releases us to a new and fresh not-knowing, instead of letting us become rigid in certainties. For with "convictions" only the desert grows. Against this, Frankfurt Critical Theory achieved a great deal by attempting again and again to "destupefy" the theoretical inheritance of the nineteenth century and, above all, by trying to save the elements of truth in Marxism from its degeneration in Leninist and, still more, in Stalinist dogmatics.

In its good times, Marxism was really a vehicle of an active intelligence, and it knew how to fertilize all the human sciences with its historical-critical consciousness. The *materialist conception of history* [Kautsky; —Trans.] has always contained hundreds of possibilities for "another history" and for a history of the Other. A real history of the Other, however, can be written only by those who are the Other and the Others and have decided to let this Otherness live and to fight for the freedom to be allowed to be so. The most significant examples today are the history of "femaleness" and the history of homosexuality. With the relating of their suppression and formation, both come simultaneously to the consciousness of a freedom that is *now* becoming real. By talking about themselves —in history and in the present—women and homosexuals also celebrate the beginning of a new era that they will be "a part of in a different way than they were previously. History must be like this. It must proceed from something and lead to something that lives now and that lays claim to more and more life and rights to life for the Now and Later. What is passe on a vital level cannot be considered passable on the level of living knowledge. The historical is reduced to what has been finished and what has only passed but is not yet over—the unfinished, the imperfect, the inherited evil, the historical hangover. Whenever people and groups set about to finish for themselves such an inherited chapter of the unfinished, then memory and history will become useful forces for them, whether in the individual realm, as in psychotherapy, or in the collective realm, as in struggles for liberation.

This distinguishes an existential historiography from the kind Nietzsche justifiably called "museal" history-a history that serves as distraction and decoration rather than as concentration and vitalization. We can call existential historiography kynical and museal-decorative historiography cynical. The former tells of all we have come through, battered but not broken—just as the Jewish view of history grew out of the insight into the transitoriness of foreign empires and into its own persistent continuance. In this same way Marxism—in its good times-created a possibility of systematically narrating the history of oppres-

sions, whether this is called slavery, as in antiquity, serfdom as in the Middle Ages (which, e.g., in Russia lasted until 1861), or proletarian existence as in the present. But the language in which the history of oppression in the name of Marxist ideology will be told one day remains open—in any case, certainly no longer in the language of Marxism; perhaps in that of a critique of cynical reason; perhaps in a feminist language; perhaps in a metaeconomic, ecological language. Cynical historiography, by contrast, sees "in all worldly things" only a hopeless cycle; in the life of the peoples, as in the life of individuals, in human life as in organic life in general, it sees a growing, flourishing, withering, and dying: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. "There is nothing new under the sun!" is its motto, and even this is nothing new.[36] Or it sees in history a victory route on which we have marched and will continue to march, over the bodies of those who were silly enough to believe they could stand in the way of our will to power, our thousand-year Reich, our historical "mission."

Besides "critical" history, "critical" *psychology* is the second of the human sciences with a kynically effective barb. Today, with the progressive psychologizing of society, that is no longer so readily understandable because for us, the kynical shock of psychological enlightenment already lies in the dim past. At best, we became somewhat aware of the offensive side of psychoanalysis in the Freudo-Marxist spectacles of May 1968 —insofar as we were willing to see anything in psychoanalysis other than a great self-mystification of bourgeois society that oppresses, distorts, and manipulates individuals and finally says to them, when, as a result, they don't feel well: Your unconscious is to blame. Only the Freudian Left has transmitted something of the original kynical bit of psychoanalytic enlightenment in that—from Wilhelm Reich to Alice Miller —it knew at the same time how to avoid the pitfalls of analytic orthodoxy.

In chapter 6 (the final section), we indicated how the explosive power of psychoanalysis is initially connected with the fact that Freud equates the unconscious with the domain of sexual secrets. Psychological curiosity was thereby channeled in an extremely successful way toward what has always interested people most of all anyway. As the "unconscious" it was on the whole neutralized and excused, and as sexuality it was, on top of everything else, the most fascinating thing around. Under this banner, the cognitive kynicism of psychoanalysis could breach social consciousness —at first through a small opening, but later there was scarcely anything left of the wall. Then it came out: "Everything you always wanted to know about sex." Kynics could not possibly fulfill their task more elegantly than Freud did. In immaculate prose and dressed in the best English tweed, the Old Master of analysis managed, while maintaining the highest respect, to talk about almost everything that one does not talk about. That in itself is already an Eulenspiegel action without parallel in the history of culture, and it could probably succeed only because Freud personally did not underline the subversive, satirical, and rebellious side of his undertaking but on the contrary did his utmost to

give his work the appearance of science. The miracle of psychoanalysis is how it so respectably conjures all its objects—the oral, anal, and genital. It is as if in refined society someone burped at the dinner table and nobody found anything exceptional in it. Freud managed what would leave even Diogenes green with envy: He erected a theory that makes us all, whether we like it or not, into kynics (if not even into cynics).

It happens this way: In the beginning, everyone is a pure, natural being, born from the mother's body into a well-bred society, not knowing what is proper. We grow up as sexually polyvalent, "polymorphously perverse" subjects, and kynicism is universally disseminated in our nurseries which at first, in everything lives, thinks, wishes, and acts completely out of our own bodies. Freud imported a kynical phase into the life history of everyone and also found rudimentary explanations for why adults still tell cynical jokes or are even inclined to make cynicism their attitude toward life. In every one of us, there was once a primitive dog and a primitive swine, beside which Diogenes is a pale imitation—but we, as well-behaved people, cannot for the life of us remember anything about it. It is not enough that this human primitive animal, as the educators say, "defecates" and performs in front of everybody what we adults do there where only our conscience looks on. Not only does it piss in its diapers and against the wall; this being at times even develops an interest unworthy of a human being in its own excrement and does not even shrink from smearing the wall with it. That Diogenes did such things not even his enemies claimed. In all superfluity, this being likes to frequently hold those parts of the body for which adults only know the Latin names and shows in everything a reckless self-conceit, as if it personally and no one else were the center of its world. That this kynical primitive animal in the end even wants to kill its father and marry its mother—or conversely —that, after all that has happened, is registered somewhat with resignation. Indeed, even when analysts maintain that the Oedipus complex is the universal law of psychic development in human beings, this is accepted like one more piece of bad news among many others. (Later it is noticed that Freud is interested only in the tragic version of the Oedipus myth, not in the kynical dedramatization of the story.) After these psychoanalytic revelations, parenthood must unavoidably turn into a battle between philosophical schools. For we have to become a Stoic, when we have the kynic physically right in our own house. If a connection between Freud's ethics and those of Epicure has often been noticed, that is because the Epicurean line was the most successful in finding a compromise between Stoicism and kynicism, between moral duty and self-realization, between the reality principle and the pleasure principle, between "culture" and those who experience "discontent in it." Societies in the world era of states send their members continually on those "too long marches" from which the living try to deviate by allowing themselves short cuts.

With respect to our infantile side, we have thus all arisen from kynicism. In

this point, psychoanalysis does not allow us any evasion. However, it itself becomes evasive by taking a thoroughly ambivalent stance toward the tension between the infantile and the adult. For it always knows how to arrange things so that the analyst remains respectable while the patient-child remains bestial. He makes a protege, so to speak, out of the kynical-animal side in us, to the extent that we all possess such an analyzable underground. Analysts are those "citizens" who interpret and counsel the still-effective infantile, animal, neurotic, etc., uncitizenness of others. However, here it seems to be their greatest fear that they themselves will get caught in the undertow of their themes and be seen as just as disreputable as the oral, anal, genital phenomena of life with which they concern themselves. Perhaps, at least in part, the excessive interest in culture that is noticeable in many psychologists comes from this circumstance. They seem pressured to constantly prove anew their ability to be cultured —after having already compromised themselves enough through their professional occupation with the infantile and animal aspects of human beings. "Psychological literature" has become in the meantime a phenomenon of such dimensions that it can only be dealt with sociologically and statistically. Its primary concern is the self-assurance of modern semicynics in their cultural role. With "cultivation," with books, diplomas, titles, supplementary training and degrees, they try to preserve their rights of citizenship in "official culture" (which, by the way, in any case does not exist). At the same time, this serves the pedantic demarcation of "sicknesses." There are more than a few psychologists in whose voices a lot of fear, contempt, superciliousness, and aggression can be heard when they use words like narcissism, schizophrenia, paranoia, ambivalence, neurosis, psychosis. They are words of demarcation, words for others, words on the high horse of normality. It may, however, be a good sign that today some—I want to say insightful-therapists have decided to let the mask of respectability drop and to give up the role of the respectable portrayer of reality. They have, to their own advantage and that of their patients, come over to the side of the living. For those who have been made ill by reality, the path to being able to get through life well certainly does not lead by way of an accommodation to the Freudian "medium misery" of the average adult.

In the domain of knowledge and the sciences, a number of cynical phenomena have appeared that constitute a counterpart to what, in the preceding section on religious cynicism, I have designated, after Sartre, "bad faith" *(mauvaise foi)*. These phenomena are the "crooked attitudes" toward truth and knowledge that make these "highest goods" into mere useful items, or even into instruments for lying. Despite all apparent lack of respect, the kynic assumes a basically serious and upright attitude toward truth and maintains a thoroughly solemn relation, satirically disguised, to it. With the cynic, this relation has given way to a thorough flabbiness and agnosticism (denial of knowledge). "What is truth?" asked Pontius Pilate when he sensed that he was just about to commit a crime against it. The

most harmless among the cynicisms of knowledge is that of the examinees, who build up the most external and contemptuous relation to that which they have to learn, a relation of mere cramming, of rote learning, with the firm intention of forgetting it again after the examination. After that, already less harmless, follows the cynicism of the pragmatists and politicians who, admittedly, like to see that the next generation has acquired its academic foundations, but for the rest proceed from the attitude that theory is theory and that in practice everything looks quite different. Here, all the learning and studying that precede function like pure detour and selection mechanisms, roughly according to the assumption that whoever gets through them successfully can also succeed with the other—even though, as is generally known, study and subsequent occupation often are totally unconnected. Learning is separated cynically and instrumentally from its aims and treated as a mere abstract certificate of qualifications. In some cases, the only thing that links study and occupation is salary, which is set according to the type of highest educational qualification achieved. The "substance" is degraded with cynical realism to a mere prelude, to academic chitchat. How much ethos-decimation and demoralization continually take place here is scarcely measurable —one has only to think of courses that have to do with "values": education, teacher training, the legal professions, publishing, social work, medicine, and so on. If Mephistopheles could say to Faust that all theory is gray, and green is the golden tree of life, this evidences an optimism that can be developed only by someone who has never passed from study into professional life. For here it becomes clear that theory was probably too rosy and that reality first teaches us what gray really is. But here we are not completely without hope. Course reforms work toward ensuring that the studies too will be just as gray as the prospects to be had after them.

The actual and innermost connection between the sciences and cynicism, however, concerns the structure and the procedure of modern empirical sciences per se. For just as there is a form of cynical correctness in the relations between hostile individuals, there is also a form of cynical objectivity and methodological strictness in some sciences' and some scientists' way of treating the "facts." I believe this constitutes the core of what, since the late nineteenth century, we call "positivism." If this word sounds critical, it is surely not because it designates a scientific mentality that stresses being logically exact and true to the facts and refraining from any sort of speculation. In this sense, positivism would have to be a title of honor rather than a dubious label. But in fact, the point of contention in the positivism debate is not scientific principles but the unprincipledness of science. For there are areas of research - and they are usually those in which the positivists do all the talking-where it does not suffice merely to behave scientifically "objectively" with the "facts," but where more is demanded of the scientist than merely the capacity to collect data, produce statistics, and formulate theorems. There are "objects," in relation to which there is no scientific neutrality

but only partial and interest-directed forms of investigation —most clearly of all in the entire domain of the human and social sciences (this way of seeing things can be made plausible even with respect to the natural sciences; see chapter 11 "Transcendental Polemic," which indicates the connection between objectification and the process of making enemies). The dispute around positivism ignited not over its indisputable achievement in clarifying the logical form and the empirical basis of strict sciences but over the naive assumption of the positivists that they could open up every "arbitrary" field of research with these means and thus subject every reality to the arbitrariness of a callous researching. The positivist, however, can be suspected not so much of naivete but of cynicism, especially since the days of early, and perhaps really naive, positivism are gone and we have long since been confronted with a positivism in its third generation, which, we can safely say, has been washed in the seven seas. The short formula for the history of science in this century would have to read: The path of scientism leads from positivism to theoretical cynicism (functionalism). When Critical Theory pilloried the "affirmative character" of traditional and positivistic theories, it meant by this that such theories, in their artificial objectivity, betray a cynical assent to social relations that, to those who suffer, who sympathize, are concerned, stink to high heaven. In the methodological doctrines of positivism and the new social functionalism, those theoreticians find their organon who, with detached brutality, indirectly and coolly defends existing systems against the individuals who come to grief in them.

Notes

1. If Hegel's *Phenomenology* is described as a "journey of the weltgeist through history to itself," in this formulation, none of the crucial concepts is acceptable. First, it is no journey because such a thing would have to have a beginning and a goal, which does not hold; "path" metaphors do not adequately grasp history. Second, there is no weltgeist that, simultaneously as combatant and battle follower, has been present through the turnings and struggles of history. Third, there is no world history as narrative of the vicissitudes of a subject that suffered them. Fourth, there is no self that, after some kinds of journeys, histories, or struggles, could arrive at "itself; that would be a pretty ghostly being, a megalomaniac reflexive pronoun that rampages over our natural being-as-self.

2. Wilhelm Stieber, *Spion des Kanzlers* (The chancellor's spy) (Munich, 1981), p. 135; see also chapter 10, "Black Empiricism." The quotation suggests a psychoanalytic theory of cynicism that interprets cynicism as the expression of an unconscious desire to be punished.

3. Only more recent narrative also includes the civil hero, the hero as rogue (picaro), and even the negative, passive hero.

4. The Arthurian legends discuss the problem of how a hero must constantly earn his status: Erec. His error was to become soft and to fail to expose himself to continual testing.

5. As soon as the soldiers became aware of this, they became suspicious of their leaders. The modern large armies stood and fell with the group of lower commanders and officers who "advanced with the rest." There supposedly are even statistics from the World Wars that prove that the officers are "sufficiently well" represented among the fallen.

6. This motif will be pursued in chapter 10, ("Black Empiricism"), the final section.

7. Officially sanctioned in part: As late as the war of 1870-71, there were many paid "substitute soldiers" serving in the place of conscripts.

8. Elsewhere I have tried to work out the particular emotional toning of German Fascist cynicism in an interpretation of the Beelitz anecdote from Hitler's *Mein Kampf: Der Gefreite Hitler als Anti-Schweijk—Zur Psychodynamik moderner Zersetzungsangst.* See Peter Sloterdijk, "Die Krise des Individuums —studiert im Medium der Literatur," in J. Schulte-Sasse (ed.), *Political Tendencies in the Literature of the Weimar Republic* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1982).

9. See chapter 22, "Bright Hour."

10. [Translation of the French testament: I have nothing, / I have many debts, / I give the rest to the poor.]

11. See also Marvin Harris, *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches: The Riddles of Culture,* (2nd ed. New York, 1978), pp. 133ff.

12. See Julien Benda, *La trahison des clercs* (Paris, 1975), p. 44: "Tout le monde sent le tragique de cete information: 'L'ordre est retabli.' " To maintain order is synonymous with mounted charges, opening fire on unarmed people, and killing women and children.

13. It is no accident that Michel Foucault, who stimulated the most penetrating analyses of power, force, and "micropolitics" in our time, at the same time began with the phenomenon of disciplinary force, of punishment, execution, surveillance, and incarceration.

14. Schlegel's sentence also contains the germ of a theory not only of political but also of economic and religious cynicism and the cynicism of knowledge (see the remaining cardinal cynicisms as well as the secondary cynicisms). The unabridged quotation reads: "If the essence of cynicism consists in giving nature priority over art and virtue over beauty and science; without paying regard to the letter, to which the Stoic strictly sticks, but to pay heed only to the spirit, to unconditionally show contempt for all economic value and political glamour, and to bravely maintain the rights of autonomous caprice: then Christianism would be nothing other than universal cynicism." *Athenaeum. Eine Zeitschrift von A. W. und Fr. Schlegel I,* selected and edited by Curt Griitzmacher (Hamburg, 1969), p. 102.

15. In detailed studies, these coarse classifications prove problematic; e.g., up until 1918, the German state, because of its feudal components, etc., cannot be designated as wholly bourgeois.

16. Aside: I began writing down these notes on cynicism—that a critique of cynical reason would come of it, I did not know at the time—shortly after seeing an interview with the Jewish philosopher and political scientist, Hannah Arendt, which Giinther Gaus had made with her many years before and which was broadcast again on the fifth anniversary of her death in 1980. This conversation, a prime example of relaxed chatting and philosophizing in front of an audience and one of the few examples of intelligence in television, reached its climax when Arendt told of her activity at the Jerusalem trial of the mass murderer Eichmann. One must have heard with one's own ears how this woman averred that in studying the many thousands of pages of the transcript of the proceedings, she repeatedly broke out into loud laughter about the peculiar stupidity that had exercised control over innumerable lives. In Arendt's self-aware confession there was something frivolous and kynical in the most precise sense of the word that, after an initial consternation, proved itself to be a liberating and sovereign expression of truth. When Arendt then, as an encore, even made the remark that she often had fun in exile, for she was young and improvising in uncertainty has its own attractions, then I also had to laugh, and with that, this book began to "write itself."

17. In the People's Democracies, incidentally, we encounter a complementary swindle.

18. I have decided to place money cynicism under the secondary cynicisms. Exchange cynicism, which is treated in chapter 9, appears to me to be an excrescence of the coercions of power.

19. Mature-immature: These are not value judgments but scales of measurement for objective conditions for socialism. If socialism is defined as the liberation of social productivity from capitalist fetters, then late-capitalist relations must first be created that can then be superseded.

20. See chapter 11. There I attempt to establish a rational dialectics under the concept of universal polemic. At the same time, I provide a critique of the Marxist use of dialectics.

21. This is not a plea for a "productivistic" ideology. Productivity is a multidimensional concept. Incidentally, the newer consciousness of political ecology presupposes the culmination of productivism.

22. Dialectic—as dialectic of obstruction. That is the realistic basis of Adorno's *Negative Dialectics.*

23. Kurt Keiler drew my attention to the story of the mouse's indirect suicide. It is contained in the final chapter of Boris Vian's novel, *L'Ecume des jours* (1946). Here I have changed it around somewhat to fit Goliath's tale.

24. Dialectic of perfection: In what is perfect, there is still a flaw; the perfection of the beginning must therefore be excelled by that of the end —by passing through a disorder. This constitutes a basic figure of dialectical fantasies of movement: A first, "lost" summit is regained in the ascent to a second, higher summit.

25. The motif appears not only in the European tradition but also in Hindu and Buddhist legends.

26. Epiphanius is conspicuous as one of the first priests with an obsession about Mary. See Theodor Reik's interpretation, "Der heilige Epiphanius verschreibt sich. (Eine Fehlleistung vor sechzehn Jahrhunderten.)," in Reik, *Der eigene und der fremde Gott. Zur Psychoanalyse der religiosen Entwicklung* (Frankfurt, 1975), pp. 37-56.

27. It is disturbing to only hint at this theme, which would be a book in itself. I hope to be able to write more comprehensively and convincingly on this topic in a later work.

28. This will displease many a dyed-in-the-wool structuralist who is intent on joining in the dance around the golden calf of "language, discourse, and signifier." The structuralist fetishism of the signifier *(signifiant)* is no more clever than the "logocentric" fetishism of the signified *(signifie).*

29. See Sartre, *L'Etre et le neant* (1943), p. 84: "Through the lie, consciousness affirms that it exists by its nature as *something hidden to the other,* it exploits the ontological duality of ego and alien ego for its own advantage. It is different with *mauvaise foi,* if, as we have said, it is a lie *to oneself.* . . . That is, the duality of deceiver and deceived does not exist here." The God of Cain would accordingly appear as the partner of a self-consciousness that can still deceive itself. Hence only God in genesis.

30. Nietzsche's neokynical "revaluing of all values" extends also to science by taking its objects more cheerfully "than they deserve."

31. Is not critical rationalism a la Popper an offshoot of satirical fallibilism, mistakenly taken to be respectable?

32. In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy,* Hegel remarks with regard to the "Kynical School": *"There is nothing much to say about it.* The kynics have little philosophical training and they did not manage to construct a system, a science." As in most cases, here Hegel hits the nail deftly on the head, so that we only have to put it on its feet.

33. Accordingly, "respectable critique," critique that is an instrument and a methodology of the "dominant" theories, is from the start a contradiction in terms. Critique serves subversion, not construction. For this reason, fun in using one's intelligence can be generally destroyed in a surefire way. as happens today, by educating students "critically" by force. Then, what could have been their chance appears to them as their enemy.

34. It seems that Marx found his kynical-existential critic in H. Heine —hence the frictions between them; hence also the curse "dog," which plays a striking role in their quarrels.

35. See Heine, *Vorrede zu Salon* / (1833), in Heine, *Sdmtliche Schriften,* vol. 3 (Munich, 1971), p. 10.

36. Heine, *Verschiedenartige Geschichtsauffassung* (1833), in *Sdmtliche Schriften,* vol. 3 (Munich, 1971), p. 21.

Chapter 9
The Secondary Cynicisms

Minima Amoralia: Confession, Joke, Crime

*/ am equipped with an armor that has been welded together
entirely out of mistakes.*

Pierre Reverdy

If the six cardinal cynicisms also set up the stages on which idealisms and realisms
as well as powers and oppositional powers wrestle with one another, the task is
not completed by a first description of them. In reality, what we have separated
for the sake of clarity is inextricably entangled. A precise consciousness of reality
can only be one that does not fail to note how war and power exist with sexuality
and medicine as well as with religion and knowledge in deep reciprocal inter-
penetrations and amalgams. But this is only another way of saying that life cannot
be grasped through morals and cannot be rationalized with moral explanations.
We therefore call someone a moralist who has doubts about the human ability to
act "morally." The main fields described here, on which the kynical-cynical ten-
sions inherent in the things themselves develop, mesh and, at the same time, repel
one another—in such a way that the values, norms, and views of each individual
area are caught up in increasingly entangled relations to those of the other areas.
Even the norms of the military and the state often become tangled and contradict
one another although these two realities, relatively speaking, understand one an-
other best of all. But what will happen when the norms of the military and the
state get mixed up and ensnared with those of science and religion, of sexuality
and medicine? Due to the complexity and contradictoriness of value systems, a
critical measure of cynicism must already become an accompanying shadow of
any morality.

Just as war brings about a great inversion of moral consciousness by substitut-
ing for Thou shalt not kill, the commandment Thou shalt kill as many as possible.
It also turns the other "regional" and sectoral ethics systematically on their heads

Olaf Gulbransson, *Child-like Question.* "Grandmother, tell me, after the war, will the Ten Commandments hold again?", 1918.

and makes the senseless sensible and the reasonable absurd. In order to save a lot of words, I want to refer the reader to Robert Altman's film on the Korean War, *M.A.S.H.* (1969), a masterpiece of contemporary cynical-satirical consciousness. The way in which, with a well thought out and hard-hitting joke technique, military, medical, religious, and sexual cynicism are played into each other raises this film to the status of a document on the history of ideas. In Hegel's words, it achieves what philosophy for a long time has not been able to achieve: It is "its time, grasped in (scenic) thoughts," a satirical meditation on the structures and procedures of the cynical joke, offensive and reflective, pointed and true. Indescribable, this blasphemous "Last Supper" satire, where the field doctors take leave (like the Apostles) of a colleague who is weary of life because, after experiencing an erection disorder, he fixes on the idea that he must be gay and cannot imagine how he can admit this to his three girlfriends. Also indescribable are the horrifying and horridly funny operation scenes, where the surgeons tell their brutal jokes over soldiers who have half bled to death, think of the nurses' tits, and imagine they are at a baseball game or even on the way home. In the ethos-confusion of the field hospital, something of the latent moral chaos in our so-called everyday reality becomes visible. Because here the various domains overlap in a brutally clear way, the one domain knocks the morality of the other out of its hands. It becomes almost a principle of survival there to hack up one's own moral substance so as not to be tempted to believe in some sort of "one's own cause." Survival as cynical understatement.

The plurality of pronounced, quasi-autonomous domains of reality and the

corresponding multitude of morals and moral roots are the reason moral everyday life lives on essentially in a moderate amorality and is normally satisfied when things remain by this moderation. This is simultaneously the reason why people with a fairly solid and just feeling for reality are against harshness in matters of punishment. They know that the punishment, in its strict moralism, can be more immoral than the actions of those who are to be punished. (Hence, even with Cicero: *summum ius, summa iniuria.*) Moral feeling, which self-critically mediates itself with life, means the art of moving through the twilight worlds and contradictions of autonomous and counterposed domains of values with the least amount of real evil and human damage. As Karl Markus Michel has shown in his praise of casuistry (i.e., the normative exegesis of individual "cases"), a halfway living morality tells us which sins we should commit in order to avoid graver ones; the moralist who does not judge as the fool of a superego is someone who, in distinguishing good and evil, also knows how to appreciate the "virtue of sin" (see *Kursbuch* No. 60 [1980]). Morality functions as the capacity to orient oneself toward the relatively better alternative within the universal motliness of given relations.

Only in this sense is the need for a "new" ethics and New Values, which today haunts the decaying superstructure, justified. No one should believe in New Values. Those who do can only become neoconservative shopkeepers. If we have already in large measure overstrained ourselves with the old high-cultural ethics, the "new" ethics can only make us look completely ridiculous. A new consciousness of values can only come out of a progressive making-conscious of the fact that (and why) for us there can be no "innocence" except when we suspend every kind of judgment. Wherever it is a matter of values, cynicism is always also in the picture. Anyone who radically defends *one* scale of values automatically becomes a cynic, expressly or not, on other scales of values. Whoever you happen to be, you always trample on some norms, and if you live in times that make it impossible to be naive about such trampling, then it can happen at any time that you also say it aloud.

The *confession* is for us, therefore, besides "theory," the most important form in which the truth is said. From Augustine to Francois Villon, from Rousseau to Freud, from Heine to current autobiographical literature, we hear decisive truths in the form of admission and confession. Moreover, those narrative communities that ultimately develop out of all depth-psychological practices constitute, in essence, confessional communities that have been morally neutralized through therapy. In motley reality, all talking about oneself necessarily ends up in the vicinity of a blackguard's confession or a criminal's testament, a sick report or a story of suffering, a witness's statement or a confession. That is the condition of authenticity in a situation of the *unavoidable* ethical overtaxing of oneself. Only bastards always have one more excuse, one more white vest to change into, one more spine, and one more good conscience. Those who really say what they are and

what they have done always and unavoidably, *nolens volens,* provide a rogue's novel, a certification of poverty, a story of a young scamp, an image of a fool a book of twists and turns.

What Erich Fromm calls his "ethics of being," if one views it properly, aims ultimately at such an upright bearing regarding one's own life, thinking, planning and failure. Without doubt, all that also belongs to "being," of which, according to certain value systems, we would have to be ashamed. An "ethics of being," therefore, if it (and because it) should be a conscious bearing, must lead to a point at which, for the sake of uprightness, all shame also has an end and at which we confess to everything we "are," right or wrong. The ethics of being seeks the truth in authenticity. It therefore demands and encourages confession and honest talking-about-oneself as the cardinal virtue per se. Before this ethics all other morals are suspended, even if the various sectoral ethics do not already contradict each other. Those who want the truth cannot simply build "theories" and see through masks; they must also create relations among people in which every confession becomes possible. Only when we have understanding for everything, give everything its due, place everything beyond good and evil, and, in the end, view everything in such a way that nothing human is foreign to us-only then will this ethics of being become possible because it puts an end to the hostility toward other ways of being. Being as such knows nothing and is nothing of which it would have to be ashamed, apart from conscious crookedness, dishonesty, and self-deceptions. Everything can be "forgiven," not merely what tradition calls "sins against the Holy Spirit" and what we today call a lack of authenticity (genuineness, honesty). That consciousness is inauthentic that consciously does not go "into itself because it still banks strategically on the advantage gained through lying.

An ethics of being would be the ethics of a society in which people help each other with love and criticism so that in every ego the will to truth can become stronger than the will to power and to come out on top. The ethics of being passes over the sphere of polemical pretense. Only pathological cynics and vengeful negativists admit their mistakes with the intention of committing them again. They even abuse the form of confession in order to struggle and to lie. And not always is seen in this the coquetry with which Zarah Leander, as the notorious Miss Jane, once sang, "I am so and I'll stay so /1 am so in my whole body / Yes sir!"

One will have noticed that the series of cardinal cynicisms represents simultaneously a list of the elementary satirical themes and most important genres ot *jokes.* They represent the main battlefields of elevations and humiliations, idealizations and realistic disillusionments. Here, vices and insults, ironies and mockeries have their largest playing fields. Here, the most frivolous sideswipes of hⁿ" guistic liberalism still have a morally regulative sense. The military with its

tensions between hero ethics and cowards' realism, between officers and subordinates, front and rear echelons, war and peace, command and obedience, is just as much an inexhaustible generator of soldiers'jokes as politics, with its ideologies, state actions, its great words and small deeds, which provides an infinite source of pranks and parodies. It is no different with sexuality, which, with the juxtaposition of the covered and the naked, the forbidden and the permitted, constitutes a vast field for jokes, obscenities, and comedies, regardless of whether it is flirtation, marriage, coitus, or bedroom battles. Likewise, the medical domain, with all its possibilities for sarcasm about health and sickness, madness and normality, the living and the dead. And all the more so with the entire domain of religion, which is more serviceable for swearing and joke telling than almost any other theme. For, wherever there is so much sacredness, a large profane shadow arises, and the more saints are honored, the more comical saints can be found among them. Finally, there is also the area of knowledge, which is crisscrossed by tensions between intelligence and stupidity, joke and citizens' duty, reason and madness, science and absurdity. All these "cardinal jokes" function in collective consciousness like a drainage system—regulating, balancing, equilibrating—as a universally accepted regulative mini-amoralism that cleverly assumes that it is healthy to poke fun at what exceeds our capacities to become outraged. For this reason, those who still struggle reject coarse jokes about their own cause. Only when the joke goes inward and one's own consciousness, admittedly from on high but not too ungraciously, inspects itself, does there arise a serenity that reveals not a kynical laughter, nor a cynical smile, but a humor that has ceased to struggle.

The most astounding profile of our cultural-moral situation is probably the insatiable craving of modern consciousness for *detective stories*. They belong likewise, I think, to the institutions of moral airing and ventilation in a culture that is doomed to live with an excessively high degree of mixing of norms, ambiguities, and contrary ethics. The genre as a whole, in relation to collective ethics, appears as an institutionalized medium for confession. Every detective story is a new opportunity for experimental amoralism. Through fiction it makes "happiness in crime" (d'Aurevilly) accessible to everybody. In the movements of thought in modern detective stories, from Poe to the present, those movements or thought in an analysis of cynicism are already anticipated in concentrated form, •jood crime stories, every one of them, work to reduce the gravity of the inividual crime. If the detective were the representative of enlightenment, the ʳ'rminal would be the representative of immorality and the victim would be the ʳᵉpresentative of morality. However, this constellation regularly becomes shaky hen the investigation into guilt reaches the point where the victims—from a dra-ᵃᵗ'c point of view, initally the "innocent" victims—themselves lose their inno-ᵉnce, are cast in a twilight, and are separated from the culprit who assaults them y only a microscopically thin juridical line. This line distinguishes between cyni-

cal, nonpunishable immoralisms and truly punishable offenses. In the most extreme case, it is the culprit who, almost like a provoked enlightener, merely executes on the victim the latter's own amorality. "The victim, not the murderer, is guilty." (Franz Werfel). These are the films at the end of which the inspector walks down the street, deep in thought, and makes a face as if he were sorry to have solved the case.

Already in the nineteenth century, Herman Melville, in his novel *Billy Budd* (published posthumously in 1924), relates such an inversion —in a tragic setting, of course. The hero, an upright, naive-sympathetic figure of light, is systematically provoked by a devilish magazine officer until he knocks the latter down in a speechless fit. The officer unfortunately falls on his head and dies with a sneer on his lips because he knows that the boy, who had to hit him because he had no other way of expressing himself, must now in turn, according to maritime law, be sentenced to death by the ship's command. The law appears here as an authority that can be used as an instrument of an absolutely evil will, as a weapon of the victim against the, in reality, "innocent" perpetrator.

The great crime novel constructions remain for a long time in an analogously critical moral schema. They draw their vividness from the moral structure of capitalist society. In them, individual crimes often appear either as rather naive, relatively harmless splinters of a universal social cynicism or as reflective exaggerations and magnifications of behaviors that, on a scale of averages, are not yet pursued as crimes. (Hence the two types of perpetrators: here, the relatively harmless perpetrators who have "stumbled into it"; there, the cynical tricksters, grand criminals, and monsters of crime.) The triumphant success of Brecht and Weill's *Threepenny Opera* is based on its ability to set a blackguards' cynicism into a transparent but not moralistic relation to the social whole. As in a Punch and Judy show for adults, the figures flaunt their amorality and their evil artfulness, sing songs about their own wickedness and about the still greater evil of the world, and use cynical sayings and ways of speaking to educate the public to a mode of expression in which it, too, not completely without pleasure, could speak the truth about itself.

Certain symptoms, it seems to me, indicate that enlightenment dramatization of criminality through theater, literature, and film has reached its limit. The creativity of the various criminal schemata gives the impression of exhaustion. The dissolution and thinking through of moral-amoral multivalences become increasingly too pretentious, too artificial, and not binding enough for today's mentalities. The trend hints at a more brutal way out of the tension, at an inclination to breaking loose, to massacre, to explosion, to catastrophe. Preambivalent forms of thinking win—everything or nothing, fantastic or shitty, good or bad, bomb or sugar, OK or not OK. In the place of subtle investigations of cases comes, more and more frequently, Fascist artistic release. Tense situations no longer call for mediation and defusion so much as for things to be blown to smithereens.

The School of Arbitrariness: Information Cynicism, the Press

Whoever tells the truth will be caught doing it, sooner or later.
                                                            Oscar Wilde

For the consciousness that informs itself in all directions, everything becomes problematic and inconsequential: a man and a woman; two illustrious scoundrels; three men in a boat; four fists for one hallelujah: five principal problems of the world economy; sex in the workplace; seven threats to peace; eight deadly sins of civilized humanity; nine symphonies with Karajan; ten black pawns in the North-South dialogue-it could just as well be the Ten Commandments with Charlton Heston, but here we don't have to worry about details.

I do not want to quote cliches about the notorious cynicism of journalists and press people, and not merely because it is still only a few individual reporters who go so far as to orchestrate with African mercenaries the most photogenic arrangement for an execution so as to be able to send home interesting film material, or who experience a conflict of conscience about whether, at a car race, to warn a driver about an accident up ahead or shoot photos when he crashes into the wrecked car. It would also be pointless to reflect on whether journalism is a better climate for cynicism than public-relations institutes, advertising agencies, commercial studios, film production circles, political propaganda offices, TV stations, or the studios of the pornographic press. The point is to find out why cynicism, almost as if it were a natural necessity, belongs to the professional risks and deformations of those whose job it is to produce pictures and information about "reality."

We have to speak of a twofold disinhibition that concerns the production of pictures and information in modern mass media-of the disinhibition of the portrayal vis-a-vis what is portrayed, as well as of the disinhibition of the currents of information in relation to the consciousnesses that absorb them.[1]

The first disinhibition is based on the systematic journalistic exploitation of others' catastrophes, in which there seems to be an unspoken contract of interests between public demand for sensations and journalistic provision of them. A considerable part of our press serves nothing other than the hunger for misadventure, which is the moral vitamin of our society. The use value of news is measured in large part by its stimulation value, which obviously can be raised considerably through its packaging. A journalism can hardly flourish completely without makeup. Insofar as it could be understood as simply the art of comprehensible portrayal, we could value it positively as the descendant of a rhetorical tradition for which the way something was brought to market was never a matter of indifference. However, the packaging of the usual cynical type rests on a twofold disingenuousness: With literary-aesthetic means, it dramatizes the innumerable world events, both large and small, and transfers them-without making the tran-

sition recognizable and with a more or less clear consciousness of deceiving —into fiction, in their form as well as their content. Second, the packaging lies with its sensationalizing style by continually restoring a long since superseded, morally primitive frame of reference in order to be able to present the sensations as something that fall outside these coordinates. Only a highly paid, corrupt mentality lets itself be used over a long period of time for such games. Modern primitive conservatism owes a great deal to a correspondingly primitive journalism that practices daily cynical restoration by acting as if every day could have its sensation and as if a form of consciousness had not long since arisen in our heads, precisely through its reporting, that has learned to accept scandal as a way of life and catastrophe as background noise: With a trumped-up, sentimental moralism, a world picture is continually concocted in which just such a sensationalism can exercise its seductive and stupefying effects.

The second disinhibition of the information industry is even more problematic. This industry floods the capacities of our consciousness in a downright anthropologically threatening way. One has to have been completely away from media civilization once for a long time —for months or years —in order to be so centered and concentrated when one returns that one can consciously observe in oneself the renewed distraction and deconcentration that occurs when one takes part in the modern information media. Seen psychohistorically, the urbanization and informatization of our consciousnesses in the media complex probably represent the aspect of modernity that cuts deepest into life. And only in such a world can the modern cynical syndrome — diffuse, omnipresent cynicism — unfold in the way we experience it today. We now regard it as normal that in magazines we find, almost like in an Old World theater, all regions close to one another: reports on mass starvation in the Third World next to advertisements for champagne, articles on environmental catastrophes beside a discussion of the most recent automobile production. Our minds are trained to scan and comprehend an encyclopedically broad scale of irrelevancies —in which the irrelevance of the single item comes not so much from itself but from its being arranged in the flood of information from the media. Without years blunting and training in elasticity, no human consciousness can cope with what is demanded of it in flicking through a single thick magazine. And without intensive practice, people, if they do not want to risk some form of mental disintegration, cannot bear this continual flickering of important and unimportant items, the waxing and waning of reports that in one moment demand the highest attentiveness and in the next are totally passe.

If we want to speak positively about the superfluity of information streams through our heads, we would have to praise them for the principle of boundless empiricism and the free "market." Indeed, we could go so far as to grant to the modern mass media one function in which they are intimately linked with philosophy: The limitless empiricism of the media imitates philosophy to a certain extent in that they adopt the latter's perspective on the totality of being —of course, not

of a totality in concepts but a totality in episodes. An enormous simultaneity stretches itself out in our informed consciousness: Here, some are eating; there, some are dying. Here, some are being tortured: there, famous lovers separate. Here, the "second car" is being discussed; there, a nationwide, catastrophic drought. Here, there are tips on tax write-offs according to section 7b; there, the economic theory of the Chicago boys. Here, thousands go wild at a rock concert; there, a dead woman lies undiscovered for years in her flat. Here, the Nobel prizes for chemistry, physics, and peace are awarded; there, only every second person knows the name of the president of the Federal Republic of Germany. Here, Siamese twins are successfully separated; there, a train with 2,000 passengers derails into a river. Here, a daughter is born to an actor couple, there, the cost estimates of a political experiment rise from half a million to two million (people). Such is life. As news, everything is at our disposal. What is foreground, what background; what important, what unimportant; what trend, what episode? Everything is ordered into a uniform line in which uniformity *{Gleichformigkeit)* also produces equivalence *{Gleichwertigkeii)* and indifference *(Gleichgiiltigkeit).*

Where does this unleashed drive for information come from? This addiction and this compulsion to live daily in the whirr of information and to tolerate the constant bombardment of our minds with unbelievable masses of indifferent-important, sensational-unimportant news?

It seems that since the beginning of the modern era our civilization has become entangled in a peculiarly contradictory relation to novelty, to the "novella," to the case study, to the "interesting event"—in a certain way as if it had lost control over its "hunger for experience" and its thirst for news *[Neu-gier,* literally, craving for the new; — Trans.]. Enlightenment wants to turn the universe increasingly into the epitome of news and information, and it achieves this with the aid of two complementary media, the encyclopedia and the newspaper. With the former, our civilization undertakes the attempt to span and organize the "circle of the world" and the entire cycle of knowledge. With the newspaper, it produces a daily shifting frame of the movement and transformation of reality in its eventfulness. The encyclopedia comprises the constants, the newspaper the variables, and both are similar in their capacity to convey a maximum of "information" with a minimum of structuring. Bourgeois culture has had to live with this problem from the start, and it is worth a quick look to see how to date it has come through unscathed. The person in a relatively closed culture, with an organic information horizon and a limited curiosity about the outside, remains largely unaffected by this problem. Not so, however, with European culture, particularly in its bourgeois period, which is characterized by its laboring, researching, traveling, empirically disposed, experience-hungry, and reality-thirsty individuals. Through centuries of the accumulation of knowledge, they bring their civilization onto a curiosity course that, especially in the nineteenth century and even more completely in the twentieth, has been transformed with the triumph of the radio and electronic me-

dia into an overpowering, strong current that washes us forward rather than being steered by us.

All this began seemingly quite innocently, namely, with the emergence of novelists, narrators of curiosities, and entertainment artists who, in the late Middle Ages, began to build up a novella-like "narrative news network" in which the accent increasingly shifted from morally exemplary, didactic stories to the anecdotal, remarkable, special, extraordinary, piquant, and picaresque, the strange and singular, the eventful and amusing, the terrifying and that which causes one to ponder. Perhaps this is the most fascinating process of all in our culture: how, in the course of the centuries, such "singular stories of events" gain increasing acceptance over the standard stories, the fixed motifs, and the commonplace—how the new sets itself off from the old and how the news from outside works on the still narrow, traditional consciousness. Through the history of our literature and discourse, therefore, even more than through the history of law, we can study the unfolding of "modern complexity." For it is not at all self-evident that our consciousness has to be able to absorb and order information about explosions in the outer layers of the sun, about failed harvests in Tierra del Fuego, about the way of life of the Hopi Indians, about the gynecological problems of a Scandinavian queen, about the Peking Opera Company, about the sociological structure of a village in Provence . . .

Since the age of the Renaissance (which Jakob Burckhardt poignantly described with the formula: "the discovery of the world and of people"), the heads of those who are "plugged into" the (learned, diplomatic, news) information network have been inflated with immense masses of news. An unleashed empiricism piles up mountains of assertions, reports, theories, descriptions, interpretations, symbolisms, and speculations on one another until, in the end, in the most elevated intellects of the age (one thinks of figures like Paracelsus, Rabelais, Cardano, "Faust"), "knowledge" grows profusely and boils over in chaotic ambiguity. We no longer remember this early period of a "baroque age of information" because the age of enlightenment, rationalism, and the "sciences" has cut us off from it.[2] What we today call enlightenment, by which we inevitably mean Cartesian rationalism, also refers, from the perspective of the history of information, to a necessary sanitary measure. It was the insertion of a filter against the flooding of the individual consciousness, which already had begun in the learned circles of the late Renaissance, with an infinity of equally important, equivalent, and indifferent pieces of "news" from the most diverse sources. Here, too, a situation regarding information had arisen in which individual consciousness was hopelessly exposed to news, pictures, texts. Rationalism is not only a *scientific* predisposition but, even more, a *hygienic* procedure for consciousness, namely, a method of no longer having to give everything its due. Now we separate the examined from the unexamined, the true from the false, the hearsay from the evidence of one's own eyes, the adopted from what one has thought out for oneself,

the statements that rest on the authority of tradition from those that rest on the authority of logic and observation, etc. The disburdening effect is initially enormous. The memory is devaluated; in its place, criticism and a defensive, selecting, testing kind of thinking are intensified. Now, one does not have to let everything pass through. Indeed, on the contrary, what is valid and has "scientific substance" is from now on only a tiny island of "truth" in the middle of an ocean of vague and false assertions —soon, they will be called idols, prejudices, and ideologies. Truth becomes like a solid, rather small fortress in which the critical thinker resides, and outside the fortress stupidity and the infinite, falsely formed and falsely informed consciousness rage.

But it took only one or two centuries before this new rationalism, which was initially so successful in its mental-hygienic procedures, ran into the same difficulties it wanted to overcome. For enlightenment research too —indeed, it all the more so —does not elude the problem of producing a world that is "much too large," of bringing forth a boundless empiricism, and of unleashing still more streams of reports consisting of truths and novelties. Rationalism copes with its own products just as ineffectively as the Renaissance literati did with the measureless confusion of traditions. From then on, moreover, a certain intellectual shrinking process can be observed within the strictly rationalist camp, so that the impression is given that the sanitary and defensive function of rationalism has won the upper hand over the productive, researching, clarifying function. In fact, with some so-called Critical Rationalists and so-called Analytical Philosophers, the suspicion is justified that they emphasize their rational methods so much because there is a lot they simply do not understand and so, with clever resentment, they cover up their lack of comprehension with methodological rigor. Here, however, a merely negative, filtering, defensive function, inherent in rationalism from the beginning, is revealed,

We today are not the first to notice this. Since the eighteenth century, whenever people with more sensitive understanding and with psychological, poetic, and emotional aptitudes spoke out, they expressed their concerns that the rationalism was too narow and the learned pedantry too narrow-minded. For them, too, the full breadth of human experience and culture in their time could not be grasped with the rationalist, hygienic instrumentarium alone.

I believe that the significance of *bourgeois art and literature* in the history of spirit can be best surveyed from this perspective. The work of art—the closed just as much as the open —placed its aesthetic order emphatically against the lexicographical chaos of the Encyclopedists and the journalistic chaos of the newspapers' empiricism. Here, something durable was erected against the increasingly broad flood of simultaneous inconsequences: formulated in a *language* that penetrated the ears and took hold of the heart; with *constructions* to which one could return (cultivation, identity, quotations - that is one complex); often presented in *ritualized forms* that maintain a highly significant durability in the

stream of inconsequential changes; built up around *characters* who seem pithy, coherent, and vitally interesting; in *plots* that unfold life before us, dramatized and intensified. With all this, bourgeois art possessed an enormous significance for the forming and strengthening of consciousness threatened by the waxing chaos of experience in developed bourgeois-capitalist society. Only art could still in any measure provide what neither theology nor rationalist philosophy were in a position to give: a view of the world as universe and the totality as cosmos.

With the end of the bourgeois age, however, this bourgeois, quasi-philosophical exercise of the arts is also extinguished. Already in the nineteenth century, art gets caught in a narcissistic circling of itself and in the ruts of the Artistic —whereby its illusion of representation increasingly fades.[3] Soon art no longer appears as the medium in which the rest of the world could be "conceptual-ized" and presented with a unique transparency, but itself becomes one more puzzle among others. More and more, it gives up its representational, ersatz theological, ersatz cosmological function and, in the end, stands before consciousness as a phenomenon that distinguishes itself from other "information" above all because in it, one does *not* know "what the whole is supposed to mean," that it is no longer something transparent, no longer functions as a clarifying medium and that it remains darker than the all-too-explicable rest of the world.

Only after the decline of the great function of representation in the arts was the time ripe for the ascent of the mass media to their hegemonic position with regard to information about the world as event and actuality. (Here, we do not want to get into a discussion about the interlude provided by the "life philosophies" and "grand theories" of the nineteenth century, halfway between art as religion and mass media consciousness; I refer the reader to the section on the Grand Inquisitor in "The Cabinet of Cynics," chapter 7.)

The mass media were the first to develop a capacity that no rationalist encyclopedia, no work of art, and no life philosophy could do to that extent. With immeasurable power of compilation, they steer toward that which grand philosophy could only dream about: the total synthesis—of course, at the absolute rock bottom of intelligence, in the form of total summation. They really do admit of a universal, chaotic empiricism; they can report on everything, touch on everything, record and place everything side by side.[4] In this they are even more than philosophy; they are the descendants of both the encyclopedia and the circus.

The inexhaustible "ordering" capacity of the mass media is rooted in their additive "style." Only because they have placed themselves at the very bottom of mental penetration can they give and say everything, and this, moreover, all at once. They have only a single intelligible element: the "And." With this "And," literally all things can be turned into neighbors. In this way, chains and neighborhoods arise that no rationalist and no aesthete would have allowed themselves to dream about: expenditure cuts-and-premieres-and-motorbike-world-championships-and-street-walkers' tax-and-coups d'etats . . . The media can provide every-

thing because they have given up without a trace the ambition of philosophy to also understand the given. They comprise everything because they comprehend nothing. They talk about everything and say nothing about anything. The media kitchen serves us daily a reality stew with innumerable ingredients, but it still tastes the same every day. At least there must have once been a time when, because the stew was still new, people were not yet fed up with it and stared fascinated at the flood of unleashed facticity. Thus, in 1929, Frank Thiess could declare with a half-justified pathos; "Journalism is the church of our time" *(Das Gesicht unserer Zeit. Briefe an Zeitgenossen,* 4th ed. [Stuttgart, 1929], p. 62).

The "And" is the morality of journalists. They have to swear, so to speak, a professional oath that when they report on something, they will not object to the placement of this thing and this report among other things and other reports with the use of an "And." One *thing* is *one* thing, and the medium permits no more. To produce connections between "things"—that, after all, would be the same as to disseminate ideology. Therefore, whoever produces connections gets chucked out. Whoever thinks has to get out. Whoever counts to three is a fantasizer. The media's empiricism tolerates only isolated reports, and this isolation is more effective than any censorship because it guarantees that what belongs together does not get together and can be found only with difficulty in people's minds. A journalist is someone who is forced by occupation to forget what the number is called that comes after one and two. Whoever still knows it is probably not a democrat—or is a cynic.

To look at this "And" critically should be worth the effort. Viewed in isolation, is it already "cynical" in some way? How can a logical particle be cynical? A man *and* a woman; knife *and* fork; pepper *and* salt. What could be objectionable about that? Let us try other combinations: Lady *and* whore; love thy neighbor *and* shoot him dead; starvation *and* caviar for breakfast. Here, the "And" seems to have been caught up between antagonisms that it renders by way of a sort of shortcut as neighbors so that the contrasts scream out at one another.

But what can the "And" do about it? It does not create the antagonisms; it simply couples the unequal pairs. In fact, in the media, the "And" does nothing other than place things next to one another, founding neighborhoods, coupling, contrasting — no more and no less. The "And" has the capacity of building a linear series or chain whose individual links touch solely through the logical coupler. The latter, in turn, says nothing about the essence of the elements it brings into a row. In this indifference of the "And" vis-a-vis the things it places beside one another lies the germ of a cynical development. For through the mere placing in a row and the external syntactic relation between everything, it produces a uniformity that does not do justice to the things that have been set in a row. The "And," therefore, does not remain a "pure" "And" but rather develops the tendency of eliding into an *Is-equal-to.* From this moment on, a cynical tendency can propagate itself. For when the "And" that can stand between everything also means an

Is-equal-to, everything becomes the same as everything else, and each is just as valid as the other. Out of the sameness of form of the "And" series comes, imperceptibly, a factual sameness of value and a subjective sameness of validity. Thus, when I go down the street in the morning and the newspapers scream at me from the mute vendor, I have to choose, for all practical purposes, only the favored indifference of the day. Is my choice for this murder or that rape, this earthquake or that kidnapping? Every day we must make renewed use of the natural right *not* to learn of millions of things. That I *must* exercise this right is guaranteed by the media, which, at the same time, guarantee that those millions of things are already on their way to me and that I only have to look at a headline for a split second and already another inconsequentiality has managed to leap into my consciousness. Once it has made that leap, it also induces me to make a protocol of a cynical indifference toward whatever has reached me as "news." I register, as a hyperinformed person, that I live in a newsworld that is a thousandfold too big and that I can only shrug my shoulders at most of it because my capacities for empathy, outrage, and thinking-through are tiny in comparison to that which offers itself and makes an appeal for my attention.

Without noticing it, we have worked our way up to a point at which it becomes possible to take up the best of the Marxist tradition and rethink it. Those who speak of uniformity, equivalence, and indifference have secretly already arrived on the soil of Marx's classical achievements in thinking and stand in the middle of its reflection on the puzzle of equivalence relations between goods and things. Should there be connections and transitions here? Has not Marx, in his commodity analysis, provided a fulminating and logically very subtle description of how a same-valuedness produces a sameness in validity (indifference) that precipitates in the relation of commodity and price? The best prep school for *Capital*— would it not consist in watching television several hours a day, looking through several newspapers and magazines the remaining hours, and continuously listening to the radio? For basically, we can read *Capital* as often as we like and we will never understand the decisive point if we do not learn it from our *own* experience and if we have not sucked it into our own structure of thinking and way of feeling: We live in a world that brings things into false equations, produces false samenesses of form and false samenesses of values (pseudoequivalences) between everything and everyone, and thereby also achieves an intellectual disintegration and indifference in which people lose the ability to distinguish correct from false, important from unimportant, productive from destructive — because they are used to taking the one for the other.

To live with pseudoequivalences, to think in pseudoequivalences: When you can do that, you are a full citizen in this cynical civilization, and when you are *conscious* of it, you have found the Archimedean point from which this civilization can be critically unhinged. Marx circled around this point in his powerful movements of thought on the critique of economy, in order to unfold the central

inequality of our form of economy —that between wage and labor value—from ever new angles. However, the simplest path to an understanding of *Capital* leads not via a reading of *Capital.* We do not have to say, along with the unhappy Althusser, *Lire le Capital,* but rather *Lire le Stern, Lire la Bild* newspaper, *Lire le Spiegel, Lire Brigitte.* There we can study the logic of pseudoequivalences much more clearly and much more openly. In the last instance, cynicism leads back to the amoral equating of different things. Those who do not see the cynicism evident when press reports on torture in South America are placed between perfume ads will also not perceive it in the theory of surplus-value, even if they have read it a hundred times.

Exchange Cynicism, or: The Hardships of Life

Who ever said life was fair?

Money is abstraction in action. To hell with value, business is business. For money, nothing matters. It is the medium in which the equating of what is different is realized in practical terms. Like nothing else, it has the power to bring different things to a common denominator. Just as newspaper print and television screens are indifferent to the contents they transmit, money preserves its unshakable indifference with respect to all goods for which it can be exchanged, no matter how different. The Roman emperor Vespasian sniffed a coin as if he suspected that it must stink and remarked ironically: *non olet.* Modern bourgeois economic sciences are basically nothing other than a higher-level *non olet.* In the song of praise to the free-market economy, modernized money, as capital, has found an appropriately modern form to declare its physical and moral odorlessness. For as long as nothing other than purely economic acts of exchange stood to debate, scarcely a single philosopher, still less an economist, thought of checking out the phenomenon of money with regard to its cynical valences. In its theory, the capitalist commodity economy unrelentingly confirms its good reputation. Is it not based on the best possible of all morals —the just price and the free contract? Wherever private wealth emerges, there is always someone around who assures us that he has "earned" it in the most moral way, by "his own sweat." Only out of resentment could anyone want to find fault with good businessmen.

Of course, the *non olet* party, in its intelligent representatives, has accepted responsibility for certain moral complications of the commodity and money economy. With regard to *spending* money, some dubious manifestations must be obvious even to the defender of the existing relations. Georg Simmel was probably the first to investigate explicitly the problem of cynicism that arises with money. For if money, as we say, has "buying power," how far can this buying power extend itself? If money confronts a commodity that has been produced for the market, it is naturally the price that determines whether the commodity changes hands

to the money possessor. This remains a purely economic calculation of value. Simmel then came to speak of exchange procedures in which money exchanges against "values" not known to count as commodities. *The Philosophy of Money* reveals the phenomenon of cynicism in the fact that it seems to be an inherent power of money to entangle in exchange deals goods that are not commodities as if they were such. It is the obvious venality of everything and everybody that, in capitalist society, instigates a gradual but continually deepening process of cynical corruption. "Here the more money becomes the sole center of interests, the more we see honor and conviction, talent and virtue, beauty and the health of the soul mobilized on its behalf, all the more will a mocking and frivolous mood arise regarding these higher goods of life, which are offered for sale for the same kind of value *(Wertquale)*[5] as goods on the weekly market. The concept of market price for values, which in their essence refuse every valuation except that in their own categories and ideals, is the completed objectification of what cynicism represents as subjective reflex" *(Philosophie des Geldes,* 4th ed. [Munich, 1912], p. 264).[6]

The cynical function of money reveals itself in its power to entangle higher values in dirty deals. One rightly hesitates to treat this under the concept of buying power. Wherever economic money value shows itself to be in a position to draw extra economic values —honor, virtue, beauty —says Simmel, into "business," there, in addition to the power of buying, a second power of money comes to the fore that is only analogous, not identical, with the first. It is the power of *seduction.* It exercises its power on those whose wishes, needs, and life plans have assumed the form of venalities — and, in capitalist culture, that is more or less everyone. Only in a situation of universal seduction (in which, moreover, those who were seduced have long regarded the word "corruption" as morally overstrained) can Simmel's "frivolous mood" regarding the higher goods of life (from now on, so-called higher goods of life) become a cultural climate. This climate is nothing other than what we described at the beginning as "universal diffuse cynicism."

Caricatures: "Everything has its price, particularly that which is priceless." The speech balloon rises out of the mouth of a big financier of the fin de siecle who dines in his private compartment, his coat unbuttoned, cigar in his hand, on his knees two naked ladies from good society. Counterpart: American billionaire on a tour of Europe as intimidated Europeans may have imagined him during the twenties: "Well, boys, I'll be blowed if, for a couple of dollars, we couldn't pack up the Old Continent into our suitcases. An extra check for what these deep German ecstatic thinkers call 'cooltoor.' And to top if off, we'll sign up the Pope as well." Such buy-up phrases caricature the breaking through of the material sphere of values into the "ideal" sphere of values. Capital irresistibly corrupts all values bound to the older forms of living —whether by buying them up as decorations and means of enjoyment, or by causing them to disappear as obstacles. (This constitutes the dialectic of "antiquities": Old stuff survives if it can be capitalized, and

it can be capitalized only by virtue of the dynamics of modernization and aging specific to capitalism.) Here capitalist society inevitably comes up against its fundamental cynical dynamic regarding values. It is in its nature to continually expand the zone of venalities. In this way, it produces not only an abundance of cynicisms but also, as moral encore to these, its own outrage against them. In accordance with its ideological optics, it can only conceive of money cynicism as a *market phenomenon.* Without effort, neomoralistic and neoconservative phraseologies find here their accusing examples. The capitalist form of economy is compatible with nothing quite so much as the humanistic lamentations about the corrupting effect of "almighty" money on ethics and customs. Money makes the world go round. Isn't that terrible?

The *non olet* party must, therefore, also concede a certain odor of disreputability. However, it does everything it can to trace cynicism in the use of money back to the seducibility of individuals. The flesh is weak where money is willing. Things can always be presented as if the disreputable actors were responsible for shady acts of exchange. Once their principal accountability is assured, it is not hard to concede certain "marginal moral problems"; these are, unfortunately, inherent to the market. Seduction in the sense of the "channeling of needs," indeed, belongs to its fundamental principles. Insofar as a cynical function of money is noticed, it remains strictly limited to the domain of exchange and consumption in which, as they say, secondary disreputabilities "cannot always be avoided." However, who would want to deny the advantages of the system? In order not to have to speak of cynicism, sociologists like to tinker with theories of modernization that jovially enter the "change of values" in the progress account.

If we listen closely, we cannot avoid noticing that Simmel has a particular form of venality of higher values in mind. Naturally, here we are talking about the honor, virtue, beauty, and spiritual welfare of "woman." Such things can also be "bought." Prostitution —in the narrower and broader sense —is the core of exchange cynicisms in which money, in its brutal indifference, also drags "higher-order" goods down to its level. In no other area does the cynical potency of money come so glaringly to the fore as there, where it bursts sheltered regions — feelings, love, self-esteem—and induces people to sell "themselves" to an alien interest. Wherever "hussies" carry their genitals to market, there capital is confronted from the outside with something about which deep inside it does not want to know anything.

In a certain respect it is a shame that Marx, in his famous commodity analysis, did not proceed from prostitution and its particular form of exchange. Such an approach would certainly have offered theoretical advantages. As head of the *olet* Party, he would have to be interested in every opportunity to demonstrate the cynicism of money. The woman as commodity would have been a truly irrefutable argument. But a book that intends to become the Bible of the worker's movement cannot begin with a theory of prostitution. Marx thus initially tries to explain

the secret of equivalent exchange with completely irreproachable products such as wheat and iron, coats and linen, silk and shoe polish. We follow his subtle analysis in its decisive steps: commodity and commodity; commodity and money; money and commodity; transition from money as money to money as capital. Here, in the middle of these idyllic, formal considerations of equivalence, those dull tensions reveal themselves for the first time that hint at a source of "contradiction" at the core of the entire system of exchange: All at once, money, by way of the detour through commodity and back to the money form, now becomes *more* money. Where does it come from? According to the assumptions, equal value is exchanged for equal value, and it augments itself this way! Is the economy a magical variety show? Marx, however, and this much is certain, has described nothing other than the basic form *(Grundform)* of all circuits of capital that, without exception, rest on the expectations of augmentation. The common people too know that money only begets money.[8] In expressions of *non olet* rhetoric it is even said that "money works." In observing this wondrous augmentation of capital on the commodity market, Marx behaves like a total spoilsport. He does not rest until he has explained the augmentation mechanism from first principles. To the present day, capitalist society has not forgiven him for this. But it does not do the moral, and even more, the intellectual integrity of a society any good when it has to live chronically against the truths that have long since been formulated about it without being allowed to accept them.

I think that Marx's reticence regarding the phenomenon of prostitution has a deeper ground. As a genuine theoretical fundamentalist, he is interested not so much in the easily detectable *olet* on the market as in the ideologically concealed *olet* in the sphere of labor. His power of thinking is stimulated not by the cynical stench of circulation but by the mode of production itself. The latter stimulates the theoretical organ in a way quite different from the former, which directs itself more to the senses. (For this reason, the socially critical modern arts have turned toward the colorfully corrupt manifestations of circulation cynicism.) Marx, by contrast, breaks into the innermost positions of the *non olet* party and smells on capital itself the unmistakable odor of surplus-value robbery. The contested theory of surplus value never would have been able to achieve the key strategic position it has won in the Marxist attack on the capitalist social order if it were merely one arbitrary economic formula among others. In fact, it constitutes not only an analytic description of the mechanism of capital augmentation but, at the same time—in a politically explosive way— a diagnosis of the moral relationship of the laboring class to the profiteering class.

In the exchange of labor power for wages, the harmony of the equivalence principle appears to be destroyed once and for all. At the innermost core of the capitalist paradise of equivalence, Marx finds the snake wrapped around the tree of knowledge, hissing: When you comprehend how one can systematically take more than one gives, you will become like capital and forget what good and evil

are. Since labor creates much more value than is given "back" to the laborers in the form of wages (the wage level always moves along the line of the historically *relative* existence minima), significant surpluses accumulate in the hands of the possessor of capital. The term "exploitation" poignantly designates the scandal of unfair advantage included in surplus-value production. It contains an epistemological peculiarity; namely, it is simultaneously an analytic *and* a moral-agitational expression. As such, it has played a significant role in the historical workers' movements. That the side of capital rejected this battle concept from the start because of its "subversive" undertones is self-evident. The ideological struggles in the conversations between "labor" and "capital" have, in fact, concentrated on the question of how the phenomena of entrepreneurial profit and exploitation (or rather, so-called exploitation) should be interpreted: oletistically or nonoletistically. Whereas the oletists talk of "problems" such as poverty, proletarian misery, oppression, and immiseration, nonoletists draw attention to economic "aggregate interests," reinvestments, social achievements of the economy, securing of jobs, and the like. Thus, modern nonoletism is a single great ideological effort at "decriminalizing surplus-value robbery."[9]

The Marxian thrust into the moral-economic complications of surplus value thus shifts the point of attack to the mode of production itself. In this way, it outdoes every possible verdict on cynical "outgrowths" of the use of money on the market. The real problem is not that, as one says, "women of honor" and "men of their word" can be made weak with money. Rather, the scandal begins where money as capital systematically presupposes for its functioning the weakness of men and women who have to carry themselves to market. This is the functional-immoral basis of the industrial exchange economy. It always reckons with the needy position of the weaker in its calculations. It erects its continual profit circuit on the existence of large groups that have scarcely any other choice than to like it or lump it. The capitalist economic order rests on the extortability of those who always live in actual or virtual exceptional circumstances, that is, of people who will go hungry tomorrow if they do not work today and who will get no work tomorrow if they do not accept what is exacted of them today.

Marx does not seek the cynicism of unequal exchange where it can be trivialized as an "outgrowth," but rather where, as principle, it bears the entire structure of production. After Marx, therefore, money in capitalism can never stop stinking of the laborers' misery. In comparison to this, turning the cultural superstructure into a brothel is only a secondary process. The "decadence" theories of the Left describe this pointedly. The great discovery of Marxian political economy, however, consists in the fact that it deciphers the moral-political element in the economic element; domination establishes itself through the wage exchange. Marx exposes how the "free labor contract" between the laborer and the entrepreneur includes elements of coercion, extortion, and exploitation. (It is funny that since the labor force has become syndicated, entrepreneurs complain that

they are really the ones being extorted.) In the interest of self-preservation, those who have nothing to offer but labor power subject themselves to the profit interest of the "other side." With this archrealistic expansion of the field of view, Marx's analysis raises itself from a merely positive theory of the economic domain of objects to a critical theory of society.

Whereas with regard to the circulation and consumption sphere, the cynicism of capital presents itself as a form of *seduction,* in the production sphere, it appears as a form of *rape.*[10] Just as money as a means of payment lures the higher values into prostitution, money as capital rapes labor power in the production of goods. In all these transactions, the demand for a real equivalence of the goods exchanged proves itself to be illusory. Acts of exchange that come about under the pressure of seduction and rape make futile every attempt to construct equal values between the goods. The capitalist system of exchange remains more a system of pressure than a value system. Extortion and rape —even in the noncoercive form of coercion in which contracts are accepted for lack of alternatives — write the real history of the economy.

With a realism unpardonable from a bourgeois perspective, Marx describes capitalism in a way that takes the ground from under the feet of all mere economic theories. One cannot speak seriously about labor if one is not prepared to speak about extortion, domination, polemic, and war. In investigating surplus-value productions, we find ourselves already in the domain of the Universal Polemic.[11] In order to take the polemical realism of his analysis to the limit, Marx could have even spoken of the *struggle value* of a commodity instead of its exchange value. This is revealed in particular, of course, with the commodity-producing commodities —the means of production in the narrower sense, which always also represent means of struggle and pressure for their possessor. Moreover, it is also shown with the strategic main goods of economies such as wheat, iron, etc. (one only has to think of the apparently harmless examples in the commodity analysis in volume 1 of *Capital),* to say nothing of the military weapon commodities and commodity weapons. Due to their functional relatedness, weapons and commodities are frequently interchangeable.

So, seduction and rape are supposed to be the two modi of capitalist cynicism? Circulation cynicism here, production cynicism there? Here the selling out of values; there the arbitrary pulping of the living time and labor power of the masses for the sake of blind accumulations? A moral overstraining is noticeable in these formulations, no matter how deftly aimed they may be. Whoever stresses the importance of encountering reality with as few illusions as possible may not cite it before an idealistic court even when it is amoral. The moral paradox of capitalism is, in addition, the peculiar tolerability of the "intolerable," comfort in devastation, and high life in permanent catastrophe. Capitalism has long since swallowed up its critics, especially since it can be certain of the failure of all alternatives initiated by revolutions. "Whenever it has to be pointed out to capitalism

that it cannot help the world, it in turn can point out that communism cannot even help itself." (Martin Walser, Biichner Prize speech, 1981).

Does what has been described here as capital cynicism in the last analysis mean nothing other than the final historical pupation of the experience that, since time immemorial, human life has been exposed to a lot of hardship and cruelties? Is the existence of human beings on a bloody globe at all subject to moral criteria? Does not this cynicism possibly present to us the most recent form of what the friendly pessimist, Sigmund Freud, called the *reality principle ?* And accordingly, would an explicitly cynical consciousness not be simply the form of "adulthood" complying with a modern world torn more than ever by power struggles, which undisheartedly hardens itself enough to cope with the given relations?

Those who speak of the hardships of life land almost automatically in a realm beyond moral and economic reason. What in the physical world is the law of gravity appears in the moral world as the law that the survival of societies always demands its sacrifices. Every survival demands to be paid for, and it exacts a price that no merely moral consciousness can approve of and no merely economic calculation can compute. The laboring and struggling groups in human society must experience the price of survival as such a bitter tribute to the reality principle because they pay it with *their own blood, sweat, and tears.* They scrape it together in the form of subjugations to "higher" forces and facticities; they bear it in the form of pains, accommodations, privations, and hardening self-limitations. They continually pay this price in living currency that cuts into the flesh. In the struggle for survival, calluses, wounds, and losses are well-known phenomena. Indeed, where a struggle is waged, the strugglers cannot help but make themselves, with their own existence, into a means and weapon of survival. The price of survival is always paid with life itself. Life sacrifices itself everywhere to the conditions of its preservation. Everywhere we look, it bends to the coercion to toil; in class societies, it subjugates itself to the given relations of domination and exploitation; in militarized societies, it hardens under the compulsion of armament and war. What common sense calls the hardships of life is deciphered by philosophical analysis as self-reification. In obedience to the reality principle, the living being internalizes the external harshness. Thus, it itself becomes the tool of tools and the weapon of weapons.

Those who are lucky enough, in a generally hard world, to live in a niche in which even self-dehardenings are possible must of necessity look with horror outside at the worlds of reification and objective cruelty. The perception of these develops most sensitively in those who stand between social worlds of varying degrees of hardness and who want to work their way out of the more strongly reified and alienated world into the milder zone. These people come ineluctably into conflict with a reality principle that requires greater self-hardenings from them than would be necessary in the mild zone. They get caught in a front against the versions of the reality principle that demand nothing but sacrifice and harden-

ing from individuals. That is the dialectic of privilege. The privileged person who does not become cynical must wish for a world in which the advantages of softening can be enjoyed by the greatest possible number of people. To bring the reality principle itself into movement is the deepest characteristic of progressivity. Those who know the *douceur de vivre* become witnesses against the necessity of the hardships in life that always reproduce the hardened ones anew. Thus, real conservatives can be recognized, above all, by the fact that they have a horror of the dehardening of people and their conditions of life. The neo conservatives of today fear that we could become too delicate for a nuclear war. They seek a "dialogue with the young," whom they suspect of being possibly already too flabby for the distribution brawls of tomorrow.

In the descent to the deepest layers of the reality principle, we discover compulsions to subjugate oneself, to labor, to exchange, and to arm that have imposed themselves on societies in various historical forms. Even exchange, which bourgeois thinking imagines as one of its models of freedom, is rooted more deeply in coercion than in freedom, and this since ages past. Long before we can properly speak of cynicism, we encounter in archaic, exogamous groups the "use" of women of childbearing age as a living "means of circulation." The principle of equivalence inserts itself in human cultural history in a way that shocks us: as childbearing means of production, women are traded "like cattle" for goods and cattle. However, this exchange does not so much serve the acquisition of herds and riches by the group that exchanges the women. Mostly, the establishment of kinship relations among the dispersed tribes retains its functional priority. Already in the first "economy," a "politics" of survival and pacification manifests itself. The transformation of women into exchange objects contains an embryonic *political* "economy" —if you like, a tribal foreign politics. Well before any value calculation, archaic groups in this way pay the price for the conditions of survival.

Modernity distinguishes itself from a macrohistorical perspective, among other things, by the way in which it becomes increasingly unclear how societies can sensibly scrape together the price of survival. The "hardships" they subject themselves to today in the interest of self-preservation in the meantime possess such a fatal inner dynamic that they work toward self-annihilation rather than toward security. How can that be? A degradation of the reality principle in the modern world has to be diagnosed. As yet, no new modus has been worked out for societies under today's conditions to sensibly secure an economy of survival. For not only is the era of the exchange of women long past, but the succeeding survival economy is also approaching an absolute limit. I call it the economy of the militaristic age. (This corresponds to the "class societies" of Marxist historiography, but the perspective is different.) This age is characterized by the fact that in it, by means of enormous amounts of surplus value from the labor of slaves, serfs, or wage laborers, or from taxes, military-aristocratic strata (or standing ar-

mies) are supported that, in the classical sense of the word "parasitic," represent nonlaboring groups; they have instead the task of securing the living space of their aggregate group. The last millennia belong to the interactions of competing military parasitisms. In this economy, a new price for survival is established: The survival of the whole is paid for with the subjugation of the masses under political-military structures and with the readiness of the peoples to read surplus-value robbery and tax extortion as the handwriting in which "harsh reality" communicates its intentions to them. The violence of wars translated itself into a realism that acknowledges the fact of war as a "higher power." The necessity of "thinking in terms of war," in the last millennia, constituted the indissoluble core of a tragic positivism. The latter knows, before any philosophy, that we do not primarily have to interpret or change the world, but *endure* it. War is the backbone of the conventional reality principle. With all its burdening consequences for the construction of social institutions, it represents the innermost, most bitter core of experience of life in class societies. During the age of feudalism and nation-states, a society that could not defend itself was doomed to perish or to be conquered. Without a military "protective blanket," none of the groups that have been powerful in history could have survived.

The direct transmission of surplus values to military-aristocratic strata ("ruling class") is characteristic of feudal societies. But nowhere to date has the modern world that developed out of the bourgeois revolution against feudalism been able to *decisively* overcome this transmission process. Everything it has achieved in this point exhausts itself in the transformation of direct surplus-value transmission into an indirect transmission. Instead of the direct exploitation of the people by a stratum of nobles and a soldiery maintained by them, we now have modern peoples' armies, run by professional soldiers and financed with the aid of taxes. But it is precisely here that the modern state, as bearer of society's military "protective blanket," increasingly conducts its task ad absurdum. For in the age of the total war, of universal "military service" and nuclear strategy, the military apparatuses of the major states are no longer protective shells for social life but develop day by day more clearly into the greatest source of danger for survival in any form. Because it has become possible to annihilate without a trace whole societies through blanket bombardments and the effacement of every difference between combatants and noncombatants (i.e., between troops and the "civilian" population), the modern states, which call themselves democratic or socialist, play with the lives of their populations in a way that not even the most brutal of feudal systems would have been able to do.

If, in fact, the transfer of surplus value from the working populations to the political military apparatus were the price we had to pay for our survival, then even today, in the last instance, it would still have to be scraped together with a gnashing of teeth. In reality, this does not work. Vast sums of surplus value are pumped into political-military structures that incessantly entangle themselves in

more and more risky mutual threatening. Today, therefore, working means, whether we like it or not, supporting a system that in the long run can by no means be the system of our survival. For a long time now we have not been paying a price for our survival but rather creating surplus value for a suicide machine. In this I see a disaster for our traditional concept of reality and rationality. With a thousand voices, this disaster is answered by the rampant irrationalism in the Western superstructure. Total social irrationality has reached a level that not only leaves the explanatory power of individual intellects behind but even conjures up the question whether the world's centers of action can at all still muster enough rational energy to overcome the irrationality that is active within them. Everything that today would have the power to loosen the knot is itself part of the knot. What today is called rationality is comprised down to its deepest layers by the fact that it reveals itself to be the form of thinking of the principle of self-preservation gone wild.

The fate of the last great attempt—publicly announced as rational-to break up the deep layers of social irrationality is cause for dismay. In the attempt to disentangle the contradictions of the capitalist system with the aid of the Marxist *dialectic,* the knot not only did not loosen but became twisted to the point of total absurdity (see the section on the Grand Inquisitor, chapter 7; and the second sections of chapters 8 and 11). In the wrangle of the great powers, the Marxist faction, which had undertaken to solve the problems of capitalism, has possibly even become the more hopeless part of the problem. If we look for the reasons for this, it becomes clear how fatefully and illusionistically the moralizing aspect of the surplus-value theory has outflanked its analytic aspect. For what this theory works out as the "objective perfidy" of the capitalist robbery of time from the laboring masses is, at the same time, a description of what happens in *all* societies with political-military superstructures, even if they call themselves socialist a thousand times. The channeling of surplus-value into armaments is more likely to flourish even better with the complete state ownership of productive property —as the Russian example shows.

Do not the Marxist theories of revolution rest on a tragic misinterpretation of the theory of surplus value? The latter, according to its strategic intent, was essentially the attempt to formulate an objective (i.e., quantitative) language in which a moral-social relation (exploitation) could be treated. It wants to develop the concept of exploitation in a computable way so as to show that this exploitation cannot go on forever. But the problem of exploitation basically *cannot* be located on the level of quantitative considerations. Who wants to "calculate" what people are prepared to put up with? There is no mathematics that can be used to calculate how long the thread of patience will hold out, and there also is no arithmetic of self-consciousness. For thousands of years, people in military and class societies

have been trained through toughening and education to allow surplus value to be squeezed out of them under the pressure of domination, and the people on the infinite expanses of today's Russian agrarian archipelagoes are scarcely any different from the slaves and fellahin of antiquity. This demands not so much a theory of surplus value as an analysis of "voluntary servitude." The problem of exploitation touches more on political psychology than on political economy. Resignation is stronger than revolution. What could be said about the damned of the Russian soil comes not from Lenin's quill but from Flaubert's: "Resignation is the worst of all virtues."

Since, therefore, the military reality principle, and with it the entire rationality of previous calculi for self-preservation, is on the point of dissolving before our eyes in a shocking way, we can ask whether the spiritual resources of our civilization will suffice to erect a new transmilitary and postindustrial reality principle. Atomic, biological, and chemical weapons, as well as the entire system of hostile artillery, are nothing more than outgrowths of a world-historical process of induration in which the imperial-polemical cultures have represented their essence technically. The overkill realism that lies at the bottom of today's interactions between the great powers can, in the long run, only be the reality principle of politicking psychopaths.[12] The age of military survival rationality, together with all its corollaries, is gradually moving toward a fatal end.

But is what is dying here not already pregnant with a new reason? If survival as a whole in the future in no way can be subsumed under the law of warring and exploitative, callous systems, does this not foreshadow a new reality principle? The world situation itself puts our survival in the hands of another *ratio.* We can no longer pay the price for survival within the framework of the polemical reality principle. The principle of self-preservation is on the point of a world-historical overthrow that leads all induration and armaments ad absurdum. That is the twilight of the idols of cynicism. The hour has come for hard subjects, hard facts, hard politics, and hard business. Cultures that have armed themselves with nuclear weapons are being caught in the feedback of their arming. Those who control the splitting of the atom can no longer afford *not* to control the splitting of humanity, the systematic self-hardening through making enemies. For this reason, I have designated the nuclear bomb as the Buddha machine of our civilization. It stands facing us imperturbably and sovereignly as a mute guarantor of negative illuminations. In it, the ontological maximum of our defensivity on a technical path has gained representation. It embodies the extreme to which the armed subjectivity of our rationality of induration was able to develop. If we do not learn from it to create soft facts by means of a new principle of reality and rationality, it could be that in the near future the hard facts will see to our downfall.

Notes

1. See on this also chapter 24, "Hey! Are we Alive?" as well as Excursus 9, "'Media Cynicism and Training in Arbitrariness."

2. Foucault has portrayed this age nicely in *Les mots et les choses* (1966; The order of things), chapter 2.

3. From this comes the accusation of "escapism" leveled against the nonrealistic arts.

4. That they nevertheless do not present "everything" is an effect of their still considerable selectivity. Lying through selection?

5. *Wertquale,* value of a definitive kind; here, of the economic kind, expressed in money and commodity.

6. Simmel designates as cynical only the domain of subjective, quasi-nihilistic, and frivolous attitudes. My work definitely wants to get away from such a subjective concept of cynicism. I try to understand cynicism as rooted in the real and relatively-universal social-intellectual process, so that being kynical or cynical does not come "out" of individuals-that would be psychologistic rubbish-but offers itself to individuals, grows in them, and develops itself *through* them, i.e., by means of their energies, but above and beyond them.

7. Here the statement holds that money stinks in principle and not only when it is a matter of Vespasian's latrine tax. What is intended is a fundamental critique of private property (of the means of luxury and production), a critique that consolidates itself from the unwieldy slogan Property Is Theft to the subtleties of the theory of surplus value.

8. For this reason, the lottery is the greatest moral achievement of capitalist society. It shows the untold numbers of people who obviously do not achieve anything through *labor* that *luck* is the only thing that promises justice.

9. In the twentieth century, Marxist oletism has obtained protection from psychoanalysis, which conceives of money and shit as symbolic equivalents and subsumes the money complex under the anal sphere. It has not reaped a harvest of gratitude for this aid, especially since the Russian Revolution when a Marxistically disguised non oletism emerged overnight that proclaims that exploitation in Russian is no longer exploitation. Socialist surplus value sails under the libidinous flag of construction lust.

10. When Baudrillard remarks that seduction is stronger than production, it sounds more surprising than it really is. In its mass-consumption phase, capitalism can move much more smoothly with the aid of seductions (i.e., pampering, stupefaction, brothelization of minds) than if it used naked force. Fascism was only a thunderstorm; seduction by the rapist. Consumerism is seduction by the pimp.

11. See chapter 11 (the second section). The systematic analysis of capital opens up three polemical fronts: capital against wage labor, competition among the individual capitals, and war between national capitals.

12. See chapter 5 (the final section), chapter 8 (the first section), and chapter 10 (the final section).

III. Logical Main Text

Chapter 10
Black Empiricism: Enlightenment as Organization of Polemical Knowledge

> *Perhaps truth is a woman who has reasons not to let her*
> *reasons be seen ?*
> > Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die frohliche Wissenschaft*

> *A spy in the right place replaces twenty thousand men at the*
> *front.* *Napoleon Bonaparte*

> *Agents must be intellectuals; in the decisive moment, they must*
> *not shrink from making the ultimate sacrifice.*
> > Directive No. 185796 of the Soviet intelligence service,
> > quoted from B. Newman, *Spione: Gestern, heute, morgen*
> > (Stuttgart, 1952)

Enlightenment? Good. Science? Research? Good, very good! But who enlightens about the enlightener? Who researches the research, who undertakes science about science? By posing such questions, are we demanding *more* enlightenment, science, research, or less, or of another type? Is it an appeal to philosophy? To metascience? To sound common sense? To morality? My plea is for a continuation of the phenomenological path. We ask, Who is interested in what? Which forms of knowledge or sciences arise through these interests? Who wants to know what? Why? What motivates his or her curiosity —and even assuming that *Homo sapiens* has a natural hunger for experience, desire to experiment, and an excess of curiosity, the question still remains, Why precisely this curiosity, this wanting to know? If, in ideology critique, it is always asked, Who is speaking? (in order to reduce the words to the speaker's social position), then, in the critique of enlightenment, we ask, Who is seeking? Who is researching? Who is struggling?

  Here a rather remarkable field of kinship relations emerges —a rare clan of curious persons, of trackers of knowledge and curiosities. From this perspective, the philosopher and the spy, the policeofficer and the journalist, the detective and the psychologist, the historian and the moralist present themselves as the children of the same, although quarreling, family. All appear like the various lines in the spectrum of enlightenment knowledge. Curiosity seeks the reasons for curiosity —it too seeks! - for enlightenment about enlightenment, and must therefore in turn let itself be interrogated as to the reasons for its own curiosity. Counterenlightenment inclinations? Reaction? Discontent within enlightenment? We want to know what the point is of this wanting to know. There is too much "knowl-

edge" about which we could wish, for the most diverse reasons, that we had not discovered it and had not gained "enlightenment" about it. All too many insights are fear inducing. If knowledge is power, then today, what was once eerie, inscrutable power, confronts us in the form of insights, transparency, obvious connections . If at one time enlightenment — in every sense of the word—lessened fear through the increase of knowledge, then today we have reached a point where enlightenment turns into what it undertook to hinder: the increase of fear. The uncanny that was supposed to be banned comes to the fore again out of the means used to protect against it.

Enlightenment develops in the form of a collective training in mistrust of epochal proportions. Rationalism and mistrust are related impulses, both bound tightly to the social dynamic of the rising bourgeoisie and the modern state. In the struggle of hostile and competing subjects and states for self-preservation and hegemony, a new form of realism bursts forth, a form that is driven by the fear of becoming deceived or overpowered. Everything that "appears" to us could be a deceptive maneuver of an overpowering, evil enemy. In his proof through doubt Descartes goes as far as the monstrous consideration that perhaps the entire world of appearance is only the work of a *genius malignus,* calculated to deceive us. The emergence of the enlightening, insightful perspective on reality cannot be comprehended without a thorough cooling down of the ego-world relation, without the deep penetration of suspicion and fear about self-preservation to the very roots of the modern will to know. An overpowering concern with certainty and an equally irresistible expectation to be deceived drive modern epistemology on to search at any price for absolute and unshakably secure sources of certainty-as if its primary concern were to overcome a downright world-annihilating doubt. Enlightenment possesses at its core a polemical realism that declares war on appearances: Only the *naked* truths, the *naked* facts should be regarded as valid. For the deceptions that the enlightener expects are considered artful but nevertheless transparent, exposable maneuvers. *Verum etfictum convertuntur.* The deceptions are transparent because they are self-made. What is self-evident in this world is fraud, threats, dangers-not openness, generosity, security. Truth is thus never to be had straight off but only through a second effort, as the product of critique that destroys what seemed before to be the case. Truth is not "discovered" innocently and without struggle, but rather is won in a toilsome victory over its predecessors, which are its concealment and antipode. The world bursts at the seams with problems, dangers, deceptions, and abysses as soon as the gaze of mistrusting investigation penetrates it. In the universe of modern knowledge, the backdrops, trapdoors, panoramas, deceptive images, dissembling gestures, hidden feelings, concealed motives, enveloped bodies predominate—all of these phenomena make "reality itself more inaccessible precisely because, with increasing complexity, it is composed of ambiguous, concocted, and contrived acts and signs. This forces us all the more to separate the obvious from the concealed.

I am deceived, therefore I am. And: I unmask deceptions, I myself deceive; therefore, I preserve myself. The Cartesian *cogito, ergo sum* can also be translated in this way.

We follow roughly the sequence of chapter 8, "The Cardinal Cynicisms," in treating the essential manifestations and dimensions of "enlightenment" as polemical empiricism in six steps: war and espionage; police and enlightenment in class struggle; sexuality and hostility toward self; medicine and suspecting the body; death and metaphysics; and natural science and weapon technology. That this polemical phenomenology makes a circle from the knowledge of war to the natural science of weaponry is no accident; we are preparing here the "Transcendental Polemic" of chapter 11. It describes how, behind a series of curiosities, compulsions to struggle are at work that guide "epistemic interests." In this phenomenology, we go through the characteristic tapping-in-the-dark movements of a "full modernity" that is still in search of itself and that is learning to doubt the productivity of Cartesian doubt and to mistrust the measurelessness of enlightenment mistrust.

Knowledge of War and Espionage

> *. . . Instead, in May 1869 he sent his confidant, Theo von Bernardi, to Madrid, a historian and national economist whom, under the mask of the scientist, Bismarck and Moltke had already often used for secret missions . . . .*
>
> *However, such [emissaries] required the greatest capacities in observation, knowledge of people, combination, dissimulation; indeed, a general cunning and artfulness . . .*
>
> Wilhelm J. C. E. Stieber
> *Spion des Kanzlers* (Munich, 1981)

For every warlord, the questions are, What is the enemy doing? What is he planning? What condition is he in? How can it be found out? Direct communication is not possible. To ask the enemy himself is ultimately impossible or at least pointless, since he will always simply give deceptive answers.

> For this reason, an outstanding intelligence service is required whose chief is an extraordinarily intelligent man but not necessarily a fighter. He should be able to think clearly in order to separate what is essential from the mass of the accidental that is always present where the problems of the opponent are concerned.[1]

In the case of enmity, the probability, indeed, the certainty, of being deceived is a priori a given. The enemy will pretend to be stronger or weaker than he really is so as to provoke or deter. He will take up illusory positions and suddenly attack

from an unexpected side. It is thus part of the logic of survival of each side in a dyad of opponents to see through and circumvent the deceptive maneuvers of the opponent through enlightenment in the sense of espionage and to outdo him with one's own exposures, counterdeceptions, and operative measures. Espionage in its most immediate form is set up as a science of survival. What the polemical realism of "enlightenment" wants can be seen most clearly through its example. Enlightenment as espionage is research on the enemy —the accumulation of knowledge about an object to which I am bound not through well-wishing, or through disinterested neutrality, but through a direct, hostile tension with a threatening effect. It nourishes a special kind of wanting-to-know and necessitates a series of peculiarly "indirect" methods of research: dissimulation, secrecy, infiltration of positions of trust, misuse of friendships. Espionage exercises the art of getting the other to talk, works through surveillance and searches, spies on others' intimate and private domains, seeks levers for extortion, looks for vulnerable points and the weak link in the opponent's chain. It banks on the readiness of individuals on the other side to betray it. All this belongs to the methodology of espionage. The spy, the "subject of knowledge," comes forth in a mask vis-a-vis a hostile reality, that is, the reality of the enemy.

We see at once how the approach of enlightenment as espionage to "truth" is distinct from that of science and even more so from that of philosophy. For the truths that the spy brings together are, from the start, subject to a passionate and special "interest." War of powers, war of consciousnesses. The migration of knowledge from subject A to subject B is already part of a struggle or an arming. Accordingly this amoral direction of research appeals openly to martial law and situation ethics, which says that whatever serves self-preservation is allowed. For this knowledge, the grand gesture of disinterestedness and contemplative objectivity, which science is particularly fond of, does not come into question. The spy seems to stand closer to the man of war than to the philosopher or the researcher. When he wants to know something, the disinterestedness he presents to the world is in *every* case only an illusion; the cases in which it is otherwise with researchers and philosophers remain to be examined.

But what attitude do the warrior and the philosopher assume toward the spy? Most of the time they have contemptfully chastised him; and with good reason as the spy's research work violates the ethical norms of the metier on both sides. On the one side, it is the generals who, in going about their "heroic, upright, manly, brave" business, never like having to deal with people who, because of their profession, do not really care about all that stuff. For the spy, another morality always holds, although he fights the same fight. The hero does not want the corrupt spy as a fellow fighter; that would make him feel soiled. Strategy and tactics, which are certainly also familiar with deceptions and ruses, belong ambivalently to the heroic-masculine side. The spy, by contrast, appears merely as cunning and sly in the low sense of these words. He *seduces;* he does not carry out

frontal breakthroughs. Napoleon was at least honest enough to confess that behind some of his great victories stood not only military genius but also the diplomatic art of deception of his master-spy, Karl Schulmeister (he contributed decidedly to the hoodwinking of the Austrians, which led to their defeats at Ulm and Austerlitz). It is said that General von Moltke, Bismarck's veteran fighter, did not like spies in general, and particularly not that Wilhelm Stieber, who from 1863 on was Bismarck's chief spy (his nickname was "Most Superior Security Superior"; *Oberster Sicherheits-Oberer* and who, under the cover of a news service, that is, a kind of press agency, built up the international network of the Prussian secret police. If one reads Stieber's recently published memoirs, one can estimate the significance of modern intelligence networks for "Realpolitik." Not only did Stieber repeatedly save Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm I from assassination, but in organizing the intelligence work on the Austrian army according to new principles, he laid the groundwork for the Prussian campaign against Austria in the "fraternal war" of 1866. It was also his duty to organize the intelligence prerequisites and the reconnaissance of the terrain on which the German campaign against France in 1870-71 was to take place. Nevertheless, the more distinctions he reaped through his extraordinarily successful activity, the more he was snubbed by the Prussian officer caste. The heroes could not bear that their naive (?) soldiers' ethos should have anything to do with the systematic amoralism of the chief spy.[2] The higher the office, the greater the compulsions to lie. One acted as if one were blind to Machiavelli's realism: "In war, fraud is laudable" *{Discorsi,* Book III, p. 40).

Scientists and philosophers who do not deign to look on the spy and the phenomenon of espionage, however, proceed in a way that is scarcely any different. For dirt sticks to the spy's hands, namely, an all-to-clear, all-too-special "small" interest. The high seekers of truth, by contrast, do everything to avoid resembling the spy; they would rather admit to no self-"interest" at all and not put themselves as tools at the disposal of any "aim." If the true philosopher had contempt even for the paid academic (see Schiller's lecture on the study of universal history), then the spy was really beneath all criticism. But how would it be if the spy proved to be in reality the shadow and obscure double of the enlightenment philosopher?

On the surface, of course, one can hardly think of an opposition greater than that between the spy, who, being quite "interest" oriented, commits himself to a particular party, nation, a mere fraction of humanity, and the investigator of truth, who looks only at the whole and claims to serve only the universal well-being of humanity, or even "pure truth" itself. Not until this century did science and philosophy of enlightenment become conscious of their own limited biases and narrower polemical and pragmatic commitments. In the age of class struggles at the end of the nineteenth century, the keepers of the seal of high knowledge had to feel the ground shake under their feet for the first time: A nasty suspicion

arose that they, the bourgeois scientists, might be agents of bourgeois class domination —deluded helpers of a political system who naively, idealistically uncovered "universal" truths that, when applied, however, served only, or for the main, the particular interests of the ruling classes. When in August 1914 the First World War "broke out," many professional "seekers of truth" dropped their masks. The wave of "ideas of 1914" tore them along and found them more than willing to consciously take over the role of "ideologue," of spiritual weaponsmith in the slaughter of the peoples. What was committed to paper as theory in the years 1914-18 remains unimaginable —the extent to which culturally chauvinistic nationalization of "pure truths" suddenly became possible.[3]

In subsequent decades, the sciences as a whole have largely lost their passion for truth. Moreover, they have to live under constant suspicion of being agents, a suspicion that was and is determined to unmask them as helpers of the powerful. Since then, associations that place the spy and the philosopher, the secret agent and the researcher side by side no longer seem so misguided. At the same time the military became detheorized, the consciousness of researchers began to become more pragmatic. Knowledge and interest were allowed to, indeed should, have something to do with each other, with the proviso that the interests take it on themselves to prove their legitimacy. Nietzsche had begun to undermine every will to know through the suspicion of the will to power. Students of the First World War cannot fail to notice the acknowledged role espionage and martial "enlightenment" played —cognitive warfare, psychological warfare, treason, propaganda. General Moshe Dayan finally declared both openheartedly and secretively after the Israeli-Arab Six-Day War that intelligence services had played just as important a role as the air force and tank divisions. The taboo seems to be broken. It is no different with countless scientists all over the world who, obviously without professional ethical scruples, work on weapon research and projects with the potential for annihilation. If science too has to earn its daily bread, then at least a part of it discovers the coming war as employer.[4]

Military enlightenment as provocation to philosophical enlightenment? What is the situation with the subjection of knowledge to interests and how universal, how particular, do these interests have to be? Is every gathering of "truths," knowledges, and insights bound to polemical, defensive-aggressive subjects (here states)? Certainly, espionage is the furthest from the illusion of "universal" interest. It therefore emphatically puts its knowledge under lock and key. Scientists, by contrast, are categorically publication crazy, and some metatheories even construct a fundamental connection between universality, truth, and the publicness of assertions. Whereas science boasts of universality, the secret services know that "knowledge" has value only as long as others do not know that they know it.

From this vantage point, a connection between the theory of knowledge and the intelligence service can be seen: Both devise postures of "objectivity" toward

the object of knowledge, postures that would remain incomprehensible without the influence of the hostile stance toward the object. Both are set on separating the obvious from the concealed. Both worry that error and delusion can lie in wait everywhere. In both, deception is a rival of suspicion. To have an enemy thus means to define an object of research (the converse of the sentence holds only with qualifications). War channels curiosity into a polemical course and equates what is unknown about the enemy with his dangerousness. To know him is half the job of holding him in check. Out of enmity, specialized domains of curiosity, areas of research and epistemic interests are built up: through the keyhole to the naked facts. Without making enemies and a corresponding concealment, there is no unmasking; without darkening, there is no naked truth. The striving of "enlightenment" to reveal the truth obeys a dialectical principle: Only through a specific, polemically forced concealment does a space "behind" arise—the "naked facts." What is naked is what was previously secret: the enemy, eavesdropped on in his privacy; the hidden power here, the conspiracy there; the naked women, the genitals made visible; the confessions of the amoral; the true intentions, the real motives, the hard statistics, the relentless standards. Those who enlighten do not rely on what "people say"; the naked facts will probably always be different from what "people say." The enemy is everywhere: *powers of nature* that are too powerful, too dangerous for us to rely on; *rivals* who, when it comes to the crunch, will show no mercy and who already envision us as corpses over whom they, determined to "survive," will walk if necessary; *traditions* that fog up our minds and cause us to "believe," but forbid us to know what "the case really is."

If secretiveness is a striking characteristic in the theory of knowledge of the intelligence services, then here a bifurcation of enlightenment into naive and reflected, gullible and artful directions becomes clear. The naive assume that they are a priori nobody's enemy and would let nothing force them to become someone's enemy. When enlighteners of this type "know something," they automatically think that everyone else should also be allowed to know it. More reflective forms of enlightenment (e.g., the earlier Freemasons) from the start understood themselves in this regard differently: They accepted the facts of the (even though always only relative) enmity and consciously reckoned with the compulsion to be secretive; they accepted the need to think in the logic of struggle during unavoidable conflicts. They knew that knowledge was to be treated as a weapon, preferably as a secret weapon. The other side does not have to know what we know. With the spy this becomes most striking: to gain knowledge without letting it be known that one knows. Hence also the often fascinating, Romanesque masquerades in espionage. Agents are trained to see without being seen, to recognize without being recognized. Stieber was not only a sly organizer but also an actor with talent— who even visited Karl Marx in his London exile and played, successfully, it seems—the comic role of a doctor who, due to his revolutionary convic-

tions, had had to flee Germany. Stieber noted smugly in his memoirs that Herr Marx did not waste a word inquiring about his revolutionary vicissitudes and the situation in Germany, but only asked Doctor Schmidt about a prescription for hemorrhoids.[5] Stieber also occasionally appeared at scenes of unrest as a landscape painter. He is even supposed to have turned up as a street vendor who carried devotional knickknacks and pornographic postcards on his cart—one of the two could always be used to lure soldiers into confidential conversations. We have also heard how Stieber's descendants do it today in the socialist Prussian secret police: In psychological Casanova courses, East German agents are said to study the art of curing the weekend neuroses of top Bonn secretaries so tenderly that even the East Berlin State Security Service profits from it.

Are we preaching to the converted? The German public must long since be well aware of the connections between science and espionage, at least since a model concept of the secret services has permeated into general consciousness. Those pieces of information collected by legal and illegal means, which are "at hand" "against" a person or a group, are called "intimations" *(Erkenntnis)*. Suspicion guides the storing up of "intimations"; it constitutes the prosecution procedure. What mistrust ferrets out lies at hand as "intimations" when the time comes to take "measures." This is no semantic lapse, no conceptual contingency. In a broader sense, this way of speaking about "intimations" is only one of several exposures of *the primary* connection between knowledge and (polemical) interest. The English language uses at this point the compact word "intelligence." "One understands by it particularly the gathering, assessment, and handing on of (publicly accessible or secret) pieces of information in special bureaus (agencies or services) for the purposes of the military and political leadership (general staff and government)."[6] The "naked facts" ferreted out by intelligence build the first solid layer of a cynical empiricism *(Empirie)*. They must be naked because they are supposed to help keep the object in its dangerous enmity in its sights. The subjects must thus dissemble in order to eavesdrop on the ("naked") objects. Dissimulation of the subject is the common denominator of espionage and modern philosophy.

Police and the Optics of Class Struggle

> *Certainly, my fair miss,*
> *the police want to know everything,*
> *especially secrets.*
>   Lessing, *Minna von Barnhelm*

This observation can easily be carried over to inner-political enmities, fears, and struggles. Enlightenment is written in good part "psychohistorically," as a history of political fear and its emotional and practical-strategic offspring: suspicion and

Olaf Gulbransson, *Russian Secret Police,* 1909.

mistrust, control and subversion, surveillance and secret, criminalization and outrage. Those who nurse suspicion can become collectors in a black (in the multiple senses: secret, polemical, anarchist, directed at the bad) empiricism. On the side of the wielders of power: rulers, administrators, police, stooges, denouncers; on the side of the critics of power: revolutionaries, rebels, deviants, "dissidents." Each of the two sides (properly speaking they are not mere "sides," as in a symmetrical relation, but *classes* superior and inferior, master and servant, ruler and oppressed; this asymmetry would play a significant role in a moral evaluation, but that is not our concern here) views the opponent through spectacles of suspicion. Organs of state and representatives of hegemonic powers watch out for subversive, oppositional, deviant forces in the domain of their subjects, fueled by the worry that a "conspiracy" could be formed that gives expression to a will to change. The oppositional powers, by contrast, keep a transcript of the immoralism of the ruling power, of its capricious acts, infringements of justice, its corruptness and decadence. In times of open polemical tension, a mutual curiosity to investigate can be spurred on by the element of enmity that inevitably (but more or less manifestly) clings to every domination. Both, although asymmetrically, are moved by a specific will to know that seeks to expose the political opponent in his nakedness.

We know that Louis XIV maintained a complicated network of palace espionage, that spies had to inform him of his courtiers' every move, every secret word, and every possible ulterior motive —especially about the activities of peers, the great men of the realm, that is, potential rivals and aspirants to the throne. Since then, the incumbents of power have infinitely extended and refined the system of surveillance of the other candidates and participants in power. Modern societies are permeated with organs of self-reconnaissance. In the time of Napoleon I, the police had stocked the Fouches Archive with files on all persons of actual or virtual political significance. The networks of the Russian secret police in the late nineteenth century traversed not only Russia itself but all countries in which Russian emigrants lived. The cross-examinations to which members of the public services are subjected have today become unquestioned routine. All power apparatuses derive the right to fight against subversion[7] from the principle of self-preservation. "Understandably enough, I am thinking of "internal security," of the protection of our state from subversion, by which I understand the undermining by enemies of the constitution."[8] Of course, the secret style of this inner-political reconnaissance contains a certain risk of paranoia that is fundamentally related to a disturbance in the reciprocal relation of seeing and being seen. Being seen without being able to see belongs to the standard motifs of delusion (persecution), just as conversely, seeing, without being seen, can slip into "seeing ghosts."[9]

Political self-reconnaissance in modern societies is not precisely covered by today's concept of the police and its circle of duties, but is approximately covered by that of the police in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (when the concept was conceived more broadly). This also has something to do with the change in the structure of social opposition. After the disappearance of feudal absolutism and the emergence of political parties, political opposition became partially decriminalized; from then on, not *every* opponent or rival had to be suspected of being a threat. With the emergence of the party system in the nineteenth century, a situation arose in which "constitutions" and parliaments offered competing power groups a stage for self-representation. With the public institutionalization of the "opposition" as counterpart to the government, a dimension of inner-social reconnaissance was more or less abolished. In this system, the opponent takes over a part of the work that otherwise would have to be done by informers (without the latter becoming unemployed, but the domain of secrecy is displaced). Now the opponent himself must say what he thinks, what he plans, what his means are, and how strong his following is. Parliamentary systems do, in fact, have the advantage of lessening political paranoia through daily contact with the opponent: integration through collaboration, trust through division of powers and transparency.[10] Of course, the lessening is only partial because, with a legal opposition, the problem of subversion is displaced: Political fear now hovers around the possibility that "changes in the system" could take place gradually under the

protection of legality or, worse still, in the underground, in the extraparliamentary sphere, outside the transparent official oppositions. For this reason, multiparty states also suffer, and not infrequently, from political paranoia (e.g., McCarthyism).

Black empiricism also knows the converse perspective. It keeps its eye on the bloody or crooked finger of the powerful. With a frequently justified suspicion, it inverts the principle of legitimation. It asks not only which principles, which right, is power based on, but also which rights the powerful infringe in their exercise of power. What is hidden behind the veil of legality?[11] What drives this polemical curiosity is a political trauma: to have been exposed without protection to the "legitimate" but brutal, painful, oppressive force and violence of others—the power of parents, disciplinary force, political (military, police, executive) force and violence, sexual violence and coercion. The trauma gives birth to a critical attitude. Its a priori: Never again be struck; never again swallow offenses without resisting; never again, if possible, allow a hegemonic power to do violence to us. This critical stance is allied at its origins with Jewish kynicism against the arrogance of the more powerful: They may boast, they may present themselves as the legitimate power, but at the core of their exercise of power is always "naked force," partly arrogant, partly hypocritical. This critique tends toward wanting to wring from the ruling powerful *confessions* of their violence and immorality. It comes down to an inversion of the police and espionage: antipolice, social espionage, reconnoitering the lion's den, exposure of the wolves in sheeps' clothing by the "humbled and insulted." Since the eighteenth century, there has been in Europe a strong current of such critical empiricism of power, especially in the form of a literary shadowing of the powerful. Early on, enlightenment began to denounce the excessive sexual proclivities of the despots, to attack the unscrupulousness of the courtiers and ministers who secure their careers by taking advantage of the wild pleasure principle of the rulers. Recall the cynical courtier, Marinelli, in Lessing's *Emilia Galotti,* the graphic masterpiece of German political psychology in the eighteenth century. Such a critique really provides "naked truth." It shows the powerful in their despicableness, artfulness, egocentricity, lust, addiction to extravagance, lack of conscience, unreasonableness, greed for profit, misanthropy, duplicity . . . Earlier, the religious, ascetic kynic cast this gaze on the excessively worldly life-style of their time; then the bourgeois intelligentsia on the morbid aristocracy; later, the morally aggressive part of the workers' movement on the "overstuffed imperialist bourgeoisie," and, most recently, anarchism and the antiauthoritarian movements on the state and the wielding of power per se. The dynamic of such research impulses can still be demonstrated in the modern social sciences. In them, the rulers and the ruled, the wielders of power and oppositional powers, observe each other in order to "rationally" objectify their political mistrust.

Sexuality: The Enemy is Within—Below

When the word "enlightenment" is encountered for the first time, it is as a rule an indecent word. At some time or other, someone gets the idea that we are now old enough to know about "it": Life comes from fucking. There you have it. One can approach the topic innocuously, starting with the bee and the flower, then with cat and tomcat, cow and bull, finally with daddy and mommy, who, in doing it, love each other quite tenderly. No one says a word about it before, no one says a word about it afterwards; in between a gap: enlightenment.

Wherever things are so intensely hidden, there, under the covers, it becomes burningly naked. "Naked" is one of those words that are still sexually unsettled; we think of the atmosphere in a brothel, of skin and secrets. A "naked fact" in some way always resembles an undressed woman. What is naked is rare, desired, and magnetic. It remains an exception, a Utopia. The old sexual economy rested on the game of concealing-revealing, refusing-enticing. It created a deficiency and in doing so produced something valuable. The history of sexual relations therefore probably consists for the lesser part in the history of "eroticism"; the larger part consists in the history of the war between the sexes. For this reason, too, only the smaller part of concealment arises from the erotic game; the greater part comes from coercion, struggle, and oppression. We cannot speak realistically of sexuality without treating animosities and polemics. In a society like ours, the attraction between the sexes seems to be linked from the start with power struggles between "one's own and the alien," [12] with duels over top and bottom, with exchanges of lust for security, with compromises between fear and surrender. In the meantime, the word "relationship" has become almost synonymous with conflict.

The black empiricism of sexuality observes its objects through the keyhole, lustful, fearful, apprehensive. Because erotic facts were totally screened off before thevso-called sexual revolution, like dangers and secrets, every access to them, whether one liked it or not, had a conflictual character. Anyone seeking sexual experience found it to be almost like a military adventure. It is no accident that our erotic tradition uses an abundance of martial metaphors — attack, defense, siege, storm, victory, subjugation, giving over the key to the fortress, etc. The sexual body was thus in no way a simple, straightforward matter. Because it was made so difficult for the sexual body to conceive of itself as an opportunity and as happiness, it became instead a curse and a calamity. The sexual drive, dammed up in its own skin, became an agonizing "thorn in the side." This is how the older sexual economy handed it down right up to the time of our puberty. In fact, puberty was actually the time when acquaintance with the misfortune of having this drive began. Here it helped little to become "enlightened," especially not according to the formula: the bad news in brief. To be enlightened meant to have become cognizant of the essentials of a new, inner enemy. To learn how to cope with its

"Guardian Angel," by Roland Topor. Made for laterna-magica sequence in Fellini's *Casanova*. Ink and colored pencils. Copyright © 1975 by Roland Topor. Reprinted by permission of Diogenes Verlag AG Zurich.
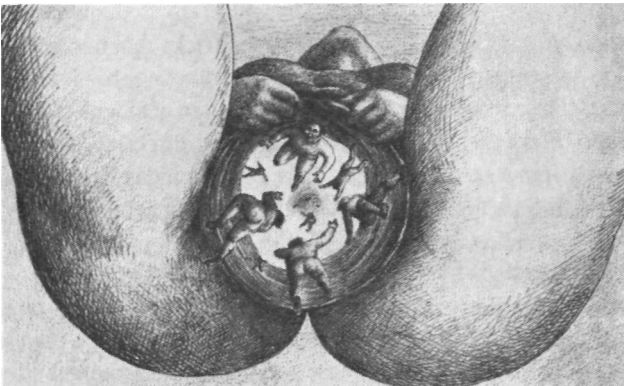
"Gefahrliche Vaginen" *(Dangerous Vaginas),* by Roland Topor. Copyright © 1975 by Roland Topor. Reprinted by permission of Diogenes Verlag AG Zurich.

urges was the strategically pressing task. Sexuality appeared from this perspective as a vast danger zone. It was on the sexual level that you could be overtaken by every possible misfortune: the catastrophe of unwanted pregnancies; the disgrace of inopportune seduction; the misery of repugnant infections that consumed you for the rest of your life; the humiliation through a premature, lonely drive without prospect; the risk of discovering a monster within oneself that harbored homosexual or perverse tendencies in its bowels; to say nothing of the degradation of prostitution, and so on and so on. These risks became threateningly present with the beginning of sexual maturity. It is understandable that the thought *of contraception* initially referred not to conception but to sexual contact, erotic ex-
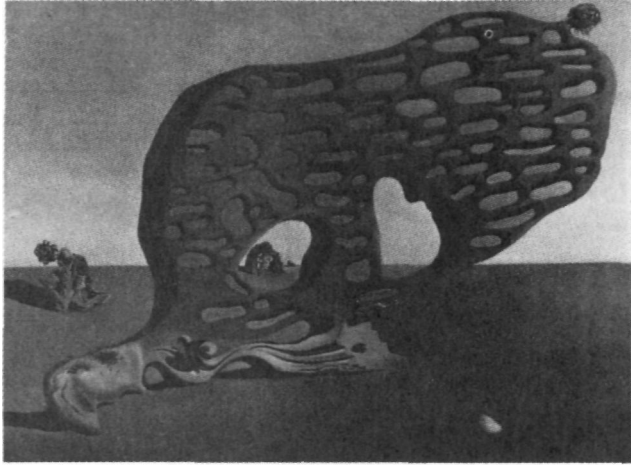
Salvador Dalf, *The Puzzle of Desire, Ma mere, ma mere, ma mere,* 1928.
(©S.P.A.D.E.M., Paris/V.A.G.A., New York, 1987.)

perience per se. Apart from a few liberal clever tricks that has been the Catholic position to the present day: contraception through abstinence. The inexperienced, it was thought, can scarcely ever be mature enough to deal with the sexual danger. Only marriage offers the necessary protection by directing sexuality, together with all its risks, into a secure channel. In it, the forbidden becomes allowed, disgrace becomes duty, sin necessity, the danger of conception the joy of parenthood, etc.

Whether this regime is fully past is not the question. Then as now, in our civilization sexuality is seen through a primarily pornographic visor—as if there were still something to spy out, to uncover, and to bring over to one's own side. Nakedness becomes the symbol for the highest good. Our image world crawls with naked bodies that build up flourishing worlds of stimuli for voyeurism and the brain sensuality of the capitalist wish society. The remote, but already visible, naked body remains in the world where we have "contact" without touching each other, the epitome of the really desirable. Because the commodity society can only function on the basis of disembodiment, its members are consumed by a hunger for images of the body, including one's own body image. Often one has the impression that the images are already among themselves, in search of a complementing counterimage. Only in marginal groups and in parts of the intelligentsia does a type of people still live who know that the images are different from themselves —a knowledge not infrequently paid for with disorders, depressions, and who-am-I neuroses.

Would the addiction to images and the black sexual empiricism not cease at one stroke as soon as the concealments were removed and the prevention of sex-

ual experience were stopped once and for all? Prohibition and concealment are really the driving forces of mechanisms of wishing that continually strive from the given to the other. Nudism and promiscuity therefore both have a subversive component that is worthy of investigation. They destroy the backdrops among which the wishes move when they make their appearance. Where everybody disarms from the start, unclothes, and becomes accessible, the wish-producing fantasies of prohibition, darkness, and remote goals vanish. Those who have experienced such evaporations sense, if not freedom, then nonetheless an increase in possibilities among which freedom can choose. By tracking down their wish functions they can recognize themselves in the role of the producer of their wishes. It is not the objects that are responsible for the desire directed at them but rather: Wishing paints the objects with its longings, as if the objects were not themselves but simultaneously the remote other that inflames the wishes.

Medicine and Suspecting the Body

Even the doctor —at least the doctor who is markedly influenced by modern natural scientific medicine-exercises an activity of a polemical type. What in positive terms is practiced as "healing therapy" appears from a pragmatic perspective as the *fight* against disease. Healing (making whole) and fighting are two aspects of the same thing.[13] Whereas for the voyeur the naked body is the image sought, today's doctor proceeds from the naked body in order to uncover the sources of danger in its *interior*. The analogies between modern medical diagnostics and the machinations of the secret services (to the point of linguistic details) are glaringly obvious. The doctor undertakes, so to speak, somatic espionage. The body is the bearer of secrets and is to be shadowed until so much is known about its inner states that "measures" can be decided on. As in secret diplomacy and espionage, in medicine, too, things are "probed" a lot, listened in on, and observed. Medical apparatuses are "infiltrated" into bodies like agents —probes, cameras, connecting pieces, catheters, lamps, and tubes. With auscultations, the medico eavesdrops on the body like the listener on the wall. Reflexes are noted, secret(ion)s drawn off, tensions measured, organ data counted. Quantitative statements, whether they be about production figures, troop strengths, urine data, or diabetes points are particularly appreciated because of their "matter-of-factness," here as there. For the doctor as well as the secret agent, there is often no other way than to rummage around in excrements and refuse[14] because the investigations, as a rule, must take place indirectly, without disturbing the normal running of the body or the overheard corporate entity. Only artful and often disreputable methods lead to important information about the inaccessible secret area. To be sure, more recent methods of spying on the interior of the body shrink back less and less from direct and aggressive advances. In places, the distinction between diagnostics and intervention becomes blurred: Foreign substances are infiltrated into the body.

Michael von Zichy (1827-1906).

For these reconnaissances and illuminations of the body, not only the natural in-
lets and outlets are used as canals; often the body is even directly cut open, the
safe broken into. And like spies, the medicos put great efforts into encoding their
information so that the "object" does not know what is known about it. Learned
bluff and intentional concealment for "therapeutic reasons" separate the doctor's
knowledge and the patient's consciousness. Coding and secrecy characterize the
medical secret service style. Both exercise formally analogous intelligence
practices.

   If, for diagnostic medicine, comparisons between medical and secret service
optics suggest themselves, then, with operative medicine, still more clearly, po-
lemical analogies are in place. Surgery shares the concept of "operation" with the
military; conversely, concepts such as foreign body, plague boil, festering sore,
poisoning, and decay connect the ideas of medicine and those of the police. The
fight against crime has long used medical jargon. Evil, against which medicine,
the police, and the army all fight, appears not only in the various manifestations
of sickness, criminality, and opposition to war; these manifestations can also eas-
ily change from one form to the other. That also brings the "theoretical" polemical
disciplines —military sciences, intelligence services, police, medicine[15] —into a

partly thematic proximity, but even more so into a methodological proximity. They all follow the logic of suspicion, which promotes the development of strategies for theoretical and practical knowledge of the enemy. Modern medicine, too, even more than all its predecessors, is black empiricism. It is based on the a priori principle that between the subject and its sickness, only enmity can exist. To "help" the subject means, accordingly, to help it to a victory over the aggressor sickness. From this optics of hostility, sickness necessarily appears as an invasion, and it is self-evident that the only way to deal with it is polemically, defensively, aggressively—not integratedly or comprehensively. The idea that sickness —like any hostility —could also be an original and, in a certain sense, "true" self-expression of the "subject" is already excluded by modern medicine's approach. In practice, the idea is ridiculed that sickness, at a given time, can be a necessary and authentic relation of an individual to itself and an expression of its existence. Sickness must be thought of as the other and the alien, and this polemically split-off element is treated by medicine in an isolating and objectifying way, no differently from the way the organs of Internal Security treat suspects, no differently from the way the moral prohibitive authority treats sex drives.

The medicine of a latently paranoid society thinks of the body basically as a subversion risk. In it, the danger of sickness ticks like a time bomb; the body is suspected as the future murderer of the person living in it. My body is my assassin. If in the age of the first asepsis, bacteria and viruses were blown up into symbols for everything that stimulated evil-up to the point where politicians identified their opponents as bacteria (for which Fascist rhetoric no less than Communist rhetoric provides examples: swarms of Jewish, foreign, revisionist, anarchist, decomposing bacteria)—then today, in the age of the second asepsis, not only the "foreign body" (germ) but even the body itself is conceived of as a suspected enemy. Because it *could* become sick, it is the problem child of Internal Security. This suspicion creates the "medicinal" body, that is, the body as battlefield of preventive and operative medicine. According to some statistics, most surgical interventions consist in preventive and "security measure" operations, measures born of mistrust, whose superfluity is veiled by the relief that the worst fears have not been confirmed. One can call this procedure methodical pessimism. The secret of its *procedere* lies in painting a bogeyman on the wall with one hand while operating with the other hand. As with all security systems, such preventive measures exist because of the growth of the readiness to be afraid. If it can be said that societies manifest their feelings toward life in their medicine, then our society reveals that life is too dangerous to live but still also too precious to throw away. Between preciousness and danger, one seeks the safe middle ground. The more life secures itself, the more it becomes virtualized, pushed away, and abandoned. It becomes a mere potential that does not want to engage or realize itself because engagement cannot happen without risk. Preventive, operative, prosthetic, and sedative medicine hold up a mirror to our society: In

it, in a modernized form but archaically motivated, the existential fears of a civilization appear in which, openly or secretly, everyone has to fear a violent death.

With the fading of Christian European metaphysics,[16] these fears have organized themselves anew. Existence becomes plastered with ideologies of security and sanitation. How police thinking and hygiene gracefully elide into one another is expressed by Doctor Herold, the chief of the Federal Criminal Bureau, in a disturbing way when he sees the police of the future confronted with *"social sanitary"* tasks[17] The idea of sanitation means nothing other than prevention and prophylaxis. Behind the enlightened will to know, we thus still discover, to be sure in artfully unfettered forms, archaic fears of contact and wishes to eliminate. They give the polemical disciplines the energy, knowledge, and practices to accumulate for the goal striven for. Scientific prognosis and polemical prevention are essentially related. Obstruction, avoidance, defusing, and suppression are the pragmatic a priori principles of the polemical preventive sciences. In them, enlightenment has organized itself completely as combative knowledge.

To articulate this implies simultaneously the task of describing an integrating philosophy, namely, to go behind the polemical approach of these disciplines and "sciences" and to uncover the logic of hostility. In this return, the fears and efforts of the will, which precede hostility and prevention, emerge: They are the blind motives of self-preservation.

Nothingness and the Metaphysics of Naked Self-preservation

All primary hostilities can be derived from the splitting off of death from life. The inability of any modern, postmetaphysical, scientized thinking to conceive of any death as one's *own* leads to two obviously ubiquitous attitudes: Death does not belong to life but confronts it irreconcilably, or even more, disconnectedly, as an absolute annihilation; and because there is no death of which I can say it is "mine," thinking clings to the only death that remains thinkable as an objective death: that of the other. "Live and let die," as the title of a James Bond story says. The a priori principle of self-preservation —agents' cynicism enjoys the freedom of being able to say it openly —functions according to this rule of thumb. Because the modern subject, for psychological, ideological, and metaphysical reasons, cannot think its "own death" (against this, Heidegger's philosophy seems *(scheini)* only an impotent corrective), it becomes subsumed under the law to avoid it with literally *every* means available. In a certain respect, all means are means for not dying. As a logical consequence a total instrumentalism [18] pervades everything that is not the ego, which wants to survive. It provides the technical-logical basis for the modern rulers' cynicism of "instrumental reason" (Horkheimer). If the subject is a priori that which cannot die, it transforms the world rigorously into the domain of its struggles for survival. What hinders me is my enemy; whoever is my enemy must be hindered from hindering me. In its ultimate consequence,

this will to prevention implies the willingness to annihilate the other or "the Other." With the alternative "them or us," the choice falls automatically on the death of the others since it, in the case of conflict, is the sensible, necessary, and sufficient condition of my survival.

The incapacity to die subjects the world, in its visible as well as invisible areas, to a radical transformation. If, on the one hand, it becomes the theater of human struggles for self-preservation, on the other, it is flattened simultaneously into the materialist backdrop behind which only so-called nothingness can be surmised. What in earlier times constituted the knowledge of priests, shamans, and mystics —insights and views into the beyond, into the sphere of spirits, angels, demons, powers, gods —now becomes impossible, if only because we can no longer assume a stance to which such a beyond full of beings could be allotted.[19] Only an ego that can "die" and go beyond itself and that experiences itself as a Being within a metaphysically expanded cosmos would be able to communicate with the "spaces" and events beyond death, beyond the empirical body and every-day understanding. However, the modern self-preserving ego, which produces itself through mistrust, criticism, rationality, and control (through universality), marks itself off from the start from such individual metaphysical "intercourse," from spiritual flights, night wanderings, and journeys beyond limits. The ego without metaphysics, to be sure, presents itself as cognitively modest by demonstrating (a la Kant) that and why we cannot know of such things. However, precisely through this, it slides into an explosive self-expansion because, from this denial onward, it stands absolutely alone vis-a-vis the universe. Only with this does the modern self-preserving and knowing ego achieve world dimensions. Ego and world come to have the same extensionality; where a world is asserted, the ego that has it as its object must be designated.

Only with the subject without metaphysics, and not earlier, can Nietzsche's diagnosis of a "will to power" be confirmed. For the subject of modern knowledge is explicitly megalomaniac—not in the sense of muddleheaded or exaggerated self-esteem, but in the sense of a collective, ontologically real plan of (technical) praxis. What the modern natural sciences and technologies have brought forth are palpable realizations of ideas that earlier were possible only as magic, metaphysical, or occult ideas: flights into space, deep-sea diving, world travel, telecommunications, robots, thinking machines, rejuvenation magic, genetics, psychopharmacology, nuclear energy, reception of radiation from outer space. All these are precipitates of an earlier metaphysics, which, however, becomes real only through its retreat and through the elimination of its most important psychic thread: the consciousness of "my" mortality, which ineluctably links me with the hidden and the beyond. In modern thinking, however, death is not the door to somewhere else, but a pure rupture, a node between being and nothingness, not between the here and the beyond. Since the disintegration of death, everything that is non-ego must become potentially the reality of an enemy. The polemical

disciplines are called on to keep it in check. Since human beings in no respect could still think of themselves as partners of a beyond, their gaze has dimmed to the given world. Gloomily, humanity had to take every kind of *(given)* meaning from itself; thus the nihilistic shock when one realizes that there is no *given* meaning but that we *manipulate* it and then "consume" it ourselves. When things have gone so far, the ultimate wisdom in the middle of meaninglessness remains only blind self-preservation.

But with this the problem is not solved. To the extent that conventional images of transcendence were extinguished, hundreds of *substitute transcendences* spring out of the ground —in the middle of the process of enlightenment—and these were by no means in every case, as Gundolf once said of the spiritualists, merely "fishing in the beyond." The concept of substitute transcendence could ground a phenomenology of modernity and order numerous phenomena into perplexing connections: the *unconscious* as an individual and collective immanent beyond; *history* as the sphere of dark origins, of the bright future, the lost wealth, or the promised fullness, as that which gives, and simultaneously takes, our identity; *space travel* as infantile technological and military psychedelics; *eroticism* as the maze where egos seek the you into which they could "go over"; *drugs* as explosions of the banal continuum and journeys into interior-outer worlds; the *arts* as the disciplines in which subjects can creatively climb into something they are "not yet," into shapes, fantasies, and expressions: *competitive sports* as an attempt to overcome the daily limits of bodily movement and performance; *tourism* as expansion of the world of experience.

However, besides such transformations of transcendence —we could say, into an extended humanity-there is also in modernity a thoroughgoing revenge of the occult. Precisely because no room was left in the world concept of enlightenment for the beyond (i.e., there are no enigmas, only "problems," no mysteries, only "falsely formulated questions"), consciousness, which thus was left in the lurch, sought a thousand secret paths into dark regions. Respectable occultism is a typical product of enlightenment, and its representatives are parodies of scientists who, against the skeptical world, try to defend the beyond, which for them is a certainty, and this they do by means of precisely that scientific skepticism that only acknowledges facts. Of course, that cannot work well, but that it is attempted at all shows at least a perhaps strongly justified urge. Occultism is the too often humorless and cramped drastic defense of metaphysical sensibilities against the exactions of a materialist backdrop ontology and of a repression of one's own "death" in favor of a falsely enlarged and falsely modest ego: black metaphysics, border crossings between the psychotic and spiritual galaxies, black empiricism beyond empiricism. We can predict that these neomythical tendencies will increase. They are, in reality, the things that challenge what is traditionally called enlightenment. Enlightenment must be enlightened about what enlightenment dishes up. Catastrophic processes of forgetting follow enlightenment's trium-

phant "learning processes" like a shadow.   Because enlightenment, with its ir-
resistable antimetaphysical thrust, has led to a polemical splitting off of death in
the first person, it would today be apposite for it to go into the school of the oppo-
nent and to learn what is at stake when living beings experience themselves to
be in alliance with "powers" that go about their affairs beyond the narrow and
simultaneously puffed-up world-subjugating ego.

Espionage against Nature, Artillery Logic, Political Metallurgy

> *With metals we are at an advantage in Europe and our metallic*
> *arts have risen to the highest level. We were the first to trans-*
> *form iron into steel and copper into brass; we invented the gal-*
> *vanization of iron and discovered many other useful sciences,*
> *so that our artisans have become teachers to the whole world*
> *in noble chemistry and mining.*
>
> Gottfred Wilhelm Leibniz, *Exhortation to the German People*
> *to Better Exercise Their Understanding and Their Language*

If in numerous sciences, or better, knowledge disciplines, a latent or open decla-
ration of enmity on the part of the knower against the objects has been uncovered,
the concepts of conventional epistemology—*subject, object*—appear in another
light. Subject means "the subjugated one"; in other languages, therefore, it is the
homonym of *Untertan (sujet,* subject); in rhetoric, the subject is the topic; in po-
lice jargon, the suspect. If this "subject" now rises to the nub of modern epistemol-
ogies, that is not merely a word displacement. What is hidden behind it is nothing
short of a revolution. Subjectivity strives for sovereignty, and to do this the sub-
jugated wants to subjugate whatever it can subjugate. We observe a complete
inversion—also with regard to suspicion: The suspect (subject) becomes the one
who suspects. The subjugated one subjugates the surrounding world and makes
it into the epitome of "data," of given facts for itself—given to whom? The com-
manding subject. The data give themselves into its hands without its having to
give itself back to them. Out of the subjugated arises the ruler over what is given.

   This inversion (in latent form probably relatively old, in manifest form a mod-
ern phenomenon) constitutes the a priori of the transcendental polemic. The war
of the subjects who make the other, opponent or thing, into an object, produces
for the first time the foil for the polemical objectivity of the "scientific," enlighten-
ment disciplines. The thing that stands *against (gegen) me* becomes an object
(Gegenstand). Every object-if we take it in itself or *an sich-* is a potential rebel,
a counterego or a means in the struggle against me, just as the ego only became
the subject in a philosophical sense, a maker of "subjects," as rebel against what
subjugates it. In the will to knowledge, interests are always astir that do not ex-
haust themselves in knowledge as such but serve the subjects as weapons against

the objects. "Objective knowledge" in this sense possesses the character of a *weapon.* (The concept "weapon" appears to me to have precedence over the concept "tool"; therefore, a mere critique of instrumental reason does not sufficiently grasp the domain of the polemical.)

Is all this supposed to hold also for the model sciences of modern rationality, the natural sciences? Can the assertion be defended that these sciences viewed nature, their object, primarily in a hostile or a hostilely neutral way? Precisely in the natural sciences, and all the more in biological and physical foundational research, a relatively "peaceful" self-understanding seems then as now to predominate. But the appearance is deceiving. To be sure, all sciences also possess a contemplative wing, but they do not fly with it. What calls the sciences to life are the imperatives of praxis —of competition in production, politics, war. One of the philosophical achievements of ecology is the demonstration that, no matter how they understand themselves, the modern natural sciences, as the fundamental sciences of industrial technology, are caught in a process that, if one weighs the facts, can only be described as a war of exploitation and annihilation of advanced civilization against the biosphere. By the way, it was a German-Jewish philosopher, Theodor Lessing (whose influence—if one can speak of such a thing—was felt in the time of the Weimar Republic), who laid the foundations for an ecological-philosophical critique of predatory Western industry.[21] The tracks of the superpredator can be followed up into the heights of epistemology — the gaze of the plunderer who roams through organic as well as inorganic nature. Today, we see more and more how futile all attempts are to once again contemplatively neutralize the results of research into nature, as if they were won in order to prop up a "natural scientific world *picture."* The political, economic, and military entanglements of the natural sciences are all too clear. They were and are the reconnoitering patrol our civilization, desirous of domination, sent out into the previously closed worlds of natural truths. What these patrols and pioneers of natural research have investigated and invented yields in toto something that threatens the existence of the object of research, nature, as a whole.

Am I speaking merely metaphorically here? Not at all. I want to exemplify the polemical character of natural scientific empiricism with the "object," earth, to which all natural sciences, right up to astronomy, refer, and which remains at the heart of our "interest in nature." It can be relatively easily demonstrated that and how the "earth sciences" are motivated by polemical-practical interests. The activities of observing the surface of the earth as well as the spying out of the earth's interior serve, in many cases, political and military interests. For this reason, geography belongs more to the domain of strategy and rulers' science, geology more to the domain of weapon technology.

The first accumulation of geographic knowledge probably takes place in the heads of monarchs, conquerors, and generals — although they do not have to be the ones who carry out the empirical "research." As political subjects of power,

however, they have a prime interest in collecting the geographic knowledge of others —whether they be hunters, seafarers, merchants, or philosophers. The unity of merchant, investigator, and spy has long been well known. Right at the beginning of the European tradition of geography, we find a thought-provoking episode. It is said of the Milesian philosopher of nature, Anaximander, that around the sixth century (shortly before the beginning of the Ionian uprising and before the entry of Greece into the decisive years of the Persian Wars), he constructed a "philosophical sculpture" (Nebel): "an iron tablet . . . in which the entire globe, all seas and rivers were engraved" (Herodotus). The tyrant of Miletus took this model of the earth with him on a visit to the Spartans during which he wanted to request armed help from the Peloponnesian city-state. "Only the map could make the Spartans at that time comprehend the magnitude and the means of the Persian Empire. They learned to see themselves from the outside, became aware of their tiny size and distanced themselves from the war" (Gerhard Nebel, *Die Geburt der Philosophic* [Stuttgart, 1967], pp. 37-38). Even then, in the first moment, the spark jumped from geography to strategic calculation, and if on this occasion the philosopher maintains an advantage in knowledge over the strategist, this relation will soon be reversed. Geographic knowledge will be found with kings and generals, and hardly at all with philosophers. The travel diaries of the monarchs of the Middle Ages show how at that time the "political ego" of a system, its ruler, had to be literally "in search of his subjects." In precentralized times, not all scattered corners of a political realm looked onto an unambiguously localized sovereign center of power ("capital," residence, absolutist castle a la the Escorial, the Louvre, Versailles). As the most mobile component of the system, the sovereign had to assert his power through his presence in various places. Only with the later construction of systems of representation with administrative offices and police forces does a stationary central power become possible that makes the political realm, the state's "territory," transparent for the view and measures of administration.[22] Military-political interest founds a point of focus, around which geographic, ethnographic, and demographic details can unite into a store of knowledge. Modern geography, finally, under the star of imperialism (discovery, conquest, missionary intervention, colonization, world trade) draws general interest from within the educational strata of capitalist states to itself. It continues the old strategic perspective, only now all the more intensively. For the rest, it is often only the accident of war that founds a new epistemic interest. For lack of usable preliminary work of their own, the U.S. Marines, before the landing of American troops in North Africa, had to ask the civilian population for photos, holiday films, and other information about the characteristics of the coast at the probable landing site.[23] In the age of strategic satellites and military information systems, such archaic methods have become superfluous.

The principal means of spying out the earth's interior is *metallurgy.* In the "womb of the earth" rest the metals, often doubly inaccessible due to the depth

of their location and complicated bonding to rock. Behind the discovery, process-
ing, and distribution of these difficult materials, a truly enormous pressure of in-
terest must be present, as well as an exceptional use value that makes the effort
of processing them worthwhile. Metallurgy is the technically central science in
the history of war. With bronze and iron, the hot phase of cultural evolution as
well as the escalation of the art of weapons and war begins. With the advent of
the age of artillery finally, the latter reaches its ultimate sophistication. All deci-
sive types of modern weaponry and military systems—tank divisions, air force,
rocket bases, naval systems, etc.—are basically nothing more than the gigantic
outgrowths of the way in which artillery makes use of metals and explosives:
swimming, flying, motorized artillery systems.[24] A political theory of the knowl-
edge of metals can demonstrate the original connection between this central earth
science and polemics. Knowledge of nature and of war are connected through a
pragmatic chain of interests. Before iron weapons can be raised against an enemy,
a campaign against the earth's crust must have taken place, a many-pronged,
laborious, and dangerous process. Deposits must be dug up, the ore broken up
into pieces; the masses are transported to the smelting plant where they are trans-
formed through the violence of fire into liquid; the substances are separated and
are hardened with new amalgams, mixtures, and coolings; they are heated red-hot
once more, forged, formed, polished. Only the will to war is able to subject the
natural substances to such transformations with such violence as the technology
of smelting and forging requires. In metallurgy, a humanity thinking of war opens
up its grand offensive against the given structures of matter. What it inflicts on
the metals is nothing other than an anticipation of what it will inflict on the enemy
with the metals. If the "Iron Age" (Ovid) begins with the emergence of war—
represented in the sword and the spear, the metallic weapons of striking and
stabbing—the epoch before the emergence of *gunpowder* weapons is the Golden
Age of war. With artillery, something like a second discovery of fire takes place
in civilization. However, it is not the Promethean sunfire of long ago but a mod-
ern volcanic underworld fire. Corresponding roughly to the invention of artillery
is the development of the political centralized power and the spatial perspective
at the beginning of modern times. For the first time, it allows the opponent to be
"mastered" from a distance. Herein lies its functional relation to modern adminis-
tration and surveillance. The shell corresponds to the sovereign's gaze and to the
decisions of a centralized administration.[25]

   Since the Industrial Revolution, which emanated from the English mining dis-
tricts, the metallization of society again assumes new dimensions. At the same
time, the spying out of the earth's interior proceeds with intermittent leaps. From
now on, gigantic mines arise that eat into the blackest depths of the planet's
bowels. Miners become the ghostly army of industrial civilization—the exploited
exploiters. The laborers of the smelteries were advanced to the elite division of
the capitalist attack against the earth's "miserly" crust. In the end, the modern

Illuminating artillery, in Felix Auerbach, *Die Physik im Kriege,* 3rd ed. (Jena, 1916).

form of economy capitalizes all mineral deposits, and with millions of breaches, borings, and extractions, it pushes on with the mineralogical war against the earth's crust in order to burn the extracted deposits or to work them into tools and weapon systems. Every day, industrial civilizations decide on death sentences against millions upon millions of living beings and millions of tons of substances. In these decisions, the predatory relation of domination of Western cultures to the earth is perfected.

We must take care not to view today's nuclear technology as exceptional. It is, in reality, nothing more than the consistent continuation of the mineralogical-metallurgical attack on the given structures of matter, the purest intensification of polemical theory. Here, there is *no* discontinuity. The transcendental-polemical framework of our technology comprises the bronze sword just as much as the neutron bomb. At most, the transition from the metal age to the nuclear age signifies a new technological stage within the polemical structure and a new order of magnitude in the offensive means of self-preservation. In order to keep up their war against the Other, modern competition egos and research egos conquered the previously most secret structural forms and energy sources of matter. In fact, in going beyond the metallurgical explosion of natural substances (ore, etc.), they even overstepped the threshold of the natural structures of substances

in order to reach the point where the previously most puzzling cosmic powers were bound. But also on the nuclear level, the mistreatment of matter merely anticipates the mistreatment of the enemy. It projects the pressure for enmity between the rival societies (by way of the "relatively autonomous" intermediate step of natural science) onto radioactive matter. What we are prepared to inflict on the enemy if need be sets the standard for which tools of annihilation are to be wrung from nature. What we have intended for the enemy—large-scale blanket annihilation through incineration, contamination, atomization—has to be first inflicted on the weapon. It is basically only our *message* to our opponents; it communicates what we intend to do to them. The weapon is therefore the enemy's proxy in one's own arsenal. Those who *forge* weapons make it clear to their enemies that they will treat them just as mercilessly as they treat the club, the anvil, the grenade, and the warhead. The weapon is already the maltreated opponent; it is the *thing-for-you.* Those who arm are already at war. This war takes place de facto continually in intervals of hot and cold phases, the latter being misnamed peace. Seen in the polemical cycle, peace means a period of arming, displacement of hostilities onto the metals; war means, accordingly, the implementation and consumption of arms products, the realization of the weapons on the opponent.

On the highest level of polemical technology, our process of enlightenment reaches the point where it takes leave of a thousand-year-old dualistic tradition of metaphysics: The antagonism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* in the cybernetic age becomes altogether invalid. To the extent that the *res* (substance) that thinks actually can be represented and produced as machine, the antagonism toward the *res* that exists in space (extension) disappears. In the meantime, there are modern artillery systems that in strategic jargon are called "intelligent munitions" or "smart missiles," that is, rockets that perform classic thought functions (perception, decision making) in flight and behave "subjectively" toward the enemy target. The existence of these systems signifies a metaphysical statutory declaration of our civilization: We have, in fact, become in large part subjects who think of themselves as "thinking things," and it is these thinking things that exchange blows in modern warfare. The difference between the hero and his weapon disappears; the megalomaniac self-preservation egos of our culture have externalized their own being as weapon. If, in the end, the self-sacrificing kamikaze pilots take over the function of the guiding system *(res cogitans) in persona,* then, in the case of the most advanced weapons of the present day, this heroic subjectivity has become an electronic subjectivity: The manned dive-bomber still presupposed a pilot who consciously took his inevitable death upon himself and demonstrated an ability to die peculiarly reminiscent of that quality described in ancient philosophy. In intelligent munition, this human factor is fully eliminated. A further degeneration of metaphysics to paranoia has come about; "live and let die" is accordingly not only the secret agent's motto but also the principle of modern warfare based on artillery and its extensions. With the "thinking missile," we

reach the final station of the modern *displacement of the subject*[16] because what is called subject in modern times is, in fact, that self-preservation ego that withdraws step by step from the living, to the summit of paranoia. Withdrawal, distancing, self-displacement are the driving forces of this kind of subjectivity. Artillery is only one of its manifestations and, especially in the form of electronic, intelligent, atomic munition, is the ultimate outgrowth of self-assertion and world domination from a distance. The modern long-range ego wants to preserve itself without recognizing itself in its own weapon. It must thus be split off from it as far as possible. Intelligent munition satisfies this need. Since its invention, the schizoid structure (the subject in the form of the state and the polemical self-preservation ego) approaches its consummation. The next great war foresees only schizophrenics and machines as combatants. Decisive homunculi in the state, ghostly split administrators of destructive forces, will press the decisive buttons "if it has to be," and heroic robots as well as thinking hell-machines will fall on each other—the *experimentum mundi* is at an end; humanity was a mistake. Enlightenment can only summarize: Humanity cannot be enlightened because *it itself* was the false premise of enlightenment. Humanity does not come up to scratch. It carries within itself the obscuring principle of dissimulation (displacement), and where its ego appears there cannot shine what was promised by all enlightenments: the light of reason.

Notes

1. Bernard Law Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, *Weltgeschichte der Schlachten und Kriegsziige,* vol. 1 (Munich, 1975), p. 17. See also his sketch of the tactics warriors use to feel each other out: "A commander must be able to think himself into his adversary or at least try to do that. For this reason, during the war against Hitler, I always had a photo of my adversary in my command vehicle. In the desert and then again in Normandy, Rommel was my adversary. I repeatedly studied his face and tried to imagine how he would react to the movements I wanted to implement. Strangely enough, this proved to be useful."

2. This rather offended Stieber. His memoirs contain a good share of self-justification, but also a dose of revenge against the enemies who had "branded [his] character as 'illiberal, inhuman, even cynical' "; Stieber, *Spion des Kanzlers,* p. 176.

3. See, by contrast, the lucid polemic of Julien Benda in *La trahison des clercs* (1927).

4. Here I refrain from making the empirically important differentiations of the various concepts and functions of "intelligence," "research," "science," "philosophy," "critique." Our reflections belong not to the sociology of intelligence but to the forefront of a (polemical) epistemology.

5. Stieber gathered incriminating evidence that played a role in the Cologne Communist trail.

6. Max Gunzenhauser, *Geschichte des geheimen Nachrichtendienstes* (Frankfurt, 1968), p. 11.

7. They thereby continually anticipate the free-style ethics of the emergency situation ("Them or us"); for them, the war is never over.

8. Giinther Nollau, *Wie sicker ist die Bundesrepublikl* (Munich, 1976), p. 9.

9. Stieber mentions several times that Bismarck said to him, "You're seeing ghosts!"

10. From this comes the following hypothesis: Multiparty systems will be less endangered by paranoia than one-party systems.

11. "Law as Ideology"; critique finds cores of violence in some phenomena that are generally per-

ceived under the fiction of freedom: in the wage-labor contract, in the marriage contract, in the "social contract" as such.

12. This is the prominent theme in the writings of the long-lost pupil of Freud, Otto Gross, finally accessible again in the collection entitled *Von geschlechtlicher Not zur sozialen Katastrophe,* with an appendix by Franz Jung, ed. Kurt Kreiler (Frankfurt, 1980), pp. 27ff. See also in particular, *Uber Konflikt und Beziehung,* pp. 7Iff.

13. Of course, a medical typology could be imagined that evaluates these aspects very differently: integrative medicine, which does *not* treat the sickness as the patient's enemy; combative medicine, which behaves toward the sickness exclusively as an adversary.

14. Does a *wastepaper basket* not play a role at the beginning of the Dreyfus affair?

15. Attali maintains, in continuing Foucault's analyses, that a good deal of the more recent social history of medicine, particularly of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is dominated not by doctors but by the police. A large part of the suffering is not healed but interned; see *L'Ordre cannibale* (Paris, 1979).

16. In the nihilism discussion, which likes to employ a strident vocabulary, one speaks rather of the "collapse," the "fall" of metaphysics. I think these pictures are not apposite, at least not any longer. Metaphysical systems do not "fall," but fade, seep away, stagnate, become boring, old hat, unimportant, and improbable.

17. On this point there are fascinating preliminary reflections by the chief of police during the Wilhelminian period, Wilhelm Stieber. He already consciously practiced police town-hygiene, e.g., in prostitution and dealing in stolen goods.

18. See on this point the discussions of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor and Heidegger's Anyone, chapter 7.

19. The choice can only be between two types of beyond: an empty one (nihilism) and a full one (spiritualism).

20. And repeatedly, when we think that we have become wise in a new way, through "new experiences", we discover that kynical wisdom was there before us. *Diogenes Laertius* (vol. VI, p. 7) reports of the first kynic, Antisthenes: "To the question as to what one had to learn before all else he replied: To guard against *unlearning.*

21. Theodor Lessing, *Untergang derErde am Geist (Europa und Asien)* (Hannover, 1924), a summary of two of his earlier books: *Europa und Asien* (1914) and *Die verfluchte Kultur* (1921). See in particular chapter 11, "Der sterbende Pan." That this book, significant in spite of all its peculiarities, was so crudely misunderstood as "irrationalist" is a part of the traumatic history of Lessing's influence.

22. Suggestions for a history of the political eye can be found in Erik Grawert-May, *Zur Geschichte von Polizei- und Liebeskunst. Versuch einer anderen Geschichte des Auges* (Tubingen, 1980).

23. This anecdote belongs to the prehistory of the emergence of the modern U.S. secret service.

24. *De re metallica* (Georg Agricola the Elder, 1556) would be a good title for a social history and a history of science of the metallic civilizations *(res publico:* the state; *res metallica:* war).

25. Many stimulating connections between ballistics, the theory of administration, diplomacy, the courier system (predecessor of the postal service), and printing come to mind: telecausal functions that form a new ego.

26. *[Verstellung* can be rendered as either "displacement" or "dissimulation." The ambiguity is interpretatively significant, here as in psychoanalytic literature.-Trans.]

Chapter 11
Transcendental Polemic: Heraclitian Meditations

War is the father of all things.
                              Heraclitus

With the following reflections I want to effect a kind of axis rotation within the critical pragmatism that today predominates in epsitemology (C. S. Peirce, J. Habermas, K. O. Apel). If it was the achievement of this pragmatic theory of knowledge to have presented the connections between knowledge and interest, theory and praxis from first principles, plausibly and without metaphysical mortgages, it is nonetheless infected, I think, with the weakness of a concept of praxis that is too schematic. The preceding reflections may have made it clear why we cannot be satisfied with an epistemology that, on the one hand, assumes only an a priori interest of the type *labor,* and on the other, a second interest of the type *communication* (interaction). This is because the polemical-strategic dimension worked out here (just as the diametrically opposed dimension of the erotic and the reconciliatory interest) can at most be implicitly "co-reflected" in the attempt to ground pragmatism. This avenges itself through a deficit of realism and concreteness. The transcendental polemic (as well as eroticism, which I do *not present* in this book) inserts additional dimensions into the network of "aphoristic" epistemically guiding and forming interests. In war we encounter a combination of motives of labor and interaction that cannot at all be comprehended logically with the schematism employed until now. I maintain that polemical-strategic action and thinking, which are treated by the aforementioned authors only as an addendum and in passing, in fact forms a dimension that *encompasses* not only the action of labor and governing but also communicative action. This is not taken sufficiently into account by either the older or the more recent Critical Theory. Neither a critique of instrumental reason nor a critique of functionalist reason dis-
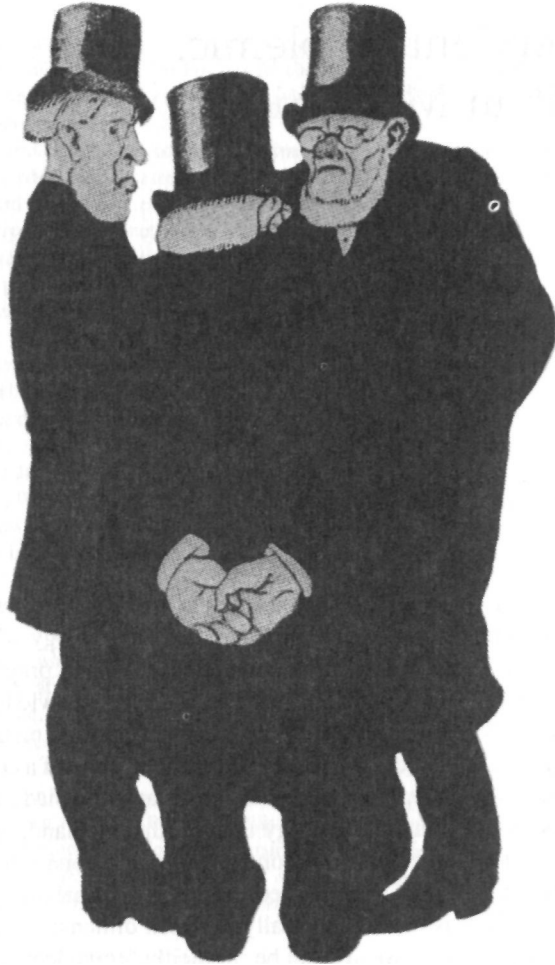
"Just as I have completed my book, which is meant to finish him off scientifically, he really dies!" *Meggendorfer Blatter,* 1916.

closes the connection between strategy and cynicism that we here present as the philosophical signature of modernity.

Labor and interaction are from the very beginning crisscrossed by war and eros, enmities and reconciliations, decimations and creations. Whatever is supposed to be recognized in the interest of labor and interaction, from the very start and always, receives a "theory form" that is also stamped by the polemical or the erotic. What kind of "objectivity" is chosen is emphatically no innocent alternative. It also makes a categorical difference which form of precision is decided on:

the precision of the polemicist or that of the lover.[1] If that is really an a priori alternative, there must be a twofold science of all things (and not *one* basically neutral theory that then, secondarily, as we say, can be used for good or evil purposes). Whereas pragmatism formally assumes a homogeneous "community of researchers," the transcendental-polemical view allows us to examine the "war of the researchers" as the condition of that which they work out as truths. Thus, research is not so much a means for the neutral illumination of reality as an arms race in theoretical forms. The insights then appear more as weapons than as intellectual instruments at the service of labor and communicative understanding, and taken in their aggregate, they constitute not an intellectual treasure or encyclopedia but an arsenal, a munitions depot (of intelligent cartridges). If we wanted to remain content with a priori interests such as "labor" and "interaction," we would have to refrain from interrogating this "labor" and this "interaction" as to which struggle they serve and which reconciliations they facilitate: in other words, whether the researcher ego confronts the "object" from the stance of generalization, distancing, and domination or from that of individualization, closeness, and surrender. From this viewpoint, the distinction between the "Two Cultures"[2] once again makes sense. In the "First Culture" (which predominates), we observe a primacy of method, of procedure, of the research process over the objects. Here, only that can be an object that falls into the domain covered by the methods and models. If we attribute everything of a methodological nature to the subject, we can speak of a type of knowledge that issues from an elevation of the knower over what is known: *the primacy of the subject* (that this, curiously enough, holds for the exact and "objective," or better, objectivistic disciplines illustrates the connection between determination of the object *[Objektfeststellung]* and the displacement [dissimulation] of the subject *[Subjektverstellung]).* This elevation is the price of "objectivity." At the same time, it is procured at the cost of a methodological constriction or standardization of what the subject is allowed or not allowed to "know." The idea that all real sciences in the end will only have a correct theory as a problem presupposes at the same time the expectation that the so-called community of researchers in the long run will grow together into an homogeneous army of subjects who will all be stamped by the same methodological dis-placement (dissimulation) with regard to the "things." Only when the subjects are epistemologically standardized (same "interest," same concepts, same methods) do the statements about the objects coagulate into their final and correct shape (in the sense of these presuppositions). The one cannot be had without the other. Where several hypotheses still stand beside one another, a weakness on the side of the subject is uncovered—and this subjective weakness gives the things a chance to reveal themselves in their multiple meanings. Stated to the point: The weaker our methods, the better it is for the "things." As long as there is a multitude of "interpretations," the things are safe from the delusion of the knowers that they had fixed the objects-as known-once and for all. As long as

the things are being "interpreted," the memory is also kept alive that the things are also something *an sich* (in themselves) that has nothing to do with their being known by us.

If we follow this thought to its extreme, we come to the diametrically opposed pole of forms of knowledge. Here, what Adorno called the "precedence of the object" holds. If, with the primary of the subject, the *agonistic theory* must necessarily arise, then, from a way of treating things that acknowledges the precedence of objects, something comes forth that may bear the name *erotic theory*. Where eros is at play, there, and only there, does the "Second Culture" live, and where it is alive, it assumes the form of an art rather than a technique. Artists and eroticists live under the impression that the things want something from them rather than that they want something from the things, and that it is the things that entangle them in the adventure of experience. They go to the things, surrender themselves to their impression, and as true researchers, feel themselves under their spell.[3] For artists and eroticists, the things are the river into which, according to Heraclitus, they cannot enter twice because the things, although they are the same things, are new in every moment, having flowed further into a new relationship. If love is new every morning, the objects of love, along with it, are also new. In them there is nothing "known," at most familiar. With them, there is no "objectivity," only intimacy. If the knower approaches them, it is not as master researcher *("Forsch-Herr")* but as neighbor, friend, as someone who has been "drawn in." For lovers, the things are beautiful, and they know that the "relationship" is over when, one day, everything looks as if it had always been *the same:* constant, everyday, identical, predictable. Where the sense for beauty ceases, war, indifference *[Gleich-Güiltigkeit*, literally, equal validity;-Trans.] or death begins. Philosophers have rightly taught that the aesthetic dimension is integral for the truth content of realizations. This refers of course to realizations that have submitted themselves to the precedence of the object. Enlightenment, however, has taught us to mistrust such insights deeply. For enlightenment, if it does not continually correct itself against erotic (aesthetic) experience, the objects are the quintessence of that to which we should *not* surrender ourselves trustingly because both, trust and surrender, are stances that the compulsions of life and enlightened realism force out of us. Precedence of the objects would mean to be forced to live with a power *over* us, and because we, quasi-automatically, identify everything that is above us with that which oppresses us, from the viewpoint of this unenlightened enlightenment, there can be, on the contrary, only a stance or polemical distance. Nevertheless, there is another kind of precedence that is not based on subjugation: The precedence the object enjoys in sympathetic understanding does not demand that we reconcile ourselves to an inferiority and an alienated position. Its prototype is love. The ability to concede the object a precedence would be tantamount to the ability to live *and* let live (instead of live and let die), and indeed, as an ultimate consequence, also to die and let live (instead

of following the impulse to pull everything down into death with us). Only through eros do we become capable of conceding the "object" a precedence. And even if I cease to be, eros wills that Something remain.[4]

Polemic against the Id, or: Think the Devil

Where Id was, Ego should become.
Sigmund Freud

The sketches of the cardinal cynicisms contain the material for a theory of dialogue and interaction that encompasses the polemical. They describe positions and oppositions in military, political, sexual, medical, religious, and theoretical consciousness that grate against the conventional concept of ideology. In these oppositions, it is not true and false consciousnesses that are counterposed; rather, combative consciousnesses that, on the basis of differing given stances toward the world and toward life situations, find themselves in *unavoidable* antagonisms with one another. If in the description of kynical and cynical positions, with their reflections and counterreflections, the notion of "stages" being set for an offensive or counteroffensive recurred, it referred to stages for conflict, i.e., theaters of the noisy and quiet passages of arms of an ineluctably polemical consciousness.

How does a stage arise? Certainly not simply through an antagonism of two "principles." A dualism would be initially nothing more than a "thought thing," and as such it would have no dramatic force. The dualism would be *an sich* (in itself) harmless or uninteresting if it were not staged in reality itself. Wherever a dualism emerges, we thus, as a rule, come up against an enmity, a demarcation between Us and Them, and up against the establishing of the predominance of one principle over the opposing principle: Above —Below, Good —Evil, E g o - Id. With this, a real struggle and a real stage arise. On this stage, a dominant intellectual position enters first, a nomos-doctrine, an idealism, a "high" and affirmative theory that presents itself as respectable, stern, and inspired, as if it had been won from higher sources. This is inevitably answered, in the second scene, by a realistic (kynical) antithesis that polemically counterposes the viewpoints and experiences of the underdog, the so-called evil position that is shoved into the id *[Es,* literally, it; —Trans.] (matter). In kynicism, therefore, an ego appears that takes it on itself to be that which the nomos-idealists prohibit, exclude, and despise. With this, kynicism from the plebeian perspective bursts the value system installed from above without fully ceasing to pay regard to it. This also gives kynicism its obviously aggressive and culturally critical aspect. With kynicism, an acidic element penetrates into culture-the first decomposition of the *esprit de serieux* with which whatever wants to rule has always surrounded itself. At the same time, it appears to those on top as something sinister and dirty, and the more hegemonic consciousness tries to withdraw to pure heights, the more subver-

sively and demonically does the kynical refusal appear on its horizon. From then on, it must seem disgusting that this low, mere It stands up for itself and places an ego of its own sort against my own ego. This anti-ego that giggles forth out of the kynical resistance against the metaphysical idealism of master theories probably also constitutes the core of what our tradition calls the diabolical. The displacement of the concept, from "kynicism" to "cynicism" and its metaphysics, provoked by Christianity (as the mentality of the nihilists or the devotees of the Devil) is, to be sure, no mere accident. For if the metaphysical ego identifies itself with the Above and the Good, then the fact that in the Id-Below-Evil an ego also is astir overcomes it like a shock. "It" obviously is no longer content to be merely mute, low, lethargic matter. That this evil id could also be something for itself— that is the real metaphysical scandal that, since the late Middle Ages, has been discussed in the form of innumerable analyses of the Devil. Nothing seems to dualistic consciousness (i.e., bifurcated and identified with the better half) to be so simultaneously agonizing and fascinating than the presentiment that in the so-called evil and low regions, too, there could live a potent, ready-witted self-consciousness. When Plato declares Diogenes to be raving mad, this betrays, besides contempt, a measure of self-protection. This can be regarded as relatively harmless, however, since Diogenes, as reported in anecdotes, knew how to turn the tables so that in the end it was not quite clear who the real crazy was. In Christianity, the antagonism was intensified much more dramatically. Christian consciousness, which understood itself to be endowed with the absolute truth through revelation, had to conjure up a non-Christian ego in the image of the Anti-Christ—and thereby simultaneously became caught up in a permanent apprehension that "evil" could even be active within ourselves, *quaerens quern devoret* (seeking whom it will devour) (1 Peter 5).

Here we have to refer again to Faust, the Devil, and the cynicism of Satan. The story of Doctor Faustus can be understood as a document for the unsettling of the older metaphysical dualism through the new empiricism (whereby under empiricism sexual experience is also included). Art between the Middle Ages and modern times experiments with the possibility of an evil subjectivity "also for us"—and in didactic, morally embellished narratives itself tries out how it would be to live in such an "evil" skin —and what kind of exciting experiences that would bring. I have already described this with the example of the Goethean pact with the Devil. Faust explores the wide world ("so that you, set loose, free / experience what life is") as the Devil's partner, and thus as a probationary devil. Only to the Devil does the world of experience stand open without restriction. Like Goethe, folk literature also does not neglect to describe explicitly the acquaintance of the probationary devil (Faust) with sexual evil:

> As Doctor Faustus saw that the years of his promise came day by day
> to an end, he went about leading a slovenly and epicurean life, and

called upon seven demonic succubas all of whom he slept with. . . . For he traveled into many kingdoms with his spirit so that he could see all womanly shapes. Of whom he succeeded with two Dutch women, a Hungarian, an Englishwoman, two Swabians, and one Frankish woman, who were paragons of the land. With these demonic women he practiced unchasteness to the end of his life. *(Deutsche Volksbilcher,* ed. C. O. Conrady [Hamburg, 1968], p. 133)

After this, there can be no doubt that "being evil," or the slovenly and epicurean life (which, of course, also means "kynical living") pays off to the extent that we can experience what we long since wanted to experience but did not dare. Who can so easily let themselves go to the Devil? The folktale of Doctor Faustus explores, almost uncensored, the lust to try out evil once for oneself. This is a metaphysically dramatic process, because only in this way, at first virtually and then actually, does the integration of the other side, or in other words, the end of dualism, become possible.[5] Many narrative works of early modern times operate according to this moral schema. The folktale allows itself the exciting experiment of lending an ego like our own to what is "authentically" evil. It takes the test jump of fantasy into the Devil's ego. Of course, these stories still have to end badly, and the probationary devil, who allowed himself everything that Christians should not do (in the magical, culinary, sexual, tourist, and theoretical domains) in the end has to be punished as an example. "Thus, whoever does evil, dies." A classically cynical passage can be found in the Faust book, where the Devil makes a maliciously joyful, satirical speech to the poor doctor before the evil spirits come to tear him apart:

Therefore, my good Faust, it is not good to eat cherries with great men and the Devil; they throw the stems in one's face, as you now see. For this reason you probably would have done well to have gone far away; that would have been good against the shooting. But your arrogant pony kicked you. . . .

. . . Look, you were a beautifully made creature, but the roses, as long as they are carried in the hand and smelled, do not last. Those whose bread you have eaten, their song you must also sing. If you postpone things until Good Friday, it will soon be Easter. What you have promised has not happened without cause; a roasted sausage has two ends; you cannot walk well on the Devil's ice. You have had an evil way, and evil ways do not let evil ways alone, just as the cat does not stop chasing mice. To do something heavy-handedly causes pitting; because the spoon is new, the cook uses it; afterward, when it gets old, he shits on it, then finishes eating with it. Is it not so with you? You who were a new cooking spoon of the Devil. . . . So let now my teaching and reminder go to your heart, which for all that is thoroughly doomed. You should not have become so well acquainted with the

Devil, especially because, as well as being God's ape, he is a liar and
murderer. . . . To put up the Devil requires a clever innkeeper. There
is more to dancing than a pair of red shoes. If you had had God in
mind and had been satisfied with the talents given to you, you would
not have danced to this tune, and you should not have so easily bent to
the Devil's will and believed; for whoever believes easily is soon de-
ceived. Now, the Devil wipes his mouth and goes on his way: You
have made yourself guarantor with your own blood, now the guarantor
is to be strangled. You let it go in one ear and out the other. (Ibid., pp.
137-38)

That is nothing short of a model text for the cynical joke. In proverbs, conser-
vative common sense rubs its hands with glee. For we understand so much at
once: That is not the Devil; no sovereign spirit would speak this way. Rather,
in this way, the unsettled human spirit, at the end of its Faustian excursion, tries,
with bold and blatant sarcasm, to cut itself down to size again and to talk itself
down to the level of narrow-minded morality. Ironically, here the Devil poses as
a moralist who reproaches the poor doctor with how he should have been: well-
mannered, accommodating, pleasing in God's eye. The main reproach, very sig-
nificantly, says that Faust should have been more *mistrustful.* Herein culminates
this moral sermon, in which "the evil spirit punishes the aggrieved Fausto with
strange mocking, jovial speeches and proverbs." This address is cynical in the
most modern sense because it contains a sardonic restoration of morality by the
one about whom we know anyway that he offends against it in principle. This
devil's speech is perhaps the first model of modern masters' cynicism as such.
These gentlemen with whom one is ill-advised to eat cherries throw the stems in
one's face. After our Faustian experiment, the structure of self-denying, impera-
tive morality is laid bare: Morality *is* a swindle, but nonetheless it has to be main-
tained, does it not? Therefore, we should make sure that the story ends badly.
In the folktale, the doctor is torn apart by bestial spirits, his brain and blood spat-
ter the walls, his torn corpse lies on the dungheap. (Does the Devil collaborate
with psychopaths, Fascists, perverts?) It seems that Faust is punished a hundred
times more horribly than he sinned. He pays a shocking price for having been
allowed to live for twenty-four years —the duration of the pact —beyond good and
evil, in a world in which dualism was suspended and everything to do with life
was permitted.[6] In its collapse, the old metaphysical dualism demonstrates its full
pathogenic energy for the first time.

The vision of the diabolical that comes over people is thus closely connected
with the phenomenon of kynicism. It is not the dualistic separation of good and
evil, light and darkness *as such* that produces the great tension through which the
Devil becomes strong; rather, there also must be the experience that the "evil
side" is filled with a subjective intensity, that is, with intention, awareness, plan.
The id is actually already an ego. This is a far-reaching finding: It enables the

philosophical description of a metaphysical form of consciousness in crisis to be combined with a psychological description of paranoia. The crisis is triggered by the fact that evil gradually becomes thinkable as one's *own* ego; the difference begins to fade.[7] An implosion is impending. And only under this threat does the splitting off of the Id-below-Evil, which, at the same time, has an ego, become a violent explosion. Only from then on can the concept "devil" be applied to people who live among us but are "different" (heretics, magicians, homosexuals, Jews, clever women). The sharp defensive reaction presupposes that defenders are undermined by the presentiment that they could be like "those over there." On this mechanism is based Pascal's observation that people who want to play the angel easily become the Devil, more precisely, a devil who declares the opponent to be a devil in order to eliminate him or her with reasons that are all too good. The drama is thus not played out only between a good ego and an evil id. Rather, it comes into its explosive phase through the good ego meeting an opponent who consciously and unrepententingly takes it on itself to be that which dualism discriminated against as the evil half, that is, the *openly evil,* kynical "evil" ("that's the way I am, and I intend to be that way") and consequently, an evil that, viewed carefully, is perhaps no evil at all. (Therefore, some moral revolutions begin with phases of kynical polemic in which the "amoralists" openly plead guilty to what scandalizes the others: Diogenes masturbates in the marketplace; women say, "We had abortions"; men, "Gay is beautiful"; doctors, "We have practiced euthanasia"; etc.[8] Thus if evil can have an ego, only then does suspicion begin to plow up one's own moral consciousness. For the ego that hides in the evil id could indeed, because it is ego, also be my ego. Only the repression of this possibility produces the energy of the paranoid projection. With it, the suspicion is blown up out of all proportion. Suspicion wants, at all costs, to again ban evil into the non-ego. It wants to burst the I-You relation that is inevitably given as soon as so-called evil enters as another ego. The diabolical thus manifests itself when an ego wants to defend at any price a dualism that has become untenable. The Devil is a reflexive effect; he arises when something that is already ego should be made into id once again. Every ego can be a mirror for every other ego; those who do not want to see themselves take care that the others do not really ascend into the status of ego. The more unmistakably, however, the other ego has already shown itself to be a fact of life, the more fervent becomes the urge in the denying ego to smash the mirror. Paranoia and antireflective politics have the same structure, although on different levels. That in the course of European history this structure ascended to the dominating ideological reality several times —in the period of the Crusades, in the heretics' and witches' inquisitions, in the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, in the fascisms, in anti-Semitism, in Stalinism-proves the explosiveness of this structure, in which warlike antagonisms, metaphysical dualisms, and paranoid mechanisms coalesce. For this reason, I think, the understanding of *kynicism-as* conscious embodiment of that which has been negated,

excluded, humbled, and declared evil (id) —holds a key to the *cynical* bestiality with which in our culture the fanatical defenders of the so-called good have distinguished themselves so remarkably since time immemorial. And perhaps with the help of that doctrine that, of all philosophies, least of all represents a "theory," more insight can be won into that counterposed philosophical tradition that began with Plato and presented itself as the highest possible form of theory as such: dialectics. For we would like to think that dialectics must remain immune against the dualistic-paranoid temptation. Does it not proceed from what the consciousness described earlier does not want to admit: from the conflict of positions and principles? Is it not its fundamental thought that against every thesis an antithesis must emerge and that this, which appears horrible to others, is, in fact, good and correct—for the sake of the synthesis and the "higher" truth born of the struggle?

Before we pursue these ideas, we must discuss the turn the "id" took within psychoanalysis. With both his so-called topographies (i.e., descriptions of limits and areas on the "map of the soul"), Freud ventured forth into an area that for a long time had been philosophy's territory. Nevertheless, there is no doubt about the fundamental antimetaphysical stance of Freudian analysis. What then has happened with the philosophy of the subject that a psychologist can speak as Freud does about the human person? The ego in Freud is not that of subjectivity philosophy. Reduced to a formula, Freudian analysis presupposes that the metaphysical dogma of the unity of the person in its ego has been burst—but how this happens is not our topic here. Only so much is certain: Freud only finds this bursting as *a fait accompli* and does not himself bring it about. That is his place in the history of ideas. From then on, in the rubble left after the explosion, several sectors can be staked out: on the one hand, the conscious and the unconscious domain; on the other, more or less superimposed, the districts of the *superego* in which the laws, norms, standards of conscience, and ideals reside; the districts of the *ego,* where everyday knowledge, qualifications, conscious competences, recollections, and plans have their space; and finally the districts of the *id* from which the vital energies, drives, and dreams ascend. Of course, only because the unity of the person posited by metaphysicians is broken do psychologists have a free hand to speak in their way about another unity of the person. They see this unity not as something given but as a task: What is given is the landscape of rubble, strewn with large clumps that have been exploded into the unconscious, interlaced by the cracks under which the old abuses and pains seethe. Therefore, Freud can say, "Where id was, ego should become." He envisages draining the unconscious sea, setting up ego controls over what was previously the inner nonego (id). In this, it is not so much the function of domination by the ego or of control that should be emphasized. In fact, the "sublation" of the id into the ego presupposes in the first place the opposite of domination by the ego, namely, radical recognition of the id without reservation. In fruitful analytic cures (there are, as is well known, also other sorts of cures), it inevitably comes to the emergence

of the id to the point where the ego can be thoroughly washed away by those forces that were previously split off. Thus it can no longer be overlooked that "It" (id) belongs to *me* even if not yet in the sense of my old ego, marked by control and repression. A new ego-broader, livelier, more dynamically moved by the newly uncovered id space—is called into life, an ego that learns to live with its whole history, its traumatic burden, and its madnesses.[9] Cure presupposes the recognition of the id as the precondition and foundation of life for the mature ego. Wherever that happens, the paranoid structure, the polemicization of the id, must end of its own accord. Thus, in Freudian terminology, a downright philosophical-philanthropic act is also to be discovered: The id is thought of as one's *own* from the beginning and is set up a priori as still unconscious with an orientation toward the ability of my ego to one day bring light into the darkness. Let us not argue about whether that is exaggerated rationalism or hidden Hegelianism. The point is not that the ego should now become completely the "master of its own house"; rather the point lies in the chance that the "spirits of the house"[10] learn to live together under one roof.

Metapolemic: On the Foundations of European Dialectics in Polemics and Rhythmics

> *As far as he is able, the author lays his cards on the table; that is in no way the same thing as the game.*
> Adorno, Preface to *Negative Dialectics*

> *All kinds of good principles have currency in the world; we simply neglect to put them into practice.*
> Pascal, *Pensees*

Dialectics derives from a polemical tradition that has its beginnings in the Greek philosophers in the generations before Socrates. In sophistry an art of disputation and logical rhetoric for overwhelming the opponent arose for the first time, in a way in which it has scarcely again come to life in our civilization, except in the age of the Scholastics, when likewise, a seasoned art of disputation flourished. If, therefore, "dialectician" is supposed to be the name for someone who performs above average in the art of being in the right, philosophy, but also political reality, would have one problem less. Dialectics would then be only a prettier word for rhetoric and sophistry in the negative sense, for caviling and the unscrupulous use of logic and language for the purpose of subduing by surprise.

To be sure, many people—philosophers as well as nonphilosophers —must nave experienced dialectics, or something that called itself such, in some such way. For, from many a despiser of sophistry in antiquity—to Schopenhauer (who declared Hegel to be a crazy charlatan) up to modern analytic philosophy (accord-

ing to which dialecticians do not know, in the strict sense, what they are saying) and further, to refugees from the Eastern bloc in which a so-called Dialectical Materialism is the ideology of state—an endless series of voices have spoken out as victims, adversaries, and critics of "dialectics." If, therefore, it is supposed to be a mere art for always being in the right, there must be reasons why some remain immune to this way of maintaining that one is in the right. If it is only an art of convincing, it cannot be compelling because too many people remain unconvinced —and that since time immemorial! If dialecticians are those who try to force affirmation of their truth, then innumerable people have resisted this attempt by counterposing their negation to it in an unmistakable way. The situation presents itself thus for a superficial consideration. This consideration is superficial because it is not concerned about contents but holds firm only to the formal aspect: Here, on the one hand, there are thinkers who put their trust in a certain technique of arguing that in the end is supposed to always bring the truth to light. On other hand, there are thinkers on whom this technique does not work in the sense intended by the dialecticians and who obviously have a counterposed art at their disposal that immunizes them against dialectical "seduction."

If we call the art of the dialectician "dialectical logic," and the art of those who resist or even repudiate it "analytic logic," we have roughly described the confrontation that for ages has caused two rival philosophical styles to grate on each other.

This finding, however, is no longer so completely superficial. The surface contains once again the "thing itself." There is obviously a *dispute about dialectics* in which two rival "schools," dialecticians (antianalyticians) and analyticians (antidialecticians), struggle. And this seems to correspond precisely to assertions made by the dialectical position. If, out of the struggle between the two schools, the "truth" were to be produced, that would be ipso facto a result won out of the dispute of opinions. However, dialectics, even if it receives gratification through this observation, must not want to go so far as to claim a complete victory or an exclusive justification vis-a-vis analysis because otherwise it would not have required any dispute but, from the beginning, without contradiction, would have been able to say of itself "how things are." Thus, in the truth produced in the dispute between dialectics and analytics, analysis must have properly come into its own; if analysis had been totally defeated, dialectics would be in the wrong. Conversely, analysis too cannot win a total victory because it cannot disqualify dialectics from competence in matters concerning dispute.

Thus, if in the dispute between dialectics and analysis —in accordance with the well-known three steps —as synthesis a higher truth should emerge that "sublates *(aufhebt)* the elements of truth of the one side as well as those of the other, this higher truth must have overcome those aspects of the dialectic that have long since obviously provoked the uprising of a counterposition. Consequently, there is a false element *(Moment)* in dialectics as soon as it coagulates to a position that is

defended —otherwise, the continual polemic of analysis against dialectics would not be possible. The nature of this "false moment" in dialectics is basically the only philosophical problem that remains of the legacy of dialectics once the misunderstandings are taken away.

The question is thus: What is wrong with dialectics?[11] Why must this doctrine for argumentation be disputed? Why is there so much resistance against a "theory" that —we could say, highly realistically —treats experiences such as conflict, contradiction, history, development, becoming? Is not the opening up of such "themes" in any case an indispensable gain for philosophy that, once acquired, can provide a measure for every serious competing theory? Is it not to be seen as an advantage when a theory of the real comes so far as to not only dispute with other theories about truth, but also to conceive of the dispute as such —as an unavoidable presupposition of the search for truth?

However, precisely here, the dilemma of dialectics begins. The analytic reply will say, You are talking of dispute, well and good; but what is meant by that? Your dialectics means the art of conducting an intellectual dispute and grows out of the experience that, in fact, from energetically antithetical discussion, insights are sometimes worked out that lie higher than the theses brought into the dialogue by the discussants at the beginning. If that is what is meant, we are all dialecticians, at least with regard to those things about which one *can* dispute at all.[12] But in fact, you dialecticians mean something much more ambitious than a doctrine of productive dialogue. It is not simply that you want to talk about how *we,* as pugnacious theoreticians, work toward better insights through the leveling out of our extreme opposing opinions. The dialectical stimulus indeed begins only where we try to speak of the dispute and contradiction of "things" in reality and as reality. The ground under our feet gets hot when dialectics is understood not as dialogics but as ontology. But where does the boundary run? The disputatious dialogue is not only an imaginary opposition of two statements that meet in a "logical space." But, if the contradictory statements are to "work with each other," it will be first and simultaneously necessary for us, you and me, to "duel" bodily and to use our opinions against each other like sharpened weapons. The antithetical nature of the statements alone does not instigate enmity. Subjects must be found who truly struggle against each other with these statements in reality, with personal presence and psychosomatic intensity. The dispute, although it brings statements into battle against statements, thus does not belong merely to the "intellectual" sphere but itself signifies a piece of reality. And with this, the dilemma of dialectics begins. Those who begin to reflect on the dispute of ideas inevitably come to a point where the logical "passes over" (whatever that may mean) into the ontological. In the dispute, a contradiction is not only thought but staged *in reality.* With this, dialectics has set foot in ontology. Hence, analysis can no longer slam the door shut in its face. Dialectics has put its foot too firmly in the way: Disputatious processes are indeed part of what really exists, and the logic

of productive dispute unmistakably reaches over into the ontological domain. Here, something takes place that we can call the ontological putsch of dialectics: Because it has now undeniably penetrated into the ontological domain, it tries, with a bold and arbitrary stroke, to take possession of the *entire* realm of the existing as its domain. With this, it turns the cosmos into an all-encompassing "dialectical process"—as if it were nothing other than a disputatious phenomenon that unrelentingly propels itself through its own dramatic-agonistic self-movement.

Hegel developed this view with an almost devastating consistency and brilliant radicality with regard to almost all phenomena of being. For him, world history is a bloody, seething dispute of the *Weltgeist* that ultimately culminates in radiant self-knowledge of self-knowledge. This dispute strives—through a powerful chain of self-sunderings and self-surmountings, in search of the concept of itself—toward the moment when it, in Hegel, no longer only seeks but has found, no longer moves forward but flows into the fulfilled moment of "absolute knowledge." Here, dialectics has leapt completely from a doctrine of dialogue over into a doctrine of the world, from a logic over into an ontology, and how all-dominating the dialectical principle has thereby become is revealed in Hegel's intrepid undertaking to erect anew, from first principles and in the spirit of dialectics, even the "science of logic."

With this ontological inflation of dialectics to the greatest system-construct in the history of European philosophy a point had been reached from which a backlash became unavoidable. The fates of the Hegelian system, which meanwhile from our distance appears as a ghostly ruin[13] of idealist metaphysics, indicate the inevitable turning point clearly enough. Even Hegel's unprecedented dialectical system did not elude the fate of being reduced in turn to a mere position against which powerful and successful oppositions consolidated. What had claimed to be the whole fell back into the position of a "moment," a mere pole of an antagonism. Against the pretensions of self-glorying speculation, a solid and modest spirit of *empiricism* awoke to an energetic self-consciousness. Against the idealism that had been driven to an extreme, the *materialist* reaction arose. Against the grandiosity that had become a system, an *existential* consciousness articulated itself that provided an account of our relativity and fragility. And, above all, against the hegemony of theory, a current now made headway that resolutely prescribed for itself the primacy of *praxis.* For if Hegel reached a point in his grand view of above-the-world historical processes where the spirit thinks it has come to rest in the unity of reason with reality, the post-Hegelian generations have known and felt nothing more sharply than that reality and reason blatantly diverge and that if the gap were ever to be closed, this would have to be a matter of a praxis that *transforms* reality and makes it accord with reason.

This fivefold "antithesis" to the system of dialectics (empiricism, materialism, existentialism, primacy of praxis, reason as Not-Yet) characterizes down to the present the situation with which every later philosophical theory, whether it be

dialectical or analytic, had to debate or come to terms. However, from then on, mere antidialectical "convictions" are even more inadequate for the task. For whatever may come after and against Hegel, it will, whether it wants to or not, fall into the "dialectic of dialectics"-in other words, into the conflict of subjective reason with the collapsed system that had wanted to demonstrate an all-pervading objective reason of conflict.

This conflict begins with a blunt refusal to make dialectics absolute. The dream of a productive contradiction that everywhere moves through thesis and antithesis to higher syntheses cannot be pursued. Real being, precisely when it is viewed in its movements, developments, and struggles, cannot be thought of as, according to the model, an enormous disputatious dialogue that strives, through all the extremes, toward truth. If we say no to this, we demand nothing other than that dialectics be forced back out of ontology. A complete expulsion is inadmissible because, as we have said, as disputable theory of dispute, it itself already has a "foot in the door." After Hegel, it must accordingly be the concern of philosophy to reverse the ontological putsch of dialectics without suppressing the scope of its validity. This demands nothing more or less than a rational (analytic) reconstruction of dialectics in the form of a *Universal Polemics.*[14] The point in which the dialectical tradition was great, that is, to disputatiously think the dispute, to think the contradiction in the movements of contradiction—that must be "sublated" by a rational theory of dispute. Of course, this sublation, measured against Hegel's claim, is a sinking, said positively, grounding *(Erdung),* a realistic and illuminating anchoring of this Universal Polemics in universally understandable arguments.

"When two people quarrel, the third is glad." Through an interpretative unfolding of this saying, the polemical meaning of dialectics can be grasped. In the struggle with each other, the first and second parties consume their powers — when they are approximately the equal of the other-so that an additional third party could subjugate both with little trouble. In the dialectical dialogue, however, we find no third party but rather only two partners who, as far as possible, work each other over. If both do their job equally well, we can predict that the match will be undecided. If both are skilled polemicists, it will not be impossible for them not only to defend a position that has been thought through and worked out, but even to make an offensive advance against the adversary. However, the picture is suddenly altered when the first party not only goes to battle as a competent polemicist but tries to *bepolemicus* and *arbiter* simultaneously. That is precisely the dialectician. As such, the latter leaps out of the position of the partner with equal status into that of the superior third party and then, in its double role as first and third party, quashes the position of the second. It disputes with cleverness against cleverness, but takes care to remain the cleverer one. It takes up, as we say, the "moments of truth" in the opposing side, subordinates them, and adopts them from a "higher level" as its own. This, however, is legitimate only

when the second party in turn declares itself not simply to be outdone, but to be convinced by the third. Thus the third party by its assent again comes closer to the opponent with whom, on a common higher level, it would have reached agreement. We would then have two "third parties," both of whom could be glad about the dispute between the first and the second because both would have come out of it winners.[15] But that means, metaphorically speaking: In the dispute between two, there is no third party. For as long as they maintain a balance, we cannot talk of dialectics but have to always call the matter by the appropriate name: dialogue or disputatious conversation.

The poverty of dialectics is concentrated in the often conjured-up function of synthesis. In the conflict offerees, according to dialectics, the newer and higher entity will be born. However, a trick lurks in this acknowledgment of the conflict. For this acknowledgment is made only by the party who regards itself as the victor in the dispute, not by the loser. It could be that our European dialectics since Heraclitus have all been *victor's fantasies* that try to conclude something like a peace treaty in the so-called synthesis; to be sure, it is a kind of dictated peace, in which the loser is supposed to come to terms with and be assimilated into the new order. In the jargon of dialectics, this means that a universal will be erected over an antagonism. What really happens thereby is the reinterpretation of polemics as dialectics, that is, the summarizing of a dispute by the victor. The latter models the history of the struggle as the development and progress toward its own position. The consciousness of the conquered party no longer speaks explicitly in the victor's resume but only as a subordinated "moment." Its contribution is "sublated"; it itself remains below. The victor is thus, viewed structurally, a double ego, namely, first and third, and in the function of the third, it swallows up to a certain extent the arguments, powers, and rights of the second.[16] Hegel's *Weltgeist* operates like a cannibal who devours opposed consciousness and gains its sovereignty by digesting them. This "positive" dialectic functions as the suppression of the second party; indeed, precisely speaking, it functions as the second subjugation of what had already once opposed the first. (For the second position, the antithesis, emerges in reality not as a dueling partner of equal status or as the other extreme but as a revolt against an already established hegemonic power.)

The positive dialectic thus does not leave the realm of polemics but ends the dispute with a victor's dictate. With this it always intervenes in a polemical happening —and, as a rule, on the side of the hegemonic power and ruling consciousness. It reinforces the Above-Below, Good-Evil, Ego-Id structures from the viewpoint of the dominant position at the expense of the underdog. With this comes a pronouncedly ironical result: Positive dialectics from Plato to Lenin in practice function as obstacles to and falsifications of what they have taken as their topic: the productive dispute and the equalizing of forces.

It is on this experience that Adorno's bold inversion of the tradition of dialec-

tics is based. This inversion mistrusts the victor ideology of the higher synthesis. In reality, the victories of the "universal" do not bring any relaxation of tensions; the negation remains just as unproductive as the negation of the negation. The "sublations" are a lie; nothing better comes afterward. The more "dialectical" parties, blocs, ideologies raise themselves against each other, the more the spirit of deadlock, control, and rigidification triumphs under cover of hectic production and armament. Living things increasingly become weapons and tools. To the extent that, directly or indirectly, everything becomes struggle and business, war and exchange, weapon and commodity, the living element, for whose development and enhancement, according to the conception of dialectics, conflict is beneficial, dies. In the end, dialectics is no longer even seemingly the form of movement of reason in historical conflicts, but—if we think of Stalin's use of dialectics—it becomes an instrument of artful, calculating paranoia. War is not at all the father of all things but rather their obstructor and annihilator. Adorno's correction of dialectical theory is consistent in taking its starting point in the dubious "synthesis":

> The formulation "negative dialectics" offends against tradition. As early as Plato, dialectics wants to create something positive with the means of thinking called negation; the figure of a "negation of the negation" later designated this concisely. The book wants to liberate dialectics from this sort of affirmative essence. *{Negative Dialectics* [Frankfurt, 1966], p. 7)

Negatively conceived dialectics works toward a Universal Polemics without saying so. If the first party is the "idealism" of the hegemonic powers and the second is the "materialism" of the oppressed, then the third, which emerges from the dispute, is basically the first again, but worse. The erection of a universal over antagonisms always leads to the same thing. Certainly, something "moves" in doing this but *plus ca change, plus c'est la mime chose:* Adorno's negative turn against traditional dialectics amounts to a denial of what in today's predominant "dialectical" doctrine, Marxism-Leninism, is a mere lie. However powerful and productive his realistic side may be (he indeed has all the themes of the aforementioned fivefold antithesis to Hegel, that is, everything that today we call "realistic"—the existential moment, however, only in a mutilated form), Adorno was not realistic enough in a decisive point: He did *not* bring about the withdrawal of dialectics from ontology in a satisfying, rationally well-ordered form.

This withdrawal, we maintain, must lead to a Universal Polemics that penetrates the dispute in its social dynamics and evolutionary function. A theory that after Hegel wants to call itself dialectical has to achieve this, nothing more or less. Marx made a *start* with this. He presented a history of philosophy that makes sense only when it is understood as a first attempt at a rational Universal Polemics. The central idea of his theory, that all previous human history is a history

of class *struggles,* shows Marx's attempt to liberate dialectics from its idealistic inheritance and to ground it realistically and empirically as theory of reality, that is, as Universal Polemics. Nevertheless, the dilemma of dialectics was repeated in Marx himself. He provided not only a Universal Polemics but, within this, also a false proof as to why his position had to be the victorious one. Marx, too, produced a victor's fantasy (in advance); that is, he falsified polemics again into dialectics. The expropriation of the expropriators is meant to establish something universal over the antagonism between the exploited and the exploiters, namely, the just distribution of wealth. The means for doing this, however, are not universal but a new polemic, the oppression of the oppressor, the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat. Marx's thinking, itself dictatorial, affirms this dictatorship. For Marx, too, dialectics serves as a "positive" artificial means, party and arbiter, first and third at the same time. However realistic Marx was as inaugurator of a Universal Polemics, he remained unrealistic with regard to the aims and results of the struggles he postulated. What today we encounter as so-called one-party systems are the malformed offspring of this truncated rationalism: parties that have gone so far in the victor's fantasy that they believe they have now integrated the second position and sublated it into the one, unique, higher synthesis. The party as the whole. The pole as integral. The moment as totality. Precisely that is the schema in which, in Marx's own words, the "whole shit" has to start "all over again."

What began as an attempt to avoid the dualistic danger of paranoia by means of a dialectical acknowledgment of the one *as well as* the other in the last moment becomes a new onesidedness that forces new dualisms.

Marx's attempt to ground a rational Universal Polemics must be regarded as having failed, in reality just as much as in theory; *his lasting achievement lies in the attempt itself.* Our only choice is to rationally carry on his attempt. Human history is really *also* a history of struggles, as Marx emphasized, but whether he was right in identifying all historical struggles as *class* struggles is more than questionable. The world polemics we see before us as world history reveals rather the image of enormous interethnic, international, and interimperial conflicts, crisscrossed and overlaid, of course, by the fact that the subjects of conflict *in themselves* are mostly class societies —at least in the historical period we identify in general with the history of the state, i.e., hierarchical societies of domination. However, no sophistry will ever be in a position to present the human history of war in such a way that it corresponds completely to the history of class struggles. Class society, too, is just as much a product of war as war is the product of class society. Here, the historical facts count, and in the conflict between fact and theory, we will always have to say, going against Hegel, all the worse for the theory. War is older than class society, and struggles between class societies are not class struggles per se. A Universal Polemics, in contrast to Marx, enjoys the advantage of being able to afford these clear distinctions from the beginning. It can do this

because it does not want to be a victor's fantasy and has no interest in proving the necessary and historically "due" triumph of one party. Even less is it compelled to construe subjects of conflict that cannot be found, as Marxism did when it postulated a militant proletariat as the world-historical conflictual partner of the bourgeoisie. Universal Polemics can even go a step further in historical description than Historical Materialism; namely, it can investigate the polemical style of the dialectician as one of the most important phenomena in the modern history of conflict. It shows what happens when a party founds its struggles on a "dialectical" theory. Positive dialectics, for its part, remains an object for Universal Polemics.[17]

Adorno's great intervention relates to this point. Only a negative dialectics would cease to be the legitimating ideology of a party that dreams of itself as victor *and* as the whole. Only with this can misuse of dialectics cease. If its rational core has been laid bare as Universal Polemics, its lying side can and must disappear. Then it will no longer perform dogmatic services for anyone. It will no longer be a weapon, an ideology, an instrument of propaganda, but will become what it falsely understood itself to be: an instrument for the description of reality, history, and of the conflicts of consciousnesses. When Adorno, as he said, put his cards openly on the table, he executed the gesture that had long since been due in the overripe tradition of dialectics. As negative dialectics, it openly gives up the attempt to compulsively be in the right and to celebrate the force of the victor as a higher synthesis. Critical Theory was the attempt to come into the inheritance of dialectics without spinning victor's fantasies. In it, the legacy of those who have been violated and beaten down gains expression. It raises for the first time in a consistent way the demand that human history be written that the unhappy ones who perished as victims appear not simply as "dung" (see chapter 7, the section on the Grand Inquisitor) and that historiography not repeat the violence and injustice that happened in past struggles through its mode of examining.

Is that all? Can we be satisfied as soon as dialectics has been turned back out of ontology into the domain of Universal Polemics? Is its rational core constituted *only* by this polemics? Was everything else only fine phrases and arrogance? It remains to be shown that what we call dialectics has a second root that remains firmly anchored even when we have to pull out the first. We find the second root when we listen a little to the ontological and natural-philosophical claims of dialectics. Sooner or later in the self-presentation of dialectics, the assertion is inevitably made that it is the science of "becoming" and that becoming, in turn, is the "great law" of reality. And then without fail soon after comes the touchingly naive example of the plant that becomes a seedling out of the seed, whereby the seed disappears and transforms itself into the plant that it gives forth; the latter, in turn, produces the seed, which leaves the plant, is carried away, and germinates anew, while the old plant dies, just as waning is in general the obverse

side of becoming. Have we not, without noticing it, changed over from social polemics to natural philosophy and biology? To be sure, we have changed terrain but not without noticing it. For the so-called dialectics of nature has always been the Achilles' heel of this line of thinking. Especially since Hegel, we can amuse ourselves with certain assertions: The flower is the *antithesis* of the bud, whereas the "fruit (now) declares the flower to be a false existence of the plant" *(The Phenomenology of Spirit).* Conceptual sorcery? Rhetorical hyperbole? Analysis really does not have a hard job here of demonstrating a misuse of language. The mockery of the critics lies to hand and is justified. However, it should not make us blind to the significant idea provided by the example. Naive as it sounds, it hints at a naive and original fundamental layer of philosophizing that cannot be completely dissolved by any dialectical or analytic artfulness, no matter how sophisticated. For this example is looking at the cycle of life and the great and universal transformation of appearances between becoming, existence, and waning. The old tradition of wisdom—the prescientific tradition—has these phenomena constantly in mind: It sees the change of seasons, the rhythm of day and night, the recurrence of waking and sleeping, the in and out of breathing, the alternation of light and shade. In the center of these polar phenomena it finds the play of the sexes —which at the same time provides the model for the expansion of the polar dyads into the dialectical triad. For in the encounter of the masculine and the feminine, the child emerges, the "synthesis" of father and mother, egg and sperm, love and law, and so on.

I think that these naive observations show what dialectics tried to base itself on in its positive aspect. Namely, for a long time, it borrowed its ontological principles from an original philosophy of life that had the play of antagonistic world forces and dualities in mind. What calls itself dialectics is, in reality, a *rhythmics* or a philosophy of polarity. Through pure observation, it tries to grasp life and the cosmos as the untiring change of phases and states of being in their coming and going —such as ebb and flow, the cycles of the stars, joy and sadness, life and death. This great rhythmics understands all phenomena without exception as pulsations, phases, cadences. It recognizes in them the to and fro of the One, of the cosmic principle in its natural and unavoidable turnings. That everything in the world has its counterpart, that circumstances move in an eternal flow and cycle, and that the extremes transform themselves into each other-these are the great, unshakable visions this rhythmics achieves. The "dialectic" of Heraclitus-the first and probably also the only European dialectic that is a pure philosophy of polarity without becoming a polemic, therefore also contemplative and mysterious, not wanting to convince and not intended for the disputatious dialogue-corresponds completely to this type of wisdom:

Opposites strive for unity, from variety arises the most beautiful harmony, and everything arises on the basis of discord.

Connection: whole and not-whole, convergent striving and divergent striving, ringing in unison and ringing differently, and from everything one thing, and from one thing everything.

Both and precisely that is always in us: living and dead, the awake and the sleeping, and young and old. The one is transformed into the other, and in the new change, the latter again becomes the former.

We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are, and we are not. (Selection of quotations from *Antike Geisteswelt. Eine Sammlung Klassischer Texte,* ed. W. Riiegg [Frankfurt, 1980], pp. 92-93)

Such a view of the world totality still possesses the coolness and greatness of a First Philosophy. It has a reflective, not an argumentative, meaning. It is taught for everybody and for nobody, not persuading, at most giving hints; it could also be left completely unsaid, and under no circumstances does it want to be "defended" like an opinion or a position. Its speech is like an attuning to a rhythmic, pulsing cosmos. The world after all possesses its own gait and breathing, and this earliest philosophy of polarity was only an unresisting breathing with the in and out of the world. Between the "world law" of polarities and their understanding by the philosopher there is no gap. Thinkers, or better, "see-ers," do not assume their "own" position and do not distinguish themselves as knowing subjects from known phenomena. In the great world of these pulsations and polar transformations, they do not appear as egos that could separate themselves from this world and thereby fall into error. Everything they say also goes through them, and it would be so whether they said it or not. As a final consequence, we would have to call such a doctrine of polarity a philosophy without a subject. Wherever this view reigns, there are basically only the rhythms, only the to and fro of energies and opposed poles; for the separate ego of the human being there remains no self-contained sphere. In relation to these rhythms, there is for human beings only one valid stance: surrender. Understanding means to be in accord with. Those who see that the world is harmony in strife will not struggle against it. Wherever insight reigns, the subject of struggle has already faded. If, however, dialectics in this sense may really be called the "highest theory," it seems to be *argumentatively* completely defenseless. In its free-floating contemplation, it has relaxed to the most serene of all unprovability. Such wisdom is thus in no ^way polemics but rather attunement and rhythmization.

If it is at all correct to call such philosophy of polarity dialectics[18] it is a matter m any case of a cosmological-contemplative theory. In it there is nothing that reminds one of the more modern "dialectical" subject-object relation. With respect to the polarities, human beings do not have a contradiction of their "own"; human beings do not face the polarities as a subject faces a thing; the individual human being can be at most a pole, subject among subjects, force among forces —

Rene Magritte, *Hegel's Holiday,* 1959. (©S.P.A.D.E.M. Paris/V.A.G.A., New York, 1987.)

inserted simultaneously unresistingly and actively in whatever happens. It is not endowed with the characteristic of counterposing itself to being as the self-glorying, autarkic other (subject). This begins only when the human world has become autonomous, when, with higher degrees of civilization and socialization, the polemical principle becomes tense and heats up, when oppression, violence, enmity, domination, war, ideology, martial arts, strategy, etc., begin to form corresponding polemical subjects. These subjects undertake intensively the splitting off of the other "pole" and make of it an "object." This corresponds roughly to the polemicization of the id treated earlier. We then are no longer concerned merely with rhythms and polar oppositions but with military, political, social, ideological animosities. The principle of enmity encroaches on the formerly neutral poles. The force-force relation becomes ego-id, subject-object. From now on, the respective negative should no longer even show its face. In the polemics, the backlash of the other side should be put out of action. Thereby, however, the world of rhythmics is destroyed. Polemical dialectics, to be sure, tries to preserve a residue of polarity by emphasizing that the transit through the opposite pole is necessary. In fact, however, it affirms and carries on the polemics because it feels itself capable of a *victory* over the opposed principle. The reconciliations that dialectics thought out for itself were second dominations, and the syntheses in thought had the function of disarming the second party and subordinating it. Only in logic does "negation of the negation" sound neutral and just. Only in logic can it seem that the antithesis has received its due before the negation of the negation brings about a synthesis. In reality, it is a matter of a preventive negation of the negation —in other words, the suffocation of the antithesis at its source. The antithesis does not unfold itself to an opposing pole but remains a mere "potential,"

a suffocated and sleeping negation. For this reason, Adorno's negative dialectics designates not a "late degeneration" but a fundamental trait of dialectics.

Negative dialectics recognizes finally the dialectics of hindering. Hindering is the only ingredient that can be brought into the world of rhythms by the "subjects." Wherever people's lives succeed, it happens not so much through combative self-insistence but because they develop cultures in which rhythmical shapes can come into play without our interference. Creative life flourishes wherever we renounce our capacity to hinder. Thus, there are surely no hindered geniuses, just geniuses at hindering.

The "subject," born of manifold hindering and threatening of itself, can only interfere everywhere as hinderer, combatant, and producer of "objects." In society, it arises out of the thousands of large and small restrictions, denials, definitions, enmities, inhibitions, and alien regulations that merge into its "identity." To attack the subject means to drive it all the more into itself.

In exoteric form we recognize this only since the total arming of modern political subjects has brought the global destruction of the world into practical reach. The apparently most simple abstraction "struggle"("which expresses an ancient relation valid for all societies"; Marx)[19] is therefore practically true for us today for the first time. Only at the peak of modernity does the identity of subjectivity and armament reveal itself to us. Only here do we have to do with "struggle as such," "struggle *sans phrase.*" What the great esoteric doctrines of this world have carried through the millennia with mysterious exuberance as their dangerous secret now steps out into the light of a demystified reflection in which we can say serenely what our defensiveness means. Only in modernity has life frozen so much into the defense of subjects that our thinking, late but not in vain, can achieve the true universal concept for such subjectivity. How life could really be becomes more deeply forgotten day by day in the unfolded system of hindrances. We could only be helped by that which helps us to disarm as subjects-on every level, in every sense.

However, insofar as the liquefaction of subjects, which was always the concern of inspired thinking, remains the decisive task of practical reason, philosophy too as theory of reason, also gains with this, its ultimate norm. A rationality that has offered its services to the hardening of subjects is already no longer rational. Reason that maintains us without extending us was not reason at all. Thus, mature rationality cannot elude "dialectical" becoming. In the end, the most rigorous thinking, as the mere thinking of a subject, must go beyond itself. It does not matter whether in this we bank on the self-reflection of a philosophy of consciousness, on the "communicative action" of a philosophy of language, metareligiously on meditative fusion, or aesthetically on playful transcendence: A rational-that is, a physiognomically sympathetic-reason will unconstrainedly intercept the decision from the inclinations of our bodies.

Notes

1. Those who do not understand this in time get onto the wrong track in many sciences. Many researchers have begun to study, say, art and literature as lovers of the "objects" and then, as professors, only act out their hate against them because they fall into the stance of polemics, of nonsurrender to the objects, by having chosen the wrong type of exactitude.

2. There is a long tradition of attempts to confront two types of sciences or forms of knowledge: understanding or explanatory sciences, exact or inexact, sciences of the general or the particular, sciences of intellectual or natural objects, *scientiae* or *artes.* These oppositions are, to be sure, "plausible," but the history of science shows that they become blurred. The present trend is toward a unified science (of the type of polemical objectification).

3. Thus, the enormous dislocations that have broken out today in basic physical, cosmological, and biological research in no way arise from some *methodological* considerations or other, but result rather from the scientist's being torn into the fascinating refractoriness of "things themselves."

4. The conflict between intellect and feeling that typified the Enlightenment derives in part from the contest between the two tendencies: distancing and surrender, precedence of the subject, precedence of the object. All distance philosophers, from Descartes to Sartre, have therefore seriously discussed the equally monstrous and characteristic question of how the ego can possibly establish whether, in the domain of non-ego, there exist other egos; thus, the problematic of "alien subjectivity."

5. Heinrich Heine uses the overcoming of dualism as the foundation of his popular philosophical account *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (On the history of religion and philosophy in Germany; 1835).

6. On this point, the Faust myth has something in common with the equally fascinating Don Juan myth. Both were allowed to go to excess. One sees what happens to them: in the end, the punishment of hell.

7. Were not also "pantheists" for a long time held pointblank to be worshippers of the Devil? "Whether among those whom the Devil himself has paid to annihilate all divine and human right someone is to be found who in this work of destruction has been more active than this . . . swindler?" asks the Jena theology professor, Musaeus, with regard to Spinoza! Another Christian propagandist finds a work of Spinoza's to be "full of sacrilege and godlessness, truly worthy of being thrown back into the darkness of hell from where it has come into the light to damage and disgrace humankind." Quoted after W. Weischedel, *Die philosophische Hintertreppe. 34 grosse Philosophen in Alltag unci Denken,* 8th ed. (Munich, 1981), p. 159.

8. It also gives cause for reflection that so-called anti-Semitism waxed strongest in the epoch when Jews gained an aggressive self-proclamation [coming out; —Trans.] through the Zionist movement. This, of course, can be reversed.

9. For this reason, the famous Freudian comparison of psychoanalysis with the draining of the Zuidersee is, strictly speaking, erroneous; it is still too colored by engineering, conceived too much according to the model of polemical medicine (sickness as enemy). The id-sea never dries up-but is it not already a lot when one has learned to sail on it?

10. This alludes to the first volume of the three-volume recollections of the conservative Munich Weltanschauung writer, Oskar A. H. Schmitz, *Die Geister des Houses, Jugenderinnerungen* (Munich, 1925)-remarkable above all because Schmitz had undergone a psychoanalytic cure with Freud's pupil, Abraham, and tried to integrate experiences from his (failed) analysis into his autobiography. Some comments on Schmitz are also to be found in my book *Literatur und Lebenserfahrung-Autobiographien der 20er Jahre* (Munich, 1978, pp. 229ff.

11. Not: "What is dialectics?" For those who pose this question do not begin where they really stand intellectually, namely, at the insight that they are participating in the dispute around dialectics,

so to speak, moving in the dialectic of the dialectic. Those who pose this question will probably remain stuck with it.

12. Dialectics would then be restricted to the group of statements that can have antitheses, that is, to "problematic" statements with metaphysical or normative contents with which one can in fact at first, and even in the long run, provide grounds for *this* view just as well as for *that* view. Besides this, there is a broad group of statements that cannot have antitheses, which are not problematic, but which can or must be unambiguously decided one way or the other. These would be statements without metaphysical or normative content, thus, either purely empirical or purely logical assertions. There can be no argument about them. Conclusion: Where people argue, metaphysics or ethics is involved. Kant's transcendental dialectics describes the sphere of assertions capable of antithesis as a sphere of metaphysical *illusion;* accordingly, he is the model of a thinker who thinks dialectically and nondialectically at the same time.

13. Hegel's ruins repeatedly attract the interest of critical squatters; they are regularly followed by positivistic eviction orders.

14. Therefore, H. G. Gadamer's thesis that dialectics has to be "taken back" into dialogics and hermeneutics is aesthetically truncated. The polemical far exceeds the dialogical. Who would think of a "hermeneutics of war"? Of a theory of "armed argumentation"? Of a "dialogic" of the breaking off of dialogue—to say nothing of the absurdities of a "hermeneutics of capital" or a "dialogic of administration"?

15. See chapter 2.

16. With Hegel, who has worked himself incomparably deeply into the schizophrenia of this double ego, there are even grammatical reflexes of this structure, sentences whose subjects stand in the first person, the predicate in the third person.

17. See chapter 8, the second section; chapter 7, "The Grand Inquisitor"; chapter 9, "Exchange Cynicism"; chapter 3, "Critique of the Idealistic Superstructure"; chapter 4, "Marxist Elegy"; as well as chapter 26.

18. Because I have no philological intentions, I have not tracked it down in a specific philosopher, but have constructed it in its ideal-typical form; however, I have done this in such a way that Asiatic rather than European figures of thought-insofar as I can say anything about them-shine through.

19. This formulation in Marx (in the introduction to the *Grundrisse)* refers to the abstract concept of *labor* developed by Adam Smith. Ironically, the dialectician, Marx, has not provided us with even the most simple general concept of the polemical. He would only have been able to furnish this if he had "developed further" not only from philosophy to the critique of political economy, but also from the latter back to philosophy. In this gap, Lenin's principled terrorism was able to fatefully unfurl.

IV. Historical Main Text

The Weimar Symptom:
Models of Consciousness in German Modernity

> *On the whole, a reading of the thing induces fear, and that not*
> *so much because of the horrors but rather because of the com-*
> *plete security with which the secret contract that exists between*
> *people is broken. The impression is roughly as if someone in*
> *the room would raise their voice and say, "Since we are now*
> *as animals together among ourselves . . . "*
> Ernst Jiinger, *Grausame Biicher,* in *Das abenteuerliche Herz*

Cynicism, as has been shown, forms a basic figure of the revocation of values in the historical process of combatant consciousnesses. In it, the "ideologies" awaken to themselves. Ostentatiously, they scintillate in malevolent ineluctabil-ity. In the course of history, periods that are especially prone to cynicism emerge, said Marxistically, periods of declining class domination—epochs of an ideology that has become reflexive in which the norms and dogmas of culture, buffered by self-irony, begin to play with their inner contradictions. In human history to date, the becoming-reflective of false and malevolent states of consciousness was al-ways a culturally pathological symptom—an expression of the fact that the ruling strata had entered into a morbid stage tending to decadence and indiscriminate disinhibition. In this point, Oswald Spengler, no matter what one thinks of him, has made statements of perplexing physiognomic precision. It is a matter of late periods, when original forces, value-stable naivete, and more primitive tensions of will in a culturally dominating stratum have been consumed by strategic learn-ing processes. Cynically disposed, therefore, are the times of hollow gestures and artfully prearranged phraseology where, under very official word, private reser-vations, opposed worlds, and ironies are hidden and where, under public an-nouncements, mute submonologues flow, about which only the initiated, the cocorrupted, codecadent, coironist knows something. The smile of the augurs is also the smile of declining ruling classes.

My essay on the Weimar Republic consciously avoids the pathographic vocabulary of cultural critique just as much as the hypocritical soundness of those all too self-certain philosophies of history that straightaway talk of decadence and putrefaction as soon as the individuals in a culture become more reflective, sensi-tive, fractured, and conscious of problems. The phenomenon of reflective ideol-ogy is not quite identical with degeneration. When naivete declines and soberness ascends, that does not have to mean the decline of the West. In any case, moralism and swamp metaphors do not suffice. Even Ernst Bloch, who has also written more subtle things on this problem in general and on the "Weimar Symptom" in particular (in *Inheritance of These Times),* sometimes speaks from this somewhat

too certain, too "healthy" perspective: "putrefying ideology in the declining times of a class society . . . already conscious false consciousness, consequently deception" *(Das Prinzip Hoffnung,* vol. I, p. 169). This way of seeing presumes a psychostructure in which it would be just a short step from the uncovering of the "swindle," that is, from the making conscious of the "putrefying ideology" to the pithy truth. Today's situation is far removed from this, psychologically as well as sociologically, and today scarcely anybody still deludes himself that he has a firm relationship with the truth. A pre- or postmorbid stage expands into a new normality. After a hundred-year-long crisis, the word "crisis" is as wilted as the individuals who once were supposed to be shaken up by it. The modern, reflectively cynical structures have obviously survived the motley phases of decadence: The gray cynicisms of modern matter-of-factness too are still cynicisms, even when they no longer have anything of the great pose of aristocratic morbidity, of aestheticism, or dandyism or of the spiritually decayed life-style of overbred late-bourgeois individualities. We live today in a cynicism from which absolutely no flowers of evil sprout, no grand cold gazes and fireworks in the abyss. Instead, cement cities, bureau-democracy, listlessness, endless mediocrity, administration of deplorable states of affairs, lamenting prattle about responsibility, miserly pessimism, and insipid ironies. It may be that we will have to put up with this "spirit" for a long time. That is a mentality that is not even decadent because it was not preceded by any high point from which it could decline. What today is cynical has long since been sliding along unperturbed in this style.

As we have said, there is no longer any "exposure" that corresponds to reflective ideology. No critique can cope with gelatinous realism, for critique cannot achieve any validity when it is not confronted by an ignorance. In diffusely cynical consciousness, no genuine ignorance reigns, only an inner splintering, unreachable by any sort of enlightenment, and a conscious semidarkness that in its gloom still finds the energy, God knows where, to go on. Even a critique that itself becomes cynical in order to smash the predominating cynicism is deflected. In exactly this way, incidentally, we could summarize critique in the Weimar Republic in the shortest possible formula.

The Weimar Republic is one of those historical phenomena through which we can best study how the modernization of a society has to be paid for. Enormous technical achievements are exchanged for an increasing uneasiness, in the unculture; conveniences of civilization for the feeling of meaninglessness. Huge enterprises shoot up, but in the half-shadow the question remains: What is the meaning of it all, and what does it have to do with me? In the intelligentsia, which consciously went through and participated in the process, there is no longer anywhere a "false consciousness" in the simple sense but rather dissolute consciousness on all sides. Because nothing is "sacred" to this consciousness anymore, it becomes greedy. A world of instruments lies at the feet of this amorphous and imprecise greed, but it finds no real enjoyment in them.

In the Weimar culture—as I hinted in chapter 1 —cynicism finds a more salient language than today. Then cynicism was acidic and productive, whereas today it expresses itself only in the no-thanks style, sullenly or bureaucratically. For the leaders of Weimar culture, in spite of everything that happened, reveal an intimate proximity to the heights of values and the ideals of the metaphysical traditions, whose collapse is now writ large in thousands of bold and fresh, aggressive disillusionments and dismantlings. Kynical and cynical elements are to be found in almost all the progressive aesthetics of the time, not to mention the petit-bourgeois phenomena of disinhibition on the martial-political level (fascism). Among the productive spirits of the time there are not a few who take it on themselves to articulate their disappointments, their derision, and their new, grand coldness in aggressive art forms. They create an expressive language in which negativity and modernity, unhappiness and conscious contemporaneity become almost identical. From this circle come grand poses, individuals holding firm in a glaringly unholy reality. Here, the First World War can still be seen as an event in the history of metaphysics —in a certain way as the militaristic commentary on Nietzsche's "God is dead." The ego after the war is an inheritance without testament and is almost inevitably doomed to cynicism. Once again, it throws itself into grand expressive postures: aesthetic autonomy in dismemberment; destruction of oneself in the general destruction; a superior mien even when being torn apart; cold affirmation of relations that deny our dream of life; the coldness of the world outdone by the coldness of art. Weimar art cynics train themselves to play masters of the situation, while the situation in fact is one in which things have gotten out of control and sovereignty is no longer possible. They practice elevating themselves above the absurd, the inconceivable, and above what has long since been seen through. They impudently place their poses against the equally overwhelming and mediocre destiny of the period: cynically allowing themselves to be swept along —Hey, we're alive. The modernization of unhappy consciousness.

Chapter 12
Weimar Crystallization: Transition of a Period from Recollection into History

> *Three-quarters of your literature and your entire philosophy*
> *are expressions of discontent.*
>
> Bruno Frank, *Politische Novelle* (1928)

In the course of the decade during which I have occupied myself with Weimar culture, an initially very quiet mistrust regarding research on the Weimar period developed that gradually has been transformed into a well-founded theoretical doubt. The more I read, the more uncertain I become about whether we are at all in a position to say anything sensible about the culture and the consciousness of those years from 1918 to 1933. The more research undertaken, the clearer this doubt becomes. The existence of a series of exceptional scientific analyses and accounts does not change this in any way. The doubt is related not to the possibility of giving a historically critical account of this or that aspect of the cultural life of this time but to our ability to assume a sensible stance toward our continuity and discontinuity with Weimar. This can be understood as the expression of a disquiet stemming from the "philosophy of history."

There are two easily distinguishable points of access to Weimar: a nostalgic-archaeological one and an apologetic-political one. The first leads through the literature consisting of memoirs to the oral tradition of older people and finally to the projective curiosity of present-day marginal political groups. According to this perspective, there was a time in Germany when life was "still interesting," when politics and culture proceeded dramatically, vitally, tumultuously, full of ups and downs—as if histrionics had been the common denominator of a whole gamut of social manifestations of life- from expressionism to Marlene Dietrich's spectacular legs in *The Blue Angel,* from the bloody comedy about the Hitler putsch in 1923 to *The Threepenny Opera,* from the impressive Rathenau burial in 1922 to the villainous staged arson against the *Reichstag* in 1933. The perma-

nent crisis, spoken about by everyone, proved itself to be a good director who knew how to arrange eye-catching effects. In addition to the nostalgia of the recollectors, we also observe a pronounced homesickness on the left for the Weimar Republic, where there was indeed a highly remarkable spectrum of political culture—from the leftist liberalism of Tucholsky, Ossietzky, Kastner, Heinrich Mann, etc., to authors and sympathizers of social democracy and communism up to the leftist radicals, anarchists, and independent Marxists such as Benjamin Korsch, Brecht, and up to the early Critical Theory . . . The Weimar Republic became something like a playground for leftist historicism, an exercise field for retrospective allegiances and commitments, as if it were useful to know, at least after the event, to which side one would have beaten a path. Because the connection to the ideas and potentials of Weimar culture was cut off by the Third Reich and the restoration of the Adenauer period, the New Left had to construct a quasi-archaeological access to the buried layers of German political culture. Archival work, skimming, reading; what came to light was impressive: An interrupted tradition had to, in a certain sense, exhume itself, and discovered to its surprise that everything had already been there once before—our entire intellectual "identity" under the rubble.

The second point of access to Weimar chooses fascism, the rule of national socialism, as its perspective. Here, the interest is almost completely apologetic and didactic: why this or that party or person *had* to act in that way; why Nazi fascism could not have been stopped or how it could have been hindered; why everything was as terrible as it was. Weimar appears in this light as prefascism, the period before Hitler. This how-was-it-possible literature already comprises libraries. In it, Weimar functions as an augury of political ethics-what flourishes when a democratic middle is lacking, when illiberal forces become too strong, when the workers' parties mutilate each other, when monopoly capital does not know how to go on, etc. A line of authors knew "even then" the truth, but unfortunately did not gain influence; another line, admittedly, made "errors," back then, but today it knows the correct view. Weimar thus serves on all sides as a political-moral history class from which everyone can learn. Democrats in East and West Germany compete against one another in the posture of those who have learned from the mistakes of the past. Because today the generation of eyewitnesses is aging and dying out, nothing stands in the way of a political pedagogification of those years anymore —except perhaps the academicization.

Doubts arise concerning both ways of proceeding. Could it not be the case that to date only a research in the "mirror stage" [Lacan; —Trans.] has resulted from them, which lingers under the spell of naive relations of "interests" to the "object. Projection, apologetics, overcoming, nostalgia, salvation: They are all positions and images in a historical gallery of mirrors. "What you call the spirit of the times / That is the masters' own spirit / In which the times mirror one another" *(Faust*

I). Is then the "object Weimar" visible at all for us? Can we already try out ways of seeing other than merely nostalgic, projective, apologetic, and didactic ones?

I think the specific forms of consciousness of Weimar culture are beginning to become visible for us again through the prism of the cynicism of our time, which is now coming into its own. The clearer the modern cynical structure becomes for us, the more we gain the optics that belongs to the innermost core of the object. We then see the Weimar culture as the essential "founding period" of this cynical structure in its culturally dominating dimension. Back then for the first time, strategic immoralisms seeped out of the previously hermetically sealed milieus into collective consciousness, and what previously was regarded as the trade secrets of realpolitik, of diplomacy, chiefs of staff, secret services, organized crime, prostitution, and the direction of enterprises is now taken up by a blatant rage for the truth and placed irrevocably in the twilight of "open secrets."

As long as we do not explicitly grasp what cynicism is, the essence of Weimar culture must escape us. Our self-reflection, therefore, has precedence over historiography. As naive historiography, it has already come up against its limits. Only a more precise self-reflection again makes possible a more profound historical experience—if we then think it is necessary. But conversely, one must have absorbed in long studies the specific scent of Weimar and Fascist cynicism in order to recognize that structures are at work in them that live on and connect us with our past. Historical objects do not simply "exist"—they emerge through the development of the eye.

Another doubt about the usual accounts of Weimar is a pure reflex of the study of the sources. In reading the documents, the impression is awakened that many texts of that time were written on a far more elevated plane of reflection, insight, and expression than the later cultural histories "about" them. The latter often profit only through distance in time, and their only way of being cleverer comes from the later perspective. That is, however, the insidiousness of the Weimar object. We cannot simply talk about this period as if its contemporaries had not already said enough about themselves. In its extraordinary achievements in articulation, Weimar culture, in spite of many counterexamples, stands before us as the most self-aware epoch of history; it was a highly reflective, thoughtful, imaginative, and expressive age that is thoroughly plowed up by the most manifold self-observations and self-analyses. If we simply speak "about" it, we all too easily go right past it. Our commentary risks summarizing things that exceed our understanding because the self-understanding in the texts has often climbed to such heights that a later period cannot automatically assume that its powers of understanding could again reach the earlier peaks. (This holds, of course, not only for the culture of these years but especially for it.) I think I can show how, in the various areas of Weimar culture, a summit of cynical structures was reached that only now, from the perspective of the disillusioned, kynical-cynical, crisis-conscious Zeitgeist of the late seventies and early eighties, can be brought into view. The

periods understand each other over a stretch of half a century on the basis of the reconstructed proximity of experience. As far as self-reflection disorders, clever irritabilities, and pensive demoralizations are concerned, they have again become congenial to one another. That is expressed positively but describes a threatening phenomenon. Here we are working with a hypothesis that we think is right but that we hope, like a self-destroying prophecy, will sublate itself namely, that such structures articulate typical features of interludes between wars, in which no intelligence and no goodwill suffice to stop catastrophic tendencies in the system.

The method of presentation is associative and simultaneously construing. For it, extensive quotations are fundamental. I would like to communicate to the reader something of the perplexity that can be summoned through a pure reading —of course, in a prepared context. The themes are relatively multifaceted; they are not pursued to their end anywhere. Every chapter has to remain a hint. Altogether, a methodically thought-out labyrinth results, as if we could gain knowledge of an epoch by going through texts from that time as through and between the mirrored walls of a carnival fun house. Any other way would not succeed. I want to make an object more comprehensible by showing how, in its own inner many-sidedness and fracturedness, it exceeds our normal powers of understanding. What we need is a logical and historical "cubism," a simultaneity in thinking and in seeing. In daily life, we are not deranged [verriickt, meaning also "displaced"; - Trans.] enough to get a proper perspective on the derangement that has coagulated to normality of our everyday life and our history. One can thus read the "Weimar Symptom" as a methodological adventure —as a journey through the madness from which we come.

Chapter 13
Dadaistic Chaotology:
Semantic Cynicisms

> *1. Around a fireball races a pellet of dung on which ladies'*
>   *stockings are sold and Gauguins valued . . .*
>
> *78. A swift kick for the cosmos! Vive Dada!!!*
>   Walter Serner, *Letzte Lockerung* (1918-20)

> *We have the right to every diversion, whether it be in words, in*
> *forms, colors, sounds; but all this is a glorious bit of nonsense*
> *that we consciously love and prepare—a huge irony, like life it-*
> *self; the exact technique of finally comprehended senselessness*
> *as the meaning of the world.*
>   Raoul Hausmann, *Des deutsche Spiesser drgert sich*

> *Hindendorf Ludenburg are not historical names. There is only*
> *one historical name: Baader.*
>   Johannes Baader, *Reklame fur rnich*

> *Everything should live—but one thing must cease: the citizen.*
>   Richard Huelsenbeck

With Dada, the first neokynicism of the twentieth century strides on stage. Its thrust is directed against everything that takes itself "seriously"—whether it be in the area of culture and the arts, in politics or in public life. Nothing else in our century has so furiously smashed the *esprit de serieux* as the Dadaist babble. Dada is basically neither an art movement nor an anti-art movement, but a radical "phil-osophical action." It practices the art of a militant irony.[1]

From bourgeois "institution art" (Peter Burger), Dada makes a claim only on that motif that had given the arts their philosophical momentum in the bourgeois century: that of the amoralist freedom of expression. But art had long since ceased to be what it had been at its center and in its neokynical founding phase (i.e., in the bourgeois Sturm und Drang of the eighteenth century-a medium of expres-sion for the "truth." What the Dadaists saw before them was an art of the aes-

theticistic type, an artists' art that took itself totally and ceremoniously seriously, a substitute religion and a means for beautifying the "hideous bourgeois-capitalist reality." The Dadaists, therefore, simply rehabilitated the philosophical impulse of the arts —their will to truth —in a counterattack against its submersion by aesthetics, finesse, and elitist vanities. With an act of violence, they equated art with what at that time was called contemptuously "arts and crafts" —with that innocuous decorative art that accommodated the need of the upright citizen *(Spiesser)* for being cheered up and for diversion from reality. For the supporters of the avant-garde, by contrast, reality smacked of the rawest negativity, and it could thus happen that the peaceful and antimilitarist Dada people of Zurich in 1916 (almost without exception emigrants from warring countries) even reckoned the pacifists among their enemies because they, disgracefully unrealistic, merely counterposed an *ideal* of peace to reality. Here, the handwriting of kynical modernity appears for the first time: affirmation of reality as reality in order to be able to smash in the face everything that is merely "aesthetic thinking."

> The handicraft artisans from all of Zurich began a resolute campaign against us. That was the most beautiful thing: Now we knew whom we had to deal with. We were against the pacifists because the war had given us the possibility to exist at all in our entire glory. And at that time, the pacifiists were even more respectable than today, where every stupid kid wants to exploit the conjuncture with his books against the times. We were for the war, and today Dadaism is still for war. Things have to collide; things are not proceeding nearly as horribly as they should.

Those were the words with which Richard Huelsenbeck obliged his audience in his first Dada speech in Germany (Berlin, February 1918). Morally we will probably never be able to come to terms with such a text, psychologically scarcely any better. We must first gain experience with ironical-polemical ways of speaking in order to comprehend Huelsenbeck's way of proceeding: He was trying out the new tactics on an immeasurably ticklish subject, namely, the art of declaring oneself, in an ironic, dirty way, to be in agreement with the worst possible things. With cynical speeches he produced an ego beyond good and evil that wanted to be like its mad epoch.

At that time, the war was still raging on all fronts. Western "values" were "collapsing"-like the German Western front at that time and, beyond that, a whole age that will be called the bourgeois period: the aged nineteenth century. In the battles of matter of the World War, Europe experienced the "return of the repressed"—the return of the beast out of the false peace of an imperialist, respectable bourgeoisie. The bourgeois spirit of progress had been an irrealism; it was answered by what had been denied for all too long, in fearful explosions. After Nietzsche, the Dadaists were the first who tried to take up the return of the

4 DER BLUTIGEERNST'eo

I JAM A UiNUKM WOCKEMICHMIPT HIMUICFBE*: ««i EINSTEIN. GEORai &aosi

Arbeiten und nicht verzweifdnl
S O N D E R N U M M E R IV.   D I E S C H I E B E R

Bloody Earnest: "Work and don't despair!" (Special Issue IV: "The Racketeers").
(©S.P.A.D.E.M., Paris/V.A.G.A., New York, 1987.)

repressed from a positive angle. In doing so, they gave the artistic right to unin-
hibited "free" expression a new twist. Between the mentality of the generals, who
are respectably for war, and the mentality of the pacifists, who are respectably
against it, the Dadaists erected a maliciously clashing third position "free" of all
scruples: to be unrespectably for it.

Dada draws a part of its driving force from the feeling of seeing the world in
an indomitably sober way. One assumes a pathetic positivistic air. One unrelent-
ingly separates "naked facts" from phrases, mere culture from hard reality.

"We propagate no ethics, which always remain ideal (swindle). . . .
We want to arrange economy and sexuality rationally, and we don't
give a damn about culture, which was not a palpable thing. We want its
demise. . . . We want the world to be moved and movable, turmoilin-
stead of calm—away with all chairs, to hell with feelings and noble
gestures.

Hausmann, *Der deutsche Spiesser drgert sich*

In the *Dadaist Manifesto* we read:

The word Dada symbolizes the most primitive relation to the surround-
ing reality; with Dadaism, a new reality comes into its right. Life ap-
pears as a simultaneous whirr of sounds, colors and spiritual rhythms
that is taken over into Dadaist art together with all sensational screams
and fevers, its audacious everyday psyche and its entire brutal reality.

In Dadaism, individuals consciously execute for the first time the inversion of
the modern ego-world relationship characteristic of all modern subjectivity:
Kynical individuals put an end to the pose of the self-sufficient creative artist (gen-
ius), the world thinker (philosopher), the expansive entrepreneur; rather, they
consciously let themselves be driven along by what is given. If what drives us
is brutal, then so are we. Dada does not look onto an ordered cosmos. What is
important for it is presence of mind in the chaos. In the middle of the murderous
tumult, every pose of a great thinker, as was usual in the calmly excited *Lebens-
philosophien* of the time, would have been senseless. Dada demanded from exis-
tence *(Dasein)* an absolute simultaneity with the tendencies of its own time—
existential avant-garde. Only what was most advanced lived with Dada on one
time line: war as mobilization and self-disinhibition; the most advanced destruc-
tive procedures even into the arts; an tipsy chology, antibourgeoisie. It is the pa-
thos of truth in this current to have the times in one's nerves and to think and to
live in their rhythm.[2]

We can hear a philosophical echo here; namely, Dada anticipates motifs of
Heidegger's existential ontology, which, for its part, criticizes the lie of the sub-
ject in the European philosophy of domination on the highest conceptual plane.
The ego is not the master of the world but lives in it under the sign of thrownness
(Geworfenheit); we make at most "projections" *(Entwurfe),* but these too are in
turn "projected projects" *(geworfene Entwurfe),* so that primarily a passive struc-
ture toward being holds true. Next door we hear:

To be a Dadaist means to *let oneself be thrown by things,* to be against
every formation of a sediment, to have sat for a moment on the chair
means: to have brought life into danger.
                              dadaistisches manifest (leaflet, 1918)

The idea could occur to us that existential ontology is an academic catching
up to "Dada philosophy" or "Dadaology"—whereby Martin Heidegger would
have contested the status of head Dada held by the master, Johannes Baader, with
enormous success. The secret of Heidegger's success touches the point that con-
stitutes the "failure" of Dada: respectability. Instead of the unrespectably glitter-
ing productions of Dadaist "projected" artists of life and politicking satyrs,
projectedness in its respectable variant won out.

The Dada attack has both a kynical and a cynical aspect. The atmosphere of

the first is playful and productive, childish and childlike, wise, generous, ironical, sovereign, unassailably realistic; the second aspect reveals strong destructive tensions, hate and haughty defensive reactions against the internalized fetish of the citizen, considerable projection, and a dynamic of affects of contempt and disappointment, self-hardening and loss of irony. It is not easy to separate these two aspects. They make the Dada phenomenon as a whole into a scintillating complex that evades simple evaluations and uncomplicated emotional responses. Dada also behaves ambiguously toward fascism: With its kynical elements, Dada belongs definitely to antifascism and to the logic and "aesthetic of resistance." With its cynical elements, by contrast, it leans toward the prefascist aesthetics of annihilation that wants to enjoy the intoxication of demolition to the full. Dada tends to struggle against the "bloody earnestness"—which, however, with its aggressive aspects, lies deep within Dada itself. The Dadaists by no means succeeded in treating their own motives ironically: In their ironic poses, much unfree destructiveness remained stuck and in their way of letting themselves go, a lot of resistance and self-hardening could be demonstrated.

"Dadasophy" develops here and there mystically ironic visions that celebrate life in its undivided fullness, but these are despairingly exaggerated in tone, as in the proclamation of the chief Dada, Johannes Baader.

"A Dadaist is someone who loves life in all its limitless shapes and who knows and says: Not only here, but also there, there, there, *(da, da, da)* is life! The genuine Dadaist thus also masters(?) the whole register(!) of human expressions of life, starting with grotesque self-persiflage up to the most holy word of the church service on the ball, called earth, which has become mature and which belongs to all people.

Even in such megalomaniac hymns of the sect's chieftain, Baader, who proclaimed himself president of the universe, the typical attempts of a more encompassing affirmation appear, in which Dada irony fits well with the kynical aspect of religion (see the works on mysticism by Dadaists, especially Hugo Ball).

In Dadaism, a provisional philosophy of Yes is attempted that refers, above all, to the concrete, momentary, droll, and creative energy of the Dada individual. The Yes holds for the state of the world, which it treats ironically, but even more for the lived moment, in which the miracle of an eternal, fleeting present and the existentialist paradox of the inner "duration," simultaneously permeated and untouched by the turbulence in the world, are realized.[3] The cultural superstructure must be annihilated so that this vital-dynamic element can step into the foreground. The Dadaists thus often see even in expressionism only the continuation of German idealism: "nauseous mystification of things, called expressionism."

The first expressionist, a person who invented "inner freedom," was a

gluttonous and sodden Saxon, Martin Luther. He effected the protesting turn of the German to an inexplicable "inwardness" amounting to mendacity, a juggling with imagined sufferings, abyss of the "soul" and its power beside a servile malleability toward official power. He is the father of Kant, Schopenhauer and today's idiocy in art, which stares past the world and thereby thinks it has overcome it.

Hausmann, *Riickkehr zur Gegenstdndlichkeit in der Kunst*

Nietzsche's kynical realism echos here —with the same anti-Protestant component of hate. The Dadaist Yes to reality and to realization does not concern itself with the opinion of experts, connoisseurs, snobs, and critics. One may understand Dadaism as a prelude to an emancipation of dilettantes that assumes that the joy in creating is more important than the successful result. Ability is only an embellishment of genuineness. It is not the lasting works that count, but the moment of their intensive realization.

A further Nietzschean motif—the recurrence of the Same —can be found in Dadasophy. In a brilliant sketch, *It Was Done by Dada: A Trialogue between Human Beings,* broad historical dimensions are skimmed through.

There has always been Dada, in old Egypt just as much as in Europe or Mexico. The Dadaist, my dear Doctor Smartney, is independent of time. . . .

. . . it is continually reborn, it is handed down through the chain of generations; Dada is an eminently metaphysical matter. . . .

. . . Dada is the great scrutinizer and catcher of moralists. . . .

You regard it as the religious worldview of an ancient Egyptian sect —but Dada also appeared in India. The Sivaites of the left hand cultivated it. In the Gilgamesh epic of the old Assyrians you will find references that Dada is identical with the birth of the world. In the Dionysus mysteries Dada is to be found just as much as in the oracular sayings of the priests of Dodona. . . .

Dada is the greatest irony. It appears as a tendency but is no tendency. . . .

The sexual criminal Alton was a Dadaist when he wrote in his diary: Killed a young girl today, it was fine and hot . . .

Manolescu was a Dadaist when he appeared as a prince and took lodgings in the emperor's court without knowing how we would pay the bill. Dada is the American side of Buddhism . . .

Dadaist documents are always forged, (pp. 110-13)

That Dadaist thinking cannot be summarized and reduced to a formula lies in its structure based on instantaneity. It moves entirely within processes, leaps, points that in their very essence cannot be abbreviated. The thing itself is its execution (a theme that, by the way, dominates reflection philosophy, particularly in Fichte and Hegel). To talk "about" Dada consciousness means almost automati-

cally to place oneself beneath its plane. If we nevertheless try to say something general *about it,* we do this with the express remark that the object is not the Dada documents but the Dada method.

I want to call it a procedure of "reflected negation"—in other words, a technique of disordering meaning, a nonsense procedure. Wherever firm "values," higher meanings, and deeper significance emerge, Dada attempts a disordering of meaning. Dada provides an explicit technique in the disappointment of meaning —and thereby stands in a broader spectrum of *semantic cynicisms* with which the demythologization of the world and of metaphysical consciousness reaches a radical final stage. Dadaism and logical positivism[4] are parts of a process that pulls the ground out from under all faith in universal concepts,[5] formulas for the world and totalizations. They both work like a garbage disposal in the depraved European superstructure of ideas. The Dadaists indeed were all descended from a generation that a short time before had still genuflected with insuperable awe before everything called art, work of art, culture, and genius. For them the first task was a grand cleaning up in one's own head, of one's own past. They negate, as apostates of an earlier faith in art, their previous way of living and the tradition in which they can no longer "stand": bestowing meaning through art and the elevation of the ordinary to the significant. In the backlash against this declining way of living, Dada finds acidic words, particularly with regard to the "last" tendency in art, expressionism:

> No, gentlemen, art is not in danger —for art no longer exists. It is dead. It was the development of all things, it still enveloped the bulbous nose and the swinish lips of Sebastian Miiller with beauty, it was a beautiful illusion proceeding from a sunny serene feeling toward life(!) —and now nothing elevates us any longer, nothing at all! . . . The absolute incapability . . . this is expressionism . . . The writing or painting petit-bourgeois could regard himself as solidly sacred; he finally grew somehow beyond himself into an indeterminate, universal world drowsiness —Oh expressionism, you turning point in the world of romantic falsehood.
>
> Hausmann, *Der deutsche Spiesser drgert sich*

It is no accident that this posture that storms against art had its day once more around 1968 when the Dada of the New Left was "reborn" in activism, happenings, go-ins, love-ins, shit-ins—all the body Dadaisms of a renovated kynical consciousness.

Dada does *not* revolt against bourgeois "institution art."[6] Dada turns against art as a technique of bestowing meaning. Dada is antisemantics. It rejects "style" as pretense of meaning just as much as the deceitful "beautifying" of things • . . As antisemantics, Dadaism systematically disrupts-not metaphysics but the talk about it: The metaphysical domain is laid bare as a festival ground; there,

everything is allowed, except "opinions." The "irony of life" (Hausmann) is supposed to be captured by Dadaist irony. Even Dadaism as style would already be a step backward—and precisely in this sense art history has appropriated it and ordered it into the museum of stylistic schools. Foreseeing this, Hausmann said he is actually speaking an anti-Dadaist. Because Dada is a procedure, it cannot "sit on a chair"; every style is a chair. In this sense, Dada understands itself even as an "exact technique"; it says No, methodically and without fail, when a "meaning of the world" emerges that does not concede that it is nonsense. All opining, every idealization is sublated in intellectual movement-montage and demontage, improvisation and revocation.

The sharpest honing was given to Dadaist semantic cynicism by Walter Serner, the writer whom Lessing called a "German Maupassant." The fact that he has been rediscovered in our day shows that in West Germany, too, a public has been formed in which the sense for cynicism has grown and that can read this author because, in his polished immoralism, a sense for highly conscious, "unfortunately necessary" malice, all too well understandable today, betrays itself. Forty pages of incomparable prose, *Letzte Lockerung {Final Slackening),* originate from Serner, written in the last year of the First World War, published in 1920 by Paul Stegemann in Hannover in the collection, *Die Silbergaule* (The silver nags), a series of philosophical-poetic miniatures, composed of cultural critique and cyanide. Nowhere else can the meaning of sublation *(Aufhebung)* be studied with such sharpness-a violent and simultaneously playful bursting of all cultural semantics, of positing meaning, philosophies, and exercises in art. Brutally and elegantly, this prose strikes out on all sides. Serner presents a theory of language games beside which Wittgenstein's theory looks like finger exercises for respectable Ph.D. candi-dates *(Habili-Tanten,* p. 4).

In this "slackening," the disinhibition of a certain suicidal tendency also betrays itself. Intellectual aggressivity is directed not only outwardly and brings about not only a spectacular repulsive reaction by civilization critique. Serner, the most reflective of the Dadaists, provided himself with an account of the fact that the Dadaist hatred of culture is logically directed inwardly, against the culture-in-me I once "possessed" and that now is good for nothing.

Favorable proposal: Before going to sleep, one imagines with the most pronounced clarity the final stage of a suicide who, by means of the bullet, wants to finally weld self-consciousness into himself, (p. 8)

Where no content counts anymore, only a moment of desperate intensity remains, a suicide's self-consciousness that is "through" with everything. Existence as being unto death. After this, there is no longer any question that Dadaism and Heideggerian existential ontology nurture a subterranean community of inspiration with each other.

At the zero point of meaning, only a pathetic contempt for meaning still stirs itself—an all-penetrating nausea about "positivity": "Weltanschauungen are word mixtures" (p. 5).[7] In true positivist manner, Serner looks into his head and finds there words and sentences that afford no connection. He projects this disconnectedness onto the world, which, accordingly, can no longer be a "cosmos." Dadaist antisemantics proceeds consistently to an anticosmology. From now on, it keeps a sharp eye on people as they paste together worldviews and conceptions of order. In the beginning was the chaos into which people, in their debility and hunger for meaning, dream a cosmos.

> Set a redeeming heaven down on top of this chaos of smut and riddle!! Scent human dung with order!!! I thank . . . Therefore . . . philosophies and novels are sweated over, pictures smeared down, sculptures tinkered with, symphonies etched out and religions started! What a shattering ambition—especially because these vain donkey tricks have all thoroughly (particularly in German regions) missed the mark. It's all balderdash!!!" (pp. 5-6)

Here, one of the naivetes of the older positivism comes to light, namely, that it conceives of the world as a confusion of "facts" that whirl about together just like the sentences in the heads of the logical positivists. However—in contrast to Serner, who tries to outdo the unbearable through affirmation—they cannot bear this chaos of uncoordinated sentences. Therefore, they put formal-logical corsets on their "facts." In their approach, they are all chaotologists. They all assume the precedence of the unordered, the hypercomplex, the meaningless, and that which demands too much of us. Cynical semantics (up to Luhmann) can do nothing other than to charge order to the account of cultural caprice or the coercion toward a system.

With Serner, we see how the otherwise playful dadasophy turns into a humorless, cold romantics. It is a romantics of utter unnai've. In it, the anxiety of being taken by surprise by a naive gesture or a surrender is at work. That drives malevolent reflection into its own hardened flesh. No search for a better life is counterposed to the universal unhappiness. Rather, the attempt is made to counter the given unhappiness with self-intended "high" misery like a sovereign trump card. This is the way a consciousness behaves that is not only despairing but also elevates the wish to be hard as the point of departure for its self-modeling. In his unholy self-reflection, Serner practices the art of piling up and outdoing every "positive" thought with objections, detachments, and condescending commentaries in a distrustful and furious manner. Self-experience and self-destruction become one and the same. Everything is rage that, to be sure, expresses itself but does not discharge itself in a liberating way.

Rage is thus life itself? To be sure: rage contains most of all upright-

ness; to be sure: all other states can only be suffered in that the rage remains hidden or in that the master dissimulates. . . . However: senselessness, at its highest point is rage, rage, rage, and is far from being meaning, (p. 42)

In this sense, a subterranean line leads through the culture of hatred in our century —from Dada to the punk movement and the necrophilic robot gestics of New Wave. Here, a mannerism of rage makes itself felt that gives the great dead ego a pedestal from which the nauseous, incomprehensible world can be despised.

It is urgent that these reflective spaces of modern unhappy consciousness be described because they are the spaces in which the phenomenon of fascism, too, insofar as it is militant nihilism, consolidates. Even in the obvious stupidity of Nazi ideology, a certain "artful dimension" was hidden in the structure. Insofar as Dada presented a cynical show, it led a struggle of unhappy consciousness for sovereignty in spite of the feeling of meaninglessness for grand poses in spite of inner hollowness. Semantic cynicism is accompanied not only by suicidal inclinations but also by the risk of hysterical reaction that can be demonstrated through the paradoxical "sensuousness" of fascism, which brought a resurrection of "grand meaning" in the political spectacle that covered up the long-felt nothingness. In the hysteria a will to break through the self-controls of the lifeless everyday ego expresses itself. The hysteria is driven, according to Lacan's malicious aphorism, by the search for a master to tyrannize. To the extent that a spark of political hysteria was effective in Dadaism, this hysteria still had a strong realist component. For the master Dada sought in order to beat him up also existed, outside Dada consciousness in reality, and as warlord in this imperialist-bourgeois world war he was objectively worse than any hoax, no matter how malicious. Fascist hysteria, by contrast, even invented the master it wanted to tyrannize, and itself conjured up a Jewish world conspiracy in order to eradicate a people whose existence was, to be sure, no mere figment of the imagination.

Serner's *Final Slackening* thus remained a penultimate slackening. As far as we know, his whole life long, he did not let the mask of the gentleman fall. True, he saw the world as having "gone to the dogs," but he himself shrank back from "going before the dogs" (Kastner). Even his sophisticated dog-eat-dog crime stories maintain a style that has more of the master in it than the dog.

The dadasopher, Raoul Hausmann, kept closer to the secret of the kynical pleasure in disputation, which can attack without falling into self-destruction. He consciously oriented himself toward the sounder forms of symbolic destructiveness, toward the "alertness of laughter, irony and the useless," toward the "jubilation of Orphic nonsense" (p. 50). That is the way Diogenes' dogs bark. "This damned Christ said: See the lilies in the field. I say: See the dogs in the street" *(Sublitterel* [1919], p. 53).[8]

Excursus **1. Bluff Twilight**

/ know exactly what the people want: the world is motley, senseless, pretentious and intellectually inflated. They want to despise, show up, deny, destroy that. One can surely talk about that. . . . Those who hate fervently must have once loved deeply. Those who want to deny the world must have embraced what they now set on fire.

Kurt Tucholsky, *Dada,* 20 July 1920

In Tucholsky the Dadaists found their first apparently well-meaning psychologist. He tried, as popular explicator, to extract the good contained in the bad in order to simultaneously justify and belittle it. Tucholsky translates the Dadaist dissolution back into a serious language —he calls this understanding "these people." They are, like all of us, those who have been disappointed by the bad world, who only let off steam more forcefully than our kind. The Berlin Dada phenomena being spoken about here are interpreted by Tucholsky as symptoms of a great loss of love through which Yes has been turned into No and love into hate. Through the explanation of its psychic mechanism, the matter seems to have been brought into order again. If the negative is really only the inversion of the positive, we must know this and then "we can surely talk about it." In this way, the psychologizing journalist determines how negativity is to be dealt with. To be sure, he himself knows irony all too well, but his way of lessening the gravity of things is through melancholy. He does not really consider an aggressive irony. It thus must happen that with his "understanding," he pensively belittles the thing to be explained: "When we subtract what is bluff in this association, not a terrible lot remains" (p. 125). But who said that we should "subtract" the bluff? With this formula, Tucholsky gets caught in his respectable misunderstanding. For the Dada procedure, bluff is indeed fundamental. Bluff and bewilderment *(Verbluffung)* belong together and produce a provocative wake-up effect. Dada builds in a certain way on a bluff realism and demonstrates a technique of deception *(Tduschung),* exposure *(Enttduschung)*, and self-exposure *(Selbstenttauschung).* As a methodology of bluff (of pretense and disruption of meaning), Dada shows ironically how modern ideology functions: to establish values and act as if one believed in them, and then to show that one has not the slightest intention of believing in them. With this self-dissolution *(Selbstaufliebung)* of weltanshauung ("word mixture"), Dada betrays the modus operandi of modern consciousness with all its notorious meaning swindles. Tucholsky cannot, or rather, does not *want* to see this. He himself still postulates objective "meaning." For this reason he does not come up to the level of the object he wanted to explain. He does not see that the methods of advertising, political propaganda, activist and neoconservative weltanschauungen, of the hit parade and entertainment industry, etc., have here been

laid out like a toolbox, or better, like a grammar before our understanding. For Dada contains a bluff theory in action. Without a theory of bluff, of show, seduction, and deception, modern structures of consciousness cannot be explained at all properly. It may give cause for reflection that Tucholsky, up to just before the seizure of power, views the ascendant nazism still from the viewpoint of "respectable irony" and is full of contempt for the stupidity, crampedness, bluff, posing, bigmouthedness, etc., of the Nazis. To the last, this remains the tenor of Tucholsky's anti-Fascist feuilletons that otherwise leave nothing to be desired regarding sharpness. But the sharpness of real understanding is missing. Like all other defenders of melancholy seriousness, he is unable to develop a penetrant relation to "reflexive ideology" and to the phenomena of bluff and disingenuous opinion. (In this regard, he was completely different from Brecht, who from the ground up was in a position to think in the opponent's thought forms: to "tack," to weave, to let oneself go, and at the same time, to control oneself.)

Tucholsky's political moralism is expressed most clearly in his notes on the Dada trial before the Second District Court in Berlin in 1921. At that time, the case before the court concerned a plea by members of the army *(Reichswehr)* against George Grosz's drawings "God is with us"—"in which grimacing faces (of soldiers) of . . . unheard of brutality were to be seen" *(Dada*, p. 127). The five accused—Baader, Grosz, Herzfelde, Schlichter, and Burchardt (the gallery owner)-disappointed the expectations of the left-wing trial observers. Instead of confessing, they tried to get off by belittling themselves.

> Five living beings on the bench for the accused, among them one man: Wieland Herzfelde. He was the only one who said here what was necessary and did not shrink back. . . . None of the boys was the one who had smashed the window pane. . . . As far as Grosz is concerned, I do not know whether the laxity of his defense can be traced to the fact that he cannot speak. . . . His plea saved Grosz's neck and was annihilating for him and his friends. "So that's your defense! Did you intend it to be so?" (Ibid., pp. 128-29)

Is Tucholsky here not following an outmoded moral psychology? Consistency right up to jail and full-blooded political character? More "identity," more confession, longer sentences? Does he not see that the ruling ideology wants precisely the same thing, namely, to isolate culprits with political persuasions? Does the man of conviction not have an advertising function for the political opponent? In any case, it remains remarkable that Tucholsky's demand for "character" related to people who were just more or less in the process of consciously developing an ironic strategy.[9] Instead of profiting from the new art of "sublation," Tucholsky relied on melancholic lethargy. Here, he missed an experience that would have saved him from certain surprises in 1933. Those who treat

phenomena of bluff as something one should "disregard" must remain blind to fascism, even if in other ways they are the bravest anti-Fascists in the world.

Klaus Mann grasped the problematic of bluff from a somewhat clearer perspective. But he, too, sees the matter somewhat defensively.

> We want to distinguish ourselves from the Nazis, for whom everything, from their "nationalism" up to their "socialism," is mere tactics (that is, bluff, trick and swindle), above all through the fact that we are serious about what we say; that we really mean the words and ideas with which we try to draw support for our cause. *(Heimsuchung des europaischen Geistes,* Essays [Munich, 1973], p. 49).

Klaus Mann was one of the first to view the cynical component of Fascist "ideology" clearly. He developed nothing less than the relatedness of the actor with the Fascist politician out of the spirit of bluff (see the novel *Mephisto).* However, it remains questionable whether he, for his part, can really be serious about the antithesis to it: "to mean it seriously." What is an antifascism and an antinihilism that itself is essentially based on the fact that one, more sure than one can be, erects "opposed values" and behaves respectably only so as not to be cynical like the others? Is antinihilism itself not simply an obstructed nihilism?

Grosz, who had worked off the hate within himself in his early work, much later described the connection between nihilism and commitment (as antinihilism) as follows:

> We demanded more. We did not quite know how to say what that more was; but many of my friends and I did not find any solution in the merely negative, in the *rage at having been deceived* and in the denial of all previous values. And so we were driven as a matter of course more and more to the Left. —
>
> Soon I was head over heels in political currents. I gave speeches, not because of some conviction or other, but because everywhere at any hour people hung around disputing and because I had not yet learned anything from my experiences. My speeches were a stupid, parroted enlightenment babble, but when it dripped out of the mouth like honey, you could pretend that you were deeply moved. And often, your own twaddle really moved you, purely through the noise, sishing, twittering and bellowing that came out of you! (p. 115)

> I never went along with the idolization of the masses, not even in those times when I still pretended to believe in certain political theories (Grosz, *Ein kleines J a und ein grosses Nein* [Hamburg, 1974], p. I11)

It must be said, however, that this is a different Grosz talking, a Grosz who, in exile in America, has sat down, inwardly and outwardly, in Dadaist language, "on the chair." What remains significant about this testimony is that it originates

from someone who ran the entire gamut of negativism, political commitment, and withdrawal and could document it as a survivor. When Grosz wrote his memoirs, the two critics of bluff, Tucholsky and Mann, had long since killed themselves.

Excursus 2. The Ice Dogs: On the Psychoanalysis of the Cynic

> *In everyone, the ice dogs bark.*
> Ernst Toller, *Hoppla, wir*
> *leben!* (Hey, we're alive!)
> (1927)

A thought-provoking coincidence: When nazism came to power, on January 30, 1933, the January-February issue of the journal *Psychoanalytische Bewegung* (Psychoanalytic movement) appeared in which, for the first time,[10] a pupil of Freud's addressed extensively the phenomenon of cynicism (Edmund Bergler, *Zur Psychoanalyse des Zynikers* I; the second part followed in the next issue).

Next to this remarkable temporal constellation, another rather piquant observation is to be noted: Here, an author has something to say about a topic that stands in a thoroughly explosive relation to his profession. For the psychoanalyst who expresses views on cynicism talks about a topic that corresponds intimately with psychoanalysis. In 1933, an analyst could actually have found himself exposed to the charge of reinforcing a pornographic and cynical picture of humanity (two expressions that could easily be fused with the epithet "Jewish" in a fatal way). Here, then, a psychologist has ventured into the lion's den. He tries to put the "cynicism" of analysis out of action through an analysis of cynicism. At one point, Bergler himself even betrays a powerful kynical bite, precisely when he defends himself against the charge that psychoanalysis, with its exposure of psychic mechanisms, could be suspected of cynicism. Psychoanalysis is none-the-less, he notes, a "respectable science" and science is no "life insurance for illusions" (p. 141). For the rest, Bergler's interest centers on personalities in whom cynical tendencies are striking, as his depth-psychological studies of Napoleon, Talleyrand, Grabbe, and others demonstrate. It is obvious that his reflections are motivated by current events - as shown not least of all by the fact that as examples he brings in texts and events of the most recent times, for example, Erich Kastner's novel *Fabian* from 1931.[11] Finally, Bergler's study reveals, with the use of some examples, that he believes he has found traits of cynicism in some patients that, as a rule, manifest themselves in the form of aggressions against him, the analyst. To that extent, we are justified in saying that this psychoanalytic statement on cynicism arose in a thick mesh of current motives and stimuli that tie the text precisely to the historical moment (1932-33) and to the author's professional situation. He defends his profession against the charge of cynicism; he diagnoses some patients who attack him as having traits of cynicism ("moral insanity").

There is thus no question that here we are *in* the middle of things —even when they are spoken *about* matter-of-factly.

What strikes us is the extraordinary emphasis with which the analyst proclaims cynicism, or better, the "cynical mechanisms" to be a manifestation of the *unconscious* and of the persisting *infantile* component in the adult. With a grand gesture the whole domain of cynical phenomena is pocketed for psychoanalysis. Bergler allows only four of the sixty-four listed forms and variants of cynicism to count as "conscious," and even behind these, insofar as they are not disqualified from the beginning as "shallow" and "worthless," he conjectures that there are "grave neuroses."

Cynicism, says Bergler, is one of the forms in which people with extremely strong emotional ambivalences (hates-loves; respects-contempts, etc.) create a psychic possibility for discharge. Cynical "discharge" accordingly stands on the same level as classic neurotic mechanisms such as the hysterical, melancholic, compulsive, paranoid, and criminal(!) defenses. In cynicism, the negative, aggressive side of the ambivalence can be expressed. However, this side alone does not characterize "cynical discharge." In addition, an extremely strong "unconscious need to be punished" must be present—masochistic and exhibitionist tendencies (although male verbal cynics are often said to be strikingly prone to shame regarding their bodies). In cynical speech, a psychodynamic related to the compulsion to confess (Reik) is said to be at work-to know that one violates the commandments of the strict "super ego," but that one cannot refrain from the infringements, and so, to settle the inner conflict thus created, one resorts to truth that is now aggressively revealed. The cynic attacks the outer world in trying to overcome an "inner conflict." "He beats the others; he wants to beat his conscience" (p. 36).

But through its aggressive, comical side cynicism is also a method of gaining pleasure, and this in a sevenfold way: (1) because cynics become temporarily free of guilt by means of an apposite remark; (2) because the rage of others amuses them (this thesis is reflected in the blurb from J. Drews [ed.], *Zynisches Worterbuch* [Zurich, 1978]); (3) because they can enjoy their own exhibitionistic tendencies; (4) because cynicism is a method of distancing; (5) because narcissistic pleasure can occur insofar as clever statements are admired; (6) because jokes are simply funny; (7) last of all, because thereby cynics can live out their infantile tendencies —by which are meant early infantile fantasies of grandeur, "anal" tendencies, and early sexual-cynical rage against the whore in the mother, said more generally, the scars of old Oedipus conflicts.

The crux of this interpretation of cynicism is the older psychoanalytic superego theory that sees the human being as a creature that continually cowers under the commands and threats of a lofty, strict, "heavenly" superego. However, it is curious that the analyst who deals with the cultural relativity of the so-called superego (which is expressed in cynicism) does not venture to think through this

Man muß Kautschukmann sein!

Ja, Kautschukmann sein — eventuell den Kopf
zwischen die Beine stecken oder durchs Faß springen —
und spiralig in die Luft schnellen! sieh, ein Paragraph
rempelt Dich an,
    eine Affiche,
    ein Flohzirkus . . .
. . . .
(sämtliche Flöhe lie-
gen an Schlingen —
desertieren ausgeschlos-
sen — Springen von
Flöhen auf Kommando,
Parademarsch der Flöhe
. . . .)
    Immerhin wichtig
    ist, das Gleichge-
    wichtzu behalten!
    Wo vordem die go-
    tische Kirche,
    messelt sich heute
das Warenhaus hoch — !   EIN „MARSIAS" INTERESSERT
    — Die Fahrstühle sausen . . . Eisenbahnunglücks,
Explosionskatastrophen . . . .
    — quer durchrast der Balkanzug Mitteleuropa,
    doch gibts auch Baumblüte und Edelmarmeladen-
rationierung . . . .
    Wie gesagt, Kautschukmann sein
    beweglich in allen Knochen
    nicht blos im Dichter-Sessel dösen
    oder vor der Staffelei schön getönte Bildchen pinseln.

    Den Bequemen gilts zu stören
    beim Verdauungsschläfchen
    ihm den pazifistischen Popo zu kitzeln,
    rumort! explodiert! zerplatzt! — oder hängt euch
ans Fensterkreuz . . . .
    Laßt euren Kadaver in die Branntweingasse baumeln!
    Ja! Wieder elastisch werden, nach allen Seiten
höchst federnd — sich verbiegen — anboxen! Kinn-
oder Herzgrubenhieb!

Ladies and gentlemen!!
Jeder hat Zutritt!

    Nur nähertreten!! . . . nur nähertreten!! . . .
    Schon beulen sie den Weihrauchkessel ein.
    Nervös rutscht das weiche Gesäß hin und her!
. . . .
    Ja! Wenn nicht sämtliche Flöhe an Schlingen
lügen! . . . .

From *Neue Jugend* (June 1917, Malik-Verlag).

concept of the superego—as if his intellect cowered and crouched under the authority of the superfather, Freud. This is curious because Bergler comments on phenomena in which obviously the superego does *not* succeed in confirming itself in the cynic's behavior. Should the superego too not be something more than it once was?

It seems that Bergler begins, against his will, to give an account of this. Cynicism is after all a phenomenon that belongs to the "dialectic of culture," and insofar as psychoanalysis as a theory of psychic processes is inevitably a theory of

culture, in the long run, it cannot pretend that cultural phenomena such as cynicism can be treated merely psychodynamically. In fact, this is precisely the topic through which psychoanalysis sublates itself. The individual psyche has to be grasped just as much from the cultural aspect as the latter has to be grasped from the psychic aspect. The universal, transtemporal, strict superego is a superseded analytic fiction. In most of Bergler's examples—there are some very nice ones among them, and they alone make the reading rewarding —we can say that the mechanisms of the cynics' statements were hidden to them only if we do violence to these examples. They know what they say and they say it not so much on the basis of "unconscious" mechanisms but because they have become conscious of real contradictions. Thus they often express a contradiction kynically, or they express one of the many forms of *mauvaise foi* cynically. The unconscious scarcely has to make an effort. The conscious participation of the ego is objective immoralisms and the obvious fragmentation of morals explain the matter much more effectively than does the depth-psychological theory. Only at one point does the analyst widen his field of view.

> The flooding of the entire culture with fear of one's conscience *(Gewissensangst)* leads to the circumstance that even there, where persons seek to rid themselves of their fetters *in thought,* as in *cynicism,* nothing other(!) than a compromise with the superego comes about. One is thus not very far removed from reality when one says that cynicisms are profoundly *also* a bowing before the superego and compromises with the inner voice of conscience. "Not all those are free who mock their chains," taught a poet-philosopher. But that *even in this mockery* people pay tribute to the superego is grotesque, (p. 166)

It cannot be better said: "One is thus *not very far* removed from reality .. . ," but still pretty far away. Bergler understands that many forms of cynicism are efforts to strip *oft fetters*—consequently, that cynicism belongs to the dynamic of cultural liberation struggles and the social dialectic of values and that it is one of the most important methods of working through ambivalences in a culture. The expression "compromise" indeed hints in this direction. With something that stood "above" me, no compromises could be concluded; then it would just be a matter of obeying.

The compromise is concluded with an authority that has no penetrating imperative force —with a weak superego and a conscience that only pricks but can no longer give orders. Bergler shows involuntarily that analysts and cynics are in a way the last real moralists. They let themselves be reminded now and again of the commandments of conscience and morality, even if only when a conflict arises between reality and morality. For the rest of the world, morality is always and everywhere not broken with such matter-of-factness, but split, so that one no longer even feels the "inner conflict" with it. With its theory of the superego, psy-

choanalysis gives the "moralists of the last days" a medium in which they can express themselves. However, the collective decomposition of the superego is always a step further along than the moralists think. Objective cynicism has a head start on subjective cynicism which can never be made good. When cynics make malicious jokes, when they give morality the cold shoulder, when they demonstrate an icy coldness with which they anaesthetize themselves against the amoralism of the world, indeed when they even want to outdo its amoralism —then the subjective coldness toward morality reflects a general social freezing over. The joke that comes out of the cold at least reminds us in its aggressivity of a more vital living. The "ice dogs" still have the energy to bark and still possess enough bite to want to make things clear. Psychoanalysis, which is "precisely not life insurance for illusions," also has it in its better half. The scientific embalming cannot erase the fact that enlightenment, as Kant and many others emphasized, is just as much, if not more, a matter of courage as of intellect and that those who want to say the truth will not be able to avoid conflicts.

The date is January 1933. Psychoanalysis reflects on cynicism. Soon it will have to emigrate. It is done with the analytic explanation of cynicism. It becomes evident that what was supposed to have been the solution has been overwhelmed by the problem.

Notes

1. Otto Flake (1923): "Dada is the same thing as was earlier the famous, little understood romantic irony —a *dissolution*. The seriousness, not only of life, is dissolved." *Das Logbuch* (Giitersloh, 1970), p. 295.

2. This seems to be a basic factor of Left morality. See G. Regler's statement: "Those who did not participate in their times were poor-hearted. This became an unwritten law, then a pressure, and finally moral blackmail." *Das Ohr des Malchus* (Frankfurt, 1975), p. 161.

3. Dada could be understood essentially as a school of "subjective" positivism, in contrast to the "objective" positivism of logical empiricism. Both positivisms intersect in their radical semantic cynicism. Dada speaks of *nonsense* in an existential regard; the logical positivists speak of *senselessness* with regard to (e.g., metaphysical) statements.

4. They constitute the most prominent phenomena in the area of semantic cynicism; see also Carnap's *Scheinprobleme;* Theodor Lessing's *Geschichte als Sinngebung des Sinnlosen;* Mauthner's *Sprachkritik:* Wittgenstein's *Tractatus.*

5. If M. Rutschky could write in his essay about the seventies, *Erfahrungshunger* (Cologne, 1980), that it was a time in which the "utopia of universal concepts" melted away, then he designates something common to the German Federal Republic and the Weimar Republic. In the former, of course, it was a matter of Left sociological universal concepts; Weimar struggled more against ethical ghosts. Both stressed subjective positivism, sensousness instead of sense.

6. This refers to Peter Burger's much discussed *Theorie der Avantgarde.* In my opinion, he approaches the problem wrongly, namely, from the sociological side. However, this cannot be debated here. For the Dadaists, art is not an "institution." Art is a meaning machine-it should be disturbed or destroyed in its functioning. Hence semantic cynicism. Art is a superego sector, a piece of authority: That should disappear. Hence the anarchistic gestures. The urge toward life, toward sublation in realization, by contrast, is an old inheritance: neokynicism of the eighteenth century. In this

sense, significant bourgeois art is "avant-garde" for as long as it has existed: pioneer of truth, of vitality in modern society.

7. Weimar/FRG: In Peter Handke's development, we can observe the stages subjective positivism can run through: language critique, language-game actions, logical treatment of nausea; then from senselessness to faint-hearted sensuousness, to new narration; circling around the first "true feeling"; labor of recollection. Nausea and meaning cannot coexist in the long run. In understanding this, Handke is on the way to becoming a significant writer.

8. All Dada quotes that are not cited more explicitly are from the easily accessible Reclam selection, *Dada Berlin. Texte Manifeste Aktionen,* ed. H. Bergius and Karl Riha (Stuttgart, 1977).

9. One should write a history of ideology on the struggle between irony and identity, talent and character (see Heinrich Heine's trouble with the German public of characters. See also Excursus 8. Actors and Character.)

10. With the exception of some remarks of Freud, Reik, and others.

11. See here chapter 22, "Bright Hour," where I quote the same passage Bergler cites as an example of a "cynic who revels in his own shabbiness" (K. Kraus).

Chapter 14
The Republic-as-If. Political Cynicisms I: The Struggle Goes On

> *Swindle! Concocted swindles! They all have their national colors. They will take care not to hoist the colors. They wouldn't even dream of it. Pay attention to what comes afterward! I'll tell you . . . Then come Wilson's fourteen points![1] Fourteen times fourteen, they won't give a damn about us.*
> Franz Schauwecker, *Aufbruch der Nation* (1928), p. 372

George Grosz has just provided the slogan of the epoch: "the rage at having been deceived." Disappointment, disillusionment, resolutions not to let oneself be deceived again: These are the psychopolitical fundamental motifs of the Weimar Republic. They intensify the reflectively cynical disposition of society into manifest aggression.

Everywhere the bitter feeling of having been deceived hung in the air of the new beginning. The war was over, but the state did not manage a demobilization. The Weimar peace became a continuation of war through other means.

Today's research is in agreement that the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 represents the earth-shattering diplomatic mistake of the century. In it, it became clear for the first time that under modern capitalist-imperialist premises, the relation of war and peace had become something different from what it previously had been in (European) history. If the First World War had already introduced a new quality of international warfare, then, in the Treaty of Versailles a "harsher" quality of peace was hinted at. The victors had already won in principle a "total war," without, however, demonstrating their success through a "total victory" (invasion, occupation, foreign administration, etc.). The German capitulation came a little before the collapse of the Western Front and the invasion of Germany by the Allies. Thus, the Allies' victory was indeed unambiguous, but not fought out to the last military consequence. The German capitulation happened, as we know from numerous sources, to a large extent in the expectation of a bearable peace —an expectation that burst in the early summer of 1919 as the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles became known. Here it was demonstrated that

the victors did not have in mind any chivalrous gestures of honor toward the con-
quered and that they thought of transforming the total war into a total victory as
well through diplomatic means. From this moment on, the despondency of the
losers, who by that time for the most part had become thoughtful and were
prepared[2] to discuss a sensible new beginning, began to dissolve into an outraged
refusal. The Versailles treaty had the same effect on the losers as if the victors
had broken the "real" truce. From now on, the dull impulses to deny what had
happened received their external seed for crystallization. From then on, an out-
break into aggressive defiance became objectively possible.

In Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1925), we find passages in which the dynamic of such
denial can be grasped in crystalline form. Hitler describes how he, as loser,
would have liked to dictate to the victors the conditions under which he would
rather have lost the war, in any case, not this way.

> Does a military defeat have to lead to a total collapse of a nation or a
> state? Since when is this the result of an unhappy war? (Edition of
> 1937, 275,000th-276,000th copies, p. 250)

Hitler proceeds from historical experiences in which the phenomenon of such
total war and total defeat was not yet known. Hitler now wants to reduce this
historical innovation to a well-known magnitude. He speculates that the great
"collapse" is attributable to two factors: military defeat *and* "inner" betrayal. The
first factor alone, he thinks, would have been withstood:

> For, if the front as such had really failed and if, through its misfortune,
> the fate of the Fatherland had been put on the agenda, then the German
> people would have taken the defeat upon itself in quite a different way.
> We would have then borne the subsequent misfortune with clenched
> teeth. . . . Even the capitulation would have been signed only with the
> head while the heart would have already sounded the coming uprising.
> (P- 251)

And now, the myth of "inner putrefaction" follows.

> Unfortunately, the military defeat of the German people is not an un-
> deserved catastrophe but a well-earned disciplining of an eternal retri-
> bution. We have more than deserved this defeat, (p. 250)

Hitler translates the political-military debacle of Wilhelminianism and the fall
of German feudal capitalism into the moral language of blame and sin. For noth-
ing has happened for which we ourselves were not to blame. Our offense con-
sisted in not having hindered the strengthening of socialist, pacifist, liberal,
democratic, and "Jewish" elements in society. The collapse, according to Hitler,
was a "consequence of an ethical and moral poisoning, of a lessening of the drive
for self-preservation" (p. 152). Only thus could it have come to mutinies of

troops, strikes in munitions factories, etc., toward the end of the war. The battle front was intact [sic]; only the home front had let us down and betrayed "those out there." In this way, Hitler pushes the front inward: Outwardly, the war may be at an end; here in the interior, it goes on —as a campaign against the democrats, pacifists, and others who needed the military defeat for the victory of their convictions.

With this, Hitler outlines unmistakably a situation of civil war: On the opposing side, he sees the Jews and their "Marxist organ of struggle" as well as the entire horde of democrats, socialists, and company.

> Did they not in some circles express downright joy at the Fatherland's tragedy? (p. 250)

Hitler even claims to have observed contemporaries who at the end of the war had "laughed and danced, who extolled their own cowardice" and had "glorified the defeat"(see also the Pasewalk infirmary anecdote, discussed later). With this, Hitler projects his own catastrophile structure onto the opponent. For the real winner as a result of the catastrophe had been *he himself*— who discovered his calling in it. At the same time, in his projection he does understand parts of reality correctly. There really were many who had been awakened to political consciousness by the war and who were relieved that the Wilhelminian Junker regime, which had become intolerable, could be driven off. Other groups welcomed the revolution as the beginning of a new era for humanity. And others openly announced that their cause would be able to succeed as a result of the catastrophe suffered by the (capitalist) nation. Something of this resounds in the tone of the "Guiding Principles of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party on the Peace of May 19, 1919":

> I.   The peace conditions of the alliance with respect to Germany are the balance of the inner and outer . . . situation of Germany after four and a half years of a lost imperialist war . . . (serves you right?) . . .
> III. The peace conditions of the alliance systematically exploit this inner and external political bankruptcy . . . .
> VI. The situation is absolutely hopeless for the government of bankrupt imperialism, no matter what it undertakes. *(Dokumente zur deutschen Geschichte, 1919-1923,* ed. Wolfgang Ruge and Wolfgang Schumann [Frankfurt, 1977], pp. 17-18)

The Communist party thus rejected both: the acceptance of the treaty as well as its rejection. For the German proletariat, one was as bad as the other. But what would be the alternative —or the alternative to the alternative? Is there a third road? Yes, a proletarian dictatorship, and only this could then accept or reject without it being "immediately disastrous for the proletariat." This is how the Ian-

guage of a cynical hyperrealism sounds that accepts the "fact" that the catastrophe occurred because of the "nature of things" and that those who know this can talk about it as if they were not touched by it but were in alliance with it.

Hitler likewise tries on the role of the great diagnostician. For him, too, the catastrophe was a necessity, and as such it reveals an aspect that points toward the future.

> For the German people, we can almost regard it as a *great fortune* that the period of its insidious disease was suddenly shortened by such a terrible catastrophe; for otherwise, the nation would probably have perished more slowly, but all the more surely. . . .
>
> It is then already—of course, a *bitter—fortune* when destiny decides to intervene into this slow process of putrefaction and, with a sudden stroke, presents the end of the sickness to those suffering from it. . . . For this is not the first time that such a catastrophe has come down to this. It can then easily become the cause of a cure that sets to work with extreme resoluteness, (pp. 243-54)

"Bitter fortune": This is the sharpest expression of populist dialectics. Political sadism in medical metaphors? Pathological cynicism in political metaphors? Already at the hour of birth of the republic, the political surgeons on the far right and the far left have taken their positions and sharpened the ideological scalpels with which they want to cut the cancerous growth out of the German patient. Both are scarcely interested in the current situation in Germany. They look into the future and dream of the day when the grand operation can take place.

Thus the struggle goes on. The faint-hearted spirit of the New Beginning — however it may have looked—which, in the seven months between the capitulation in November 1918 and the signing of the Versailles Treaty in May 1919, had had its small chance, from then on was pulverized between a multitude of realisms, sophisticated tricks, defiant postures, and duplicitous thoughts about the future. Ernst Toller has one of the men who was there during the revolution of 1918 say in 1927, "It is all a matter of tactics, my dear." Ten years later, he was practicing realpolitik. *{Hey, we're alive!)*

Notes

1. President Wilson presented on January 8, 1918 a peace program that called for the evacuation of occupied territories, arms limitations, freedom of the seas and world trade, the right of self-determination for all people, and the founding of the League of Nations. Wilson's idealistic line could not gain acceptance at the negotiations that led to the Treaty of Versailles (January-May 1919).

2. The great majority of the Weimar National Assembly, elected in January 1919, was still prodemocratic. The first Reichstag of 1920 was already clearly dominated by antidemocratic forces.

Chapter 15

The Front and Nothingness. Political Cynicisms II: Populist Dialectics and the Dissolution of the Front

Everyone was hated: the Jews, the capitalists, the Junkers, the Communists, the military, the landlords, the workers, the un-employed, the Black Reichswehr, the controlling commissions, the politicians, the department stores, and once more, the Jews. It was an orgy of incitement and the republic was weak, scarcely perceptible. . . . It was a completely negative world with colorful foam on top.

G. Grosz, *Ein kleines J a und ein grosses Nein*
(Hamburg, 1974), p. 143

From the end of the war it took about ten years until, in the Weimar Republic, a regular military nostalgia broke out. "Front" became a magic word for clarity in political relations. Us here; them over there. We know exactly in which direction we have to shoot. The apprentices of democracy who had been frustrated by politics began to yearn for the "clear relations" of war. Toward the end of the twenties, the horrors of the battles seemed to be, even psychically, integrated or pushed into the distance or reinterpreted to the extent that numerous authors ventured an account of the war: Remarque, Renn, Glaeser, Zweig, van der Vring, Goebbels, Schauwecker, Beumelburg, and others.

With the right-wingers, two motifs are unmistakable: They long for the experience of comradeship on the front—above all as antithesis to the bickering state of affairs of Weimar political sects and right-wing parties; they yearned for the "front" as that line where one still knew "who one was." In the meantime, even the conservatives and the young nationalists had comprehended that war and domestic politics were two different things. With a military nostalgia, they enunciated this experience concisely: Soldiers are apparently heroic, clear, hard, brave, big on withstanding, obeying, serving and persevering- in a word, manly-The politicians, by contrast, were slippery, sly, frivolous, opportunistic, cowardly, compromising, small, unclear, ambiguous, soft-in short, unmanly-The nostalgia for war, among other things, was a restoration of manliness, but even more the restoration of a declining sociopsychological type, the "unambiguous character." To have fought on the front, that gave the militarist nationalists a recollection of how it was when one still felt safe in the psychical armoring of

one's own "identity." Already with the dissolution of the regiments in the gloomy November and in the dismal Weimar peace, the soldiers often did not quite know which world—after all that had happened—they should return to. For them, the republic was the place where they lost what they held to be their "identity." In retrospect, the dream of the front grew in them, where everything had still seemed so clear.

In 1929, Franz Schauwecker, one of the more intelligent authors in the populist camp, sketched a highly significant scene: a parting of soldiers into a peace with which scarcely anyone is pleased. The author ascribes an awareness to his figures that belongs more to the year 1929 than to November 1918. As with Hitler, the great misfortune is now, in retrospect, attributed an equally great significance. Here, too, the end of the "real" war is denied.

> But do you know how all that appears to me?! The proper war is only just beginning, the real war, you know. Now there are no more explosions, now everything goes on silently. That gets on one's nerves. . . .
>
>   . . . We have learned all sorts of things from each other that we can use. For this peace is the continuation of the war through other means. Each goes to his own front. The front is now secret. Live well, comrades. . . .
>
>   *Now we begin to notice how difficult things are.* . . . Until now, on the front, we always obeyed. . . . Duty does not decide for itself, but is decided. Do you see —and then it is basically extremely easy to follow one's duty- . . . And there we have it, the great German legend of today, the German mystique of the simple soldier. *They had to knowingly do something which was practically completely useless]* And they did it. There you have the greatness and the tragedy of the German frontline soldier. (Schauwecker, *Aufbruch der Nation* [Berlin, 1929], pp. 375-78)

Schauwecker grasps the point the populists otherwise deny: The German sacrifices of the war were *senseless.* However, this senselessness *has* to be overcome because one wants to. One overcomes it by demanding that it must have a meaning — even if one has to bring it about personally by force. *Nihilistic antinihilism.* Schauwecker construes a new positivity in the middle of the collapse. Even the German revolution, which for the Right was otherwise nothing more than an ordeal, is there stamped with an incidental nihilist significance.

> It is pitiable, petty, miserly, vengeful, envious and animated only by a diseased hatred, a miserable matter of insects. But quite by the way, it did something it had not at all intended. . . . It has cleared away all hindrances to ourselves, it has broken down a thick tangled mass. That is the best thing about it. It has washed the dirt out of our eyes. . . . (p. 381)
>
>   . . . But you see: that is the secret-that has long since become

clear to me in my skull. Pay careful attention: we didn't have any other content at all! That is the whole secret! Indeed! . . . The secret consists in the fact that there is nothing there. Nothing! Therefore nothing happened! Therefore, everywhere people gave way.

The new philosophy of the front replaces the old morality. It talks not in medical images like Hitler but in moral and psychological concepts. A populist revolution is supposed to result from the activism of the men with a conscience about the front. The soldiers return home, not to peace but rather they make their way from the lost war "for nothing" to the new and genuine front about conscience. "We only have to say one word, then we understand each other instinctively: the front!" (p. 381).

Today we cannot say it aloud, for it is not for everyone's ears. I don't think that it is a great disaster without meaning and without blame. . . . We have to find out once and for all why we lost the war. Because we ourselves had the guilt in us, the emptiness, the impudence, the external power. . . .
We had to lose the war so as to win the nation, (p. 382)

Georg van der Vring, too, in his *Soldat Suhren* (1928) projected the Weimar feeling of the dissolution of the front back into the inner monologue of a young soldier, who in the night train rolls out to the front for his first contact with the enemy:

And I come across a knot in my tissue called: the front. That is a military expression thrown about by the newspapers and the army reports as if it were an easily comprehensible object. But it isn't. For on that front mentioned by the army reports, good fights against good, evil against evil, good against evil and evil against good. And so it is a confused, even thousandfold twisted front whose shape no one knows.
There is, however, one front that is clear, unambiguous and straight and I find it in a secret place—I find it in my conscience. And it is the front of good thoughts and dignified actions, of hand shakes and loyal faith, (p. 59)

The moral front floats invisibly over nations, parties, blocks, individuals, and external fronts. It remains a mystical line —irrational and inward. "Conscience! That is the word that shines today" (Schauwecker, p. 379). The populists thus take their credentials from that authority that psychoanalysis had begun to investigate under the concept of the superego —and all the more with its description of the cynic's weak superego that nevertheless demands its tribute. However, in fact, this conscience for its part was already drained and disoriented. Good and evil can indeed appear inverted. Conscience was supposed to be the authority that bore the inner front—but taken in isolation it had already long since been drained

and indeterminate (or the recurrence of the old order, about which it was said it had been rotten and without substance.)

This is precisely the point that Heidegger is concerned with in his epochal analysis of conscience in *Sein undZeit* (1927), sections 55-69 (see also chapter 7 in this book, "The Cabinet of Cynics," the final section.) He conceives conscience as the "call of care."

> What does conscience call out to the addressee? Strictly speaking - nothing. The call says nothing, gives no information about events in the world. . . . "Nothing" is called out *to* the addressed self, but rather it is *called upon* to be itself, that is, to assume its own innermost possibility, (p. 273)

We observe in the populist dialectic a comparable figure of thought: the retrogression to the nation's "own innermost possibility" on the path through the nothingness of the great catastrophe. Heidegger explicates the emptiness of the conscience in "advanced" social praxis. His analysis sounds like an echo of the movements of thought in populist nihilism-antinihilism. Karl Jaspers, however, strikes at the heart of the problem even more precisely in *Zur geistigen Situation derZeit* (Man in the modern age, 1932). He elevates the problematic of the front to a universal characteristic of life in the "modern order of existence." He confirms that the function of the front—to say to people what they are to fight or work for and against, with whom they are allied and against whom or what—has been lost. In the age of tactics, everything can suddenly be turned upside down. The front melts. Under the heading, "The Struggle with No Fighting Front," Jaspers writes:

> A struggle in which one knows with whom one has to deal is clear. In the modern order of existence, however, after every momentary clarity, one is afflicted by the *confusedness of the fighting fronts.* What a moment before seemed to be an adversary is now an ally. What in accordance with the objectivity of what is willed should be an adversary is on our side; what really seems to be antagonistic refrains from fighting; what looked like a united front turns against itself. And, of course, all this occurs in turbulent commotion and change. It is something that can turn me into an adversary of those apparently closest to me and into an ally of those who are distant from me. (Berlin [1979], p. 163)

For many contemporaries, in view of the political state of affairs, the traditional schema of left and right also had to lose its clarifying function. What did concepts like progress and retrogression, socialism and capitalism, say when one lived in times when one party cleverly designated itself as "National Socialist"? When tactical alliances were made between Fascists and Communists? When two large workers' parties could not build a common "front" against that other party

that also called itself the "Workers' party" and that nevertheless knew how to make a front with the party of big capital (Deutschnationale Volkspartei) and the armed forces—the notorious Harzburger Front of 1931, from which a pretty straight line leads to the Eastern Front of 1943 —without the laughable "Iron Front" of the democrats of 1932 being able to do anything about it? (See chapter 26.)

In 1920, the Dadaist, George Grosz, yearned to join ranks with the proletarian masses.

> There will come a time in which the artist will no longer be that Bohemian, sloppy anarchist but a bright, healthy worker in collectivist society. For as long as this goal has not been realized by the laboring masses, *the intellectual will sway skeptically and cynically to and fro. (Manifeste, Manifeste 1905-1933. Schriften Deutscher Kiinstler des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts,* vol. 1, ed. Dieter Schmidt [Dresden, 1965], p. 261).

But in Grosz's autobiography we read:

> We were like sailing boats in the wind, with white, black, red sails. Some boats had streamers on which you could see three strokes of lightning, or a hammer and sickle, or a swastika on a steel helmet - from a distance, all these symbols looked similar. We did not have much control over the boats and had to maneuver assiduously. . . . The storm raged endlessly but we sailed off; we did not understand its melodies for our hearing had been blunted from so much "listen here for a minute." We only knew that a wind was blowing from the east and another from the west—and that the storm blew over the entire globe. (Grosz, *Ein kleines Ja und ein grosses Nein,* p. 143)

Chapter 16
Dead Souls without Testaments.
Political Cynicisms III: Looking after
War Graves in the Empty Interior

You know, sister, . . . I am completely sober . . . but it is my deepest conviction: no one will ever really come home anymore.

Hermann Broch, *Die Schlafwandler* (1931-32)

How senseless is everything that was ever written, done and thought if such a thing is possible! Everything must be disingenuous and inconsequential if the culture of millennia could not even hinder these streams of blood from being set flowing.

E. M. Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928)

In the survivors of the First World War, its dead did not come to rest. A change in the quality of dying had impinged on their consciousness: The Western Front of 1916 alone—in whose middle was the ghostly fort of Verdun —"claimed" over a million dead. For the first time in human history, a state of affairs was realized that can be designated by an expression from present-day American nuclear strategy: *megadeaths* (equal to one million dead). With the tactics of artillery and trench warfare, death on the battlefield was transformed from death in motion—as the storming enthusiasts of Langemarck still suffered—into a positional death. In the drumfire of *Storm of Steel* (Ernst Jiinger), an accidental surface death arose — a statistical, fatalistic relation of the fighter to the shell that either misses him or turns him into dead matter.

That trauma of 1915-16 has its invisible and ubiquitous aftereffects in dynamism, vitalism, and the intoxication of movement of Weimar culture: getting stuck in the mud; the submersion of the attack in the trenches; the shock of immobilization; the fatalistic exposure to shells flying from somewhere or other; the decomposition of bodies in the mud of the trenches.[1] That is the great unsaid (or scarcely said) trauma of the time, but nevertheless it is everywhere at work as practiced myth. The myth works on in the protest of the fighters returning from the front against the demobilization (not to sink into the mud of civilian life), in the cult of aggression, of speed and moving on, which the contemporaries of Weimar prescribed for themselves; in the pleasure taken in the spread of the automobile, which starts off in an elitist fashion with the racing of the famous Mercedes Silver Arrow, anr' mixes in with popular dreams, in order to come completely

into its own in the program of Volkswagen (the People's Car), the power-through-joy-car. In Germany, the motorized nation was initially a Fascist dream.

The incomprehensibility and the technologized indignity of death in the modern war of artillery burst all categories of conventional meaning. Absurdity elevated itself to the phenomenon par excellence, to the naked and uninterpretable fact that overwhelmed thinking with its brutal "It-is-so." The power of this absurdity can also be measured by the omnipresent attempts to overcome the experience of senselessness with (left- and right-wing) antiabsurdist dispositions.

> They did not call it "battle" or "fight"; they said "charge" and they spoke of themselves only as "we out there." In this way, they wandered for months between the hands of death until they could say neither "yes" nor "no" to anything, until they did it without a word, a look, without a thought. . . .
>
> They could be interchanged arbitrarily. . . . In these burning smelting ovens they stripped off all differences and became like each other, until only the German front-soldier remained, who, ossified, took everything upon himself: deed and hunger, exhaustion and dirt, rain and fire, blood, horror and death. (Schauwecker, p. 228)
>
> They sacrificed themselves day after day, night after night. . . . Many choked to death in the mud of the shell craters because they did not want to let go of the machine gun.
>
> . . . They died in the roar, the smoke, mud and rain. They died in the dugouts, buried and suffocated. They died, gnawed away by gas. They died with gangrene in their wounds. They died everywhere, on the ground, in the ground, in the air, in dead forests, on hills, in craters.
>
> In the end, they fought without hope. They were abandoned and each stood alone.
>
> The *only thing they possessed was this: they knew who they were.* (Ibid., p. 353)

This existentialism of the fighter at the front is already a belated retrospective bestowal of meaning from the populist perspective, as was depicted in thousands of novels and treatises. This knowing-who-they-were was carried over by the survivors of the war into the Weimar peace or, more precisely, was invented in retrospect in the latter. It is the basic figure in any bestowing of meaning from the right: Absurdity is exchanged for identity; one gains ego feelings through the denial of critical experience. "Composure." To the present day, the neoconservatisms have not done anything differently.

When the regiment described by Schauwecker withdrew to German soil, it had to, on command from above, destroy all remaining weaponry, shoot it off, or sink it in a pond. Albrecht, the hero of the story, experiences this literally as self-castration. "Here, the nation, on command, deftly cut off its private parts" (p.

369). In the Bengal light of the last flares, an old war grave lights up before his eyes—a cross, nailed together, with the inscription:

"Rifleman Fritz Bredenstoll
Infantry Regiment No. 162, 4th Company

He fell on 26 August 1914 for his Fatherland. He became a little giddy. He suddenly became a bit weak in the knees. . . .
. . . a perfectly patriotic illumination over the grave of Fritz Bredenstoll who, according to the inscription, in 1914 chose to die for his Fatherland and to give himself up to this grave, while the others preferred to explode flares in the air and to throw away their ammunition or organize some revolution or steal what they could get.
It was freezing. He became cold. Yes indeed —what did I want to say —I don't know anymore —it makes me so violently ill—that is all so repugnant to me —damn it! —leave me alone—it's all so horrifyingly stupid and childish, (pp. 370-71)

Schauwecker's tortured, sarcastic tone betrays the effort of trying to outdo the objective cynicism of death in war with the subjective cynicism of nausea. His hero returns home —with a picture of "revolution" in his head that would be nothing other than the overcoming of absurdity through grand politics: He dreams of a "revolution on the front" in which the survivors rise up for the sake of the dead.

The "Fiihrer" of this revolution found motivation for his political mission in a similar way. Hitler lay in the Pasewalk infirmary in Pomerania as the other revolution in Germany began. According to his own account, he was blinded by mustard gas "in the English gas bombardment on the South Front at Ypern" in mid-October. A recent psychological interpretation says, on the contrary, that Hitler's problems with his eyes at this time were a case of hysterical blinding with which he somatically staged the decision "not to look on." Be that as it may, Hitler records that on November 10, he learned from the infirmary's chaplain the truth about "out there" (i.e., the capitulation in the West and revolution in Berlin):

When things started to go black again, I felt and reeled my way back to the dormitory, threw myself on my bunk and buried my burning head under the blanket and pillow.
Since that day when I stood at my mother's grave, I had not wept . . . but now I could not do otherwise. So, everything had been for nothing . . . the death of the two million who died was in vain. Would not the graves of all those hundreds of thousands have to open, those who had once set off with a belief in the Fatherland? . . . Would they not have to open and send the mute, muddy and bloody heroes home as ghosts of revenge who had been so shamelessly deceived into making the greatest sacrifice a man can make for his people in this world? Had they died for that? . . . Did these boys of seventeen sink

into the Flemish earth for this? . . . Had he lain in the hell of the drumfire and in the fever of gas warfare for this? . . .

In these nights, the hate grew in me, the hate against the culprit behind this deed.

In the days following, my destiny also became clear to me. I now had to *laugh(\)* at the thought of my own future that a short time before had still caused me such bitter worries. Was it not a *laughing* matter, to want to build houses on such ground? . . .

There can be no pact with the Jew, but only the hard either-or.

But I decided to become a politician. *(Mein Kampf,* pp. 223-25)

In these pictures, the lived myth of the Weimar Republic speaks: Politics changes into the caring for war graves by the survivors. Those who got out alive seal a pact with the dead. Hitler composes an imaginary testament of the fallen by forcing himself on them as executor. Those who had sunk into the earth and mud stand up *within him* and return to their people as ghosts of revenge, out of the mud, home to the purity of ideals; instead of sinking into the Flemish soil, they would storm forward in populist movements. Hitler's conceptions of the blitzkrieg that he realized from 1939 onward were a staging of this image of graves that open up in order to transform those who had sunk into them back into storm troopers. Viewed psychopolitically, the Fiihrer was such a storm trooper, an emissary of the war graves.[2] The politics of the militaristically and Fascistically inspired Right rested on the motif of a double—just as Brecht has depicted it in his *Ballad of the German Soldier* (see also Beumelburg, *Voice from the Grave,* etc.).

The pact with the dead is the psychological dynamo of the arch-Fascist. At that moment when he makes himself into the executor of those buried in the mud ("But I decided . . . "), his private neurosis discovers the magical contact with the national neurosis. What had previously been only an individual structure-Hitler as emissary and revenger of the dead mother (see the new psychoanalytic interpretations of Hitler by Stierlin and Miller) —now becomes politically generalized; Hitler as emissary of a higher order. He is sent, he thinks, by the war dead. They are the millions who stand behind him from the beginning. They cannot save themselves from having such a delegate. In 1930, millions of living stand behind him, the war dead of the future who gave the double their vote; only then did those millions, too, stand behind him who mustered German industry to support Hitler. (See the well-known montage by John Heartfield: "Motto: Millions stand behind me"; Hitler raises his hand for the "German salute"; a corpulent donor, larger than life, lays a bundle of thousand-mark notes in his hand; Heartfield calls the montage "The Meaning of Hitler's Salute."[3])

In his poem *Stimmen aus dem Massengrab* (Voices from the Mass Grave, 1928), Erich Kastner formulated another testament of these dead millions:

We have dirt in our mouths. We have to be silent.
And want to scream until the grave breaks open!
And want to climb out of the graves screaming!
We have dirt in our mouths. You cannot hear us.

There we lie, our dead mouths full of dirt.
And things went differently than we thought as we were dying.
We died. But we died without purpose.
You will let yourselves be slaughtered tomorrow, like we
                                               did yesterday.

Notes

1. Bernd Weyergraf drew my attention to these points particularly in the case of several paintings by Otto Dix. See *Katalog zur Ausstellung im Haus am Waldsee, Berlin 1979 Otto Dix—zwischen den Kriegen,* ed. H. V. Heppe, T. Kempas, and B. Weyergraf, in particular pp. 14ff.

2. One should look at the tombs of Unknown Soldiers with this in mind. The traditional forms show heroic constructions, towering warrior statues, pyramids for the dead, flags waving, obelisks. The Munich tomb for the Unknown Soldier, erected in 1923 in the courtyard of the residence in front of the Army Museum, depicted the new experience. The soldier lies in a kind of crypt; he is the sunken one; his resting place is half sanctuary, half artillery dugout. All about, entrances to the monument have been left open. One has to descend to honor the dead one. But what is more, he lies in such a way that he can arise again at any time. See *Die Zwanziger Jahre in Munchen. Katalog zur Ausstellung im Munchner Stadtmuseum* May-September 1979, ed. C. Stolzl, p. 469.

3. See Eckard Siepmann, *Montage: John Heartfield. Vom Club Dada zur Arbeiter-Illustrierten Zeitung. Dokumente, Analysen, Berichte,* 3rd ed. (Berlin, 1977), pp. 204ff.: "Die Millionen-Montage."

Chapter 17
Conspirators and Dissimulators. Political Cynicisms IV: Conviction as Disinhibition

> *In Germany after the war there was no revolution, but there was a counterrevolution. What is commonly designated as revolution is only the fact that on 9 November 1918, all the monarchs fled in fear of a revolution. When they assessed the real situation, it was too late to keep up the fiction that they were still monarchs. Into the vacuum that had thus arisen, as the bearer of official force, stepped the army, represented by the soldiers' councils. They delegated their power to the National Assembly and thereby committed suicide.*
>
> *The monarchists, after 9 November, played dead, so to speak, and claimed that they only wanted to intervene to estab-lish calm and order. Therefore, they supported the Social Democratic government in the struggle it wanted to have with the Left. In this way, the politically anemic forces and the resolute opponents of the republic again gained power.* Im-mediately, the dictatorship of means revealed itself. *The government of 1919 could not get rid of the spirits it had sum-moned. The armed forces removed the soldier's councils, they removed the leader of the republic, literally, by having him murdered.*
>
> E.J. Gumbel, *Verschworer. Zur Geschichte und Soziologie der deutschen nationalistischen Geheimbunde 1918-1924,* new ed. (Heidelberg, 1979, p. 13; see also the new edition of *Vier Jahre politischer Mord* [1922], 1980)

With a steady hand, Emil Julius Gumbel, a privatdozent in statistics in Heidel-berg, as well as pacifist, radical democrat, and documenter of the injustice current in his time, sketches the outlines of the German Revolution of 1918-19. Its course was dominated by the interplay of social democracy with the reactionaries, the anemics with the bloodstained forces. What crystallized as the new political order

in Germany was a dubious interaction of official parliamentary forces with antidemocratic and secret organizations. In the latter gathered those who wanted to pursue a politics of refusal. The officials allowed themselves in all this to bite into the sour apple of the given facts: capitulation, the Weimar National Assembly, extorted acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles.

Social democracy had let itself be made a fool of by the political opponent or had offered itself as fool and stopgap measure. It took over the opponent's political inheritance without having looked to see whether it was really dead. Whereas those who were responsible for the war and the defeat had settled outside the country or had submerged in the blustering national opposition, the Social Democrats, with Friedrich Ebert and Gustav Noske at the helm, risked presenting themselves as the force of law and order in a situation of volatile revolutionary-counterrevolutionary ambiguity. They allowed themselves to be used to perform the work of the reaction. An older social democratic conviction complex seemed to emerge here once again. As early as 1914, social democracy had proved that it was prepared to fall into the patriotic line when it was a matter of clearing the way for the war. Thus, in 1919, it wanted to prove how efficient it was at ruling when it was a matter of administering the catastrophes of the other side. Twice within four years it said yes, gritting its teeth, to things that were irresponsible. Both times it showed itself to be the party of tragic illusory realism in Germany. In order to appear completely responsible and realistic, it accepted the responsibility for the mistakes and crimes of others, became a collaborator of Wilhelminianism, and then, after the war, the business partner of military, bourgeois, and populist reaction. In its behavior, it carried to the point of absurdity the antithesis described by Max Weber between the ethics of conviction ("the pure line") and the ethics of responsibility ("the view of what is given"). For it practiced a conviction of responsibility, a readiness to accept responsibility as a substitute for conviction, formal realism as substitute for constructive, relevant action. It did not try to understand that even a simple real reform needs a revolutionary core, and thus after 1918, it bloodily choked off the democratic forces in Germany that wanted change. It wanted reforms without real interventions and thereby achieved the highest possible degree of conservation, indeed, restoration.

In this, a basic feature of Weimar mentalities is reflected: illusory realism, false sobriety, self-deception under the facade of the grand overview, positive conviction about the innermost disorientation, nihilistic antinihilism, a reckless readiness to assume responsibility. The naive pretended to be respectable and without illusions. The vengeful disappointed played innocent.

After the pause for reflection until May 1919-by which time the German experiments with council-republics also had failed-the men of the reaction had set their sights more clearly on their goals; Down with the props of the republic. The heads of the national and military camps were dreaming, already quite some time

before the first serious counterrevolutionary coup, the Kapp putsch (March 1920), of a great *blow.*

From a memorandum for General von Lossow
It is divided into a purely military part and a civil-political-economic part. The aim of both parts is to prime the entire people for the *blow* and to psychologically *prepare* them for the work, for the spirit required after the executed blow.

I. Military Part

. . . An improvement of the state of affairs can only rely on weapons.
The armed forces execute the first blow, clear the air, eliminate quickly and ruthlessly everything that through weakness and criminality suffocates the people. After the executed blow, the part of the people at arms builds the main force for the so-called civil and economic dictatorship. . . .

3. Preparations

a) Mobilization of the armed forces and students(!) . . ,
b) Mobilization of the citizenry . . .
d) Compilation of black lists

II. The Civil Part

The Press

Certain signs and mute indications, often quite *harmless hints,* as soon as they again and again race(!) through the pages of the press, will to a large extent help solve the task of the education of the people. (Gumbel, *Verschworer,* pp. 28-30)

Under the cover of secrecy, the military Right finds its true language. The conspiracy suspends the compulsion to dissemble in its interior. Outwardly innocent; inwardly, cynicism as the normal tone. On February 11, 1920, a certain Lieutenant Mayerl wrote from Wurzburg to the commander of the Berthold Armored Division, a volunteer corps, which around 1919-20 mulled over plans for a great "blow."

It is to be hoped that the coming dictatorship will not forget to declare open season on the Jews. —One night would suffice to exterminate these *dogs.* Here, I have already started compiling a black list so that the "right ones" will be beaten to death. . . .
For many a non-Jew also deserves it. (Gumbel, *Verschworer,* 23)

From the start, the German conspirators practice a game with masks. Only those who can look innocent will be in a position to let fly when the moment is ripe. The philistine cynicism, as it is revealed in Lossow's memorandum, presupposes for its dictatorship of means a propaganda of pure conviction; the civil

preparations for the "blow" are thus necessarily respectable and publicly idealistic, apparently innocent. "The work is carried on publicly under the sign of the 'Antibolshevist League' " (Gumbel, p. 30).' The higher the public goals, the more secretive the cynical means.

Just how strongly the ways of acting and thinking of the German Right were imbued with military cynicism is revealed by documents on the most spectacular action of the populist "idealists"—the murder of the German foreign minister, Walther Rathenau, in Berlin on June 24, 1922.

> Just as Rathenau . . . wanted to drive from his villa in Grunewald to the Foreign Office, his car was overtaken by another car, driven by a student, Ernst Werner Techow, in which the former first lieutenant, Erwin Kern, and Hermann Fischer also sat. Kern and Fischer fired a machine gun at Rathenau and threw a hand grenade at him. Rathenau was killed instantly. . . .
>
>   . . . After the deed, Techow reported, "It came off. Rathenau is dead. We did it to provoke the reds to an attack. *We were out of money."* (Gumbel, *Verschworer,* p. 48)

The felons were recruited from the former Ehrhardt Brigade, later known as Organization C, as well as from other populist, conspiratorial, and antirepublican associations. Fischer committed suicide. Kern, the principal culprit, died in a shoot-out as he was about to be arrested.[2] Giinther—"who was the most likely to spill the beans"-suffered an attempted assassination with arsenic-laced chocolates.

> The most interesting personality is Willy Giinther [who had helped work out the plan;-Author]. In the war, he distinguished himself as deserter and forger of documents, impersonated a Turkish lieutenant, was exposed, punished for desertion. . . . [3] He took part in the Kapp putsch and gained through this contact with Colonel Bauer and Ludendorff. He was a member of the League of the Righteous, the German League, the German Officers' League, the League of Loyalty, the League of Protection and Defiance, and the German National Youth League. At a "nest evening" of the latter league, he let himself be celebrated as Rathenau's murderer. Letters from Helfferich, Ludendorff. . . were found in his possession. . . . One of ten letters from Ludendorff began "Dear Giinther" and ended familiarly "With cordial greetings." (Gumbel, *Verschworer,* p. 49)

In his defense, Techow, who was presented as a "populist idealist," claimed that he had believed that the trip was only a *test drive.* With *threats,* Kern had "persuaded him to become an accomplice." He had acted in a subjective *situation of distress.* The young Ernst von Salomon, who was implicated in the preparations for the murder, also swore that he had believed that the plan had to do with

"setting a prisoner loose." The tenor of the defense ran: Admittedly, they had the "noble convictions" that would suffice for political murder, but in detail, it "wasn't intended that way." Techow enjoyed strong public sympathies. At the Technical University in Berlin, a public collection was organized on his behalf.

The art of political dissimulation saturated the ways of thinking of the right-wing conspirators. Since they regarded themselves as having been duped, in other words, since they used the duping as the basic lie to justify their actions, they demanded for themselves the right to declare a secret war on reality. Because they wanted to save populist illusions, traditional privileges, and patriotic megalomaniac fantasies, they proclaimed cunning to be the true morality. With a crafty hyperrealism, they set about defending their illusions. This resulted in several remarkable strategic plans. Gumbel notes that Organization C also surrounded itself with "political fantasies" of the following kind:

> By the way, an entire system of political fantasies belongs to Organization C. The best example is a book by the former Major Solf, which appeared as early as 1920, entitled: "1934, Germany's Resurrection." Colonel Bauer, for whose arrest a warrant had been issued, wrote the preface. Here, as a means for Germany's resurrection, everything is affirmed that the opponents of present-day Germany accuse it of as a proof of the will to wage war.
>
> For starters, there is a *Club of the Innocent.* It has *contacts* in the whole country and its goal is a war of retribution against France. Its head has no name but is called the General. (Just as in the national association Ludendorff was called Dictator L. and Ehrhardt simply "Consul.") The club also has innocent members who, until the last minute, do not have a clue about what is going on. (Just as the Organization Escherich or the People's Militia.) Former officers' boys serve as contacts among the workers. For the officers, mobilization lists are compiled. A famous physicist invents a new means of war, a *kind of radiation* that causes all ammunition within a certain radius to explode. *Disguised* as cinema projectors, the individual parts are manufactured in factories (just as now in Schiebungen weapons are declared to be machines). . . . On the decisive day, the General holds a speech: "We will rid ourselves of undesirable elements without many pangs of conscience. . . . " The storm breaks loose. The Reichstag, which is nationalist to the bones, receives the General. The Reich president abdicates, the General receives unconditional power (Enabling Act, state of emergency). The enemy troops of occupation are defeated everywhere. In 1921, 10,000 copies of this book were already sold. (Gumbel, *Verschworer,* pp. 80-81)

The fantasizers of 1920 will prove to be the realists of 1933. Major Solf s scenario contains the politics of murderous innocence in embryo. The deceitful,

crafty, and upright partisans of the Club of the Innocent project the spirit of simulation also onto everything surrounding them—particularly the political opponent, even when it is already sitting in jail. From Niederschonenfeld, the notorious Bavarian fortress for "political prisoners" (Toller, Miihsam, etc.), it is reported:

> The Bavarian parliamentarian Hagemeister suffered unspeakably. He suffered from a very weak heart. The prison doctor adjudged him to be a malingerer who wanted to be transferred to a hospital so as to be able to escape. In mid-January 1922, a high fever set in. The prison doctor said, "Herr Hagemeister, you are so healthy that if you were my private patient, I would advise you to refrain from further treatment because I wanted to save you the cost." The next Hay, Hagemeister was found dead in his cell. (Gumbel, *Verschworer,* **p.** 123)

Excursus 3. The Reasonable Bloodhound: A Social Democratic Elegy

> *Someone has to become a bloodhound;*
> *I do not shrink from the responsibility.*
> Gustav Noske[4]

On 9 November 1918, the head of government under Kaiser Wilhelm II, Prince Max of Baden, knew that the situation for the Hohenzollern was hopeless. "We can no longer beat down the revolution, but only suffocate it." Suffocate the revolution—that means: Grant it a fake victory, let it occupy deserted, exposed positions in order to trap it in a position in reserve prepared for this purpose. Said concretely, the kaiser had to abdicate, the half Social Democratic government had to become completely Social Democratic, and the chancellor had to be called Friedrich Ebert. It fell to Ebert then to send the apparently victorious revolution, startled and disconcerted at the ease of its own victory, home and to recreate order —in the words of Prince Max: to do on a macrolevel what Noske had already done on a microlevel in Kiel.

Ebert was thoroughly willing to do this, and Prince Max knew it. General Groener suspected it at least. All three men were, at the latest since the morning of 9 November (!) tugging on the same rope. (Sebastian Haffner, *Die verratene Revolution 1918/1919* [Bern, Vienna, Munich, 1969], p. 77)

The fateful days of the German revolution lasted from January 9 to 12, 1919. At Ebert's command, in these days and nights, the Berlin Revolution, which pointed the way for the development of Germany, was shot to pieces. After "Ebert's bloody Christmas" (there had already been heavy fighting on Christmas Eve, 1918, between reactionary officers from the Reichswehr and revolutionary

naval troops, which ended with the sailors' victory), it now came to a bloody deci-sion. Should the new order in Germany be created with the aid of forces that wanted something new, or should only a stalling "order" be created that amounted to a conservation of the old deplorable state of affairs? Ebert had decided to place the slogan Law and Order higher than the promising revolutionary reshaping of the German situation.

Legend has it that the fighting of January 9-12 was a "Communist uprising." It has been recorded in history as the "Spartacus uprising." However, neither the former nor the latter can be taken seriously. It was not the case that Ebert and Noske drew together the reactionary volunteer troops to fire on "Communists." It was not groups of ultraleft conspirators on whom these units of right-wingers had to fire in the name of the Social Democratic chancellor. For the most part, it was Social Democratic masses of workers, for whom it seemed self-evident that after the bankruptcy of the feudal-bourgeois Hohenzollern state, a new democratic social order that served the interests of the people should arise. They had not the slightest understanding for the semiconservative tacking of the Ebert government. Ebert, Scheidemann, Noske-in the eyes of the masses, they were no longer genuine Social Democrats. For the Social Democrats, as far as the popular and not the official basis was concerned, were for clear relations and for a revolutionary break with the old powers.

On January 11, the Maercker Gendarme Volunteer Corps ("at last, real sol-diers again") marched in a demonstration through the suburbs of bourgeois west-ern Berlin. At its fore a lanky and bespectacled civilian: Gustav Noske, "Social Democrat." This is how he understood what he called "carrying responsibility": putting himself at the head of irresponsible, emotionally explosive, reactionary troops incapable of thinking politically. A few days later, the Social Democratic protege killers of the "Garde-Kavallerie-Schutzendivision" (Guard-Cavalry-Rifle Division) murdered the best minds of the revolution: Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

The name Noske from then on became the trademark of Social Democratic il-lusory realism. The "Noske period" is a phrase that recalls innumerable murders for the sake of "law and order." It designates the bloody months from January to May 1919 in which in Germany a Social Democratic government "suffocated" a principally Social Democratic mass movement with a clear tendency toward re-form, in the way in which Prince Max had predicted.

Through his role, Noske qualifies himself as a cynic of the coarsest kind. His concept of "responsibility" had the tone of a cynical disinhibition that strengthens itself by confessing to its own "unfortunately necessary" brutality. "Someone has to become a bloodhound . . . " This tragic password of the Social Democratic counterrevolution already breathes a Fascist spirit. The latter equates responsibil-ity with willingness to make decisions, which in turn disinhibits those responsible in a brutal direction, and the brutality is reflected once more in itself by express-

Prost Noske!———das Proletariat 1st entwaffnet!

The Bankruptcy: "Congratulations Noske! The proletariat has been disarmed!"
(©S.P.A.D.E.M., Paris/V.A.G.A., New York, 1987.)

ing not only that it is this way but also that it wants and "has" to be this way. The cynical tone now calls the Social Democratic tune. After Noske had gathered troops together, that is, held an executive organ of large caliber in his hand that all too willingly let fly at the local revolutionary councils and committees, he began to triumph. Noske on January 21, 1919:

> The government must gain authority for itself by shaping a factor of power. In the course of a week, a battalion of twenty-two thousand men was created. *The intercourse with the solders' councils therefore changed somewhat in tone.* Before, the solders' councils were the factor of power; *we* have now become this power factor. (Quoted after Haffner, *Verratene Revolution,* p. 170)

We, that is the Social Democrats, the bloodless ones, allied with their own deadly enemies. They provide an opportunity for the bloodhounds to get used to murder and manslaughter within a legal framework. The negligence with which Ebert and Noske came to terms with the existence of the corps of volunteers is incredible; of these, only sixty-eight were officially recognized (which according to estimates comprised almost half a million men). The minds of the commanders of the voluntary corps were thoroughly haunted by "political fantasies" (Gumbel) of the type cited earlier. One of them, a Captain Gengler, noted in his diary on the same January 21, 1919: "The day will come when I will settle accounts with this government and *tear the mask off the* entire wretched, pitiful pack" (quoted after Haffner, *Verratene Revolution,* p. 172). Here, a pre-Fascist speaks as enlightener who wants to unmask the Social Democrats, whom he recognizes as dissemblers. Even the populists saw through Ebert's philistine pseudorealism that, as a simultaneously restricted and disinhibited conviction of responsibility, wanted to "save" Germany in its hour of need. Ebert's complex about dignitaries misled him to believe that reason could only be something that lies between the extremes. He did not comprehend that there can only be a midpoint between right and left where the left principle had unfolded enough in order to be able to be balanced out. Ebert already set a middle course as preventive measure. Thus it happens that, lacking the left wing, the midpoint between the forces always comes to lie pretty much to the right. Thus it can occur that what is "reasonable" in a cynically bright hour, will have occasion to confess to being a bloodhound. That is the tragic knot in German history of this century. With its false reasonableness, social democracy destroyed and hindered what was about to take place in Germany in those months: the Social Democratic revolution.

Notes

1. This probably refers to Eduard Stadtler's well-known ideological foundation of this name. For more details see Joachim Petzold, *Wegbereiter ties deutschen Fascismus. Die Jungkonservativen in der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne, 1978), pp. 52ff.

2. Erich Fromm provides a psychogram of Kern in his book *Anatomic der menschlishen Destruk-tivitat,* chapter 11.

3. These details become significant in connection with chapter 23, "On the German Republic of Impostors."

4. The German revolution of 1918-19 has coined scarcely any frequently quoted phrases. This is one of the few and it is cynical like scarcely any other. Noske related it on assuming command of the troops who were to beat down the revolution in Berlin. That was on January 9, 1919. On January 10. [ne] S[ave] orders to attack revolutionary Berlin.

Chapter 18
Depersonalization and Alienation. Functionalist Cynicisms I

> *Stop! Don't do anything because of your name. A name is something shaky. You cannot build on it!*
>
> B. Brecht, *Mann ist Mann*

The First World War had undermined the thinking of the ideologues who wanted to glorify the warrior. Its proper subject showed itself to be not the battle-stained hero but the massive military machinery. The survivors expressed this experience a thousandfold. It forms the hard core of the modern dissatisfaction with subject-object ways of thinking. The individual subject now appears unmistakably as registered, drafted, uniformed, engaged, disposable —subject in the original sense of the word as "subjugated." War spits out the new subject of the times: the "front," the people at arms; this becomes the megasubject of thinking marked by war. A little later, it will be called "community of the people"; in it, the members of the nation will be forced together in an illusorily homogeneous fighting unit. As a historical alternative to this community-of-the-people-unto-death, parts of the workers' movement, which conjured up the megasubject "working class," presented itself back then and came to think about its real interests in life. The time seemed to belong to the great collectivities; the individualist veil of bourgeois culture disintegrated.

The war had consumed the "warriors" physically as well as psychologically-The "man" sank into the mud trenches, was torn to pieces by shells or mutilated. Here, a bourgeois dream of "wholeness" and personality came to a horrible end. Those who recollect frequently mention castration by shells on the front. Uncountably many experienced the defeat as a social-psychological emasculation. The war had already reduced heroism to a matter-of-factness in fighting. Now, the defeat made one more facticity out of it. In this way, I think, the oft-cited Wei-
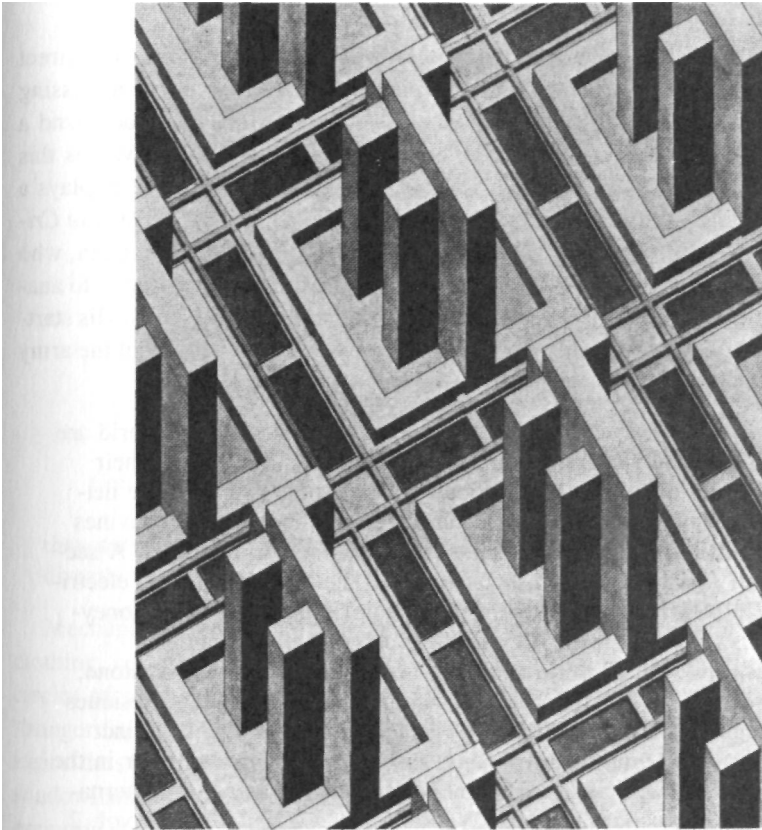
C. van Eestern and L. G. Pineau, *City of Traffic,* 1926.

mar "matter-of-factness" touches in the first place on a military-psychological state of affairs. In the following years, this seeps into the cultural style: the warrior as the coolly functioning engineer. The attacks by storm become the heroic deeds of matter-"Storm of Steel." Finally, in the modern war of artillery, the last connection between heroism and survival slackens. The bond between the soldiers and the weapon systems now is "matter-of-fact." The man in uniform has to learn to regard himself as the "human factor" in the war of machines and to act accordingly. The general staff phrase "human material" increasingly stamps the modern form of self-experience and way of treating oneself. Those who survive must have learned to regard themselves, their bodies, their morality, their will, as things. The soldier's physical condition and moral attitudes provide only aspects of armament and battle equipment. In this point, war gave all modern

moral philosophies a drastic, graphic lesson: Morality is called the psychic factor of the war machine.

Military matter-of-factness, so much of which will be inherited in an indirect way by Weimar culture, is for its part, however, woven into an encompassing process for which Walter Rathenau, who was murdered in 1922, had found a striking formula: *the mechanization of the world.* The book that develops this thought is still worth reading today, and not only because the author displays a style that is almost sensationally brilliant for a politician. Rathenau's *On the Critique of the Times* (1912) is the outstanding attempt of a bourgeois politican, who was also a successful entrepreneur and philosopher of respectable status, to analyze the essence of modern society for himself and his contemporaries. His starting point in describing the mechanization of the world, however, is not the army but the metropolis.

> In their structure and mechanics, all larger cities of the white world are identical. Situated at the midpoint of a web of rails, they shoot their petrified street-threads over the countryside. Visible and invisible networks of rolling traffic crisscross and undermine the vehicular ravines and twice daily pump human bodies from the limbs to the heart. A second, third, fourth network distributes water, heat and power, an electrical bundle of nerves carries the resonances of the spirit. . . . Honeycomb cells, fitted out with silky fabrics, paper, timber, leather, tapestries, are ordered into rows; outwardly supported by iron, stone, glass cement. . . . Only in the old centers of the cities . . . residues of physiognomical peculiarities are still maintained as almost extinct showpieces, while in the surrounding districts, no matter whether in the direction of the factories, residential or recreational areas, the international world warehouse extends (W. Rathenau, *Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 2 [1977], p. 22)

At first, Rathenau devotes his attention to the process of construction —the outstanding form of piling up of goods in the modern world. The circulation of goods, he says, is negligible beside the petrified results of production of goods. Humanity

> builds houses, palaces and towns; it builds factories and storehouses. It builds highways, bridges, railways, tramlines, ships and canals: water, gas and electricity works, telegraph lines, high voltage power lines and cables; machines and furnaces. . . .
> The new buildings in German cities would, in the course of about every five years, probably reach a value that in mechanical expenditure would equal the construction value of imperial Rome.
> What then is the purpose of these unheard-of constructions? In large part, they directly serve production. In part, they serve transport and trade, and thus indirectly production. In part, they serve administration, domicile and health care, and thus predominantly production. In part,
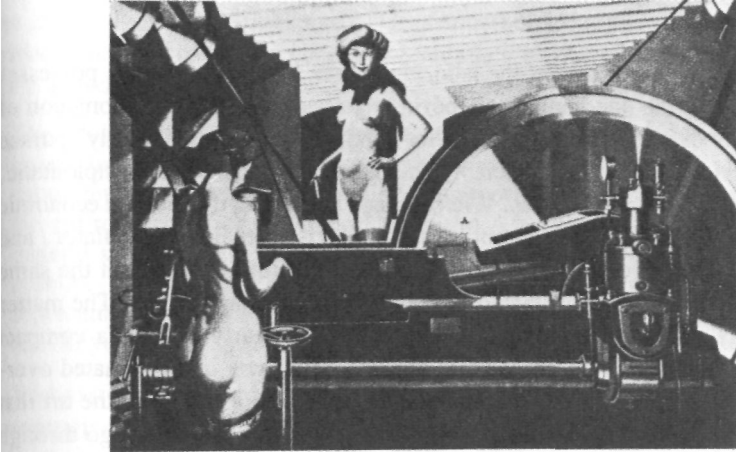
Georg Scholz, *Flesh and Iron,* 1923.

they serve science, art, technology, education, recreation, and thus in-
directly . . . once again production, (p. 51)

Mechanical production has long since overshot the elementary goals of food,
othing, self-preservation, and the protection of life. In continually expanding
circles of production and consumption, it creates new "desires," a measureless
"hunger for commodities" that is increasingly directed at artificialities. Mechani-
zation thus incorporates even wishes themselves "in the irreality, lifelessness and
shadowiness of its products and fashions" (p. 50). Rathenau's conclusions hit un-
erringly the quintessence of sociological theories of alienation: "Mechanical
production has elevated itself to an aim in itself." (p. 52).

This is the mental scenario in which the situation of humanity is determined.
Rathenau seeks it at the productive center itself, in the world of labor.

Labor is no longer an activity of life, no longer an accommodation of
the body and the soul to the forces of nature, but a thoroughly alien ac-
tivity for the purpose of life, an accommodation of the body and the
soul to the mechanism. . . .
    Labor is no longer solely a struggle with nature, it is a *struggle with
people.* The struggle, however, is a *struggle of private politics;* the
most risky business, practiced and nurtured less than two hundred years
ago by a handful of statesmen, the art of divining others' interests and
using them for one's own ends, to have an overview of global situa-
tions, to interpret the will of the times, to negotiate, to make alliances,
to isolate and to strike: this art is today not only indispensable for the
man of finance alone, but, in an appropriate measure, is indispensable

to every shopkeeper. *The mechanized profession educates one to be-come a politician,* (pp. 67-68)

Rathenau's anthropology of the laboring human being accordingly possesses two aspects: On the one hand, the laboring ego becomes an epiphenomenon of the apparatus of production; on the other hand, they who "egoistically" pursue their "own interest" become ineluctably entangled in a kind of war, in diplomatic, polemical, and political business. Where an ego appears in the modern economic world, there it must appear as politician, strategist, deceiver, calculator, and diplomat. For every contemporary, political tactics go to the head; at the same time, this "risky business" of tactics descends to the last shopkeeper. The matter has probably never been presented so disarmingly clearly in such a compact space. Where the ego does not want to become *only* a cog in an alienated over-sized machine, it must stretch itself in the other direction and learn the art that earlier was the sole province of the great figures of politics. It must go through years of apprenticeship in political cynicism.

It is scarcely any better for our intellectual and psychical powers.

The intellect, still shaking from the excitements of the day, insists on staying in motion and on experiencing a new contest of impressions, with the proviso that these impressions should be more burning and acidic than those that have been gone through. . . . Entertainments of a sensational kind arise, hasty, banal, pompous, fake and poisoned. These joys border on despair. . . . The devouring of kilometers by the automobile is a graphic image of the deformed way of viewing nature. . . .

But even in these insanities and overstimulations there is something mechanical. The human, simultaneously supervisor of the machine and machine in the global mechanism, under growing tension and heating, has surrendered his or her quantum of energy to the flywheel of the world's activity, (p. 69)

With great physiognomic power, Rathenau sketches the psychology of the productive-consumptive human being. He discovers the puzzling banality of "abstract ambition" that forms a unity of drives with the equally free-floating hunger for commodities.

Abstract ambition is puzzling because all admiration is directed at the mask, and from the mask to its wearer, there is no inner band of iden-tity, (p. 74)

Between greedy masks, a network woven of acts of purchase is spun in which surrogates and surrogates of surrogates wander through the hands of con-sumers.In bourgeois households, it comes to an excess of objects in whose consumption existence seems to exhaust itself.

Ten years later, Henry Ford answers this thought in the book about his success, *My Life and Work* (published in German in Leipzig, 1923) in which he, too, confuses the view of the captain of the economy with that of the ethnologist and, like a pseudonaive observer of capitalism, remarks:

> The advances of the world to date were accompanied by a strong increase in the objects of daily use. In the backyard of an American suburban home, there are on the average more appliances . . . than in the entire territory of an African ruler. An American schoolboy is in general surrounded by more things than are in an entire Eskimo community. The inventory of kitchen, dining room, bedroom and cellar represents a list that would have astounded the most luxurious potentate of 500 years ago. (p. 313)

The wasting away of traditional beliefs can only be countered reactively by the consumptive personality. It wants to cling to beliefs and values without being able to be the person for whom they still really hold.

> Now he strives with cunning to regain what has been lost and plants little shrines in his mechanized world, just as roof gardens are laid out on factory buildings. From the inventory of the times, here a cult of nature is searched out, there a superstition, a communal life, an *artificial naivete,* a false serenity, an ideal of power, an art of the future, a purified Christianity, a nostalgic preoccupation with the past, a stylization. *Half believing, half dissembled,[1]* devotion is given for a while, until fashion and boredom kill the idol. (Rathenau, *Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 2, p. 93)

This structure of modern credulity regarding values, which is a feigned belief in capricious and desperately restored values, brilliantly describes the mentality of those populist-activist groups, propelled by nihilistic antinihilism, which, shortly after the failure of the German revolution, did all the talking. From one of these groups came Kern, Rathenau's murderer. The first encounter between the future murderer and his victim took place in October 1921 during a public lecture in Berlin. Ernst von Salomon has recorded this scene in his novel, *Die Geachteten* (The outlaws; Gutersloh, 1930). While Rathenau is speaking, Kern pushes forward to a column near the speaker's rostrum and forces the minister into the spell of his eyes, cold with hatred:

> I saw in his dark eyes the metallic green shine, I saw the whiteness of his forehead. The minister, however, turned hesitatingly, looked at first fleetingly, then confusedly at that column, froze, sought laboriously, then gained composure and inattentively wiped from his forehead what had been projected onto him. But from now on he spoke to Kern alone. Almost entreatingly, he directed his words to the man by the column and slowly became tired as the latter did not change his stance. . . .
>   As we pushed through the exit, Kern managed to get close to the

minister. Rathenau . . . looked at him questioningly. But Kern shoved hesitatingly past him and his face seemed eyeless. *(Die Gedchteten,* p. 315)

Something of the spirit of the whole epoch is contained in this confrontation. The gaze of the nihilist perpetrator of the deed does not want to see what his opponent had in terms of intellect, goodwill, and readiness to accept responsibility. Rathenau is supposed to feel that Kern does not want to listen.

Hermann Rauschning, too, links up with insights such as those already presented by Rathenau in his book *Masken und Metamorphosen des Nihilismus* (Masks and metamorphoses of nihilism [Vienna, 1954]) in which Hitler's erstwhile dialogue partner sketches outlines of a philosophical theory of fascism. The intellects that are worked up against modernity, Rauschning shows, are inclined during a crisis to cling precisely to that which nihilism had taken as its starting point: to the great social institutions, the state, the economy, and the armed forces. They, the great promisors of meaning, are the principal agents who "broadcast unconscious nihilism behind a facade of apparent order and forced discipline." (p. 121).

What those who are unstable call to for salvation is, in fact, the source of the evil. The institutions to which the conservative antinihilists cling with gloomy sympathies are the real "agents of nihilism."

According to Rauschning, nihilism advances in two ways: Values and truths are subjected to a "progressive unmasking," they become transparent as surrogates, and they are, as the functional lies of the great institutions, stripped of all higher validity. At the same time, however, the social institutions free themselves from human control as means and elevate themselves to ends in themselves to which individual as well as collective human existence has to subjugate itself.

A contemporary writer who renounced for himself every organ of metaphysical speculation . . . has expressed this . . . process in a single excellent sentence: "When humanity emanicipated itself from God, it probably could not yet guess that one day logically the things will emancipate themselves from it." (Ernst von Salomon, *Der Fragebogen* [The questionnaire])

Human beings become the material of the economic process, the mere means of the state. (Rauschning, *Masken,* p. 123)

The institutions, the regulations, the apparatuses of community order, the organs of European culture are not longer aids for humanity in establishing meaning for itself. They are means and tools of nihilism. They do not hang in the air; rather, the entirety of human existence floats without any supporting ground and clings to the means of existence that have become ends in themselves as the only things that can be held onto in the whirlwinds of insubstantiality. (Ibid., p. 130)

What is here put forward by philosophizing statesmen is confirmed in the works of contemporary writers. Among them, Bertolt Brecht claims a special status. For, like scarcely any other, he critically presented and experimentally thought through in his works the inversion of the bourgeois-individualist understanding of the ego that had been decried as nihilism. He is the real virtuoso of the "cynical structure." In fact, he grasps it as a procedural possibility and as a poetic opportunity. No matter how his share of subjective cynicism is estimated, he succeeded in making it into a means for representing reality. In his epoch, he became a master of the cynical tone of voice and, with almost every one of his plays, from *Baal* to *Massnahme* (Measure), he established his reputation as a poet who commanded a language that allowed the "times themselves" to speak.

With Brecht, too, the stance recurs that we found at first in Dadaist irony: letting oneself be thrown and pushed around by the given state of affairs, which is no longer counterposed by any flimsy ideas or upright poses. More important than self-composure is insight into what really confronts us. "Matter-of-factness" functions as a form of going along, of being-in-the-times: Don't fall behind, don't let any resentments grow, don't cherish any old values, but look to see what the state of affairs is now and what is to be done. We cannot live off the *good old values,* it is better to start with the *bad new reality.*

Obviously, a new quality of irony and a nonaffirmative form of affirmation makes itself felt here. In this irony, it is not a subject that has "stayed clean" that reveals itself, who, distanced, above the fronts, the melee, and the tumult, tries to save its integrity. It is rather the irony of a bashed ego who has got caught up in the clockwork (rather like Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times)* who makes its hands as dirty as the circumstances are and who, in the midst of the goings-on, only takes care to observe alertly what it encounters. With Brecht, too, the pugnacious irony appropriate to modernity makes itself felt: kynical irony. It does not resist reality with "imagined fancies" but exercises resistance in the form of unresisting accommodation.

This irony's model piece is provided by Brecht in the famous interjection from the comedy *A Man Is a Man. The Transformation of the Packer Galy Gay in the Military Barracks of Kilkoa in Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-Five.*

<div align="center">Interjection</div>

Herr Bertolt Brecht maintains: a man is a man.
And that is something anyone can prove.
But then, Herr Bertolt Brecht also proves
That one can do as much as one likes with a person.
Here this evening, a man will be reassembled like a car
Without losing anything in the process.
The man will be approached humanely
He will be requested firmly, without vexation

> To accommodate himself to the course of the world
> And to let his private fish swim away.
> And no matter what he is remodeled into,
> In doing so no mistake has been made.
> One can, if we do not watch over him,
> also make him overnight into our butcher.
> Herr Bertolt Brecht hopes that you will see the ground
> On which you stand disappear like snow under your feet
> And that you will notice about the packer Galy Gay
> That life on earth is dangerous.
> *(Erste Stiicke,* vol. 2, 1953, pp. 229-30)

For the kynical realist, the idea of human individuality in times in which war machines, metropolitan streams of traffic, and unleashed production apparatuses consume the individual as their "raw material," is no longer a "fruitful hypothesis." Let us try from the other end, free of any metaphysics of individuality and without humanistic nostalgia. "A man is a man." What scenic arrangement must be set up in order to examine this cynical-critical statement of identity? In his stage experiment, Brecht has the gentle family man become a bloodthirsty fighter, "incensed" by the "wish to sink my teeth" / Into the throat of the enemy, primitive drive, from the family / To butcher the breadwinner / To carry out the assignment" (ibid. p. 293). Besides being him-"self," everybody can also be functionally the other, who, with a few tricks, is refitted as a "human fighting machine." Brecht outdoes the nostalgic lamentations about alienation with a hard commitment to psychological functionalism. The point here is that he does not want to present any reduction of the civilized human to a wild animal but a coolly presented *remodeling* of the civilian as soldier, thus no "regression" but a mere displacement in which "nothing is lost." The sole concession to the individual occurs indirectly in that the playwright turns to the audience's intelligence and provokes it into swimming free of conservative inhibitions through the surrender of the cultivated bourgeois "private fish," and into immersing itself in an ugly but vitally seething present.

Notes

1. Rathenau herewith stakes out the framework within which neoconservative ideological formations move. They rest on a denial on two fronts: They deny modernity ideologically and the "new-old values practically.

Chapter 19
Artificial Limbs.
Functionalist Cynicisms II:
On the Spirit of Technology

Goethe intervenes.

At first it was uninjured survivors who began to sing the neohumanist lamentation about modern alienation and the mutilation of the individual. On the opposed side, kynical vitalists (like the young Brecht, the Dada groups, and many others) tried through their sarcasm to outdo the degradation of the individual that had become apparent in the modern social order. They practiced the accusation or the affirmation of mechanized existence as a figure of thought.

To the physically alienated, the mutilated, and the reassembled, such forms of expression remained in either direction rather alien. It makes a difference whether one reflects on the loss of individuality as a critique of culture, or experiences how a war (or labor) tears away pieces from one's own ("indivisible") body. One source of war statistics says: "Thirteen million dead, eleven million crippled . . . six billion shells and fifty billion cubic meters of gas in four years."[1] How did the armies of cripples who streamed back to their native countries in 1918 fare? Some, in any case, could say nothing about the reassembling of humans in modernity; they no longer had mouths.

> Men with frightening faces, without noses, without mouths; nurses who shrank back from nothing fed these disfigured creatures through thin glass tubes that they poked into the scarred holes of proud flesh where once a mouth had been. (Erich Kastner, *Fabian* [1931], p. 49)

What Kastner describes refers to the year 1931; fifteen years after the war, its victims still lay in endless agonies. These "creatures," however, were hidden far

National Socialist commentary to the "March of the Cripples" in an exhibition entitled "Degenerate Art" *(Entartete Kunst)* Munich, 1937.

away in the provinces in lonely houses, away from the surrounding world that had long since begun to rearm.

For those who had been maimed in the war, the war could not really end —even when they did not belong to those disfigured ones who had to be fed through glass tubes. The organ of the mutilated was *Der Reichsverband(The* Reich Association. Organ of the Reich Association of German War-Injured and War-Bereaved), published in Berlin regularly from 1922 on. That in this periodical voices were also raised that pleaded for a war of revenge against France as soon as possible may appear to us today as a tragic curiosity. The injured and bereaved experienced in a doubly bitter way how the economic crisis that began in 1929 reduced the (in any case meager) compensation from the state, or even threatened to cut it off altogether. The situation became especially acute in 1931 when the emergency decrees of Bruning led to radical cuts in state expenditures, which provoked the Reich Association to the most emphatic protests. One can ask oneself how many votes of mutilated survivors were among those Hitler's party was able to attract to its enormous crisis constituency in 1932.

Two things were recommended to the mutilated survivors by the standard psychotechnical textbooks: a will to live as *hard as steel* and the training of the body to handle artificial limbs. The optimism with which those teachers of the maimed imbued their charges with a positive attitude and a vital joy in their continued work seems today like a parody. With deadly earnest, grimly humorous, patriotic doctors turned to the cripples: The Fatherland requires your services in the future, too: one-armed, one-legged men and wearers of artificial limbs can fight again on the production front. The great machine does not ask whether it is ' in-

Offener Brief an den Reichskanzler

Berlin, im Juli 1931.

Sehr geehrter Herr Reichskanzler!

Im vorbereitenden Stadium für die Gehaltung der Zweiten Notverordnung zur Sicherung von Wirtschaft und Finanzen vom 5. Juni 1931 ist — wie erinnerlich — von der Verbandsleitung des Reichsverbandes Deutscher Kriegsbeschädigter und Kriegerhinterbliebener sowohl in brieflicher Form, als auch auf telegraphischem Wege versucht worden, von Ihnen in Eigenschaft als Chef des Reichskabinetts für eine Delegation von Kriegsopfervertretern aus dem ganzen Reich eine Audienz zu erwirken. Mit dem erstrebten persönlichen Empfang durch den Herrn Reichskanzler war einmal beabsichtigt, vor etwaigen Maßnahmen einer neuen Belastung der Kriegsopfer unter Darlegung der in den Kreisen der versorgungsberechtigten Kriegsbeschädigten und Kriegerhinterbliebenen vorhandenen Not und Erbitterung die Reichsregierung in wohlverstandenem Staatsinteresse zu warnen, im übrigen aber auf die bereits noch zu erwartenden psychologischen Auswirkungen solcher Maßnahmen mit allem Nachdruck hinzuweisen.

Bedauerlicherweise haben Sie sich diesen Bestrebungen versagt. Darüber hinaus haben selbst die vor Erlaß der Notverordnung sich auf Gerüchte stützenden Massenprotestkundgebungen der Kriegsopfer im Reiche nicht vermocht, die Reichsregierung davon abzuhalten, in den Rahmen der mit der Notverordnung durchgeführten Drosselung der Reichsausgaben auch recht erhebliche und tiefeinschneidende Benachteiligungen im Versorgungsrecht der Kriegsopfer einzubegreifen und damit einen vielfach über das Maß des Erträglichen hinausgehenden Leistungsabbau zu vollziehen. In diesem Zusammenhang soll daran erinnert werden, daß noch kurz zuvor in der Tagespresse zufolge einer Mitteilung aus dem Büro des Reichspräsidenten versichert wurde, daß „die Befürchtung einer Kürzung der Renten unbegründet ist, und daß die Reichsregierung nicht beabsichtigt, eine allgemeine Herabsetzung der Bezüge herbeizuführen".

Jede Reichsregierung der Nachkriegszeit hat noch Verständnis für die Notwendigkeit der Ausgestaltung des Versorgungsrechtes für die Opfer des Krieges bekundet und dies sogar in Regierungserklärungen zum Ausdruck gebracht. Lediglich dem gegenwärtigen Reichskabinett blieb es vorbehalten, die an sich von Regierung und Reichstag vielfach als ungenügend bezeichnete Versorgung der Kriegsbeschädigten und Kriegerhinterbliebenen in einem Ausmaß zu verschlechtern, daß man sich berechtigt halten darf, von einem Mangel an Verständnis für die Lebensnotwendigkeiten der Versorgungsberechtigten zu sprechen.

Diese Feststellung zu treffen, erscheint um so notwendiger, als die Kriegsopfer der gegenwärtigen Regierung berechtigte Hoffnungen entgegenbrachten, da Sie, Herr Reichskanzler, bei der Bildung Ihres Kabinetts sich als Frontkämpferkabinett bezeichneten. Niemals hätten die Kreise der Versorgungsberechtigten geglaubt, von einem Frontkämpferkabinett derart benachteiligt zu werden. Titel verpflichtet bekanntlich, und die Verpflichtung aus dem Titel, den Sie Ihrem Kabinett gegeben haben, ist in ihr Gegenteil verkehrt worden.

Es kann nicht meine Absicht sein, im einzelnen die Unhaltbarkeit der Maßnahme versorgungsrechtlicher Art darzutun, aber mit Bezug auf die Auswirkungen der Notverordnung seien im nachstehenden einige Fragen gestattet.

Ist Ihnen, Herr Reichskanzler, bekannt gewesen, daß beispielsweise einem Kriegsbeschädigten, der ein Einkommen aus öffentlichen Mitteln bezieht, für den Verlust eines Beines (Oberschenkelablösung) nur noch 10 bis 15 Mark monatlich an Rente zusteben? Es wird zugegeben werden müssen, daß von diesem Betrage nicht einmal der Mehrverbrauch an Wäsche und Kleidung abgegolten werden kann.

Sind Sie sich dessen bewußt gewesen, Herr Reichskanzler, daß durch die Notverordnung Tausende von kleinen Beamten und Angestellten, die sich mit Hilfe einer Kapitalabfindung ein eigenes Heim geschaffen haben, dieses Heim verlieren müssen, weil sie keinen Pfennig Rente mehr erhalten und von dem getilgten Gehalt — auch eine Folge der Notverordnung — die Zinsen nicht mehr aufgebracht werden können, da das Gehalt ja kaum für den Lebensunterhalt reicht?

Waren Sie sich, Herr Reichskanzler, der Tragweite einer Maßnahme bewußt, wenn arbeitslose Kriegsbeschädigte, Kriegerwitwen und -waisen ihre geleisteten Arbeitslosenbeiträge überlegend verteidig geben, weil die Versorgungsgebührnisse bis zu einem verbleibenden Betrage von 15 Mark auf die Arbeitslosenunterstützung angerechnet werden? Wissen Sie auch, daß ein Kriegsbeschädigter, der für sein zerschlagenes

Wheelchair parade for the Fiihrer, 1934.

dividuals" who are here active for it, or units of human and artificial limbs. A man is a man. In the textbooks on the maimed and the writings of the medical-technical industry, a highly apposite image of the human being emerges: *Homo prosthetics,* who is supposed to say a wildly joyful Yes to everything that says No to the "individuality" of "individuals."

I quote from a one-armed primer from 1915 (which, owing to the tremendous increase of one-armed among the war maimed, had to be reprinted within a month) whose author notes with satisfaction that the influx of new one-armers from the front has given the "old one-armers" new energies. Privatdozent von Kunzberg writes:

> The oldest German hero's song, the song of Walthari, relates the duel of the hero with Hagen in which Walter loses his right hand. He binds it, sticks the stump into the straps of his shield and simply(!) fights on with the left hand. That such a sense of heroism is still alive today in our armies is shown by a small newspaper report from the beginning of June 1915. In the first attack of the Austrian fleet on the Italian coast, torpedo boat 80 had been hit by a shell in the officers' mess, and the right forearm of a reservist, a fisherman by profession, was completely torn off. He bound the stump with a strap and, with the left hand, worked the pump in order to stem the flood of water, without letting out a single cry. There are innumerable such brave men among our military gray and blue boys. . . . Whoever has done his share(!) with

two sound arms in the field against the enemy will be able to master his fate and himself with one arm. . . .

The present booklet . . . wants to show him . . . that one-armedness is not the worst thing by a long shot.

. . . How favorably the war-wounded is situated! The *honorary pay* protects him once and for all from real need. But what a joyless existence would await him if he could not find his way back to work. Idleness is the source of all vices. . . . Work is the duty of a citizen, a contribution to the Fatherland. . . . Even the *single* working hand cannot be done without. . . . (pp. 1-2)

. . . After a diligent stay at a school, some get on better than they did before the injury, (p. 3)

. . . You have nothing to hide. We no longer live in times when one could suspect a perjurer or thief behind a handless man. You have lost your hand, not under the hatchet of a henchman, but in a holy struggle. You are allowed to be always and everywhere proud, look everyone straight in the eyes and thereby cause wretches and the tactless(!) to blush. Most people view the war-injured person as a living monument(!) of our hard times to whom they give thanks silently(l).

To gain independence in every respect is the first commandment, the highest aim of the one-armed man. *Never allow yourself to be helped}.* There must not be any activity from which he shrinks back; . . . through . . . continual practice he will master it. One-armedness will become a matter of course; it loses the horror of a loss that cannot be overcome. Some experienced one-armers say that they would not know what to do with a second arm if suddenly, through a miracle, they were given back the lost arm.

. . . Look around you to see if there is someone in your circle of acquaintances who has been missing an arm for a time. . . . There are probably some in every town. You just have not noticed them yet. (p. 5)

In one of von Kunzberg's footnotes there is also this:

You observe also the bagpipe player at the annual fair who simultaneously beats the drum with an elbow, works another instrument with his foot, or a mounted kettledrummer who controls the reins with his feet, etc. You can also learn something by observing animals.

The joyful cynicism of patriot medicine does not touch solely on "hardship cases." Its way of thinking is not related solely to exceptional existential circumstances. Medical artificial limbs and the mentality of the robust robot, which is offered along with them only, bring a widespread way of thinking to light. War loosens the tongue of the latent cynicism of domination, medicine, and the military. Under its influence, the military and production apparatuses admit their

The title page of Kiinzberg's primer.

claim to use up the lives of individuals in their service. The human body in the society of labor and war had already long been an artificial limb even before one had to replace damaged parts with functioning parts.

In the Weimar years, technology presses in on the old humanism in a provocative way. In this period, the conceptual association of "the human being and technology" becomes a compulsive connection, from the heights of bourgeois philosophy down to school essays. The schema for thinking is this: Technology takes the "upper hand"; it "threatens" to degrade human beings; it "wants" to make us into robots. But if we pay attention and keep our souls in shape, nothing will happen to us. For technology is, after all, there for people and not people for technology. The image is approximately that of a seesaw. On one end sits the threatening,

the alien, technology; on the other, the humane spreads out and, according to whether oneself or the alien presses harder, the seesaw falls to one side or the other. The more immature the thinking, the heavier the humane end. With this phraseology, the bourgeois philosophy of technology erected an almost all-encompassing cartel of brains. Minds are nimbly provided with mental artificial "limbs" about technology. With elegant, easy-care, light metal legs ("pure German model"), thinking hobbles along behind reality, and thus personality as well as soul are kept in operation as usual. The bourgeois philosophy of technology thoroughly breathes in the spirit of the one-armed primer. Personality amputated? No problem —we have another one for you in stock.

> You see, ladies and gentlemen, doctors and first-aid helpers, engineers and manufacturers, military posts and the officers of our emergency services, all strive *in the same way* to place their experience at the service of our cause and to replace the loss of hand and arm . . . for those who have fought and suffered for the continued existence and greatness of the Fatherland. . . . And for the injured, the poet's words are apt:

> > Whoever always strives to make an effort,
> > Can be redeemed by us.

> *(Beitrdge zur Frage der Ausrustung armverletzter Kriegsbeschddigter*
> *fiir das Erwerbsleben* [1915], p. 127)

Reduced to a formula, the topic of the bourgeois philosophy of technology in the twenties and thirties is "Goethe with Machines," or at least: "Zarathustra and Industry." Even the privileged now come across the problem of "alienation" or, as Hans Freyer says drastically, "the uprising of the slave-means against the ends." More reflective authors no longer want to leave it at a mere conservative No to technology. In departing from the erstwhile sensitive repugnance, bourgeois thinking about technology converts to a downright masochistic enthusiasm. The philosophy of the new matter-of-factness, insofar as it is engineers' philosophy, tries out a hectic embracing of the new discomfort.

Hans Freyer, for example, suspects deeper connections between technology and the "human being." Not only the old town, the traditional village, the developed, preindustrial cultural landscape of Europe are subjected to destructive attacks by the new technology; an even older image of the human being or model of the soul now collapses. Freyer was by no means the only one who called the master-human relation of the European technologist to the earth the "spiritual" foundation of "our" technology. However, only in the present, where the enormous "system of means" penetrates every activity of life, can Europeans no longer escape the experience of themselves as "rulers":

> Violent questioning of nature in order to learn how to direct its forces,
> pondering over the earth in order to conquer and shape it-this will

stirs itself early in the European spirit. And it is this that guaranteed the
continuity in the successes of the technology that, since the beginning of
the 18th century, had finally come to be based on science. (H. Freyer,
Zur Philosophic der Technik, in *Blatter fur Deutsche Philosophic,* vol.
3 [Berlin, 1929-30], p. 200)

What Freyer expresses sounds reflective in tone, affirmative in substance:
Thus, we are dominant subjects, and, as Europeans, we have always been so.
Where the conservative denial stops, the neo-matter-of-fact flight forward into a
programmatic confession begins.

What Freyer still holds intelligently in suspense steps onto hard ground with
the philosopher of brutality, Theodor Liiddecke. He turns fresh cynicism into the
procedure of his talk. In 1931 he published his book on technology: *Meisterung
der Maschinenwelt. Menschentum und Moglichkeit* (The mastering of the world
of machines. Humankind and possibility). Liiddecke's ideal is "organic
cultivation" —and in the word "organic" he intends a whole range of undertones,
from the Goethean original forms up to the organs of power and the organization
of the militarized community of the people.

> The first condition of an organic cultivation is the employment of the
> "apprentice principle" in education, as Henry Ford called it. The young
> person must grow up, from youth onward, in a scuffle with realities,
> (p. 240)

The most damaging factor in the existing system of education is that the young
person is made "too sensitive"; sport offers only an insufficient balance against
this.

> Urban pupils in particular lack the organic concepts of life and labor.
>   We must educate strong-nerved, *adaptable* people who are really at
> home in their times.
>   In this way, we will come to a new aristocracy composed of honest,
> heroic fighters. . . . This idea of discipline should also stand at the
> fore of the duty to work. (p. 242)

Hence, send students of economics for four weeks into the mines so that they
"develop on the spot the capacities of a respectable miner" (p. 248); bring pupils
into the banks before the theory of money is explained to them; make intellectual
workers familiar with the hard facts on the "production front." One has to read
some passages by Liiddecke several times to make sure that he really argues from
the "Right." His clammy, joyful antiacademicism could easily be confused with
Joyful Science, theory fatigue, and the hunger for concreteness of today's Left
intelligentsia, if it were not for the fact that the author takes care to set a clear
order with appropriate signal words:

The intellectual knows too little about the people who fight as *soldiers on the battlefront of production.* The intellectual battlefield on which he moves is a bourgeois camp. We want to give the socialists credit for one thing: they have made the concept "bourgeois" unsavory for us. For the young generation, bourgeois means the same as unheroic, feeble, anxious. A thoroughly sportsmanly, hard kind of man is no longer bourgeois, (p. 248)

. . . With the help of the typically academic way of thinking, a "grain battle" will never be fought, as Mussolini was able to do. The thinking of the great activists is always straightforward and simple. . . . (p. 249)

On the sports field and in the imagination of youth, the aggressive man who is *master of the situation* lives as inspiring character type. In the daily shopkeeper-existence of this civilization, however, the *artfully calculating,* soft-stepping bourgeois, who denies everything directly heroical, reigns, (pp. 215-16)

That is socialism! Socialism is a new vital force, a philosophy of labor, a transferring of principles in sport to occupational activity, a new tone of solid comradeship, (p. 215)

The "Marxist revolution": It is, above all, a question of having or not-having. Our revolution, however, is a question of being and wanting to be better! (p. 217)

Our gospel is precisely the quick thought and the quick realization of every thought, (p. 217)

Liiddecke develops a philosophy of the enthusiastic artificial limb that experiences its "being" in the intoxication of movement. Because it steals from "progressive" discourse, the text is subversive —a reading must be all the more so. In its language, existential motifs of the Left can be found, staged by a right-wing ego: *Homo prostheticus* as a "storm trooper" itching for action, as an exploiter of himself. From this viewpoint, a diagnostic potential flits through Luddecke's theory that programs anticapitalist motifs into a capitalist-military ego. As far as an ethics of labor is concerned, its prescribed optimism blends in with the morals of management in the West today as well as with the "ought" attitude of "real existing socialism." Nothing of content remains of specifically Fascist elements. The ideology of fitness today, denazified, is as rampant as it was then, while the ethics of being is counterposed as always to those of having. The composition and the dynamic gesture remain Fascist, in which everything, mixed together incoherently, is rasped down by a "resourceful" subject in the fresh cynical tone of the likable Nazi. The Nazi philosopher is the nimble, frivolous mixer of language, the drummer of functionalism who employs everything that "works" and who cheers up the people who are following him. One of the secrets of fascism's success is to be found in this tone. It employs truth as a decoy and amiabil-

ity as bait. At the volatile center of its agitation lies the intimate complicity with the instincts for self-preservation in the confused masses. Its revolution promises complete "superiority" to the sportsmanlike prosthetic subject. Fascism appears here as the uprising of the prosthesis egos against "liberal" civilization, in whose "disorder" they at least still had a small chance of being "themselves." In a violent flight to the fore, they outdo the system from which they arise. The secret of their self-preservation is hidden in the total abolition of everything that ever reminded one of a self. National socialism established itself as national functionalism.

The brisk prosthesis of the new state needed nursing and the relaxation of tension. It was supposed to find both on the Fascist holiday. The sea was always good for uplifting thoughts, even for Nazi eminences seeking recuperation. On the beach, one can reflect even better on the Goethe of the machines. I quote some lines from Kurt Schuder's book of 1940: *Granit und Herz. Die Strassen Adolf Hitlers—ein Dombau unsererZeit* (Granite and heart. Adolf Hitler's roads—a cathedral construction of our times; Braunschweig).

> In the summer of 1938 I was in Westerland. You have to imagine Westerland as a place where you can find almost everything you are looking for: recuperation, rest, the spicy North Sea air . . . and just as spicy and benevolently stern the North Sea waves . . . which develop . . . that famous surf that is such a welcome gift to every guest on the North Sea.
>   Among them, important and intellectually influential men(!) from throughout Germany can be found. They know that what little time they have for recuperation can best be spent at the seaside, which, as far as health is concerned, always proves itself to be more than a *timesaver.* (P-7)

There, Schuder met an "influential man" with whom he was able to speak about "two great cultural manifestations in the people": "technology and industry" and "spiritual life." The "influential man" had "creative views" on these topics that the author attempts to summarize.

> The deed is first and last. The deed is the sole true content of human life. The deed is, of course, also the most difficult thing, for it demands courage. . . . (p. 8)
>   We technicians, who begin with the substances, have to wed our spirits to the substances. . . . By the way, Goethe was one of the greatest technicians of all time *(Grotaz)*[2] if one proceeds from this spiritual foundation of technology. . . . He even foresaw the electrical television. . . . (p. 9)
>   . . . Instead of sounding battle together as Goethe did, we have marched divided and the remarkable figures of spirit-only and technology-only resulted, to put it briefly, (p. 10)
>   . . . And without this *comradeship with the machine* no person

could live today, to say nothing of a people. . . . It serves and serves again. —In it we have to honor the thought of serving as such. This serving, however, is the highest ethical idea and deed, and so, the machine converts this idea into deed. . . . (!)

Of course, iron is hard and the machine is not made out of sugar. But the law of life is steel and not sugar, not porridge and puree. And only the *heart and the soul made of steel* achieve life. . . . (p. 12)

The machine is thus thoroughly in accord with the human being, a thing that corresponds to the human essence; only when we create this inner connection have we overcome the curse of the world, materialism. And this is indeed one of the great achievements of the new Germany: *the introduction of technology into the soul*. . . so that it no longer has to stand outside freezing. . . .

The technician spoke at length and penetratingly. . . .

And refreshed as if by a chalybeate bath, I go to the beach, breathe the sea air in blissfully that likewise refreshes the lungs like steel, (p. 14)

With unheard-of explicitness, the reshaping of human self-experience under the guiding star of the functional relation of the machine is recommended here as the Fascist way into modernity. This self-"reflection" of the living in steel and of "feeling" in hardness at the same time forms the basis for the cynical readiness of these philosophers of hardness to confess. They say *everything* now, but not so as to correct themselves, not to become "soft" and to think things over again. They seem not to notice that with every word, they give themselves away. They talk as if they were confessing, but without a single spark of insight. They admit everything so as not to compromise in anything. They want to become what their comrade, the machine, already is: men of steel. If images can convey something of the attitude toward life and political style, then the expressions Hitler's stirrup-holder, Alfred Hugenberg, chose in 1928 betray everything about what is to come.

What we need is not a mush but a solid block. In a mush we will perish; with the block, victory and reconstruction is a trifle. . . . We will be a block when the iron clamp of Weltanschauung binds us together and, in its embrace, causes everything soft and fluid to solidify and coalesce into rock. Those who could hinder us on the way to this goal must step aside or allow themselves to be melted down. *{Berliner Lokalanzeiger,* 26-28 August 1928)

Excursus 4. The Fourth Reich-before the Third

In 1927, a Frankfurt philosophy professor, Friedrich Dessauer, presented a book entitled *Philosophic der Technik. Das Problem der Realisierung* (Philosophy of

Beton und Stein find materielle Dinge,
der Menſch gibt ihnen Form und Geiſt.
Nationalſozialiſtiſche Technik beſitzt bei
aller materiellen Leiſtung ideellen Inhalt.

Berlin, Januar 1940

tScncralinfpcFror fiir bag beutfdpe Strajjennjcfen

"Concrete and stone are material things.
Man gives them form and spirit.
National Socialist technology possesses in all
material achievement ideal content.
Berlin, February 1940
General Inspector for the German Road System."

technology. The problem of realization) in which he promised a "critical
metaphysics" of technology. He turned against the technology Luddites who, in
a merely superficial defense, regard technology as a "parvenu" of our civilization.
Dessauer pursued the transition that runs through the epoch like a main theme,
from resistance to affirmation, from resentment to "positive understanding."

Affirmation itself constitutes the core of technical knowledge:

> Humankind can fly but not because it, say, denies or suspends gravita-
> tion but by penetrating it in an intellectual process and, expressed pic-
> torially, coming to the other side of the matter. On the first side, it is
> its servant, on the other its master. . . .
>
> Thus, gravitation is overcome, not denied. . . . Complete affirma-
> tion of everything that corresponds to the laws of nature and an un-
> swerving persistence in the framework of what is given by the laws of
> nature characterize the means, (pp. 40-41)

The *affirmation* of the so-called laws of nature serves the interest of controlling
them; if they are controlled, they can serve human goals. When Dessauer calls
for an affirmation of technology, this means the affirmation of affirmation-

domination of the means of domination. In the double Yes, the steel subject of the future stirs; it is inseparable from an increased domination by this subject of itself: for this reason, the masters' theory of that period talks incessantly of heroism. This mean nothing other than increased self-coercion; the rhetorics of courage here means to risk a higher degree of self-mashing.

The machine, for its part, emits a Yes to its inventor as soon as the latter sees that "it works." As soon as it has "stepped into existence," it possesses a particular ontic quality: It embodies something that did not occur in nature but now exists because the spirit of invention has made it—like a new shape in creation. "We are in the middle of a day of creation" (p. 52).

What does the Fourth Reich mean?

Kant, with a consciousness of an all-encompassing view of the world, distinguished three realms *(Reiche)* from one another. The first is that of natural science; he called the work, "Critique of Pure Reason." . . . How is natural science possible? is the key question that opens the way. He gives the answer: through the forms of contemplation, time and space . . . and through the equally a priori forms of understanding .. . the categories through which it works up experience (p. 54). On the basis of this mental equipment, natural science, as knowledge of appearances, is possible. . . .

He discovers the second realm in the experience of ethical law, that omnipotent, unconditional (categorical) imperative that gives the will direction. . . . Theoretical reason of the first realm cannot enter this realm; here, the higher, practical reason reigns that opens up the supersensuous to the life of the will. . . .

In Kant's ordering, the borders separate the first realm completely from the second. But is such a separation bearable? Kant himself forced an opening through. In the third realm it is a matter of "feeling," of the subjugation of the objects of experience to the goal by means of the power of judgment. This is the aesthetic and functional realm, (pp. 55-56)

But one would try in vain to find in Kant enlightenment about the dimension that cuts most deeply into the life of the present. "In the fourth realm *(Reich),* we enter a new land that opens up technology to us." The Fourth Reich is that of inventions, those things that have been brought into existence only by human beings, the immeasurable potential of what can still be invented and realized. According to Dessauer, technology means nothing other than to call the slumbering shapes of the Fourth Reich into reality through invention. It is as if technology reached over into the sphere of the *Ding an sich* (thing in itself), which according to Kant is inaccessible to us, in order to create out of this sphere previously nonexisting objects of experience, machines. The machine, however, is no *Ding an sich,* no creature "out there" whose possibility of existence cannot be reached by
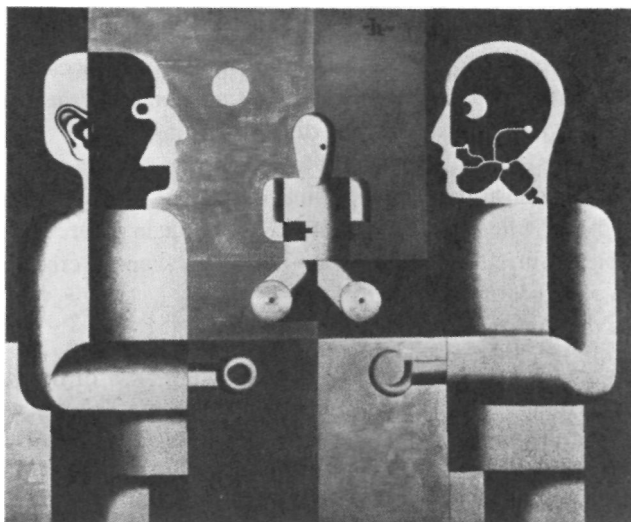
Heinrich Hoerle, *Monument to the Unknown Prostheses,* 1930. (Reproduced by permission of the Von der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal.)

any understanding, but rather is there *through us.* At the same time, what "functions" in it is not only from us; there is in it a "power that does not come from me" (Dessauer, p. 60). World-revolutionizing power can be immanent in inventions. Dessauer refers, for example, to the ontological puzzle of X rays, which, although a material natural phenomenon, can be produced only by human intervention. They constitute a new form of energy that did not previously exist. Inventions of this quality are ontological enrichments in the inventory of existence—whereby humanity is allotted the role of coauthor of the existing. Through humanity, creation *augments* itself. Nature provides only the material for the human elevation of the pregiven into a technical supernature.

Everything invented and built by human beings, however, encounters humanity from the outside like a power of nature-

like mountains, the gulf stream. . . . People have to react. Whoever lives in the mountains lives in accord with the mountains. . . . The power of technology is thus. . . .

. . . The power of newly created forms of technology possesses basically the same autonomy as the creation of a mountain, a river, an ice age or a planet. This fact intensifies the already deeply disturbing extent of a continuing creation, to which we are witnesses and, even more, in which we participate. It is a monstrous fate to be an active participant in creation in such a way that things that have been created by us remain in the visible world having an effect with an unimaginable autono-
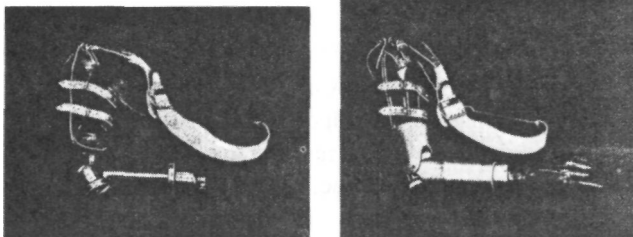
Favorable news from the Fourth Reich: "The rota-arm (from Engineer Meyer of the Rotaworks in Aachen) is somewhat lighter and more agreeable than the Jagenberg arm. In its flexibility, it far exceeds that of the human arm." Here, the workaday arm with the adjustable working claw is juxtaposed with the Sunday arm with its attractive imitation hand.

mous power: *The greatest earthly experience of mortal beings,* (pp. 65-66)

This philosophy of technology pretends to be heroically optimistic because it conceives of humanity as the ongoing creator of the cosmos. It is never allowed to resign before the overpowering misery, but must bring over more and more new shapes out of that Fourth Reich in which the solutions to all urgent problems already stand ready, slumbering, and only "await" their discovery. Thus, beside nature there grows a "dynamically pulsating metacosmos," "created" by human beings.

Do we have to point out the absurd aspects of this philosophy? Its deception-once again —lies in the concept of the subject. The subject's heroism is nothing other than the refusal to conceive any distress or suffering as its "own." The ego becomes heroic because it is too cowardly to be weak. It "sacrifices" because it hopes to gain something. Technology thus appears as the promise of a total solution to problems. One day, the philosopher implies, technology will have worked off all misery. In an astoundingly shortsighted way, he overlooks the destructive aspect of "invention." The fighting subject made of heroism and steel has to be blind to its own destructiveness. The more it threatens to break under the massive suffering of the technical, dominated world, the more optimistically it simulates the heroic pose. At the heart of this theory stands a subject who can no longer suffer because it has become wholly prosthesis.

Excursus 5: Total Prosthesis and Technical Surrealism

A diagnostic history of ideas owes a great deal to that cynical garrulousness of historical persons from whom an inner urge and the external compulsion of crisis force out statements that better controlled individuals would never let pass their

lips. Often they are screwballs who prefer to speak when so-called normal people think it cleverer to be silent. One of these compulsive talkers who supercleverly reveal something that otherwise nobody would be able to uncover so easily is the "expressionist philosopher" (Scholem) Adrien Turel. In 1934 he published, under the sign of the new German spirit, a ludicrous book: *Technokratie, Autarkie, Genetokratie* (Technocracy, autarky, genetocracy), in which curious detailed knowledge combines with megalomaniac, expansive perspectives to form a mysterious, idiosyncratic speculation.

No conventional categorization can be applied to this text; it is neither monograph nor essay nor theorem nor manifesto. As a singular document of a theoretical surrealism, it eludes all classification. Its tone is serious and pompous, at the same time, noncommittal in its apparently playful inclination to combine the most disparate things. Statements about nomadic and agrarian existence slide over as in a game into thoughts on industrialism, metallurgy, and quantum theory, climatology and the philosophy of time, subzero physics and astronomy —from the Aurignac cave dwellers to mathematical description of geopolitical power structures. At this market fair of a confused intellect, in which Turel, like an Achternbusch[3] for the philosophy of history, calls out his insights, rare "gems" are to be found—combinations of prosthesis theory and philosophy of technology that cause one to prick up one's ears.

> Technology is only a prosthesis; the labor we employ in technology is never anything else than a great offloading of compulsions to surrender our authentic essence in order to grasp the zones and concerns of other kinds of essences without thereby also having to give up our humanness, our Germanness. (p. 34)

Turel dreams, insanely realistically, of a new level of Western technocracy that secures for itself "as a class of generals and leaders," a total domination over the strivings of the rest of the world to catch up —he is referring in particular to Japan, which, according to Turel, has already stolen European models of thinking, prostheses, technologies. Only that would be the "social psychology of the coming age." Philosophy itself, in processing thought models, elevates itself

> to a bold system of prostheses that will be indispensable in the future and that is to be placed beside the prosthetic system of the airplane, the submarine, the automobile, etc., as at least their equal, (p. 34)
>
> If it is a fact that we will no longer be able to protect the great blanket patent of our technical and scientific prosthetic system from the clutches of the second zone, and in the foreseeable future, also the third zone [today, we would say Second and Third Worlds;-Author], quite independently of whether we ourselves betray the methods of fabrication to these zones . . . then, on the other hand, it is not to be forgotten that we, out of ourselves, produce, create at least an enormous new

increase in the style of prosthesis produced by machine to date, which can be called globally the *total prosthesis of a technical kind. . . .*

This technical prosthetic system, which is a typically masculine achievement, can only be compared with the prenatal, complete enclosure in the body of the mother.

All people, no matter of what sex(!), were initially, in their prenatal period, caught in the great prototype of every nourishing landscape, every protective sphere, every prison, too, i.e., they have experienced the enclosure in the body of a mother. The masculine counterpart to this is the development of technocratic prostheses, of power, of financial power and of the technical apparatuses for a complete capsule system in which individual people seem to be enclosed for better or worse. . . .

When the British fly over the Himalayas in the total prostheses of their fighter planes, and do so completely systematically with entire squadrons, that is no crazy record setting, nor is it money out the window, but rather, it is for all India a symbol of the superior prosthetic power of Britain and Europe, (pp. 59-60)

How confused does a thinker have to be to see so clearly? Madness sees through the method completely. For the rest, those who cannot follow Turel can console themselves with Gershom Scholem's analysis; he knew the author personally and, as early as the twenties, "understood literally not one word" of his utterances *(Von Berlin nach Jerusalem,* pp. 157-58).

Notes

1. H. Goetz, *Erwin Piscator in Selbstzeugnissen undBilddokumenten* (Hamburg, 1974), pp. 18f.
2. [Grotaz is an acronym from "grosster Techniker aller Zeiten" and a play on Goring's megalomaniac, insulting nickname "Grofaz". —Trans.]
3. [Achternbusch is a German film director.—Trans.]

Chapter 20
Political Algodicy:
Cynical Cosmologies and the
Logic of Pain

> *What is all this racket from constructions, ships, mines, battles*
> *and books seen from outer space: in comparison with the*
> *earth's crust, nothing!*
>
> Oswald Spengler, *Urfragen* (Munich, 1965)

Even if the hard Nazi sport subjects proclaimed their sympathies with prosthetic life under the mask of vitalism and in this way sought to counter pain through denial, in the end they, too, could not evade the question of the meaning of pain. Like nothing else, pain, which can announce death, challenges metaphysical meaning. The latter wants to know what the immeasurable suffering of this century means, who is responsible for it, and to what whole it could contribute.

Everyday understanding, made safe through routine from thoughts that are too deep, does not let itself get caught in such discussions. It thus remains protected from explicit cynicism. Mostly it does not say anything more than "that's life." But those who take on the question and risk having an "opinion" about suffering are drawn into a region where one has to very sure of one's metaphysical views, or else become cynical.

Algodicy means a metaphyscial interpretation of pain that gives it meaning. In modernity it takes the place of theodicy, as its converse. In the latter, it was asked, How are evil, pain, suffering, and injustice to be reconciled with the existence of God? Now the question is, If there is no God and no higher meaning, how can we still bear the pain? The function of politics as substitute theology immediately becomes clear. The nationalists as a rule did not hesitate for a moment to claim that the immeasurable suffering of the war had been meaningful as sacrifice for the Fatherland. The momentum of such claims was hindered solely by the fact that the lost war and the victors' dictatorship in peacetime, as well as the disappointed revolution, put this nationalist offer of meaning into question. One might consider whether the much-quoted legend of the dagger thrust was a

desperate rescue attempt for the political algodicy of the Right. For to realize that Germany would lose the war could be expected from even the densest nationalist. But to admit that "everything had been for nothing" and that the untold torments had no political meaning at all —for many contemporaries that was unbearable. The legend of the dagger thrust was no naive myth but a willed self-delusion of the Right. Their effort is also witnessed by Hitler's "bitter fortune."

Those who ask for the meaning of the suffering in the First World War were drawn by the question into a region where politics, natural philosophy, and medical cynicism met. Scarcely any speaker in those years refrained from medical metaphors: sickness, cancerous growths, operations, and healing through crisis. In *Mein Kampf,* Hitler spoke of the violent catastrophe that was to be preferred to a creeping political tuberculosis. The medical metaphors of the Right were intended to eliminate the sickness as well as the enemy within with "steel and radiation." The Left at least registered the double danger of the sickness.

> If, however, the revolutionary proletariat wants to be the doctor who has to take on the operation that is recognized as being unavoidable, then it is not allowed to continually soil its hands in the open festering sores of the sickness. For then, during the operation, the surgeon himself would carry the poisonous substances into the body of the patient again, so vitiating his task of ridding the patient of them. (Erich Mühsam, *Wahrhaftigkeit*, in *Fanal* 2 [1928])

The well-meaning cool gaze of the natural philosopher is superior to that of the doctor, for the former orders human distress into a cosmic functional relation. Before the gaze of the biologist and all the more before that of the astronomer, the miniscule convulsions of humanity melt into insignificance—as if they were only ornaments in the vast game of waxing and waning. Rudolf G. Binding, in his poems *Stolz und Trauer* (Pride and sadness, 1922), tried to appropriate such a biological "grand view" for himself.

> Heroes fall
> and sons leave their mothers.
> They are all
> simple laws.
>
> The breathing and batting of an eyelid
> in a colossal happening. (Wailing)

Here, too, is the quintessence of heroic hardening, assent, "pride," a solid-block ego that becomes a heroic, sensible machine-for-itself. Nazi schoolbooks treasured it.

The political algodicies proceed according to an elementary schema: withdrawal from feelings of empathy into a pure, observational coldness. In this exer-

Ernst Jiinger, Steel eroticist, 1930. "The longer the war lasted, the more sharply did it shape sexual love into its form. . . . The spirit of the battle of material . . . produced men the world had never seen before . . . steel natures, put into action in battle in its most horrible form. . . . There, a ready femininity paraded in long rows, the lotus blossoms of asphalt, Brussels. . . . There, only steel-like character could stand without being worn down in the turmoil. These bodies that turned to love were pure function." *Der Kampfals inneres Erlebnis* (Struggle as inner experience), 1933, pp. 33-34.

rise, Ernst Jiinger became a complete virtuoso. He is one of the tightrope walkers between fascism and a stoic humanism who elude simple labeling. Nevertheless, Jiinger is unmistakeably one of the master thinkers of modern cynicism, in whom cold posturing and sensitive perception are not mutually exclusive. Ideologically, he practices an aestheticizing political biology, a subtly functionalist termite-philosophy. He, too, can be reckoned among the enthusiasts of the hard subject who can stand the storm of steel. His coldness is the price of staying awake in the middle of the horror. It qualifies him as a precise witness of what has happened in our century by way of modernizing horror. To bury Jiinger under an all too crude suspicion of fascism would thus be an unproductive attitude toward his work. If there exists an author in our century who fits Benjamin's formula of a "secret agent," Jiinger must be it. Like scarcely any other, he took up a listening

post in the middle of Fascist structures of thinking and feeling. His contemplative hardness combines with a pronounced readiness to speak out as witness of his own experiences. If, on the one hand, Jiinger confesses to pre-Fascist tendencies, then, with his "hunger for experience," he reveals a quality that no other Fascist possessed; in general, this quality represents a spirit of mature openness to the world and liberality with which today a New Left would identify itself.

In the prose sketches of *Das Abenteuerliche Herz* (The Adventurous Heart), there is a passage that clarifies lunger's biological algodicy:

> From the beach plays, 2 Zinnowitz
> In the dense brush behind the dunes, in the middle of the swath of reed, I captured a happy picture on my usual walk: the large leaf of a trembling poplar into which a circular hole had been broken. From the edge of the hole, a dark green fringe seemed to hang down that, on closer observation, revealed itself to be a row of tiny caterpillars eagerly sucking the leaf juice with their mandibles. A short time ago, a deposit of butterfly's eggs must have hatched there; the young brood had expanded like a bushfire on its nourishing soil.
>
> The peculiarity of this sight consisted in the painlessness of the destruction it mirrored. Thus, the fringe gave the impression of hanging threads of the leaf itself, which seemed to have lost none of its substance. Here it was so open to view how the double bookkeeping of life balances out. I had to think of the solace Conde gave to Mazarin, who was weeping over the six thousand dead at the battle of Freiburg: "Bah, in a single night in Paris more people give their lives than this action cost."[1]
>
> This attitude of the battle leader, which sees the change behind the burning, has long struck me as the sign of a higher healthiness about life that does not shrink back from the bloody incision. Thus, I experience pleasure when I think of the phrase *consumption forte,* strong consumption, which so angered Chateaubriand and which Napoleon occasionally used to murmur in those moments of the battle when the general was inactive, in which all reserves are on the march, while the front, under attack from mounted squadrons and the fire of artillery that has been moved up, melts as if under a tempest of steel and fire. They are words one does not want to be without, snippets of inner monologues at the smelting ovens that glow and vibrate while, in smoldering blood, the spirit distills into the essence of a new century.
>
> This language is founded on a trust in life that knows no empty spaces. The sight of its fullness causes us to forget the secret sign of pain that separates the two sides of the equation—just as here, the gnawing labor of the mandibles separates caterpillar and leaf. *(Abenteuerliches Herz,* second version, pp. 61-62)

Junger's general's perspective also resembles that of a biologist. For this reason, something of the recognition of the great pulsing of life between procreation

and death creeps into his political sentiments. However, he ignores the threshold that separates natural death from a political death by violence. He thus transfers biological observations to the great warring "organisms" that strike out at one another in struggles of hegemony and survival. With full consciousness, Jiinger blurs the boundaries between zoology and sociology. The war is, in fact, a phenomenon of the "spiritual animal realm" [Hegel;-Trans.]. Jiinger thus provokes us as a political entomologist. His psychological sleight of hand consists in simultaneously assuming the standpoint of the insect and the scientist. He thinks himself not only into the devouring caterpillar but also into the devoured leaf. He goes with his sense organs to the front, which melts into fire. With the cold organs of thinking, however, he stands at the same time on the general's hill from which vantage point the battle offers itself as an aesthetic drama. This double ego corresponds to that of a political schizophrenic. "Fear eats up souls." The horrors of the war have eaten away his soul, the shell saves itself on a cold star from where his dead ego observes its own survival.

Gazing at the stars was a typical form of Weimar algodicy. Its main author, almost forgotten today, is the astronomer Bruno H. Buergel, very popular in his own time, Weimar celestial authority number one, a Sunday philosopher who, with humorously melancholy observations on humanity in the universe, had gathered a congregation of hundreds of thousands of readers about him. In the political realm, he was an author of "class conciliation," of compromise between labor and entrepreneurs. For decades, he practiced his astronomy as a kind of pastoral care for the confused petit-bourgeoisie. His *Celestial Science,* which was even reprinted recently, sold a fantastic number of copies. His autobiography, too, *Vom Arbeiter zum Astronomen* (From worker to astronomer [1919]) had sold a hundred thousand copies by the beginning of the thirties.[2]

In one part of his *Du und das Weltall. Ein Weltbild von Bruno H. Buergel* (You and the universe. A world picture by Bruno H. Buergel [1930]), we find the natural-philosophical confession of the author under the heading "The Great Law." In the soul-destroying or elevating spaciousness (according to your taste) of astronomical ways of thinking, the political-moral cramps of Weimar "micropolitics" loosen up. The inner desert, however, grows relentlessly. Does Buergel not further, in a humorous chatty tone, the subjects' self-freezing? What Buergel speaks of as the "great law" is the wave phenomenon he attempts to follow from electrical and acoustic vibrations into the transformation of human cultures.

Unrelentingly, wave crest and wave trough follow each other. Now above, now descending to the trough, striving to ascend again, again in the trough and, finally, noiselessly petering out in the sand. The leaf falls, its time has come, its definition has reached its end, it sinks to the great layer of humus from which new life will arise. . . .

All goings-on vibrate in waves everywhere. In a thousand forces, it swings up and down. Sound waves carry over from the bell tower of the small maritime chapel; . . . light waves whiz in a flight as quick as thought from faraway stars down to the small globe earth; electrical waves surge around me, making their way from high masts, over land and sea, broadcasting human wit and human stupidity as far as the farthest outposts of civilization.

Waves full of mysterious wonder surge around us. They bring the great law into being in the small ego. . . .

His (W. Fliess's) tireless research uncovered the marvelous law that these two different life substances, these female and male cells, have differing life spans, that the male substance is characterized by a twenty-three day period, the female substance by a twenty-eight day period. This pulsation of changing life energies can be clearly felt within us. . . .

And out of days comes the year. That too a mighty wave in earthly happenings! . . . But day and year peter out, tiny ripples on the sea of eternity. . . .

Cultures that leave their mark on the globe for centuries are also trains of waves in humanity. Thousands of years ago, the old culture of the Chinese came and went, that of the Indians, that of the Egyptians. . . . Many waves of cultures saw old Mother Earth come roaring over them; they came and went like summer and winter. . . . It seems . . . as if the culture of our age, the culture of Europe, is beginning to decline. [There follows a footnote that refers to Oswald Spengler's "significant work."] (pp. 48-51, 53)

Buergel emphasizes that even the "eternal stars" do not represent any exception to the law of waxing and waning. Our sun, too, will be extinguished "so that on this tiny star, earth, everything will sink into night and ice, into the silence of eternal death" (p. 65).

In the melancholy spaciousness of astronomical observations, a deep layer of Weimar life feeling is mirrored. The subjects collaborate instinctively with that which annihilates them and makes them insignificant. They train themselves in inhuman perspectives. They flee into the cold and vastness. Their affirmations are directed toward everything that is not them-"selves," toward everything that helps this iced-over ego to forget itself in the great whole.

Who offers resistance to this training in self-forgetting? Did the Weimar Left understand how to stem the impulse of cynical cosmology and political biology? Even today, the historian stands perplexed before the perplexity of leftist slogans of that time. The Left, too, strove as well as it could to become a "solid block." Here, too, the "line," "character," the "will of iron" dominated. Walter Benjamin was one of the few who systematically sought contact with the experiences, materials, and ways of thinking and reacting of the "other side." Like scarcely

any other, he mastered the art of rethinking—the rescue of experience from the monopoly of reactionary twaddle. The masterpiece of such rethinking is to be found at the end of his book *Einbahnstrasse* (One-way street; 1928), where he ventured into the lion's den in order to speak of things that otherwise were appropriated by the military Right—about war experiences and the blood wedding of human technology and the cosmos. With a small twist, he succeeds in uncovering the spiritlessness in bourgeois philosophy of technology: Mastery of *nature* is not the significance of technology but rather the clever mastery of the *relation* between humankind and nature.

On the planetarium

If, as Hillel once had to do with the Jewish doctrine, one had to express the doctrine of antiquity very briefly, standing on one leg, the sentence would have to read: "The earth will belong to them alone who live from the forces of the cosmos." Nothing distinguishes the human being of antiquity from the human being of modernity more than the former's surrender to a cosmic experience the latter hardly knows. Its disappearance can already be noticed in the blossoming of astronomy at the beginning of modern times. . . . Antiquity's way of dealing with the cosmos was effected differently: in ecstasy. Ecstasy is, indeed, the only experience in which we reassure ourselves about what is nearest to us and what is farthest from us, and never the one without the other. That means, however, that the human being can communicate ecstatically with the cosmos only in a community. It is the threatening error of modernity to regard this experience as irrelevant or avoidable and to leave it to the individual as revelry on beautiful starry nights. No, it becomes due over and over again, and then peoples and lineages elude it just as little as in the last war, when it made itself felt in the most fearful way, as an attempt at a new, unheard-of wedding with the cosmic powers. Masses of people, gases, electrical forces were set free, high-frequency currents traversed the countryside, new stars lit up in the sky, airspace and the depths of the sea hummed with propellors, and everywhere sacrificial shafts were bored into Mother Earth. This great wooing of the cosmos took place for the first time on a planetary scale, namely, in the spirit of technology. However, because the greed for profit of the ruling class thought of atoning for its will to profit with it, technology betrayed humanity and transformed the bridal setting into a sea of blood. Domination of nature, so the imperialists teach, is the meaning of all technology. But who would want to trust a disciplinary master who explained that the meaning of education is the domination of children by adults? . . . The thrill of genuine cosmic experience is not bound to that tiny fragment of nature that we are used to calling "nature." In the nights of annihilation during the last war, a feeling shook the frame of humanity that resembled the fortune of epileptics. And the revolts that followed this feeling were the first attempt to bring the new

body under its control. The power of the proletariat is the measure of its becoming healthy. If its discipline does not grab this body to the marrow, no pacifist reasoning will be able to save it. What is living will only overcome the tumult of annihilation in the ecstasy of creation, (pp. 123-26)

Benjamin succeeds in doing something no mere analyst of struggle, strategist, or ideologue of hardness could do. In the course of his meditation, a piece works itself loose from the hardening cramp of the subject. Ecstasy, the dissolution of the ego, is recognized as the precondition for cosmic communication. At the same time, it provides a presentiment of the reconciliation of human beings with one another. The ambiguity of the topic does not let go of Benjamin either. He speaks of proletarian discipline that has to grab the social body "to the marrow." The entire contradiction lies there openly in a nutshell. From the ecstasy of creation to strict discipline, there is no easy path. Fascism had brought ecstasy and discipline together insofar as it mobilized the tumult of power and ecstasies of destruction in its columns. It organized not only the interests of big capital but also a piece of political mysticism. Benjamin's thought-play tries to rival the Fascist threat by pointing out to the Left the necessity of tearing the ideological weapons and the psychological principle of fascism out of its hands.

Among the few philosophers of the time who did not seek the individual's salvation in hardenings, coolings, and solidifications, Max Scheler assumes a special place. He, too, was a great ambiguist, "double agent," and subversive citizen who took joy in confessing. The war had twisted his head, too, and moved him to horrifying exercises in thinking that affirmed war and Teutonic tumult *(Der Genius des Krieges und der Deutsche Krieg* [The genius of war and the German war], Leipzig, 1915). Later, as one of few, he expressly moved away from such "armed service with the pen," as Thomas Mann said about his own case. By 1921, in his protest against the German plague-spirit of "fulfillment of duty at any cost," he had long ceased to use martial language: "On the Betrayal of Joy." There he provides psychological and moral arguments for an annihilating critique of the Nazi doctrine of felicity well in advance of what came later, that is, that lying philosophy of strength through joy with which the populist labor service *(Arbeitsdienst)* secured domination over unhappy dispositions. The Nazis knew how to mobilize the hunger for something positive that drives unhappy and disoriented individuals to become "involved" and to join ranks, to work together at a "reconstruction." Scheler sees that all this can lead nowhere. When unhappy people "reconstruct" and get "involved," they only spread their unhappiness. " 'Only happy people are good,' Marie Ebner-Eschenbach once said rightly" (Scheler, *Liebe und Erkenntnis,* 2nd ed. [1970], p. 72).

As has been shown, a peculiarly ironic or cynically hard affirmation of evils as valid and ineluctable realities is part of the Weimar Zeitgeist. In the Yes, a

defensive tendency easily comes to the fore: an armoring of the ego against its suffering, a No to what would be subjective truth, No to inner wounds, to weakness and neediness. One begins to see this more clearly when one employs Scheler's important algodicy writing of 1916, *Vom Sinn des Leidens* (On the meaning of suffering) for the purpose of contrast. In this text, Scheler collects elements of another ethics and politics —not hardening against suffering but extension of the Yes and of recognition even to our pain. This, however, according to Scheler, is possible only in a religiously grounded life that, in its deepest spiritual layers feels itself as something indestructibly secure in Being. Scheler refers to this as "blissfulness" *{Seligkeit).* The secret of such an ability to suffer thus lies not in the hardening of the ego, not in political algodicies of the solid block, strength-through-joy, iron front, shoulder-to-shoulder, steel-ego, reconstruction ego type, but in the buried and forgotten Christian principle that Tolstoy revived: Do not resist evil.

> An enormous relaxation of tension that in itself had to have the effect of a redemption, a relaxation through straightforward *recognition,* through the naive expression of pain and suffering. No longer any ancient arrogant suffering that glories in suffering because its magnitude measures one's own power. . . . But also no pride in hiding it from oneself or others under an appearance of equanimity or under the rhetorics of suffering and dying "wisemen." The scream of the suffering creature that was restrained for so long reverberates again freely and harshly through the universe. The deepest suffering, the feeling of being cut off from God, is expressed *freely* by Jesus on the cross. "Why have you forsaken me?" And no more reconstruction whatsoever: Pain is pain, evil is evil; pleasure is pleasure; and positive *blissfulness,* not merely "peace" or Buddha's "redemption of the heart," is the good of all goods. Also no blunting, but a soul-assuaging *suffering through* of the suffering in sympathy for oneself and for others!" (pp. 64-65)

Every polemical subjectivity arises in the final analysis from the struggles of denial of egos against pain, which they inevitably encounter as living beings. They carry on "reconstruction," armament, wall building, fencing in, demarcation, and self-hardening in order to protect themselves. However, *within them,* the fermentation goes on unceasingly. Those who build up and arm will one day "build down" and let loose.

Notes

1. This Gallic cynicism is related also of Napoleon after the battle of Prussian Eylau.
2. On Buergel, see Sloterdijk, *Literatur und Lebenserfahrung. Autobiographien der 20er Jahre* (Munich, 1978), pp. 67ff.

Chapter 21
Asking for a Napoleon from Within.
Political Cynicisms V: Training for Fact
People

> *We Germans will manage to produce not another Goethe but a*
> *caesar.*
>
> <div align="right">Oswald Spengler, Pessimism?</div>

> *For us, the age of warring states began with Napoleon and the*
> *violence of his measures. In his mind, the thought of a military*
> *and, at the same time, national world domination occurred for*
> *the first time. . . . This century is the century of huge stand-*
> *ing armies and universal conscription. . . . Since Napoleon,*
> *hundreds of thousands, and finally millions stand continually*
> *ready to march, enormous fleets lie at anchor that are renewed*
> *every ten years. It is a* war without war, a war of outdoing the
> other with armaments and strike capability, a war of numbers,
> of tempo, of technology. . . . *The longer the discharge is*
> *postponed, the more monstrous the means become, the more*
> *unbearable the tension becomes.*
>
> *. . . The great centers of power in the world capitals will*
> *dispose of smaller states, their territory, their economy and*
> *people according to whim; all that is still only province, ob-*
> *ject, means to an end; its fate is without importance in the*
> *great course of things.* In a matter of years, we have learned to
> scarcely notice events that before the war would have
> transfixed the world. Who today still thinks seriously of the
> millions who perish in Russia?
>
> <div align="right">Oswald Spengler, Der Untergang des Abendlandes
(Munich [1922], 1979, pp. 1097-98)</div>

The Napoleonism of the Weimar Republic betrays the convolutions and crises
with which petit-bourgeois and cultivated bourgeois people at that time entered
into the century of strategy. Today that is called, often with a completely wrong

emphasis, the "politicization of the intelligentsia" or the "politicization of the masses." In reality, the First World War had been the mass politicizer. For years on end, it had transformed the consciousnesses of the entire continent into those of observers of the front. Being schooled through war reports, every individual developed the perspective of a general; the feeling grew that those who were not generals could only be tiny cogs in the war machine. For four long years, reports on the war bombarded public consciousness. Here for the first time, that overwhelming socialization of attention characteristic of modernity took place —and what awoke in individuals and groups as "political consciousness" was the optics of the observer of catastrophes, of the war voyeur.

The so-called politicization proceeds from a more intensive militarization and strategic mobilization of consciousnesses, and that not only on the surface. It penetrates deep into body postures and structures of perception. In 1912, Walther Rathenau had referred to an "education for becoming a politician" when the conceptual models of tactics, of the estimation of total situations, etc., trickled down as far as the shopkeeper.[1] From then on, it took only a short time for politicization —as strategic cothinking in large-scale catastrophes —to become universal consciousness. More than ever, it became a mass reality in the chaos of the Weimar system of Weltanschauung and political parties. At the same time, however, the collective consciousness displayed a tendency to resist this kind of politicization. Nausea about politics was one of the strongest psychopolitical currents of those years. The populist side in particular profited from it because it recommended itself less as a "party" than as a "movement."

As the political ego strives for hardness and agility, it is trained in the way of seeing of generals and diplomats: reconnoiter the terrain; coldly consider the given circumstances; survey the numbers; tack as long as necessary; strike as soon as the time is right.[2] Communist rhetoric referred to these forms of calculation emphatically as "thinking in terms of relationships" and claimed that that was the "dialectical" knowledge of the whole. (See my critique in chapter 11. The relationships are those Spengler startingly designated as "war without war." In this cold romanticism of grand strategic overviews, the political camps of the Left and the Right are quite close to each other. These realpolitik ways of thinking now penetrate down to the person on the street. This "sovereign" thinking, borrowed stateman's optics and general's disposition work on posturingly, even in the minds of the impotent. The principal psychopolitical model of the coming decades is the 'cothinking' cog in the machinery. Those who are infected with the cold intoxication of "thinking in terms of relationships" will more easily let themselves be made into the political tools of the future.

The Napoleon cult in the Weimar Republic belongs in this framework. It marks a phase of inner political colonization. With it, political masochism ascends to new heights. The small ego learns how to deliriously think in parallel with the trains of thought of a great strategic brain, which disposes of the former.

What Ernst Jünger had previously demonstrated on a high essayistic level (namely, the illusion-trick of being simultaneously general and victim, caterpillar and leaf) is translated onto a mediocre level by innumerable biographies, plays, and articles on Napoleon (and other "men of action" such as Cecil Rhodes and Warren Hastings). Here, educated and "semieducated" everyday sadomasochism finds expression. The leaf dreams of being the master ego of the caterpillar. The communality between the devouring and the devoured arises through the leaf feeling into the suffering soul of the caterpillar. Napoleon is portrayed as a demonically driven person, as a sufferer who has to make others suffer. Even Goethe saw Napoleon as a Prometheus figure.[3] The Weimar biographies further reinforce this. Napoleon races along his gleaming course like a "meteor" (Kircheissen). His glowing illuminates the more somber plight of mediocre individuals who dream themselves into the "great man."

For Spengler—who mentions Napoleon I about forty times in the two volumes of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (The decline of the West)—the Corsican is the model figure of European fate. His emergence marks a precise moment in the biographical curve of European culture.

> Now we have entered the age of enormous struggles, where we find ourselves today. It is the transition from Napoleonism to caesarism, a general stage of development encompassing at least two centuries that can be demonstrated in all cultures, (p. 1081)

In Spengler's style we find the apex of political botany that, even more radically than the writings of Ernst Jünger, brings together the perspective of the botanist with that of the politician, of the historian with that of the strategist in a sadomasochistic unity.

> Cultures, living beings of the highest order, grow up in a noble purposelessness like flowers in a field. . . .
> . . . But what is politics?-The art of the possible; that is an old word and with it, almost everything is said. . . . The great statesman is the gardener of the people. (Ibid., pp. 29, 1116)

The politician of Napoleon's ilk is the "fact person" par excellence.

> The fact person never comes into danger of propagating a programmatic or emotional politics. He does not believe in great words. He continually has the question of Pilate on his lips —truths —the born statesman stands beyond true and false. (Ibid., p. 1112)

In similar tones, interspersed with liberal, individualist, psychologizing shades, Emil Ludwig, the most famous Napoleon biographer of the Weimar years, also painted his picture of the hero. *Napoleon* (1925) was one of the most widely read books of the decade.[4] It narrates-in the present tense-the epic of

the modern man of action who is inspired by a "heroic cynicism" (p. 414). Through an inner drive, he burns up his life energy in a fireworks of campaigns and political actions —brilliant, sober, imaginative, positivistic, power-hungry, swayable, full of courage and calculation, and imbued with the "productive lack of conviction" of the born player and shaper who is called on to live out his "amoral act of force."

> The fortune of this man's life exhausted itself in works; he enjoyed
> nothing other than the completed deed. (p. 645)

Only the "new matter-of-factness" of the postwar era allowed historians and biographers to see the Napoleonic cynicisms —his sober attitude toward success whose ambitionless ambition now, in retrospect, seems to fill itself with the Weimar life feeling. In Napoleon one sees reflected how oneself lives, in a self-assertion that, at the same time, lets itself be driven from pillar to post by opportunities and circumstances —half-directing subject, half-servile instrument of historical "fate." It is precisely this alertness in letting oneself be carried along on the stream of the possible, which is well portrayed by Ludwig, that brings the Napoleonic ego into a simultaneity with the moods, self-reflections, dreams, and plans of the Weimar life feeling: wave riding on the harsh Zeitgeist, strategic presence, a cynical affirmation of all the "necessary horrors" of politics and business. Ludwig writes about the still very young Lieutenant Bonaparte in the garrison of Valence on the Rhone.

> Before his decisive matter-of-factness, before this gaze of the realist,
> the most popular author of those years, Rousseau, wilts; the excerpts on
> Rousseau's origins of the human species are continually interrupted by
> the resolutely repeated words: I don't believe a word of it. . . . (pp.
> 19-20)

The biographer succeeds in drawing a fascinating parallel in his description of the famous encounter between Napoleon and Goethe, where the emperor said in reference to the poet:

> "Voila un homme!"
>   . . . It is as if two demons recognized each other in the
> vapors. . . . It is a moment in the course of millennia that is compara-
> ble only to the legend of the encounter between Diogenes and Alex-
> ander, (p. 325)[5]

It is particularly in misfortune, however, that the ironic gambler's nature of Napoleonic realism reveals itself—that capacity of hard egos to withstand the failure of their plans and hopes. In the end, only an agile energy and a will to survive without illusions remain. Ludwig puts the following words into Napoleon's

mouth during the retreat from Moscow through Poland, after his Russian cam-
paign had sacrificed half a million lives:

> That is a grand political drama! He who risks nothing, gains nothing.
> From the sublime to the ridiculous is only a small step . . . ! Who
> could have reckoned with the burning of Moscow . . . !" Napoleon
> becomes an adventurer. To the Poles he pretended to have an army that
> had long since perished. . . . In the meantime, he lets historical com-
> parisons of global expansiveness light up, takes what is happening at
> the moment as past history, relies on premonitions and repeats four
> times the cynically grandiose sentence about the sublime and the ridicu-
> lous, which anticipates any critique. The world and what he does with
> it begin to become a drama for the great realist, and so, Napoleon
> slowly ascends the stage of elevated irony as his success descends, (pp.
> 416-17)

With such psychological sketches, Emil Ludwig shows himself to be far su-
perior to Spengler's brutal realism. At the highest point of realism it is revealed
how a hard sense for the facts slides over into the fictional, the histrionic, bluff
and irony. With this, Ludwig touches on the blind spot in the consciousness of
the philosopher of history, Spengler, who was so proud of his hard posture and
his Prussian and Roman ethics with which he wanted to cover up just how much
vulnerability, softness, and unhappiness, just how many suppressed tears and
how much resentment there had been in his life.

He was right in seeing himself as the "congenial" successor of Nietzsche. Spen-
gler was driven into the arms of the Right because after his success, he repressed
within himself by force the self-experience of doubt and weakness, which for him
had been extraordinarily strong before his big breakthrough in 1918.[6] The
Literat, Ludwig, saw a series of traits in the fact person, Napoleon, that escaped
Spengler's notice—precisely the con man's element, the factors of seduction and
drama, of diplomacy and cynical flight into a false candidness. Spengler should
have had every reason to take more notice of such phenomena. His self-
observation failed from that moment on when he began to stage the drama of the
great theoretician and friend of the powerful. This lie in dealing with himself also
tainted his theory of caesarism. With a little more honestly regarding his own psy-
chic structure, Spengler could have easily known that the Germans would bring
forth not another caesar but a sick, lachrymose actor who, to the applause of con-
fused masses, would oblige with a suicidal caesar number.[7]

In these times, only a psychologist or a dramatist has a chance of remaining
a realist. Nietzsche's prognosis of the ascent of the dramatic character type de-
grades the "respectable" forms of realism to positivistic, one-dimensional world-
views of a premodern type. Those who do not see the histrionics in reality also

do not see reality. Emil Ludwig, in any case, is on the right track when he describes Napoleon's death scene on St. Helena.

> Napoleon's mood swings between pathos and irony. When a servant an-nounces the passage of a comet, the emperor says, "That was the sign before the death of Caesar!" But when the doctor maintained that he found nothing wrong, the patient said, "It can be done without comets, too." (pp. 649-50)

The year is 1925. It is the year of Reich president Friedrich Ebert's death, with whose name the Social Democratic pseudorealism in the Weimar Republic will always be connected. It is the year in which Hindenburg, "the victor of Tannen-burg," is elected as Ebert's successor. Whether the aged officer ever understood at all the time and the realities in which he was living is questionable. It is the year in which the Communists, by putting up Thalmann, a symbolic candidate with no chance of winning, brought the senile, reactionary Hindenburg into the presidential office because they withdrew their support from the promising oppos-ing candidate, a Centrist politician by the name of Marx.[8] However, they pursued a "grand" strategy with hyperrealistic traits that hindered them from correctly un-derstanding their role in these kinds of trivial "surface phenomena."

Heinrich Mann, too, is connected with this date. He, too, had been named as a symbolic presidential candidate by certain leftist groups and some "intellec-tuals." In this year, Mann wrote an essay on Napoleon's memoirs. For him, Bonaparte embodies a Utopian dimension. The Corsican is a projection figure for Left-liberal dreams of realpolitik in which the otherwise scarcely thinkable could happen: the union of spirit and deed, ideas and canons. Heinrich Mann looks resolutely past the emperor's "productive cynicism" and his misanthropic traits. Even the fact that Napoleon had contempt for "intellectuals" is no longer a draw-back. In viewing the emperor of the French people, the liberal intelligentsia of Weimar—not at all far removed from Jiinger's sturdiness—got the idea that the "bloody incision" must be consented to if it is executed by a man of this caliber. Under the sign of Napoleon, the liberal horror of Machiavellianisms slackens off when the latter know how to conceal themselves by citing great ideas and hard necessities.

> The book to which I return most frequently is Napoleon's memoirs. He wrote them in the third person, which has, and is supposed to have, the effect of divine impersonality. In them, he has not so much glorified himself as honored destiny, which wanted such great things from him and which justified him in everything. From a vantage point that is unique and is called St. Helena, he showed the becoming and consum-mation of the great man.
>   The great man, whom this writer knew, came into the world like a

cannonball into a battle. The revolution sent him in this way. In life he was one with his idea, had the same body, the same path. . . .

   . . . The liberal idea dies, it no longer exists. But Napoleon grows incessantly. Europe finally approaches the United States, which he had wanted. . . . The genius of Europe begins a hundred years too late to reach what is due him. . . .

   The genius of Europe now understands here and there dictatorship as well. His liberal contemporaries only bore it without understanding it. . . .He was the protector of the property less. What he delayed with his dictatorship was precisely what stormed in after his downfall, the rule of money. . . . National military dictatorship erected against all merely material powers by a power of spirit. . . .

   He himself is the leader of today, the intellectual who reaches for force. Wherever today a kind of leader has a go at the future of humanity, it is always this kind of leader. His memoirs are our handbook; we automatically are on his side.

   It is all too clear that he would hate and overthrow what is now called democracy and which would seem to him like its disfigured mask. (H. Mann, *Geist und Tat, Essays* [Munich, 1963], pp. 125-29)

Such trains of thought were later referred to by Herbert Marcuse as "self-dissolution of liberalism." Around 1925, even liberal intellects of high standing were prepared to throw their own traditions of ideas overboard like illusions.[9]

Spengler saw before us only a Prussian perseverance in the evening twilight of a civilization with rigor mortis. Heinrich Mann dreamed of a bright future. When the first volume of *Untergang des Abendlandes* appeared in 1918, Heinrich Mann caused a French revolutionary to say in a scene he wrote at that time:

"It [the power of reason], however, grows secretly in all of us. Catastrophes only accelerate its growth. Catastrophes thus bring us closer to happiness. We want the catastrophes basically not because we are depraved but because we want happiness." *(Geist und Tat,* p. 137)

Notes

1. In the same year, Ludwig Rubiner wrote his famous article, "Der Dichter greift in die Politik." See the collection of Rubiner's writings with the same title, 1908-19 (Leipzig, 1976), pp. 251ff. *Der Dichter als Sprengmeister, Vitalisator, Erzeuger von Erschiltterungen:* "What counts now is movement, intensity and the will to catastrophe."

2. This concerns the spectacular main aspect of politics. That at the same time politics turned more and more into administration, remained largely alien to those politicians who had been stamped by military ways. They count on "mass movements," and they would rather form a "front" than a "coalition." They also would rather give commands than laws. They prefer to go onto the streets than into parliament and the ministries.

3. See Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* (Frankfurt, 1979), pp. 504ff.

4. In 1931, the publisher organized a special edition of 100,000 copies.

5. The Goethe-Diogenes parallel is as bold as it is apposite. See my earlier remarks on Goethe's role in the bourgeois neokynicism of Sturm und Drang, chapter 5.

6. See A. M. Koktanek, *Oswald Spengler in seiner Zeit* (Munich, 1968).

7. Thomas Mann called Spengler a "detestable Nietzsche parodist"; Mann, *Briefe 1889-1936* (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 321.

8. This is not to say that the deplorableness of SPD politicians in this election should be played down.

9. Ten years later-Hitler was already in power-Thomas Mann wrote in a letter (1935): "But can one still have many objections today to an enlightened dictator?" Mann, *Briefe 1889-1936,* pp. 397ff.

Chapter 22
"Bright Hour": Great Confessions of a Split Consciousness

> *Do you live today? No, you don't—you wander like a ghost. I have only seldom met an intellectual who would not have admitted this in a* bright hour. *Only a few have acted on this knowledge. They went on wandering hauntingly, thrown hither and thither, defenseless victims of an insoluble contradiction.*
> Johannes R. Becher, *Der Weg zur Masse* in *Die Rote Fahne*
> Oct. 4, 1927

In the twilight of the cynical structure, confessions often anticipate possible exposures. They are the rides of bravado of an irritated consciousness that now and then violently seeks out "confession" (T. Reik's "compulsion to confess") in order to find an excuse and achieve a catharsis and an inner equalization of pressure. Those who live with their times are acquainted with such cynical confessions — which also do not alter anything. Perhaps they are the most prominent element in what today we can call Zeitgeist. Unhappy consciousness too knows its most developed and most typical outgrowths that bear the color of the decade more than anything else.

The phenomenon of the "bright hour" strikes the eye of the historian who reads the traces. In several ways, Weimar is a nudist era, an era of exposure: politically, sexually, in sport, psychologically, morally. The nudist and confessional urge is the obverse side of all the sophisticated inconsequentialities, strenuous pseudorealisms, and artificially construed ideologies. The best authors were active even at that time as phenomenologists of cynicism—Brecht, Toller, Kastner, Roth, Doblin, T. Mann, Feuchtwanger, von Horvath, Broch, to name a few. To the present day, they maintain a lead in this area over professional philosophy.

The "brightest" hour was described by Erich Kastner in his *Fabian* (1931). The scene takes place in the editorial office of a Berlin newspaper (see chapter 9, "School of Arbitrariness"). Kastner possessed an intimate first-hand knowledge of the milieu. The participants are Doctor Fabian, Germanist, moralist; Munzer, the political editor; Malmy, the economics editor—both dyed-in-the-wool cynics; as well as Doctor Irrgang [literally, erring walk;-Trans.], unsalaried clerk, a

young man too unstable for the milieu; later, Strom, the theater critic, joins in. It begins with a search for a news item to be printed in place of five lines that have been struck out of a speech by the chancellor. Nothing suitable can be found in the brushproofs. Irrgang thinks that something appropriate could perhaps still come in.

"You should have become a stylite," said Miinzer. "Or a person detained by the police, or some other kind of person with lots of time. When you need a report and you don't have one, you invent it. Pay attention." He sat down, quickly wrote a couple of lines, without thinking, and gave the young man the sheet of paper. "Now, get along with you, column-filler. If it's not enough, a strip of slug."

Herr Irrgang read what Miinzer had written and said very softly: "Almighty God" and sat down, as if he suddenly felt ill, on the chaise longue, in the middle of a crackling mountain of foreign newspapers.

Fabian bent over the sheet of paper that quivered in Irrgang's hands and read: "In Calcutta there was street fighting between Mohammedans and Hindus. Although the police soon brought the situation under control, there were fourteen dead and twenty-two wounded. Order has been completely restored."

"But in Calcutta there have been no disturbances at all," Irrgang replied resistingly.

"The disturbances did not happen?" Miinzer asked incensed. Would you like to prove that to me? In Calcutta, there are disturbances happening all the time. Perhaps we should report that the Loch Ness monster has been sighted again in the Pacific Ocean? Note the following: reports whose falsity cannot be established, or can only be established after weeks, are true. And now, get yourself out of here in a hurry, otherwise I will have you set out a matrix and add something to the local edition."

The young man left.

"And someone like that wants to become a journalist?" sighed Miinzer. . . . "What can you do?" he said. "By the way, why the sympathy with the people? After all, they're alive, all thirty-six, and are perfectly healthy. Believe me, my dear, what we compose in addition is not as bad as what we omit." And with that, he struck another half a page out of the text of the chancellor's speech. . . .

. . . "You mustn't take anything to heart," said the commercial editor to Fabian. "He has been a journalist for twenty years and already believes what he lies. . . "

"You disapprove of your colleague's indolence?" Fabian asked Herr Malmy. "What do you do besides that?"

The commercial editor smiled, of course only with his mouth. "I lie too," he replied. "But I know it. I know that the system is false. With us in the economy, a blind man can see that. But I serve the false sys-

tern with devotion. For in the framework of the false system at whose disposal I place my moderate talent, the false measures are correct in the nature of things, and the correct measures are, understandably, false. I am a devotee of strict consistency, and in addition, I am . . . "

"A cynic," Miinzer threw in, without looking up.

Malmy shrugged his shoulders. "I wanted to say, a coward. That hits the mark more exactly. My character is in no way the equal of my understanding. I regret that uprightly, but I no longer do anything against it."

[Afterwards, they sat in a small wine bar.]

"I help in doing the wrong thing consistently. Everything that assumes gigantic forms can impress, even stupidity."

Miinzer sat on the sofa and suddenly wept. "I am a swine," he murmured.

"A typically Russian atmosphere," observed Strom. "Alcohol, self-torture, grown men weeping." He was touched and stroked the politician's bald head.

"I am a swine," the other murmured. He said nothing more.

Malmy smiled at Fabian: "The state supports unprofitable large companies. The state supports heavy industry. Industry markets its products abroad below cost, but it sells them within our borders above the world market price. . . . The state accelerates the dwindling of the buying power of the masses through taxes it doesn't dare lay on the propertied classes; in any case capital flees in billions over the borders. Is that not consistent? Doesn't madness have method? There, every connoisseur's mouth waters!"

"I am a swine," murmured Miinzer, and, with his pouting lower lip', caught the tears.

"You overestimate yourself, honorable sir," said the commercial editor." *(Fabian,* chapter 3)

These cynical egos are appendages of their cancer-ridden consciousness of reality, which obeys the rules of the game in the capitalist world without resistance. In it, there is no misery that does not reflect itself, double itself, and ironically mirror itself in tormented confessions and aggressive consent. The significant writers of the time behave toward these phenomena as minute-takers. They know that the people at the center of things know what they are doing. * Journalists in particular cannot appeal to any form of ignorance. That a commercial editor makes such a confession about capitalism as the false system that he serves with lies and devotion belongs to the great moments of truth in Weimar culture. Without insight into the reflective constitution of the cynical structure, a concept of truth for these kinds of situations can no longer be defined. Discreetly disinhibited, to the present day it is people of this kind who have grasped the unity of madness and method and who will say so among friends.[2]

In the "bright hour," the masks of integrated cynics crumble. Where private confidences and alcohol have helped things along, the decomposition presses threateningly and garrulously out into the open. A manufacturer's monologue from Joseph Roth's novel of 1927, *Die Flucht ohne Ende. Ein Bericht* (Flight without end. A report), runs along the same lines. The scene takes place at a party in a Rhenish town. People are talking about fashion, the latest models in hats from "Femina," about the workers and the "decline of Marxism," about politics and the League of Nations, about art and Max Reinhardt. The manufacturer, in a conversation with Tunda, the hero of the novel, loosens the laces in his patent leather shoes, undoes his collar, and stretches out on a "broad sofa." In free association, he turns his companion into a witness of his self-analysis.

> "Earlier on, I understood you perfectly, Herr Tunda. . . . As far as I am concerned, I posed my questions for a quite definite, egoistic reason. In a certain way, I was obliged to do this. You don't understand that yet. First, you will have to live amongst us a little longer. Then you will also have to pose certain questions and give certain answers. Everyone here lives according to eternal laws and against his will. Of course, when they began here, everyone . . . had his own will. He arranged his life completely freely, nobody tried to interfere. But after some time, he did not even notice that what he had set up through a free decision became, if not written, then holy law. . . .
>
> You don't yet know how frightfully open eyes it has. . . .
>
> . . . Now, occupation, too, as far as I'm concerned, is not such an important thing. How one makes a living is not decisive. But what is important is, for example, the love for wife and child. If you began, through your own volition, to be a good family man, do you believe that you could ever stop? . . . When I came here, I had a lot to do; I had to borrow money, set up a factory. . . . Thus when someone came too close to me with something or other, I got him out of my hair in a coarse fashion. I thus became a boor and a man of deeds. People admired my energy. The law overpowered me, commanded me to be *coarse* and to act carelessly—I must, you see, talk with you as the law commands. . . .
>
> Just like me, all people lie. Everyone says what is prescribed by law. The petite actress who asked you earlier about a young Russian writer is perhaps more interested in petroleum. But no, the roles have been allotted to everyone. The music critic and your brother, for example: both play the stock exchange, I know. What do they talk about? About cultural matters. When you come into a room and see the people, you know at once what each will say. Everyone has a role. It is so in our town. No one is in his own skin. And it is the same in our town as in all others, or at least the hundred largest towns in our country."
> (Roth, *Die Flucht ohne Ende,* (pp. 76-79)
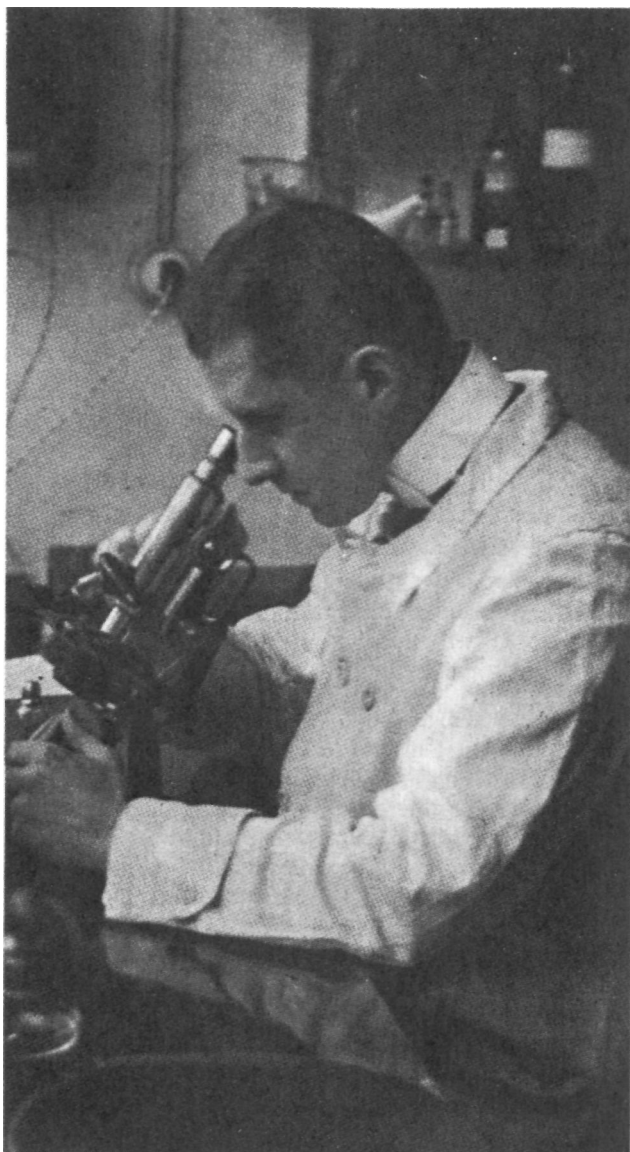
Surgeon-major Doctor Benn, 1916.

This manufacturer even thinks through the compulsion to become cynical (boorishness)—of course, without penetrating the "compulsion" to conform to this reality as such. These are flashes of illumination after which the twilight returns. One knows what one is doing. At any time, if someone asked, one could also say what is wrong with it. One calls it the compulsion of the system, realism. Life becomes one great big agreement to collude with the half-measures and torpor toward which the majority tends. Over the country there hangs a pseudorealist psychological smog, a semidarkness of hardening and demoralization, insight and resignation, drive for self-preservation and ambition. Consciousness is alert but, so as to become anesthetized, it continually casts a side-glance at the "reality that cannot be changed." "In everyone, the ice dogs bark."

Not everywhere do things remain on the level of lachrymose and momentary cynicism. Gottfried Benn tried to make the "great hour" out of the small "bright hour." He outdid the vulgar schizophrenias by distilling lyrical states of the highest quality from the German sicknesses of modern times. From the cynic's Yes to an incurable reality, isolated "flowers of evil" can spring. Benn was one of the most significant "secret agents" of his time, who let the cat out of the bag about the collective spiritual condition and made confessions of such explicit sharpness that everyday understanding usually does not comprehend them because it does not have the courage to take them literally.

> "A double life in the sense claimed and lived out by me is a conscious splitting of personality, a systematic, tendentious splitting. On this, let us listen to the "Ptolemaic." . . .
>
> Suffering, what is that anyway? You have dammed up waters —open your sluices; the times do not suit you—: a placard on your desk, in large writing: that is no different! Composure! Things are going well for you—outwardly you earn your money, and inwardly you indulge yourself. You can't have anything more, that is the situation, recognize it, don't demand the impossible! *Make do and look on the water occasionally,* he says in conclusion, but that too is not resignation; that is eclipsed by his Dionysian motif. . . . All that together results over and over again in his principal maxim: *recognize your situation* — that is, accommodate yourself to the situation, camouflage yourself, forget your convictions. . . . On the other hand, go along with convictions, worldviews, syntheses in all directions of the weather vane when institutions and offices demand it, but: *keep a cool head.* (G. Benn, *Doppelleben* [Double life], Collected Works, vol. 8, pp. 2004-9)

Notes

1. *Denn sie wissen, was sie tun* (For they know what they do) is the title of a 1931 novel by Ernst Ottwald that is critical of the judiciary.

2. Another outstanding document is Erik Reger's novel *Union der festen Hand,* likewise from 1931.

Chapter 23
On the German Republic of Impostors:
The Natural History of Deception

Orge says:
"They think of it this way:
The clever ones live off the stupid ones
and the stupid from their labor."
  Bertolt Brecht, *Tagebucher 1920-1922*

If one wanted to write a social history of mistrust in Germany, then above all, the Weimar Republic would draw attention to itself. Fraud and expectations of being defrauded became epidemic in it. In those years, it proved to be an omnipresent risk of existence that from behind all solid illusions, the untenable and chaotic emerged. A revolution took place in those deep regions of collective feelings toward life in which the ontology of everyday life was laid out: a dull feeling of the instability of things penetrated into souls, a feeling of lack of substance, of relativity, of accelerated change, and of involuntary floating from transition to transition.

This softening of the feeling for what is reliable ends in a collectively dispersed rage of anxiety against modernity. For this is the epitome of states of affairs in which everything appears only so-so and is disposed toward change. Out of this anxious rage, a readiness is easily formed to turn away from this incommodious state of the world and to remold the hate against it into a Yes to sociopolitical and ideological movements that promise the greatest simplification and the most energetic return to "substantial" and reliable states of affairs. Here, the problem of ideology approaches us from a, so to speak, psychoeconomic direction. Fascism and its side currents were after all —viewed philosophically — in large part *movements of simplification.* But that precisely the town criers of the new simplicity (good—evil, friend-foe, "front," "identity," "bond") for their part had gone through the modern nihilist school of artfulness, bluff, and deception-that was to become clear to the masses much too late. The "solutions" that sounded so simple, "positiveness," the *new* "stability," the *new* essentialness and security: They

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are but structures that, under the surface, are even more complicated than the complicatedness of modern life against which they resist. For they are defensive, reactive formations—composed of modern experiences and denials of the same. Antimodernity is possibly more modern and complex than what it rejects; in any case, it is gloomier, blunter, more brutal, and more cynical.

In such an "insecure" world, the impostor grew into a character type of the times par excellence. Cases of fraud, deception, misleading, breach of promise, charlatanism, and so forth multiplied not only in a numerical sense: The impostor also became an indispensable figure in the sense of collective self-reassurance, a model of the times and a mythical template. With a view toward the impostor, the need to clarify this ambiguous life, in which continually everything came out differently from the way it was "intended," was accommodated in the most favorable way. In the impostor, one found the compromise between the feeling of the times that everything was becoming "too complicated" and the need for simplification. If one already no longer saw through the "great whole" and this chaos of money, interests, parties, ideologies, and so on, then, in the individual case, one could nevertheless get an overview of the game of facade and background. If one looked on as the defrauder went through his masked game, then this reassured one in the feeling that the real world must also be in the vein of such role play, especially where one achieves the least clarity. Thus, the impostor became the existentially most important and most understandable symbol for the chronic crisis of complexity of modern consciousness.

To analyze individual phenomena would be a study in itself. One would have to speak of Thomas Mann's Felix Krull and of his real-life prototype, the ingenious deceiver, dreamer, grand seigneur, and hotel thief, Manolescu, an elegant young Romanian who held Europe in suspense with his criminal acts of bravado and his increasingly daring confidence tricks, and who in addition wrote two volumes of memoirs in which literary swindle was added to his criminal acts. One would have to speak of the unforgettable Captain von Kopenick, the classic plebeian impostor's comedy, with whose dramatic narration Carl Zuckmayer triumphed in 1931 on the Weimar stage. In the same trade the false Hohenzollern prince, Harry Domela, also made an attempt by putting the aristocratic sycophancy of Prussian reactionary snobs to the test and who likewise, in 1927, immortalized himself in his memoirs.

Even the enumeration and description of the most important affairs of swindle and deception from that time would fill a thick book. It would show that deception had become an industry and that the *expectation of being deceived* (in the double sense: as readiness to let oneself be deceived and as mistrust that someone would try to pull the wool over one's eyes) had become a universal state of consciousness. They were years of the collective dawning of an illusion in whose twilight the one side saw their chances to make a career of deceptions and promises, and the others let their readiness for an illusion become so starkly visible that the ac-

tive side only had to do what the passive side expected. Modernity establishes itself in people's minds in the form of a permanent training in seduction and simultaneous mistrust.

In 1923 inflation in Germany reached its peak. The state, which let its printing presses run hot without having any backing, was thereby itself caught in the role of the grand deceiver, even if it was not drawn to account, since nobody could take legal action against loss through inflation. In this year, a small Leipzig company published a booklet entitled *Die Psychologie des Hochstaplers* (The psychology of the impostor). Its author was Doctor Erich Wulffen, a humanistically educated person with many interests. A former public prosecutor from Dresden, Wulffen had devoted himself to pursuing the scientific fight against crime (criminology), even into the psychocultural preconditions of crime. In his chats, a new science took shape: "cultural criminology." Wulffen provided a psychopathology of everyday life for the daily use of public prosecutors and officers of the law. He placed himself, with the title "criminal psychologist," beside Lombroso and Gross. His booklet, as innocent and humorous as it pretends to be, reads like a police anthropology of the twenties. Here, everything is revealed by someone for whom deception, because of his profession, comprises half his life and, if one also includes the exposure, then his whole life.

The origins of deception, according to Wulffen, lie in the drive structure of human beings. Namely, nature has given human beings an inherent instinct for secrecy and dissimulation that aids the general drive for self-preservation. But traces of deception can also be found even in nonhuman domain: Bears, apes, horses, and other creatures have been caught dissimulating. Thus, the "beginnings of the psychology of the impostor" (p. 7) are present even in the brains of lower animals. In human beings such beginnings have unfolded in a specific way. Children are born deceivers. Their drive to play, their talent for "apparent lies," their capacity for imitation, and their penchant for experimenting with mental constructions provide the public prosecutor with proof of their "inherited instinct for dissimulation." As a psychologist, Wulffen knows that all crimes grow out of "quite modest beginnings." Normality is the breeding ground of crime. "A child, likewise in order to have a change, pretends to have a need so as to be taken out of the crib, carriage or chair" (p. 8). In the need for change are to be found the seeds of later bourgeois disorder, which is often nothing other than the acting out of dreams that life simultaneously wakens and prohibits in individuals. With the impostor, the transition from the drive and the dream into crime is accomplished as is, at the same time, a metamorphosis of the mere crime into an aesthetic phenomenon. That is what evidently fascinates the former public prosecutor so much about his topic. By pursuing criminal psychology, Wulffen coquets with high culture: He recognizes the crime of the impostor basically as a practiced piece of art. Of course, in this connection he cites Goethe, Nietzsche, and Lombroso, and again and again he touches on the relations between the talent of the

impostor and the artist—not only from the perspective of plagiarism.[1] Swindle, like poetry and dramaturgy, is dominated by the pleasure principle. It obeys the magical spell of great roles, the pleasure in playing games, the need for self-aggrandizement, the sense of improvisation. The great impostors build up nothing more than the stages for their roles. To riches and material incentives they have—disturbingly unbourgeois — an illusionist relationship. The money they swindle is never recognized as capital but is always only a means for procuring atmosphere, a part of the scenery that belongs to the criminal-fantastic self-representation. This holds for phony counts, marriage swindlers of distinction, and false chief doctors just as for fantasy bankers, mundane matchmakers, and princesses who are not listed in the Who's Who of the aristocracy.

Wulffen knows how to treat the ambivalence of his material skillfully. As a psychologist, he certainly recognizes the role of education in the development of the child's behavior in play and in fantasy. The initially innocent "talent" first specifies itself in a "certain atmosphere of lies" of the educators as a "conscious drive." Educators themselves often surround children with an illusory reality made of lies and threats, pretenses and double standards. In such a climate, the jump to a "precriminal disposition" is not great. Cheating, bragging, exaggeration, misrepresentation, flattery-they are the human excitations well known to general psychology from which the transition into the impostor's trade can be easily made. It is also known that in the "crisis of puberty" (where it eventuates), behavior patterns can arise that occasionally lead to habitual swindling. Anyone looking for a literary witness's report of such pubertal amoralism and youthful double-living can read in Klaus Mann's first autobiography *Kind dieser Zeit* (Child of these times, 1932) how the Mann children at that time "went about things." The twenty-six-year-old author provides —the title alludes to it —themes for a social psychology of the present and simultaneously a kind of history of philosophy for the sins of his own youth. He cites Hofmannsthal's verse: "Look out, look out, the times are peculiar / And peculiar children they have: us."[2] From the erotic sphere, too, phenomena are known that spill over into that of the impostor—the seducer as Don Juan, as marriage swindler; the double-life of upright married couples.

Impostors invent criminal variants of what is officially called careers. For they make a career, but in a different way from those who are assimilated. Their motives are "peculiar" and are comparable to those of the gambler, the mountain climber, and the hunter, and in large numbers they become unwilling victims of their own talents, among which stand out agility, a talent for languages, charm, the power of seduction, a feel for situations, presence of mind, and imagination. Rhetoricians are represented among them just as much as mimes. They are often subject to strong autonomous dynamics of the "articulatory organs" and to a drive to carry things out that comes from their ability to perceive their own fantasies

with an extremely plausible degree of probability and to latch onto all things from the angle of their feasibility. Through their behavior, they are highly successful at extinguishing the everyday ontological boundaries between the possible and the real. They are the inventors in the existential domain.

Wulffen now comes to the ticklish side of the topic: He establishes connections to social and political phenomena. He gives the impression that he sees what is decisive but is not inclined to discuss it. He mentions in passing the swindling side of all modern *advertising* and the "disreputable" side of the modern business world as such, where there are bankrupt entrepreneurs who, three days before they register their bankruptcy, "clothe wife and daughter once again in velvet and satin" and continue to live in luxury until the police arrive. Wulffen even concedes a certain sociopolitical protest value to swindling because it is in fact not infrequently the children of poor people who in this way fulfill everyone's dream of ascent into the big time. But Wulffen avoids looking at the current social situation and the most recent political past. He is silent about inflation with all its mental consequences; not only does he pass over the thoroughly deceitful, improvising, and hectically "imaginative" atmosphere of the year 1923, but he also neglects the concrete political application of his cultural criminology. True, he, too, refers to Napoleon, who, according to him, was an adventurer and a "fool of fortune," but for a German at that time, that was an accepted example and in any case was part of the general atmosphere. However, the account makes a discreet detour around Kaiser Wilhelm II. Those kinds of associations, at least in public, were not permitted for a former public prosecutor. That this theme nevertheless must also be present as the "unsaid" is self-evident when connections between swindling and society, theater, and politics are investigated seriously. The acting out of dreams and fantasies in grand gestures, since Wilhelm II, had become an element of German politics transparent from all sides.[3] In November 1923, a populist association of impostors gave its first unsuccessful performance in the Munich Hitler-Ludendorff putsch.

Thomas Mann-whose *Felix Krull,* a high-society impostor's story, had appeared in the right atmospheric moment in 1922 (in its first version) —also had a clear view of the political-symbolic dimension of the phenomenon of the impostor. From the Italian novelle *Mario und der Zauberer* (Mario and the magician; 1930) on, the conventional Thomas Mann stories about the artist and the citizen, the actor and the charlatan, and about the ambiguity of the artist's life which oscillates between people of rank and conjurers in the "green wagon," took on new dimensions. He now turned his attention to the political field and made the modern demagogue, hypnotist, and mass conjurer recognizable as a twin of the actor and the artist. Thomas Mann's narration represents the deepest probe of literary diagnostics of the times for that period.[4] It explores the histrionic-charlatanistic areas of transition between the political and the aesthetic, between ideology and

trickery, seduction and criminality. Later Mann even wrote a sketch with the provocative title, *Bruder Hitler* (Brother Hitler).

Where the everyday ontological border between game and seriousness is blurred and the safety gap between fantasy and reality has melted away, there the relation between what is respectable and what is bluff slackens. To the ambitious, publicity-hungry characters falls the task of demonstrating this "slackening" (see Serner's *Final Slackening,* discussed earlier) in the public sphere. This is called a sense for representation. An aspect of illusionism, pose, and deception always clings to everything representative in service of the public. Representers are the character actors of orderliness, and, with the best among them —Thomas Mann's behavior permits us to include him here—they openly show themselves to be gamblers.

Where insights of this kind are dawning, cynicism cannot be far behind. Manolescu, the impostor of the century, toward the end of his short life came up with the equally coquettish and serious thought of donating his unique (or so he probably thought) brain to scientific research in order to complete his existence in the representational sphere. As an anatomical-psychological specimen, his brain was supposed to go down in anthropology. With this in mind, he offered his body to the world-famous criminal psychologist, Lombroso. However, the scientist, whose fame was based precisely on the "respectable" investigation of the ambiguity between genius and madness, giftedness and criminality, probably had no desire to see his fame tainted by that of this impostor. He answered the mortally ill Manolescu on a postcard: "Keep your skull!"

Addendum:

That today there is not so much talk about impostors only proves the onward march of respectability in this area. The uneducated impostors of yesteryear have become the professional impostors of today. What counts today is not the spectacular effects but the solid facades, respectability. What was earlier called swindle today is called expert advice. Is it a matter of educational economics or of technical progress? Today, without an academic education one cannot even become a swindler anymore.

Excursus 6. Political Coueism: The Modernization of Lying

> *When, however, people struggle for existence on this planet, and consequently the fateful question of being or nonbeing confronts them, all considerations of humanity or aesthetics collapse into nothing. For all these considerations do not float in the ether but stem from human fantasy and are bound to the human. . . .*
>
> *. . . If however these viewpoints of humanity and beauty*

*are suspended provisionally during the struggle, they cannot be
employed as a yardstick for propaganda. . . . The most horri-
ble weapons were humane if they led to a speedier victory, and
only those methods were beautiful that helped the nation secure
the dignity of freedom. . . .*

*The masses are not now in the position to distinguish where
the other's injustice ends and one's own begins. In such a case,
they become insecure and mistrustful. . . .*

*That at the decisive places, it is of course not meant in this
way does not occur to the consciousness of the masses. The
people, in the overwhelming majority, are . . . femininely in-
clined. . . .*

*. . . In this there are not many differentiations but only a
positive or a negative, love or hate, right or wrong, truth or
lie, however never half-and-half or partially, etc.*

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf,* excerpts from chapter 6

What Hitler presents here may be read as a program for an artful primitivization
of consciousness. With a high degree of consciousness it is shown how experience
can be extinguished in people. Experience furthers differentiations, reflective-
ness, doubt, and the awareness of ambivalences. In the interest of struggle, this
is supposed to be voided. In the fateful year 1925, Hitler published in *Mein Kampf*
the grammar of stupefaction; this may be understood as a great act of involuntary
enlightenment.

However, it was not understood, and Hitler knew from the start that it would
not be understood. "That this will not be comprehended by our smart alecks
proves only their mental laziness, or conceit" (ibid. p. 198). Hitler realized that
the consciousness of the cynic possesses an entire dimension in addition to that
of the normal intellectual, educated, or "conceited" person. The fighting ego in
the cynic looks over the shoulder of the ego of experience and thinking and sorts
the experiences into what can be used and what cannot. It proceeds from the idea
that things have to be simplified. Hitler's recipe is therefore: First simplify, then
repeat endlessly. This will be effective. However, one can only simplify what one
has already grasped as something ambiguous, multifaceted, multivalent. So that
politicians can make an impression on the masses, they must learn to hide that
"more" that they know and outwardly identify themselves with their own simpli-
fications. With the concept of playacting, this procedure is not yet fully grasped.
Thomas Mann hit the mark very clearly not only by describing the vaudeville
character of political seduction but also and especially by emphasizing the sugges-
tive and hypnotic aspects of these phenomena. The suggestion, however, begins
in the politicians themselves, and their own consciousness is the first addressee
of suggestive persuasion. In the beginning, rhetoricians must, as they say, "con-

centrate," that is, collect themselves through autosuggestion and make themselves one with the pretended simplicity and unambiguity of their theses. In the vernacular, we say of such phenomena: They are beginning to believe their own lies. Hitler had command of this autosuggestive ability to such an extraordinary extent that, being sure of his cause, he could afford to reveal his recipe.

He rightly assumed that the artful person is superior to the merely "intelligent" person. The intelligent person knows how to gain experience and to think it through in a differentiated way. The artful person knows how the differentiations can be thrown overboard again.

The Weimar Republic may be understood as an age of a universal dawning of reflection, insofar as at that time, such tactics and theories of artfulness and of "simplicity with duplicity" were developed on all levels. We have already discussed Dada and logical positivism. One would have to discuss further the depth psychologies of Freud, Jung, and Adler, among others. Critique of ideology, sociology of knowledge, and psychotechnology open up additional dimensions. All these phenomena have multiple meanings. They can serve to simplify the complex or to restore the apparently simple to its real complexity. The consciousness of contemporaries becomes a battlefield on which the means of simplification and those of complication struggle. Both can be based on "realism," albeit on different realisms, of course. In general, it holds that the simplifications are of a polemical nature and correspond to a realism of struggle. The complications are rather of a more integrative and conciliatory nature and evidence a therapeutic realism, or a "learning." They can, of course, also lead to confusion and excessive complexity.

Among the therapeutic methods of suggestion during the Weimar period, the Coueian technique, is particularly worth mentioning. It was widely discussed at that time and represented a very simple and effective tool for positive autosuggestion. It represents a transformation and watering-down of hypnosis to an autosuggestive procedure, and as such enjoyed in those years extraordinary public interest. One bibliography lists for the period of the Weimar Republic alone around seven hundred scientific or popular publications on the themes of Coueism, hypnosis, autohypnosis, and suggestion. This enormous interest is proof of a, I would like to say, realist countercurrent to the partly too contemplative, partly too volatile discussion of psychoanalysis, in which one could retreat into a rather comfortable "interpretation" of "symbols" and could look past the real dynamic of the conscious and the unconscious.

At one point, Hitler even has a go at playing anthropologist:

> The first step that visibly separated the human being from the animal was that to invention. *Invention* itself *rests on the discovery of sly tricks and ruses* whose application facilitates the struggle against other beings for life. {*Mein Kampf,* p. 494)

What Hitler wants to provide here is not, as with Wulffen, a criminal anthropology; the latter is concerned primarily with the phenomenon of deception. *Hitler* wants an anthropology of struggle, and for this reason he emphasizes the martial character *of invention.* This word is to be understood in its double meaning as technical invention *and* subjective dissimulation. The practical and the fantastic are thus the same from the beginning. Of course, Hitler eventually wants to make the point that the "inventor" is to be praised as the outstanding, aristocratic individual who is more adept at life. The "Fiihrer" has a theory of an elite in mind. However, what we can literally read says: To be one of the elite means to belong to those who discover "sly tricks and ruses" in the struggle for existence. The aristocrat as the "inventor" of cunning. The circle toward swindle is about to complete itself. But Hitler makes even more unambiguous connections between politics and autosuggestion.

> Only the superior training of the German soldier in peacetime im-
> munized the entire giant organism with that suggestive belief in one's
> own superiority to an extent that even our adversaries had not thought
> possible. . . .
>
>   Precisely our German people . . . need that suggestive power that
> lies in self-confidence. This self-confidence, however, must be drilled
> into the young fellow countryman from early childhood. His entire edu-
> cation and training must be so ordered as to give him the conviction of
> being unconditionally superior to others, (p. 456)

Hitler demands, in a uniquely transparent form of expression, what characterizes the young and neoconservatives: *self-confidence without self-experience; suggestion against perception.* That results in the identities from the primitive-artful test tube.

Five years previously, Ferdinand Avenarius had presented a documentation of the English "horror propaganda" during the First World War and had set himself the task of exposing tendentious falsifications of images and texts by the British. He wanted to contribute to peace, as he said, by uncovering the lies of war. But this would be possible only if we overcame the "suggestive war and its poisons" and saw through the "madness of the world." Avenarius tried to illuminate the suggestions technically. He gives numerous examples of the "poisonous flowers" of suggestion —from small swindles and misrepresentations to grave crimes of misinformation. He stated, I think, realistically:

> It is probably good if we first remind ourselves what *suggestion* is. The
> pursuit of psychological questions can become universal, it can become
> "fashion" when some kind of particular stimulation, a "sensation," is as-
> sociated with it. That is what happened with the dream analyses of
> Freud and his school; it also happened this way earlier with the discov-
> eries about hypnotic and posthypnotic suggestion. For the life of peo-

DIE MACHE
IM WELTWAHN

SCHRIFTEN FÜR ECHTEN FRIEDEN

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON
FERDINAND AVENARIUS

DOPPELHEFT 1/2
PROPAGANDA UND WAHRHEIT
1. DIE PHOTOGRAPHISCHEN DOKUMENTE

Title page of Avenarius's book.

pies, however, it is imcomparably more important what reigns every-
where in broad daylight: *suggestion during waking hours.* We breathe it
in, we breathe it out, like air, and like the air—we do not see it. That
our consciousness does not notice it is what enables it to have its full
effect. Wakeful suggestion has a powerful biological (?) value for the
individual, for it relieves it of much of the world's tediousness and of
thinking for oneself. Of course, it also turns the individual into a herd
animal. But it does not notice that, for precisely in this lies one of the
most important effects of suggestion: that it causes the suggestee to be-

lieve what he thinks comes from his own head, and what he feels, from his own heart. *{Die Mache im Weltwahn,* p. 24)

In contrast to Freudian psychoanalysis, Avenarius emphasized not problems of the conscious and the unconscious but those of attentiveness and inattentiveness. Through suggestion, those pictures of reality become plausible for us that pander to our secret (not unconscious; see chapter 8, "Sexual Cynicism") fantasies. Phenomena of suggestion touch on the domain of automatic consciousness, not the unconscious as such. In this, inattentivenesses in perceiving the world combine with inattentivenesses in perceiving oneself. Thus, through suggestive seduction, latent prejudices and inclinations are pseudospontaneously brought to light.

Excursus 7. Spectral Analysis of Stupidity

We are all the more stupid in our actions, the less ignorant we are.

Charles Richet (1921)

With the emergence of impostors' ambivalences in modernity, the social economy of intelligence is altered. Almost imperceptibly, but nonetheless dramatically, the relation between intelligence and stupidity is displaced. Stupidity loses its apparent simplicity; in it, one no longer recognizes a primary state of unenlightened minds but a complicated phenomenon that in itself is many-sided, indeed downright exciting. As soon as one has taken on the social psychology of deception, "stupidity" is drawn into the complications of these observations as the complementary phenomenon to deception. "Nothing is simple anymore," not even stupidity. That is perhaps the saddest triumph of enlightenment.

In the light of reflection, the phenomenon of stupidity is torn from everyday thinking and illuminated theoretically. When this is done, the phenomenon proves to be a special case of subjugation and defiance. Deception alone would be nothing without a highly explosive readiness to be deceived in the so-called victim. The early-modern *Narrenschijf* (Ship of fools) of Sebastian Brant (1494) already calls this structure by its name: *Mundus vult decipi, ergo decipiatur.* The world wants to be deceived; therefore, it should be deceived. Thus, the theory of the fool and the deceived recognizes in them from the beginning an independent, active element *{vult).* The *Stultitia* is not innocent but contains an aspect of false naivete that clings to those who let themselves be made fools of. This precipitates aggressive laughter: Mocking laughter is a ferment of the European tradition of satire.

In this century, the scandalous contrast between the norms of reason in enlightenment and the unreasonableness of the human condition demands theoretical ex-

planations that stretch out beyond satirical wisdom. Here, psychoanalysis has without doubt achieved a great deal by penetrating the phenomenon of stupidity psychogenetically and psychodynamically. It, too, spins out the motif of wanting-to-be-deceived; it discovers that there certainly is subjective sense in being stupid.

A telling documentation of the nascent theorizing about stupidity is provided by a small humorous book by Charles Robert Richet (1850-1935), a world-renowned physiologist and psychologist who had also distinguished himself as a writer of fables; as a Nobel Prize winner, he was one of the leading lights of the French learned world. Written in 1921, his tract was immediately translated into German: *Der Mensch ist dumm. Satirische Bilder aus der Geschichte der mensch-lichen Dummheiten* (The human being is stupid. Satirical pictures from the his-tory of human stupidities [no place of publication given, 1922]). Richet is a clas-sic representative of the bourgeois type of learned scholar of the Third Republic, radical rationalist, an enlightener, and teacher of biting stringency and gentle hu-manity. One may surmise that, with this work from his later years, he wanted to express his outrage at the devastations of humanity through the First World War. It is written in a bourgeois dignitary's style that, in a very French way, walks the tightrope between clarity and platitude. Under such conditions, naive cyni-cisms of all kinds flourish, for whose understanding a glance at the author's medi-cal background is useful. In addition, Richet, at the end of his life's work, no longer feels the compulsion to be more brilliant than the occasion demands. What he relates about the First World War sounds as cynical as it is helpless.

> Thus I do not decry war for the sake of the dead and the ruins. The newborn will replace the dead and, through them, the ruins will be built up again! The trees grow once again and the harvests come again. But there is an uncanny reality that nothing can extinguish in the eternity of time: the mourning.
>
> Fifteen million dead, that is no great misfortune-at least for these dead —for the dead no longer suffer. . . . Fifteen million dead are replenished by fifteen million births. But hundreds of millions of un-happy people, hundreds of millions of martyrs for whom every joy has dried up(!) forever, that is something! [Richet means the bereaved.—Author] (pp. 48, 51)

Cynicism appears here as a form of the labor of mourning. It mirrors the hor-ror of a gentle rationalist at a human society that is incapable of conceiving oi war as a cardinal stupidity. Richet proclaims that he is ashamed to belong to this low species, humanity. One can no longer speak of the *Homo sapiens* of the Lin-nean system. Richet replaces the expression with a new anthropological classi-fication: *Homo stultus.* Animals are after all far more clever. An ape can learn

to play cricket like an Englishman, but the human being does not understand "that peace deserves priority over war" (p. 62).

In the feeling of bitterness, the old man now unfurls the picture scroll of human stupidities: mutilation, circumcision, castration, celibacy, royal cults, sycophancy, subjugation, class society, drugs, alcoholism, tobacco, fashion, jewels, war and armament, superstition, bullfighting, the extinction of animal species, the destruction of forests, protective tariffs, sicknesses through negligence, and so on and so on. In this, he indulges in a multitude of extreme insipidities in the notorious style of the nineteenth century, for which the other side, not entirely without justification, attacked him as an "enblightener" *(Aujklaricht),* to say nothing of his racist vulgarities about the stupidity of the Negroes and the cultural worthlessness of the yellow and red races.

It is fascinating to see how in this old scholar the language of ancient kynicism emerges as soon as he comes to the topic that provided the touchstone for wise teachings in antiquity: the relation of the wise person to dying. Like the ancient kynics and materialists, Richet teaches a sovereign indifference toward one's own death, no matter how much he also recognizes the mourning of the death of loved ones. He classifies every kind of death cult as stupid and as superstitious alienation. The dead body, this "earthly sack of maggots" (p. 125), does not deserve any honor. In classical manner—no matter how immediately inspired he is by kynical and Stoic sources —Richet teaches an honorable death. He celebrates Socrates' death as the model of an end worthy of a human being, that is, a serene euthanasia in contrast to that tormenting dysthanasia to which doctors of his time subjected the dying (p. 127).

> As far as my own corpse is concerned, I herewith quite solemnly
> declare that is to be thrown into the knacker's yard, burned, buried, or
> dissected; I don't care what happens to it, and I beseech my family not
> to worry themselves over it. (p. 125)

This way of thinking, oriented toward antiquity, does not hide that Richet's writing, too, belongs to the modern twilight of "stupidity." For it pinpoints precisely the dependence of stupidity on intelligence. Stupidity is an act of defiance, a refusal, a not-wanting-to-be-otherwise that advances parallel to enlightenment.

> Wherever there is no reason at all, one cannot nevertheless be un-
> reasonable! However, the more one is gifted with intelligence, the more
> one is inclined to drown in a sea of banalities! (p. 13)

From the aphorisms of the novelist and psychoanalyst, Ernst Weiss *(Von der Wollust der Dummheit* [On the pleasure of stupidity; 1938]), who is almost forgotten today, one can perceive an enriched echo of Richet's theses. Where Richet still cites the *mundis vult decipi* in classical fashion, Weiss, following Nietzsche, speaks of a "will to night" *[Wille zur Nacht* instead of Nietzsche's *Wille zur*

Macht; — Trans.] — as a universal regressive tendency ("to extinguish lights, to lie down flat, to be stupid").

This is what psychologists of the masses have to take into account if they want to speak of fascism.

> In the eyes of the stupid, God is stupid. The people want God to be stupid. A God who understood chemistry and relativity physics would not be to their liking. Luther said: Deus stultissimus. The word could come from Hitler, if he had learned Latin.

Excursus 8. Actors and Characters

> *That is, in fact, a fancy-dress ball and not reality! You can't get out of your costumes!*
>
> J. Roth, *Die Flucht ohne Ende* (1927)

The proletarian-revolutionary movement, which was organizing itself anew after the war, was disturbed by the ironic metamorphoses of the bourgeoisie. In bourgeois culture, atmospherically omnipresent, the ascent of the theatrical type predicted by Nietzsche had come about. And just as at the time of its militant rise against feudalism, when the bourgeoisie had set its steadfast morality against aristocratic cynicisms, the leaders of the revolutionary movement now recreated the antithesis of character and actor.

In his essay *Die kulturelle Stellung des Schauspielers* (The cultural position of the actor [1919]), Ludwig Rubiner, one of the heralds of expressionist activism, confirms the bourgeois success of actors as an occupational group. The bourgeois contempt for this profession ceased. But not just contempt: Today it is the "struggling classes" who continue to view the actor with "instinctive deprecation." In this there is something worse than contempt, namely, *mistrust* of the actor.

> Mistrust of his reliability, his character, of the assessment of the actor as a companion and fellow fighter. For today there is no longer any evasion: You belong either to the reaction or the revolution. The point is to make a decision. The actor has not yet decided. *{Der Dichter greift in die Politik* [The poet intervenes in politics], [Leipzig, 1976], pp. 318-19)

According to Rubiner, actors are not much more than "badly or well-fed circus animals" of the bourgeoisie, agents of planned diversion from real struggles. They are "capons," entertainment slaves, fools prostituting themselves, doomed to "existence as *Untermenschen"* because of their ambivalent position in bourgeois culture. On them falls the suspicion of being asocial —an unbearable suspicion in the eyes of those who speak the language of the "coming humanity. Rubiner damns the bourgeois actor by basing himself on a new sociality that looks

into the future: the "new community," the new humanity. The actor who had ceased to be merely a "hunter of roles" would have to decide in favor of this new humanity, and in doing so would again become a full fellow human and character. Rubiner's slogan was "Character is again worth something" (p. 323). In the new society, actors, as we know them, would disappear, and in their place would step the intellectually distinguished "dilettante," the "speaker," with whose emergence the "epoch of the prostitution of the actor" would end. Rubiner's text reads like a document for a new socialist moralism whose heyday was in the feverish months after the fall of Wilhelminian rule-and the young Russian Revolution close on its heels.

It is superfluous to comment on Rubiner's text; events themselves have taken over this task and have shown that the sociopsychological trend did not make actors into characters once again but made more and more characters into actors. However, from the millions of little stories that have been spun together into a big story, I want to cite one related by Gustav Regler. It provides an atmospheric snapshot from the milieu of prominent Berlin Communists who at that time still believed that with mere rhetoric they could resist the victory march of the Fascists. The date is January 28, 1933, two days before the fateful day.

28 January 1933 was a final grotesque day in Berlin. Kantorowicz cooked up his stiff goo of oats as I sought him out to look for the mail. . . . I found an invitation to Green Week, the farmers' exhibition. "Ask Dewald," said Kantorowicz. "He was here yesterday."

Dewald, an unemployed actor, walked out of the kitchen, puffed up his cheeks, stuck out his stomach and jammed a monocle into his eye. "Quite excellent show!" he teased. . . . "Beast becomes impudent. Produces too many vegetables, too, eats less bread. Soon it will be otherwise. . . . Fourteen years of Marxism have passed, haven't they?" Dewald no longer spoke like a Junker from East Prussia; he imitated Hitler's voice. Kantorowicz stirred his porridge, which he consumed every morning as a cure for the previous night's poisoning by cigarettes. Dewald pushed a strand of hair onto his forehead. "I have waited long enough!" he cried. "I will be the Chancellor with the bow tie under his nose. My strand of hair will enchant all Germans. The bags under my eyes will become the new ideal of beauty. . . . The Social Democratic party will crawl into its mousehole. The Communist party will distribute a printed protest door-to-door . . . "

"Hey!" said Kantorowicz and looked somewhat concernedly at the jester who, with all his mockery, took on the shine of a visionary.

"I will not stand for any backtalk!" Dewald screamed in the monotonous but nevertheless hysterical tone of the "Fuhrer." "There is no proletariat, I will send it to Moscow; there is only the German people, and they will follow me into the deepest misery because they are loyal and recognize their Fuhrer and like being kicked in the behind. This

Schleicher has been at the helm now for one month and twenty-four days, but it belongs to me. . . . I will put a stop to his cheating and, before the week is out, there will be one general less and a great Fuhrer in Wilhelmstrasse, so help me my bow tie and my shock of hair . . . "

The telephone rang. Kantorowicz lifted the receiver, listened with his raven's face at first as if he were asleep, tapped with his fingers, then he wrinkled his forehead, nodded several times and hung up. His face seemed to have grown older as he said, looking up at Dewald: "Schleicher has resigned. Hitler will become chancellor."

Dewald hastily pushed the strand of hair from his forehead. He looked as if he was scared that we would beat him to death. *{Das Ohr desMalchus* [Frankfurt, 1975], pp. 189-90)

Notes

1. Plagiarism was, by the way, the point of access of the psychoanalyst, E. Bergier, to his analysis of cynicism (see chapter 13, Excursus 2). Bergier boggled at the answer of plagiarists: for them, the concept of "intellectual private property" is nonsense; see Brecht's reply to the proof of his borrowings from Villon in the *Threepenny Opera.*

2. References to Mann's autobiography are provided in my book *Literatur und Lebenserfahrung. Autobiographien der20er Jahre* (Munich, 1978). pp. 145ff., 166ff. ("AufdemZauberberg der Pubertal"), pp. 275f.

3. In 1911, the spectacle of the "panther leap" to Agadir had ignited the second Moroccan crisis, the prelude to the now "unavoidable" world war. This was a coincidence rich in its many connections: Through the Agadir crisis, through becoming conscious of the approaching Great War, Oswald Spengler came for the first time in his cultural historical studies definitively onto the political track.

4. See Bruno Frank's *Politische Novelle* of 1928, where likewise, with Italian material, the spectacle of caesarism in the Fascist Duce is depicted.

hapter 24
ey! Are We Alive? New Matter-of-Fact Cynicisms and Stories about the Difficulties of Life

Since then, 10 years have gone by. Where we saw absolutely straight paths, relentless reality came and made them crooked. Nevertheless, things are moving forward. . . . It is a matter of tactics, my dear.

Social Democrat minister Kilman, in Ernst Toller,
Hoppla, wir leben! (1927)

In me grows a tiny feeling against dichotomies (strong-weak; big-small; happy-unhappy; ideal-not ideal). It is so only because people cannot think more than two things. More does not fit into a sparrow's brain. But the healthiest thing is simply: maneuver.

Bertolt Brecht, *Tagebucher 1920-1922*

If the revolutionary period had been a time of abrupt contrasts and absolute alternatives in which black and white reigned, ten years later, a game of gray-in-gray nuances, complicated to excess, ruled. By 1928, the people of November 1918 had long since become caught up in the shoving of "hard facts" and the "lesser evil." An all-pervading moral and tactical relativism gnawed away on older images of "identity." Literary expressionism had been a final rearing up of the will to simplify—an uprising of modern means of expression against modern experiences, against complexity, relativity, perspectivism. By contrast, the cubist tendency in painting seemed adequate to modernity in that it took account of the experience that things looked different from different perspectives.

In the age of tactics, advertising, propaganda, a cubist "mentality" becomes a general fact of intelligence. With it, from now on, older models of identity and character seem archaic or folkloric, if not narrow-minded. Under such circumstances, it becomes an existential problem how what tradition called the "humane" can be saved from a total emptying and destruction. It is, to use Thomas Mann's words, the "suffering and greatness" of late-bourgeois art that it let itself in for

the torment of such questions and the psychopolitical perceptions that force one to them. I want to try to describe some of these perceptions and, with their help, to render intelligible the meaning and the painfulness of such questions about the humane and the inhumane. In doing so, I initially work with some very bold abstractions that are meant to clarify the modern splitting apart of "systems" and "sensibilities."

Weimar "social character" was formed under the pressure of a threefold front of complexity. *The first* front imposed itself on the contemporaries as a downright depressing confusion of political structures and power relations. What has been investigated as "antidemocratic thinking in the Weimar Republic" (Sontheimer and others) is only the tip of the iceberg of social skepticism and private reservations about politics. In it there was a component of reason that to the present day cannot be overlooked. At no time did the transmission of any kind of political will —"mandate"—function in the government's policy in a way that would have allowed reliable loyalties to be formed between the voters and the elected. The "politicization" of the masses was accompanied from the beginning by a subliminal antipolitics and was influenced by disappointment, confusion, resentment, and anxious rage as well as by a profound split between liberal conceptions and a reactionary state apparatus. Between continual foreign-political blackmail and extraparliamentary radicalism, the republic was put into a state of permanent weakness and lack of respectability. Large social groups did not want to acknowledge at any time "political achievement" on the part of the government (in spite of Rathenau and Stresemann, Rapallo and Locarno). This unstable, unattractive state of affairs effected a psychopolitical polarization between a—let us say —new matter-of-factness and an old moralist type. Where the former, in part cynically maneuvering, in part realistically dutiful, tried to come to terms with circumstances in order to make the best of them, the other, far more powerful wing rehearsed an uprising of convictions against the facts; the putsch of character against the complications. We have already spoken about fascism as a suggestive political movement of simplification. As such it participates in a global psychopolitical problematic of modernity. For the pain of modernization pervades the life feelings of all social groups subjected to technical and political adjournment. A particularly German inheritance is also noticeable here —that compulsion to final explanations and to ideological overstatement of even the most banal practical questions. In the friction with American pragmatism that was streaming in mightily at that time as the New Matter-of-Factness, the metaphysical sense of the politicized educated German citizen was provoked to its ultimate extremes. Today, after decades of planning and sobering up, we can no longer picture the haze of worldviews that overshadowed the political-metaphysical superstructure in the twenties. In it, though for us today it is almost invisible, the actual sociopsychological drama of the Weimar Republic is played out: It unfolds on a subliminal but nevertheless very real front between yes-men and no-men, tacticians and

characters, cynics and consistent people, pragmatists and idealists. It was perhaps the triumphant secret of the Fascists that they succeeded in bursting this psychopolitical front and in inventing a cynical idealism, a consistent maneuvering, a colluding full of character and a nihilistic affirmation. The success of populist nihilism was based not least of all on the seductive trick of enticing the bulk of the refusers, the unhappy, and the no-men with the prospect that they themselves are the true realists and summoned coshapers of a new, grandiose, and simplified world.

The *second* front of complications, under whose pressure the ego of the times was deformed, was the nerveracking particularism and syncretism of political and ideological groups that screamed at one another in public. This experience has today been buried under a gravestone with the inscription: "Pluralism." However, at that time, as the masses were still in no way inclined to grant everything its validity or rather, to view everything with indifference, "pluralism" was still something that must have caused pain for the contemporaries. Those who are not completely hardened feel it even today. The contradictions had still a long way to go before they could be felt as mere differences; they were rather felt in their full harshness. And at the same time, the leveling tendency began to mix together everything that once stood opposed into a many-sided uniformity. Here, too, the media already took on their typical role of dedialecticizing reality (see Excursus 9). With regard to the spiritual state of the times, Musil spoke of a "Babylonian madhouse" *(Das hilflose Europa)* from whose windows a thousand voices screamed. Weimar pluralism itself had two poles: an expanding, leveling, global view, and a small-scale, atomistic, retreating pole. While the mass media and the mass parties synchronized consciousnesses in wide dimensions, innumerable cells buried themselves in detached living spaces, microideologies, sects, subcultural public spheres and regional as well as cultural provinces. Mostly the contemporaries found out only afterward what kind of times they had really lived in—and what was simultaneous with them. This can be studied well through the style of memoir literature that flourished particularly strongly in this decade. The contemporaries of these pluralist realities are simultaneously forced into the role of fringe dwellers who not only live in their local and cultural provinces but also stand with one foot in the universal. Amphibian mentalities become commonplace. The myths of identity crumble. And the rest is done by the polarization, clearly felt from the twenties onward of labor morality and leisure morality, with which the ego falls apart into separate halves above which "character" can only try in vain to erect a director ego *(Regie-Ich).* Here it becomes clear for the first time how the switches were shifted for the psychologization of society.

The *third* front is directly adjoining. It is that of the consumerism and cosmetic realism crystallizing in the new middle classes, which are predestined to a new agility and a new frivolousness. For with the ascendancy of the urban civilizations of salaried workers-some particularly like to demonstrate this with the example

of Berlin in the twenties —a new sociopsychological era indeed also begins. It bears unmistakable signs of Americanism. Its most significant creation is the leisure-time individual, the weekend person, who has discovered contentedness in alienation and comfort in a double life. Europe learns the first words in Ameri-can, among them one that for many symbolizes Europe's decline: weekend. Even the *Comedian Harmonists* celebrate its apotheosis.

> Weekend and sunshine
> And then alone with you in the woods
> I don't need anything else to be happy
> Weekend and sunshine. . . .
>
> No car, no highway(!)
> and nobody in our vicinity.
> Deep in the woods, just me and you
> dear God closes an eye. . . .

The new themes are gathered: retreat into leisure time, modern turning away from the attributes of modernity, weekend vitalism, and a breath of sexual revolu-tion. How self-evidently is it presupposed that the woods can be transformed into relaxation areas for city dwellers! Imagine how, only one generation earlier, the Germans had still propagated forest mysticism![1] Sure of their instincts, the hits of the time make use, illusionistically and ironically at the same time, of the leisure-time mentality in the new urban middle strata. For them, the world should look rosy, and for this, not only dear God closes an eye. The hits belong to a broad system of distraction that, profitably and passionately, devotes itself to the task of wallpapering the leisure-time worlds with comfortable, transparent illusions.

The ominous twenties introduce the age of mass cosmetics. From it emerges, as the main psychological type, the smiling, distracted schizoid-the "nice per-son" in the worst sense of the word. Kracauer, who pursued these phenomena at the moment of their emergence, wrote in 1929:

> A piece of information that I have obtained from a well-known Berlin department store is extraordinarily instructive. "In employing sales and office personnel," says an influential gentleman in the personnel depart-ment, "we emphasize, above all, a pleasant appearance." I ask him what he regards as pleasant; whether spicy or pretty. "Not exactly pretty. What is decisive is, rather, the moral-pink skin color, you know." (S. Kracauer, *Schriften I* [Frankfurt, 1971], p. 223)[2]

Gustav Regler, to whom we are indebted for the surreal actors' scene in the preceding chapter, also had the opportunity of trying out at close range a metamorphosis into the nice person in the world of commodities. Married to the daughter of a large department store owner (whom he called "the wolf), the

QretelQrom gestern noch^cBerliner (3ekretarin, beufe^evuekumflerm irfjiollyxvood...

Gretel Grow, yesterday still a Berlin secretary, today a revue artiste in Hollywood . . .

young man was imposed on by his well-meaning father-in-law to take a respectable position in his firm. Regler became an apprentice in textiles and later a supervisor.

> I learned about customer service, smiling, lying, calculation and measuring up, gentle and energetic behavior, feigned moods and managers' psychology, salesman's jokes and trade union demands, government decrees and taxation tricks. . . .
> I moved further and further from the people, to whom I voluntarily

had offered myself five years before, and I moved further and further from myself.

My nervous system developed what was later called "managers' disease": the office became my refuge. . . . It was the flight into activity, the stagnation of the soul. Around public holidays and vacations there was a dangerous stillness. . . .

. . . I was not myself. To managers' disease belongs also that split consciousness that no longer permits one to concentrate on what is essential. A shock had to occur in order to weld the two parts together again. *(Das Ohr des Malchus* [Frankfurt, 1975], pp. 134, 138-39, 140)

It was in the twenties that the sociopsychological design of the competent "nice person" was carried into the middle-class masses. It created the psychological basis of the New Matter-of-Factness, namely, that accommodating realism with which the urban cultured strata tried to give a first positive echo to the unalterable and in part welcome facts of modernity. It is not easy to say when the contemporaries consciously registered the change in the sociopsychological climate. What *is* beyond doubt is that between 1921 and 1925, it must have spread so far that from the middle of the decade onward, a conscious, indeed even programmatic, restyling of the culture industry and of psychic reflexes could set in with a tendency toward "matter-of-factness." During the hot inflation years of 1921-23, literature and the "history of morals" registered a first flickering of crass neohedonistic currents. In the provinces, the concepts Berlin, prostitution, and speculation become firmly associated. In the strong economic upturn of the inflationary period, which was accompanied by an intense concentration of capital and an export boom, a new middle-class illusionism celebrated a dress rehearsal while the zeroes on the banknotes galloped on. The show began. American revues made inroads into the German public's expectations. With naked legs and breasts, the new, American, way of being "shameless" triumphed. Cries of distress from the Fulda Bishop's Conference could do nothing against it. From 1923 on, public entertainment radio also began to cater to the new stage in the socialization of attentiveness.

That a change of climate of grand dimensions had really taken place was felt particularly by those contemporaries who, as prisoners of war, had been cut off for years from the new everyday life of the Weimar Republic. Shocked, they now experienced their return to worlds that had become alien. More strongly than the others, they registered the increasingly impudent demands the ambivalences and cynicisms of capitalist modernity placed on individuals' will to life and their capacity for affirmation. In *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929), Doblin narrates just such a story of the return of an individual, Franz Biberkopf. It begins with an impressive description of Biberkopf s journey through the city he had not seen for a long time, during which he becomes giddy. The novel carries on medicocynical and

.SCUlpurgisnacbt auf FicnUcllsfcId"

Walpurgis Night on Henkel's Field (May 1928). (©S.P.A.D.E.M., Paris/ V.A.G.A., New York, 1987.)

military-cynical lines from the war. In the big city, too, the struggle goes on. Biberkopf becomes a one-armed man.[3] The city befalls him like a shattered front on which anyone who wants to have "character" and be an "upright person" has to lose himself. With Biberkopf, the failure of self-preservation and wanting-to-be-strong is gruesomely exercised. In the end, as he lies dying in a madhouse, his death reveals to him what he has done wrong.

> You have cramped yourself into strength, and the cramp has still not evaporated, and it's no use. . . . You just want to be strong . . . Just blabbed: "Poor me, poor me" and "How unjust that I suffer" and how

Franz Biberkopf (Heinrich George) leaves the penitentiary in Tegel. From the film *Berlin-Alexanderpkitz,* Doblin, 1931.

noble I am and how refined, and they don't let me show what I'm really like. (pp. 388-91)

Max Hoelz, the most well known political "terrorist" of the twenties, who, after eight year's imprisonment in German penitentiaries was granted amnesty in 1928, mentions in his narration (still worth reading today) of his experiences of youth, struggle, andprison(Fow *Weissen Kreuzzur Roten Fahne* [From the white cross to the red flag], Berlin, 1929), the indescribable impression the images of new big-city streets, the cars, display windows, and people made on him on his return.[4]

The most significant story of return has been related by Ernst Toller. After five years' imprisonment in the notorious Bavarian fortress-penitentiary, Niederschonenfeld am Lech (1919-24), he himself experienced a return of this kind into the new matter-of-factly changed Weimar society. When he was released in June

1924, the republic was approaching, for the first time since its founding, an apparent stabilization. In these years of the "compulsion of things," of compromises and new realisms, Toller continued his political-moral process of disillusionment. He inhaled thoroughly the cynical spirit of the times, studied and portrayed it with all possible means. The result of his observations is *Hoppla, wir leben!* (Hey, we're alive!), one of the most impressive plays of his decade, imbued with the experience of the times and stamped by the growing pains of a bitter, but clear-sighted, realism.[5] Erwin Piscator staged this play at great expense in Berlin in 1927.

"You have to learn to see and in spite of it not let yourself be pushed down," says Kroll, a worker, in the second act of the play. He who has to learn to see is the revolutionary of 1918, Karl Thomas, the returnee. He has been locked up in a madhouse for eight years. With the old ideas in his head, he now collides with the new reality of 1927. He cannot comprehend what had happened in the meantime in the minds of the leaders, the honest, and the fellow fighters of that time. For him, two developments are confounded to a horrifying snarl that overstrains his powers of understanding: on the one hand, the confrontation of the old utopian-radical Left with the painful facts of the republic's daily life; on the other, the reorientation of the mass urban climate toward consumerist, illusionist, cosmetic, and distracted forms of life. Released from the madhouse, it seems to him more than ever that he has landed in the loony bin. Nevertheless he quickly understands that the smiling face belongs to the new style, completely in the sense of the "moral-pink skin color" so dear to the personnel boss. Thus, he puts himself in the hands of a cosmetologist.

> "Don't be scared, Mother Meller, you don't have to be afraid that I will go crazy again. Everywhere I looked for work, the bosses asked me: 'Man, what kind of a deathly bitter mien do you have? You'll scare away the customers. Nowadays, one must *smile, always smile.'* So then I went . . . to a beauty specialist. Here is the new facade. Couldn't you just eat me up?"
> "Yes, Karl. You will impress the girls. At first it was weird for me . . . All the things they demand. Next you'll have to undertake by contract *to smile for ten hours while you're working."* (3.2)

Through this part of the snarl, Karl finds his way more or less, with fatalistic accommodation and irony. But things go differently for him with the political-moral changes, about which Eva Berg, his former lover, says, "The last eight years. . . have changed us more than otherwise a century would have done" (2.1).

In a more "mature," tactical, and mournful socialism, the old moral, insurrectionary language fails. Karl Thomas calls the new matter-of-factness of the com-

mitted Left "hardening." Is it? Eva, who understands herself to be thoroughly within the tradition of the socialist struggle, speaks of growing up.

> "Once again you use concepts that no longer hold. We can no longer afford to be children. We can no longer throw clear-sightedness, knowledge that has grown in us, into the corner." (2.1)

This new experience had consumed the old political moralism just as much as the new sexual relations had overcome the old expectations of fidelity, possessive relationships, and commitment. Karl Thomas also suffers because sleeping with this woman guarantees no hopes of a future with her.

In his mind, the various aspects of modernization become blurred: Glittering transitional zones form between emancipation and decadence, progress and corruption, sobriety and nihilism. Under the burden of these numerous ambivalences, Thomas finally breaks down. Confused and despairing, he decides to jump off this carousel of crazy matter-of-factness. He wants to undertake one more "deed" as a finale and plans the assassination of Kilman, the Social Democrat minister who had tried in vain to explain to him that Social Democratic cynicism is down-to-earth and that progress prefers crooked paths. Thomas then hangs himself in the cell in which he had been locked in place of the real murderer, who naturally came from the Right. In heavy scenes, Toller outlines the panorama of a methodically inverted world. Cynically direct, the paradoxes pile up. Count Lande, who financed the murder, unveils the monument for the murdered man; Kilman's daughter, who confesses to lesbian tendencies, also goes to bed with this Count Lande, and so on.

If one asks for the "tendency" of this play, it is certainly to be found in a call to socialism to hold up the flame of Utopia even in the middle of tactical sobriety — instead of turning into cynicism. The struggle must not turn the fighter for the good "goal" into a beast. The socialist flame, Eva says, is not extinguished but "glows in another way, less pathetically." However, because this flame is no longer in a position to shed any clear light on social relations, its rays are soaked up by the general twilight. Those who still want to orient themselves with it must represent socialism with the stance of a leftist existentialism (with a pinch of sociology)—or they, as heroes, will be broken by despair. Toller shows both endings of the drama beside each other, with one half of his heart bound to those who are perishing, the other, learning further, hoping further. Even the last of the "perspectivistic worldviews" is overcome by an irrevocable emergence of the "aperspectivist world" (Gebser). The latter demands from us an unencumbered, many-sided, and continually new viewpoint. *Hoppla, wir leben!* is a significant document for "political cubism" in the nondogmatic Weimar intelligentsia. It shows the observer that those who value an intelligent relationship with their times can never return to the simplicity of the relation between a naive ego and
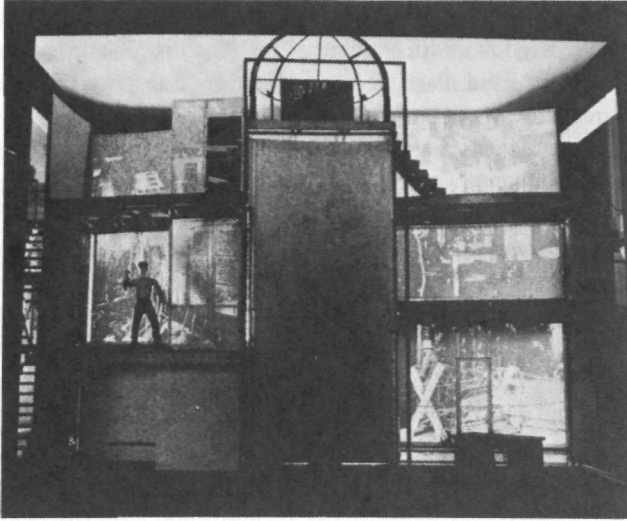
Traugott Miiller. Stage setting for *Hoppla, wir leben!* by Ernst Toller. Director: Erwin Piscator, 1927.

a clearly structured monoperspectivist world. The universe becomes a multiverse and the individual becomes a multividual — a multiply divided being.

Excursus 9. Media Cynicism and Training in Arbitrariness

> *Yes, said Tunda, one loses one's distance. One is so close to things that they don't have anything to do with one anymore.*
> Joseph Roth, *Die Flucht ohne Ende* (1927)

> *His head was a hot ball into which too many things had been thrown and now they were beginning to hiss and melt.*
> Vicki Baum, *Menschen im Hotel* (1931)

Modern mass media cater to a new kind of artificial acclimatization of consciousnesses in social space. Those who are drawn into its currents experience how their "world picture" becomes more and more exclusively mediated, sold, acquired secondhand. News floods televised consciousness with world material in information particles; at the same time, the media dissolve the world into fluorescing news landscapes that flicker on the consciousness screen of the ego. The media really do possess the power to ontologically reorganize reality as reality in our heads.

It is part of all this that everything must begin quite innocently. People read

the newspaper, believe that they are absorbing things that "interest" them, listen to the radio from the twenties on, hurry along overpopulated streets full of advertising and display windows with enticing offers. They inhabit cities that are nothing other than constructed mass media, covered by transportation and sign networks that direct the streams of people. The metropolis appears as a gigantic instantaneous water heater that pumps the subjective plasma through its tube and sign systems (see Rathenau's metaphors in chapter 18). Conversely, the egos, too, function as instantaneous heaters, filters, and channels for the streams of news that reach our sensory organs in the most diverse domains of broadcasts. The ego and the world thus get caught in a double state of liquefaction, in that ontological tossing that precipitates in a thousand and one modern "crisis" theories.

That with "qualities" and "character" one no longer gets very far in such a state of the world is shown by the numerous stories about character and morals that not infrequently end with the hero's downfall. Conformity becomes the psychopolitical requirement of the times. Where could it be better practiced than in dealing with the urban media? They provide consciousness with its daily quota of gray variety, colorful uniformity, and normal absurdity that repeatedly drums anew into the head of the ego that has regressed into moralism that it should practice Brechtian "maneuvering." We provide examples from contemporary literature of how intelligent individuals cope with the impertinence of the media world.

Erich Kastner's outstanding novel of the times, *Fabian,* begins, unavoidably, with such a snapshot.

> Fabian sat in a cafe called Split Wood and read the headlines of the evening papers: English airship explodes over Beauvais, strychnine stored next to lentils, nine-year-old girl jumps out of window, another unsuccessful prime ministerial election, the murder in the Lainz zoo, scandal in the town requisitions office, the artificial voice in the vest pocket, Ruhr coal sales decline, gifts for Neumann, the director of the federal railways, elephants running loose on the streets, nervousness on the coffee markets, scandal around Clara Bow, impending strike of one hundred and forty thousand metal workers, dramatic crime in Chicago, negotiations in Moscow about timber dumping, Starhemberg hunters revolt. The daily quota. Nothing special, (p. 7)

In the linear sequencing of great, small, important, unimportant, crazy, serious, and so on, what is "special" and "actual reality" disappears. Those who have to live continually in this false sameness of values lose the capacity to recognize, in the eternally gloomy light, things in their individuality and essentialness; through every particular, one sees only the basic tone, the gray, care, absurdity. (A scene comparable to the one quoted can be found at the very beginning of Irmgard Keun's contemporaneous novel *Gilgi — eine von uns* [Gilgi — one of us; 1931].)

The returned soldiers in particular see through this media world very clearly. One of them is Lieutenant Tunda, the main character in Joseph Roth's important novel *Die Flucht ohne Ende* {1927). He, too, sees with the eyes of someone coming from outside; he returns from the fighting of the Russian Revolution in Siberia to Western Europe to find a world in which a homecoming is no longer possible. What he brings with him is the power of estrangement.

"He saw the improbable events and facts because the usual events and facts too seemed remarkable to him. . . . He possessed the uncanny ability to understand the uncannily rational madness of this city. (p. 94)

Of course, here Berlin is being described once again as the "European Chicago" (Mark Twain).

"Within a few days we saw: someone running amok and a procession; a film premiere, a film shoot, the death jump of a performer on Unter den Linden, someone mugged, the asylum for the homeless, a love scene in the zoo in broad daylight, rolling advertising pillars drawn by donkeys, thirteen pubs for homosexual and lesbian couples, . . . a man who had to pay a fine because he jaywalked across a square instead of walking at right angles, a meeting of the onion eaters' sect and the Salvation Army. . . .

It was the time when the literati, the actors, the film directors, the painters earned money again. It was the time after the stabilization of the German currency, in which new bank accounts had been opened, even the most radical periodicals had well-paid advertisements and the radical writers earned honoraria in the literary supplements of the bourgeois newspapers. The world was already so consolidated that the feuilletons were allowed to be revolutionary, (pp. 95-96)

Besides this, Toller's model returnee, Karl Thomas, discovers as a waiter in the Grand Hotel the new radio reality. He listens for the first time to the cynical synchronizing of all events and texts in the news ether.

KARL THOMAS: Does one really hear the whole world here?
TELEGRAPHIST: Is that something new for you?
KARL THOMAS: Whom are you listening to now?
TELEGRAPHIST: New York. Widespread flooding on the Mississippi reported.
KARL THOMAS: When?
TELEGRAPHIST: Now, in the last hour.
KARL THOMAS: While we are speaking?
TELEGRAPHIST: Yes, while we are speaking, the Mississippi is bursting its levees, people are fleeing. . . . I'll switch over. Latest news from all the world.
LOUDSPEAKER: Attention! Attention! Unrest in India . . . Unrest in

China . . . Unrest in Africa . . . Paris Paris Houbigant, the
sophisticated perfume . . . Bucharest, Bucharest, food shortage in
Romania . . . Berlin Berlin The elegant woman prefers green
wigs . . . New York New York The largest bomber in the world
invented. Able to reduce Europe's capitals to rubble in one sec-
ond . . . Attention! Attention! Paris London Rome Berlin Calcutta
Tokyo New York The cavalier drinks Mumm Extra Dry . . .

That this new media-ontological situation deals the death blow to classical
metaphysics has been formulated by no one as clearly as Robert Musil. The fifty-
fourth chapter in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (The man without qualities;
1930) presents an attempt, on the highest level of irony, to play out the new decen-
tered, virtually subjectless media ontology against the old holistic ontology. In
doing so, the conventional concept of the bourgeois individual, who wanted to
be whole and indivisible, dissolves. The climax of the dialogue between Walter
and Ulrich is as follows:

"One has to treasure it, if today a man still strives to be something
whole," said Walter.
"That doesn't exist anymore," Ulrich pronounced. "You only have to
look into a newspaper. It is filled with an immeasurable opacity. There,
so many things are spoken about that it would exceed the thinking ca-
pacity of a Leibniz. But one doesn't even notice it; we have changed.
No longer does a whole person confront a whole world, but a human
something moves around in a universal nutritional fluid."[6] (p. 217)

Excursus 10. People in a Hotel

In this hotel on earth
The cream of society was guest—
It bore with an effortless composure
The heavy burden of life!
                Walter Mehring in
                Hoppla, wir leben!

At a time when the people's horizon was admittedly extended into the cosmopoli-
tan realm without letting them really share in the good of happiness of the big
world, the hotel had to become a mythical place. It symbolized a dream of social
heights on which the modern ephemerality of existence could at least be compen-
sated for with worldly, comfortable glamour. In the hotel, the world chaos
seemed to organize itself once more into a scintillating cosmos. Like a last or-
ganic form, it resisted the confounding and arbitrariness of events. This elevated
the hotel to a central aesthetic idea of modernity;[7] as if of itself, it suits the revue-
like, polythematic, simultaneous forms of experience in the big city and neverthe-

less, as a factor of unity, possesses its own myth, the *genius loci* and its inner order.

In these hotels of the world theater, exotic and typical characters of the times, driftwood and wave caps of society hurry about, every one of them bizarre and nostalgically individual, and every one of them also representative and fluorescing in the multivalent milieu. Each represents a species, as if the hotel were a Noah's ark of the last individualities. The authors are given the opportunity of presenting the great menagerie of character types one more time—reception managers, false barons, aging female dancers from Russia, one-armed elevator operators, homosexual English lords, manufacturers' wives with curious predilections, financiers who transact business around the world from the desk telephone, histrionically talented sons of champagne factory owners, pensioned officials, and moribund people who look on at the glitter world with downturned mouths and feverish eyes, knowing that things are coming to an end and that not all that glitters is gold.

Just such an interestingly nauseous character is Doctor Otternschlag in Vicki Baum's successful novel, *Menschen im Hotel* (People in a hotel; 1931), a person destroyed by life who believes he knows that "real life" for us always lies in the future, the past, or somewhere else, can never be grasped, and finally, through all the waiting, has already flown by. His eyes do not allow themselves to be deceived by the spell of the Grand Hotel, especially in a slow hour for business, when the whole world pursues its vices and business interests.

> Things stood about him like dummies. Whatever he took to hand crumbled into dust. The world was a brittle affair, not to be grasped, not to be held onto. One fell from emptiness to emptiness. One carried a sack full of darkness around within oneself. This Doctor Otternschlag lives in the deepest of loneliness, although the world is full of his kind. . . .
>
> In the newspapers he found nothing that satiated him. A typhoon, an earthquake, a moderately large war between black and white. Arson, murders, political struggles. Nothing. Too little. Scandals, panic on the stock exchange, losses of enormous fortunes? What did it have to do with him, what did he feel of it? Transoceanic flight, speed records, inch-high sensational headings. One paper cried louder than the other, and in the end, one did not listen to any of them, became blind and deaf and numb due to the loud activity of the century. Pictures of naked women, thighs, breasts, hands, teeth, they offered themselves in pretty piles, (pp. 11-12)

Otternschlag is the professional melancholy hotel cynic, a dejected realist who provides knowledge of decay.

> "When you leave, someone else comes and lies in your bed. That's that. Why don't you sit yourself down for a couple of hours in the foyer and

observe closely: the people don't have faces! They are only dummies, every one of them. They're all dead and don't even know it . . . Grand Hotel, bella vita, eh? Oh well, the main thing is that one must have one's suitcase packed." (p. 36)

Notes

1. On this see Jean Amery, *Unmeisterliche Wanderjahre* (Stuttgart, 1970).

2. Ernst Bloch remarks pertinently on this (1929): "Kracauer has journeyed to the center of this way of not being there." *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Frankfurt, 1977), p. 33.

3. From Hans Henny Jahnn's review (1929): "In any case, it is terrible. And inescapable. And only the one lesson is etched in fanatically: affirm lousy life, because it is nevertheless and at least life. And death comes soon enough anyway. It really comes and is introduced to us. Here it must be said what pain is. As with every greater book, also with this one, one will have to make some decisions, because one has experienced some things that were not made of cardboard." Jahnn, *Werke u. Tagebttcher,* vol. 7 (Hamburg, 1974), p. 253.

4. On Hoelz, see Sloterdijk, *Literatur und Lebenserfahrung* (Munich, 1978), pp. 190ff., 202ff., 31 Iff.

5. How Toller's insights as a "free man" are linked with the learning processes and sensitizations "characteristic of prison experience" can be seen by going back to his prison writings. Kurt Kreiler refers to them in the sections devoted to Toller in his excellent documentation: *"Sie machen uns langsam tot . . . Zeugnisse politischer Gefangener in Deutschland* 77S0-198O, ed. K. Kreiler (Neuwied, 1983). The documents in this volume can be read as a secret history of "systemic" cynicism from the inner perspective of its victims.

6. I describe these texts somewhat more at length in "Die Krise des Individuums-studiert im Medium der Literatur," in J. Schulte-Sasse (ed.), *Political Tendencies in the Literature of the Weimar Republic* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1982).

7. See Vicki Baum, *Menschen in Hotel* (1931); Joseph Roth, *Hotel Savoy;* Thomas Mann, *Felix Krull;* the Zauberberg sanatorium as hotel for the sick; Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin,* to name a few.

Chapter 25
Postcoital Twilight: Sexual Cynicism and Stories of Intractable Love

> *With what right do you call deflorations experiences?*
> Arnolt Bronnen, *Exzesse* (1923)

> *Woman are remarkable animals, Gaigern thought behind his curtain. Completely strange animals, they are. What does she see in the mirror then, that she makes such a gruesome face?*
> Vicki Baum, *Menschen im Hotel* (1931)

> *. . . into the sun with the animal! Pay up! Bring love into the daylight!*
> Bertolt Brecht, *Baal* (1922)

In some erotic scenes from Weimar literature —as a rule, they are not the happiest—something of the heartbeat of freshly gained experience is expressed. In becoming cleverer, lust, melancholy, and brutality are scarcely separable. The same is true when authors write of lovers who separate on the morning after spending their first night together. Man and woman in postcoital sobriety, lost in thought, summarizing experiences, clarifying expectations. The theme is not love itself but what makes it so intractable and fragile. In the morning, the old contradictions of union and separation, lust and strangeness, passion and the flow of time again become visible.

In his novel about Lieutenant Tunda, Joseph Roth has tried to provide an epic portrait of the German present. In it there is to be found a diary entry of the hero that records a scene from the new matter-of-fact sexual everyday.

> The entire lower part of their bodies is earthly, but from the hands upward, they no longer live in terrestrial layers of air. Everyone consists of two halves. . . . They have two lives. The inferior, lower parts execute eating, drinking and lovemaking, the upper parts pursue their vocation. . . .
>
> I slept with a woman who woke me after an hour to ask me whether my spiritual love for her corresponded to my bodily performance. For without the "spiritual" element, she would feel "soiled." I had to get dressed very quickly, and while I looked under the bed for my lost shirt button, I explained to her that my soul always lives in those parts of the

body that I need at a given moment to carry out a certain activity.
Thus, when I go for a walk, in the feet, and so on.

"You're a cynic," said the woman. (Roth, *Flucht ohne Ende* [1927]
(pp. 88-89)

We encounter the man here in his "ancestral" role of the sexual cynic, who
thinks he has enough with pure sex and who flees as soon as the woman demands
something more. In this flight, a genuinely new motif of matter-of-factness is
announced—that evasion into understatement that for the style of eroticism in the
twenties is so thoroughly typical. In this area, too, the impulse of the times to dis-
pense with superstructures asserts itself. The wave of new matter-of-factness-if
this word is apposite here—washes old sexual-romantic jetsam ashore. A new
spirit of experience, which is psychoanalytic, treated hygienically within mar-
riage, and emancipatively inspired, now pushes toward a more "matter-of-fact"
treatment of this entire area, which is so beset by dreams and secrets, tensions
and longings. That at the same time, as always, erotic illusionism triumphs in
mass media does not change anything in the tendency. The intelligentsia, in any
case, already begins to orient itself in things dealing with love, existentially-
analytic, reflective, experimental, decisionistic, melancholy, cynical. Musil's
play *Die Schwdrmer* (The enthusiasts; 1921) superbly documents this swelling of
a stimulating reflectiveness. One starts to take leave of the cult of pure "ex-
perience" and to realize that in our experiences, a kind of grammar of experience
and feeling comes into effect. An adult consciousness can only be a consciousness
that takes notice of this. If one puts erotic idealism to one side, firmer contours
in personal transactions become visible. The erotic barter comes more clearly to
light; the animal, capricious side of sexual energy makes itself felt; the projective
components of being in love and the resignative components of fidelity cannot be
overlooked in the long run. And like everywhere else where ideals collapse, cyni-
cism, which lives out its disappointment by pushing over what is already falling,
is not far behind.

The young Brecht moves with a quite special virtuosity and alertness on this
terrain. He discovers a new tone for cynicisms of this type —a poetry of the ordi-
nary and brutal. It is the language of the Baalian life feeling, which celebrates
a cynically vital masculinity. For Baal —poet, eroticist, vagabond, existentialist,
and lyrical-instinctual subject—women, the young ones, are nothing other than
poetic or hormonal stimuli, nothing other than hole, patch of color, odor, play-
thing, animal, white thighs. To be sure, this masculinism is lyrically ennobled
by Brecht. It possesses —besides the manifestly cynical aspect —also a kynical,
productive, antibourgeois aspect. The powerful nature of the elementary, bril-
liant man recalls the "alternative life" that is not mutilated by time allocations and
regulations but instead flows on in the stream of moods and energies. Brecht lets

Otto Dix, *Melancholy,* 1930.

sexuality and poetry flow into each other in imaginary currents. If Baal has hauled "someone" from the street into his room with the excuse "It's New Year. There has to be something white in this damned hole. A cloud!"-he nevertheless does not accept any resistance from the woman.

> "You're a woman like any other. The head is different. The knees are
> all weak . . . that's the way it is with animals."

Where Roth's cynicism remains ironically, politely, and melancholically masked, Brecht uses the figure of the powerful genius to openly mount an attack. Under the protection of aesthetic vitalism, sexual cynicism begins the flight to the fore in lyric.
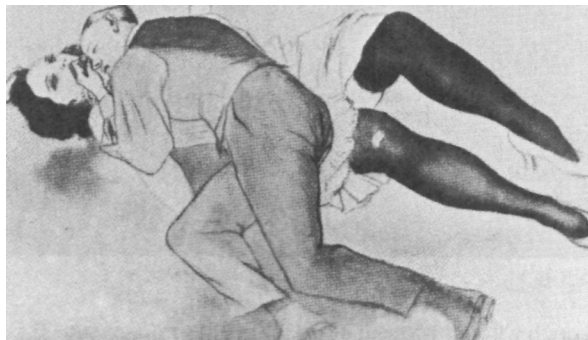
Karl Hubbuch, *Lovers' Death in Jager Street,* 1922.

Baal's attic room

I

Dawn. Baal and Johanna sitting on the edge of the bed.

JOHANNA: Oh, what have I done! I'm bad.

BAAL: Wash yourself instead! . . .

JOHANNA: Don't you want to open the window?

BAAL: I love the smell. What would you say to a new edition? What's
done is done.

JOHANNA: How can you be so mean?

BAAL: *[lazing on the bed]:* White and washed pure by the Deluge, Baal lets his thoughts fly, like doves over the black waters.

JOHANNA: Where is my bodice? Like this I can't . . .

BAAL: *[holding it out to her]:* Here! What can't you do, darling?

JOHANNA: GO home. [Lets it fall, but gets dressed.]

BAAL: *[whistles]:* A wild tomboy! I feel every bone in my body. Give me a kiss!

JOHANNA: *[on the table in the middle of the room]:* Say something! *[Baal is silent.]* Do you still love me? Tell me! [Baal whistles.] Can't you say it?

BAAL: *[looking at the ceiling]:* I've had it up to here.

JOHANNA: What was that then last night? And before that?

BAAL: Johannes might make a row. Emilie too walks around like a scuttled sailing ship. I could die of hunger here. You don't lift a finger for anyone. You always want just one thing.

JOHANNA: *[confused, clears the table]:* And you —were you never different with me?

BAAL: Have you washed? Not an ounce of pragmatism! Haven't you learned anything about that? Get on with you, go home!

Erich Kastner describes another disturbed lovers' morning in his *Fabian.* Cornelia, Fabian's lover, has already got up to leave. She knows what awaits her. She wants to get into films, be successful, not be one of the ones without prospects. For this, she allows herself to be bought by a producer. She thinks she has to prostitute herself. Fabian only finds her letter late in the evening:

"Dear Fabian . . . Is it not better that I go too early rather than too late? I was just standing next to you at the sofa. You were sleeping, and you are sleeping now as I write to you. I would like to stay, but imagine what would happen if I stayed! After a couple of weeks you would really be unhappy. You are weighed down not by want but by the thought that want can become important. As long as you were alone, nothing could happen to you, no matter what. It will once again be as it was. Are you very sad?

They want to feature me in the next film. Tomorrow I will sign the contract. Makart has rented two rooms for me. It can't be avoided. He spoke about it as if it were a matter of a hundredweight of briquettes. He is fifty years old and he looks like a retired wrestler who is too well dressed. I feel as if I had sold myself to anatomy.

. . . I will not go under. I will imagine that the doctor is examining me. He likes to occupy himself with me. It has to be so. You only get out of the dirt if you get yourself dirty. And we want to get out!

I write: We. Do you understand me? I leave you now in order to stay with you. Will you continue to love me?"

Fabian sat quite still. It became progressively darker. His heart ached. He held onto the studs of the armchair as if he were resisting forces that wanted to tear him away. He pulled himself together. The letter lay on the carpet and shone in the dark.

"But I wanted to change, Cornelia," said Fabian, (p. 125)

Chapter 26
Weimar Double Decisions, or: Matter-of-Factness unto Death

Total onlooker—you have been seen through totally.
Gustav Wangenheim, *Die Mausefalle* (1931)

The year is 1932. The cards have been shuffled for the last game. For the insight-ful it is clear that the horizon has already closed. The alternatives from now on will rear up in dull rage or helpless mind games, but events can no longer be averted. The year 1932 is a chaotic, inconceivably complicated one. It forms the last piece of the crisis complex of 1930-32, about which Ludwig Marcuse said rightly that it is more difficult to describe than an entire century would be. This year uses up three chancellors after the cabinet of the Centrist politician, Briining, had collapsed in May. At that time, Goebbels notes in his diary:

> [5 May 1932]
> It's already beginning. It is really enjoyable. In the party, we must now
> be absolutely quiet. We have to play at being disinterested. . . .
> [13 May 1932]
> The crisis goes on according to program. . . .
> [30 May 1932]
> The bomb has burst. At noon Briining handed over the dismissal of the
> entire cabinet to the Reich president. The system is collapsing. *{Die un-*
> *geliebte Republik. Dokumente zur Innen- und aussenpolitik Weimars*
> *1918-1933,* ed. W. Michalka and G. Niedhart [Munich, 1980], pp.
> 327-28)

In both the subsequent cabinets, there are, to be sure, still no Nazis, but all the more "disinterested" and party less politicians, who in earnest already go about depoliticizing politics. Under Papen and Schleicher, the "matter-of-fact

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ministers" dominate, who have "freed" themselves from narrow party ties so as to better administer the interest of the "whole"-of course, in close association with German nationals who represent in the governments, if not the interests of the whole, at least of the whole of heavy industry. In 1932, the entire voting population is called to the ballot box three times, once in April to elect the president and again in July and November for the Reichstag, which staggers on unable to act, especially after the July elections made the Nazis into the strongest party. In the presidential election, the choice is between Hindenburg and Hitler, and the choice, of course, also with the help of the still "sensible" Social Democrat votes, falls on the "lesser evil" that, nine months later, hands over the proclamation of appointment to the greater evil.

The Prussian Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) prime minister, Otto Braun, wrote in *Vorwarts,* the party organ, on March 10:

> For the electors there remains only one alternative: Hindenburg or Hitler. Can the choice be difficult? Look at both men. Hitler, this prototype of the political adventurer. . . . Opposing him, Hindenburg. The embodiment of calm and constancy, of male loyalty and sacrificing dutifulness for the *whole* of the people . . . filled with a Kantian feeling of duty. . . . I will vote for Hindenburg and I appeal to the millions of voters . . . Do the same, beat Hitler, vote for Hindenburg.

Braun's appeal is a masterpiece of late-Weimar tactics: doublethink, double roleplay, double decisions.[1] One creates the false impression of having thought through the situation to the last detail and then votes, with the entire pathos of apparent responsibility, for the purportedly "lesser evil." No one has analyzed Social Democratic ambiguity better than the Social Democrat, Fritz Tarnow, at the Leipzig SPD party congress in 1931.

> Well, we stand indeed at capitalism's sickbed not only as a diagnostician but also —now, what should I say? —as a doctor who wants to cure, or as a joyful heir who cannot wait for the end and most of all would like to help things along with a little poison? Our whole situation is expressed in this image. *(Dokumente zur Deutschen Geschichte, 1929-33,* ed. W. Ruge and W. Schumann [Frankfurt, 1977], p. 39)

Tarnow describes precisely the unholy Left alternative between tragic respectability and cynicism. By now, we know these medical metaphors all too well. Had not Hitler repeatedly spoken of a political "tuberculosis" from which the patient does not die immediately but which progresses "stealthily" and uncannily if the "bitter fortune" of the crisis does not bring the sickness to a head? Erich Miihsam, by contrast, had already referred to the double role of the doctor, who simultaneously operates on and exterminates the patient (chapter 20). Now, because the

crisis has surfaced in the most violent form, the double game becomes fully clear even to the players. Tarnow goes on.

> We are condemned, it seems to me, to be the doctor, who seriously wants to cure, and nevertheless maintain the feeling that we are heirs who as soon as possible want to receive the *entire* estate of the capitalist system. This *double role, doctor and heir,* is a damned difficult task. We could save ourselves many a quarrel in the party if we were continually conscious of this double role. Sometimes some think that the needy situation of those who rely on the patient getting better demands that we do everything to heal the patient (capitalism); others think that now, when it is already gasping, is the right moment to give it the coup de grace.

Tarnow now gives his vote: He pleads for the role of the doctor and advocates humanitarian, medically respectable tactics, rather than the cynicism of the heir.

> It is not so much the patient who arouses our sympathy, but the masses who stand behind it. When the patient gasps, the masses out there go hungry. If we know that and know of a medicine—even if we are not convinced that it will cure the patient but will at least ameliorate its rattling, so that the masses out there again get something to eat—then we will give the patient the medicine and, at that moment, not think too much about the fact that we are heirs and await the patient's impending end. (p. 39)

These Social Democratic seesaw tacticians and double role players, however, entered with harsh rhetorics into the defensive alliance against fascism that was formed in 1932 under the dangerous-sounding name "Iron Front" and which was to bring together the SPD, the trade unions, the Reich's Banner, and some republican groups. Already at that time, Ossietzky pronounced that only some sections deserved the epithet "iron," whereas other sections were "made of more pliable stuff and some are no better than pancake batter" (ibid. p. 52).

In 1932, the number of unemployed had risen to over 6 million, of which 3.8 million were in Prussia, and almost half a million in Berlin alone. The welfare offices had registered seven million needy recipients for winter aid. The crisis had created the scenario in which the role of *savior* was to be assigned to *one* among all the deceivers, strategists, double role players, and gamblers with responsibility.

> The Reich's capital was feverish. Every night, corpses were delivered to the police. Sometimes they bore on their bloody coats the sign of the republican flag, sometimes the Communist Soviet star, sometimes the swastika, sometimes simply the number of the state police. More often, however, they bore only the signs of despair in their faces, that light green, the color given to them by the gas they had gulped. . . .

September

30 Tag* *38-S&.* Wocke

Leise, leise
Kein Geräusch gemacht,   to die StMscMl

19 Dienst...

20 Mittwoch

21
0<mr!«>r»tse

22
Fl-eBas

23
Sonnalmnd

24
aoiwtag

|:-.,," • p. ⊵'J.

Qi« Jijgomt I_«rsln» und 1   i fT»»r*ohS»ri I

One must have seen the general misery so closely in order to fall prey all too easily to a revolutionary idea. . . . All views were *simplified* to one sentence: It can't go on like this anymore! . . . Every suicide who was carried out of his gas-filled flat seemed to raise himself a last time from the stretcher and point his finger at those standing about. (Gustav Regler, *Das Ohr des Malchus* [Frankfurt, 1975], pp. 178-79, 182)

The great "joint thinking" now began to bear fruit. Those who had learned to "think in terms of relationships," who had studied the Great Dialectic, had thought through Napoleon's example, and had practiced looking down from the general's hill, now found themselves in the position of the leaf that joins in the ecstasy of the "will to power" that drives the caterpillar to devour. Even one's own defeat then looks like mere tactics. Regler tells of a trade union functionary he met in mid-January 1933: "Just let him come to power," he said regarding Hitler. "In eight months, he will be bankrupt" (ibid., p. 189). Thinking: And then it's our

turn. Similar models of thinking are firmly evidenced in the Communist party. In July 1932, the chairman, Thalmann, is outraged when SPD functionaries ask KPD leaders whether they are *at all serious* about the anti-Fascist united front.

> Hitler's pack of officers and princes had declared that it wants to exter-
> minate, hang, behead and break the Communist movement on the
> wheel. And in view of this fact, in view of the danger that Germany
> could become a land of gallows and pyres, we Communists are deemed
> to be not in earnest about the anti-Fascist, the proletarian united front.
> *(Dokumente zur Deutschen Geschichte*, p. 65)

Nevertheless, the question is correctly posed and the answer is not free of hypocrisy. For the questioner as well as the respondent have for a long time been speaking the language of doublethink and know all too well that every politician, in addition to what he says, calculates on a second level. For many Communists, the united front was a respectable fiction they themselves, with a second cynical look, easily saw through. Even its protagonists did not really "believe" in it. According to Karl August Wittfogel's report, in the autumn of 1932, a scene was played out in Berlin in which the spirit of strategic cynicism is thrown more luridly into relief than in any satire, no matter how biting. It contains the essence of the whole age: the escalation of strategy into the diabolical; the crystallization of doublethink into perfect cynicism; the everlasting being-in-the-right of the simultaneously iron and nimble tactician in a reality where things always happen differently from how the grand tactician thought.

> It was a 7 November celebration in the embassy on Unter den Linden.
> One of those gala celebrations with caviar and vodka and all that. I
> stood around with Grosz, Piscator, Brecht—I no longer know if it was
> them, but anyway, that sort. Suddenly, someone came and said, "Radek
> is here." I left the others and looked for Radek, asked him—we knew
> each other from Malik—: "Do you know what is happening here in
> Germany?"—"What?"—"If things go on like this, Hitler will come to
> power and everything will go under."—"Yes, but you have to under-
> stand that. That has to come. The German workers will take on two
> years of Hitler." (Quoted after Mathias GrefFrath, *Wasserzeichen der
> Despotic Ein Portrait von Karl August Wittfogel,* in *Transatlantik*
> [February 1981], p. 37)

This says, in effect: Besides the surface propaganda in favor of antifascism, the united front, etc., Moscow had already thought out a second line that allowed the supertactician, Radek, to bet on Hitler just like someone bets on a catastrophe. Thus, one could fight against him and nonetheless still find something good in his probable victory: that, as it was thought, he was specially suitable to bring about the total bankruptcy of the system. This form of double strategy gives the Communists' rhetoric of crisis in 1932 an inflammatory tone-for the worse things get

for the "system," the better it is for those who want to see its end. In the Communists' "diagnoses" a positivistic grand-tactical spirit is mixed with malicious joy and open catastrophile gratification. Thus, the *Rote Fahne* wrote on January 1, 1932:

> Storm year 1932!
> The capitalist world takes leave of the year 1931 with an annihilating declaration of bankruptcy: with the report of the Special Advisory Committee of the Bank for International Reparation Payments . . . that . . . has investigated Germany's economy and financial position. There is no document from a capitalist pen that, with such unconcealed pessimism, ascertains the downfall of capitalism and outlines its contradictions and its manifestations of putrefaction with such somber colors. . . . The financial bankruptcy of Germany, however, will rebound on the creditor countries and conjure up new worldwide catastrophes. . . .
>
> But the imperialist bandits who see a way out of the crisis in a new world carnage forget that, with the fury of war, they simultaneously unleash the powers of the revolution. *(Dokumente zur Deutschen Geschichte,* pp. 49-50)

Here, a masochistic form of thinking has transformed itself into a strategic consciousness. The leaves feverishly approach the caterpillar in the expectation that they will win something of the caterpillar ego if they only let themselves be devoured patiently enough. What are then "two years of Hitler," if afterward *we get our turn!* What Rathenau had described as a soothsayer in 1912 (tactics, diplomacy, deception down to the "shopkeeper") has been realized here on a large scale.

In the middle of the crisis, the strategist carousel turns all the more quickly. Every rider outlines from his or her carousel horse a grand view, and from this develops tactics for getting the whole. Social democracy grasps the total scene as one in which it is "condemned" to play the double role of the doctor and the willing heir at the sickbed of capitalism. The Communists interpret the situation as the agony of capitalism, whose death can only be a question of time, so that the collapse will be accelerated by those who, on the one hand, fight against the Fascist healing sorcery, and at the same time, however, bank on the eventuality that fascism will inject the dose of poison into capitalism that puts the "system" out of its misery, leaving the Communist party as the happy heir. One side wants to ameliorate the crisis, and the other wants to push it to the revolutionary extreme.

Both draw up their account not only without the innkeeper but also without his parasites. For, on the opposing side, the Fascists and the bourgeoisie, too, the tool and its user, lead each other astray. On the one hand, large sections of German economic leadership swing around to the Nazi line because they believe that
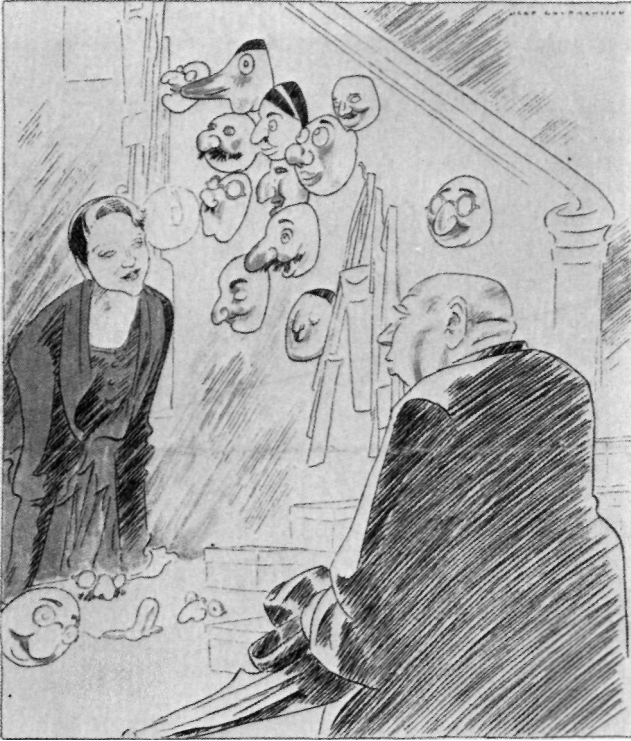
OlafGulbransson: "I'm sorry, sir, the pure Aryan noses are unfortunately already all sold out." *Simplicissimus,* February 26, 1933.

one has to go along with the Hitler course in order to be able to hold onto the course of industry and that of the "general interest" ("taming tactics"). Hitler, for his part, knows that he has to make the industrialists believe that in him they have found the tool that will realize *their* political goals. Only if they believe that can he, in turn, make them into tools of his global vision, and melt down the "economy" into his "block" and his frequently conjured hard-as-steel "body of the people," which will climb out of the trenches and the graves of the First World War so as to finally roll over the quickly subdued land as radiant victor. Then Hitler's period as dissimulator would also have an end; then he would finally be able to be completely as he felt himself to be: the chosen one of the "prophecy," the emissary of the dead, the double and spirit of revenge. He, the "adventurer" (Braun), the drummer, the charlatan, who was certified by everyone as hysterical and histrionic, proved himself, on the carousel of tacticians and semirealists, to be the only full realist, that is, the only one who knew how to pursue their aims not only as politician but also as psychologist and dramatist. He not only practiced the art

November 1933. New respectability. The lesser evil patronizes the greater evil.

of deception but also saw the necessity of enticing those who were prepared to be deceived with a show of seriousness and idealism. He knew how to handle the collective will to illusion by creating the backdrops before which the people could let themselves be deceived to their heart's desire. The illusion into which the one who is ready to be deceived thinks of falling will serve the defrauded one simultaneously as an excuse and, in the end, as an explanation why everything had to happen as it did.

Notes

1. ["Double decision" *(Doppelbeschluss)* was the name given by Helmut Schmidt to his government's two-pronged decision regarding NATO to (1) continue disarmament talks with the Soviet Union, and (2) simultaneously to "rearm" with new, deadlier missiles. —Trans.]

Epilogue
The Pleural Shock: On the Archetype of Weimar Laughter

> *"I know death, I am an old employee of his. People overesti-*
> *mate him, believe me. I can tell you, it's almost nothing. . . .*
> *We come out of the dark and go into the dark, in the middle lie*
> *events, but beginning and end, birth and death, are not ex-*
> *perienced by us. They do not have any subjective character. As*
> *processes, they fall entirely within the sphere of the objective.*
> *That is how it is with them. " This was the privy councillor's*
> *way of providing solace.*
>
> Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg*

To the image of Weimar belong spiritual states that perhaps address sarcasm and the sense for irony but not the sense of humor. A nation that has just lost a war and two million killed in action will not find laughing all that easy. That one of the first satirical periodicals after the war, a Dada publication, could call itself *Der blutige Ernst* (Bloody earnest) indicates the direction of Weimar humorous culture. In the laughter of this decade, gaiety has to step over dead bodies, and in the end, people will laugh about the thought of corpses to come. When Gustav Regler returned in 1929 to Berlin from a trip to France, he heard this new laughter

Employees' Smiles, 1929.

for the first time, with which the master men of 1933 would come into power, that power-through-joy laughter that droned out of the fighting egos and heroic prostheses: Regler saw a hunchback who carried in front of his belly a drum, on which he beat and sang:

> "There was once a Communist
> who didn't know what a Nazi is,
> He went into a brown house,
> and, without any bones, he came out! Hahahaha!"[1]

There was scarcely any public laughter in these years that would not have been laughter about horrors and against enemies, real or imaginary. It belonged either to the distracted victims who tried to raise themselves with laughter above the threats, or to those who, in the style of this Nazi newspaper seller, laughed at the victims in advance.[2]

It was Thomas Mann who like no other perceived the challenge of cynical laughter to humor. Even at the beginning of the Weimar Republic, he tried to penetrate the new Zeitgeist at the end of the bourgeois age and to provide a concept of what it means to live in a "modern" world and "to go with the times" without losing oneself fully in the accommodation to the "bad new world." In the rarefied air of the *Zauberberg* (The magic mountain), Thomas Mann settled accounts with the neocynical Weimar Zeitgeist. This has gone unnoticed by many readers who believe that these Davos conversations in the heights are nothing other than the last cultivated bourgeois intellectual niceties without any social binding force. In reality, Thomas Mann wrestled with the task of taking up the spirit of accommodation, collaboration, and affirmation, which in this century had been irresistibly caught in cynical waters, and of presenting a "positive conviction" that is not based on the pseudosovereign affirmation of deadly, matter-of-fact givens. On the magic mountain, as if for the last time, images of a humanity flourish, a humanity that remains spiritually alive without becoming cynical. A last positiveness is hinted at that is still not cynical positivism. It is a humanity that can no longer exist in the "low country." The Davos heights correspond to the psychic zone where the drama of the magic mountain is played out. Here, a humorist tries to climb once more, higher than the highest peaks of cynicism. Of the latter's breathtaking summits, anyone can be convinced who, in the speeches of the grand cynic, the privy councillor Behrens, hears the hounds of death howling. It is he who, in this rarefied atmosphere, leads the way and sets the mood. On the magic mountain, cynicism reigns, and it is due, above all, to the inspired convolutions of Mann's prose that this book has not been understood, as explicitly as it should be, as the decisive dispute between two forms of "sublation" and irony. Here, the older humorous, ironic tradition wrestles with the irony of the modern Hey!-we're-alive syndrome. Instead of the cynical leap into the melee, here, an ironist

of the old school tries to raise himself above the tumult. He coquets, to be sure, with the modern "thrownness" and the cynically alert letting-oneself-be-carried-along, for the hero of this story, too, surrenders himself to his adventure on the magic mountain and lets himself be borne by the current of the rarefied air of the times. But in him arises something that is not merely driven along without any anchor but a presentiment of what earlier was called *Bildung* (cultivation)—a breath of the higher self, of humanity and of the affirmation of life in the face of all the "debauched" temptations toward regression and death.

The physiognomy of Weimar laughter was captured by Thomas Mann at least three times. And every time, it is a laughter that makes itself autonomous and no longer belongs to the one who is laughing. When, as on the mountain of tuberculosis patients, the horrible and the ridiculous come too close to one another, a laughter breaks out for which we are no longer responsible. We do not laugh this way as long as we can assume responsibility for ourselves. We laugh this way when we are suddenly seized by an understanding that reaches more deeply into us than our civilized ego is allowed to acknowledge. The hero of the story, Hans Castorp, newly arrived, laughs this way when his cousin tells him with the driest of matter-of-factness how the corpses are brought into the valley in winter by bobsled.

> "Well, I'll be!" cried Hans Castorp. And suddenly, he was caught in laughter, in a strong, uncontrollable laughter that shook his breast and distorted his face, which was somewhat stiff from the cool wind, into a quietly aching grimace. "With a bobsled! And you tell me that with complete calm? You have become quite cynical in these last five months!"
>
> "Not at all cynical," answered Joachim, shrugging his shoulders. "How so? It's all the same to the corpses . . . By the way, it could well be that one becomes cynical up here with us. Behrens himself is also an old cynic —an excellent chap on the side, an old corps student and brilliant operator, so it seems. You'll like him. Then there's Krokowski, the assistant-a quite clever something. His activity is emphasized in the brochure. He undertakes a dismantling of the soul with the patients."
>
> "What does he do? Dismantling of the soul? That's repulsive!" cried Hans Castorp, and now his gaiety took the upper hand. He was no longer master of it. After all the rest, the dismantling of souls had taken him over so fully, and he laughed so much that the tears ran down under the hand with which, leaning forward, he covered his eyes. *(Der Zauberberg* [Berlin, 1974], pp. 10-11)

Later, Uncle James Tienappel, too, the consul who appears on the magic mountain as a visitor, will burst out laughing in a similar way when Hans tells him the everyday details of sanatorium life, such as the formation of tubercles,

pneumotomies, lung removals, and gangrene of the lungs. He will sense that the human being in this world has lost the capacity to be disturbed about anything at all.

The boldest, most horrifying, and most apt laughter for the times, however, is the obscene, diabolical *shock* laughter of Anton Karlowitsch Ferge. This atrocious laughter, which broke out in him during a lung operation, almost cost him his life. It was a matter of pleural shock, which can occur in such operations. Let us hear Ferge's report of this vulgar *(hundsfottisch)* experience, in which the laugher no longer recognized himself in his laughter, just as if a stranger within him was laughing himself to death.

Herr Ferge's good-tempered gray eyes opened wider and his face became sallow every time he came to speak of the event that for him must have been terrible. "Without anesthetic, gentlemen. Good, our kind cannot bear that, it is forbidden in this case. One understands and finds oneself to be reasonable in the matter. But the local does not go deep, gentlemen, only the outer flesh is made numb by it. One feels it as one is cut open, admittedly only a pressing and squeezing. I lie with covered face, so that I don't see anything, and the assistant holds me on the right side and the matron on the left. It is as if I am being pressed and squeezed, that is, the flesh that is opened and pushed back with clamps. But then I hear Herr Hofrat say: "Well, then," and at this moment, gentlemen, he begins to tap on the pleura with a blunt instrument —it has to be blunt so that it does not pierce through prematurely. He palpates it in order to find the right place where he can pierce and let in the gas, and while he is doing this, while he is moving up and down on my pleura with the instrument, gentlemen, gentlemen! then I was done for, it was the end of me, something indescribable happened to me. The pleura, gentleman, should not be touched, it should not and does not want to be touched. That is taboo. It is covered with flesh, isolated and unapproachable, once and for all. And now, he had uncovered it and palpated it. Gentlemen, than I felt sick. Terrible, gentlemen, I never would have thought that such a sevenfold horrible and bitchy[3] *(hundsfottisch)* mean feeling could exist at all on earth outside of hell! I fell into unconsciousness —into three unconsciousnesses at once, one green, one brown and one violet. Besides that, it stank in this unconsciousness. The pleural shock threw itself onto my sense of smell, gentlemen. It smelled to high heaven of hydrogen sulfide as it must smell in hell, and in all this, I heard myself laughing, while I was kicking the bucket, but not like a human being laughs, but rather, that was the most disgraceful and nauseating laughter I have heard in all my life, for the palpation of the pleura, gentlemen, that is as if one were being tickled in the utmost shameless, most exaggerated and most inhuman way. That's the way it is, not otherwise, with this damned disgrace and

torment, and that is the pleural shock that dear God may spare you."
{Der Zauberberg, pp. 374-75)

Notes

1. Regler, *Das Ohrdes Malchus,* p. 158: "I now saw what he was selling: it was the rag Dr. Goebbels edited, *Der Angriff* [The attack]. 'Murderer in broad daylight,' I said."

2. See chapter 13 ("Dada Laughter"), chapter 16 ("Hitler's Laughter"), chapter 24 ("Employee's Smiling").

3. *Hundsfott designates* the genitals of the female dog; *hundsfottisch:* shameless, like a dog in heat.

Conclusion
Under Way toward a Critique of
Subjective Reason

What goes under today, tired,
Rises tomorrow, newly born.
Some things stay lost in night—
Take care, stay alert and lively.
                    J. V. Eichendorff,
                        Zwielicht (1815)

Perhaps it is only this:
my heart gradually attracts the buzzards
He who no longer sees any land on the left,
for him the earth soon races
like a worn-out tire toward the eternal rubbish dumps —
Doodleloodoot, now don't run straight away
to mama with your devastations.
            Peter Ruhmkorf, *Selbstportrait* (1979)

Right at the beginning of the history of European philosophy, a laughter rose up that renounced its respect for serious thinking. Laertius tells how the protophilosopher, Thales, the father of the Ionian philosophy of nature and the first in the series of men who personify Western *ratio,* once left his house in Miletus, accompanied by an old servant, to devote himself to the study of the heavens. Along the way, he fell into a ditch. "The woman then called out the following words to the one who was crying out: 'You can't even see, Thales, what lies before your feet, and you fancy that you know what is in the heavens.'"

This mockery inaugurates a second, largely invisible, dimension of the history of philosophy that is inaccessible to historiography, namely, the history of the "sublation" *(Aufhebung)* of philosophy. It is more a tradition of physiognomic, eloquent gestures than of texts. Nevertheless, it is a tradition just as densely and reliably woven as the tradition in which the great doctrines were recorded, handed down, and practiced. In this tendentially mute tradition, a number of fixed gestures appear that, through the millennia, recur with the archetypal force of perseverance and adaptability of primitive motifs: a skeptical shaking of the head;

a malicious laugh; a return with a shrug of the shoulders to things that lie closer to hand; a realist astonishment at the helplessness of those who are the most intelligent; a stubborn insistence on the seriousness of life against the frivolous word garlands of abstraction. Here what gives philosophical thinking its greatness is exposed as an expression of weakness —as the inability to be small and as the absence of spirit from the most obvious.

In the present essay on the structure and dynamic of cynical phenomena, this history of the sublation of philosophy was given firmer contours. It was related how, in the kynicism of Diogenes of Sinope, the laughter about philosophy itself became philosophical. I wanted to show how in the pantomimes and wordplays of the philosopher from the tub, the Gay Science was born, which saw the earnestness of the false life recur in the false earnestness of philosophy. With this, the satirical resistance of conceptually informed existence against the presumptuous concept and against a teaching that has been blown up into a form of life begins. *Socrates mainumenos* embodies in our tradition an impulse giver who denounces idealistic alienation at the moment of its emergence. In this, he went so far as to use his whole existence as a pantomimic argument against philosophical inversions. Not only did he react extremely sensitively and coarsely to the moral absurdities of higher civilization; he was also the first to recognize the danger embodied in Plato, that the school will subjugate life, that the artificial psychosis of "absolute knowledge" wants to destroy the vital connection between perception, movement, and understanding, and that, in the grandiose earnestness of idealistic discourse, nothing other than that earnestness returns with which life most lacking in spirit stifles itself with its "cares," its "will to power," and its enemies, "with whom one cannot fool around."

In Diogenes' antiphilosophical jokes, an ancient variant of existentialism takes on a form Heinrich Niehues-Probsting has called, with a very happy phrase borrowed from Gigon, the "kynical impulse." He means the sublation of philosophizing in mentally alert life oriented simultaneously toward nature and reason. From this source springs the critical existentialism of satirical consciousness that cuts through the space of respectably presented European philosophies as if it were its secret diagonal. An agile, worldly-wise intelligence had always rivaled the stodgy discourses of serious theologists, metaphysicians, moralists, and ideologues.[1] Even the mightily eloquent dialectician, Marx, who wanted to heal the world of its inversions, and the despairing ironist, Kierkegaard, who burst open the false sovereignty of having-understood-everything with the principle of "existence"—they too stepped as latecomers into the age-old tradition of perpetual sublations of philosophy. After Marx, Kierkgaard, and Nietzsche, only those efforts of thought still deserve a universal hearing that promise to keep step with the ironic, practical, and existential sublations of philosophy. For more than one hundred years, critical philosophy has no longer possessed enough self-certainty to let itself be caught sojourning any longer by its traditional serious naivetes.

Therefore, since then, for its part, it has exerted itself in rivalry with those realisms about which it has embarrassed itself since the days of the Miletian maid. Philosophical thinking peddles its wares today at a fair of self-sublations and falls head over heels in its eagerness to find favor with ironic, pragmatic, and strategic realisms. The risk of such realistic metamorphoses is obvious: It can easily end up by substituting the bad with something worse. It is a short step from the kynical "sublation" of philosophy to the cynical self-denial of what great philosophy had embodied in its best aspects.

Life caught between myth and everyday reality was once confronted by philosophy as that which, through its understanding of the "good life," its social forms, and its moral-cosmic premises, was unambiguously cleverer. It lost its prestige to the extent that it lost its evident advantage in cleverness to "normal life." In the transition from archaic teachings of wisdom to philosophy based on argument, it itself was engulfed in the twilight of alienation from life. It had to accept that the independent cleverness theories of pragmatics, economics, strategy, and politics proved themselves to be its better, until, with its logical niceties, it became infantile and academic, and stood there as the Utopian idiot with its reminiscences about great ideals. Today philosophy is surrounded on all sides by maliciously clever empiricisms and realistic disciplines that "know better." If these latter really did know what is better, perhaps not much would be lost with the downfall of philosophy. Since, however, today's scientific disciplines and doctrines of cleverness without exception can be suspected of providing knowledge that aggravates our situation rather than improves it, our interest turns back to what has not received its due by any previous sublation of philosophy. In a world full of injustice, exploitation, war, resentment, isolation, and blind suffering, the "sublation" of philosophy by the clever strategies of such a life brings forth also a painful lack of philosophy. This is documented by, among other things, the neoconservative hunger for meaning today. The "false life" that already gloried in overcoming philosophy and metaphysics had never understood the contradiction of philosophy to such a life. Philosophy demands of life what Thales had described as "what is difficult": to know thyself.

At this point the ironies are reversed. Great philosophy has always taken life more seriously than the "seriousness of life" has taken philosophy. The latter's basic attitude toward life was always a deeply respectful overtaxing: It reminded life of undreamed of capacities for self-ascent into the universal. The firmly established distance between great and small spirits, which has existed since the "age of the turning point" of the high cultures (about 500 B.C.), became the stimulus of philosophical, anthropological systems of exercise and theories of development. The classical "know thyself contained the presumptuous demand of a previously unknown disciplinary self-limitation of individuals in connection with an equally unparalleled heightening of their cosmic self-understanding. From this height, everyday consciousness, with its acquired practical tricks, its short-

winded conventionality, and its helplessness in the face of the emotions, appeared as an unrespectable, immature preliminary form of developed reason. From then on, philosophy struggled with everyday consciousness with the aim of getting the better of its partly dull, partly cunning refusal to *grow up* in a philosophical sense, that is, of consciously shifting it into "meaningful wholes." Therefore, classical philosophy, centered on "know thyself," is essentially exercise and pedagogy. The commandment of self-knowledge aimed at a self-assimilation of reflecting individuals into well-ordered social and natural wholes —with the unexpressed promise that the human being, even when the state of social affairs is an affront to every thought of a rational order, many know itself to be bound into a deeper, natural-cosmic happening of reason. With "know thyself," classical philosophy promised the individual that, on the way inward, he or she would discover a common denominator for world and self. In this way, it secured for itself an unexcellable binding force that reliably bound existence together with reflection. That is why, for Thales, knowledge of the heavens and self-investigation could proceed directly parallel to each other. For as long as philosophy was able to believe in a synchronizing of experiences of the world and of the self, the principle of "know thyself could be spun out to an encyclopedia of knowledge, just as the encylopedia could be compressed into "know thyself." The classical systems drew their pathos from the certainty that worldly and self-experience had to converge under the sign of the "absolute." They could still proceed from the premise that reflection and life, theoretical and practical reason, could never completely separate themselves from each other because all knowing found an ultimate regulative in the self-knowledge of the knowers.

In modernity, the brackets that in classical thinking held reflection and life together burst apart. It becomes increasingly clear to us that we are at the point of losing the common denominator of self-experience and world experience. Even the most honorable postulate of self-knowledge today is suspected of having been naive, and what once appeared as the summit of reflectedness is today confronted by the suspicion that it was possibly only a chimera that arose through the misuse of metaphors of reflection. The greater part of present-day object knowledges has, in fact, freed itself from any relation to a self and confronts our consciousness in that extracted matter-of-factness from which no path is any longer bent "back" to a subjectivity. Nowhere does an ego experience it-"self" in modern scientific knowledge. Where this ego still bends over itself, with its obvious tendency to a worldless inwardness, it leaves reality behind. Thus, for present-day thinking, inwardness and outwardness, subjectivity and things, have been split into "alien worlds"; at the same time, the classical premise of philosophizing falls away. "Know thyself has long since been understood by modern people as an invitation to an ego trip for an escapist ignorance. Modern reflection expressly renounces any competency in embedding subjectivites without rupture into objective worlds. What it uncovers is rather the gulf between both. The "self knows

itself to be connected in a mysterious way to a "world," without being able to recognize itself in it in the sense of Greek cosmology. And no "mediating" authorities, such as social psychology or neurophysiology can alter anything in this regard. Modern self-reflection, in spite of all its "turnings back," thus can no longer "arrive home." The subjects do not know themselves as "at home with themselves," either in themselves or in their environments. For radical thinking in modernity, at the self pole, emptiness exposes itself, and at the world pole, estrangement. How an emptiness is supposed to recognize "itself in a stranger cannot be imagined by our reason no matter how hard we try.

Here, a, so to speak, non-Euclidean reflectiveness is astir that can no longer circle about the selfness of the self. If the movements of reflection in classical philosophy could be depicted in the structure of Homer's Odysseus, in which a wandering hero returns home via a thousand false paths across the whole world, in order there to be *re-cognized* by his woman, that is, by his "soul," then the reflections of modern thinking in no way still find their way back "home." They either move on the spot in essenceless flurries, drained of experience, or they drift on, like the eternal Jew or the Flying Dutchman, without hope of arriving, through the perpetually alien. The Odysseus of today no longer finds his Ithake; his Penelope has long forgotten him, and if even today she still unravels at night what was woven during the day, for fear of "finishing," that does not hinder her from losing, in the faces of her innumerable wifeless beaus, the face of teh "one" who might return. Even if Odysseus really found his way back to where he came from, no re-cognition would take place, and his own starting point would have to confront him as something as alien as the other tracts of land on his wanderings. For the modern subject, a "vagabond in existence," there is no longer any return home to the "identical." What appeared to us as our "own" and as "origin," as soon as we "turn around," has always altered and been lost.

In view of these developments, the claim of classical philosophy to be more "serious" than mere life does not look good. Since modern thinking no longer entrusts itself with the translation of self-knowledge into worldly knowledge, and of world experience into self-experience, philosophy has had to withdraw from theories of "objective reason" into those of "subjective reason." The ground is thus taken from under the feet of the ancient holistic pathos, and philosophy sinks into the apparent truncatedness and groundlessness of the subjective. The truth is, however, that this subjective element establishes and unfolds itself in the process of modern civilization to such an extent that it was able to gain as much of a foothold as seemed necessary for its self-preservation. "Subjectivity" cast its nets over the "object" worlds and transformed excessively powerful first nature into a tamed second nature. Herein lies the source of modernity: The latter fosters the unfolding of the "subjective" to the relatively objective, of that which has no foothold to something that provides for itself its own foothold—the transformation of the world's wildness into what we make and think through. Modern philosophies that

set themselves the task of grasping these transformations are those we rightly think of as the "rational" philosophies: social philosophies, philosophies of science, philosophies of labor, of technology, of language. They link up directly with the producing, acting, thinking, and speaking of a subjectivity that has become sure of itself. Therefore, philosophy that does not speculate past the structures of the modern world is basically practical philosophy. As such, it must equate what is intelligible in the world with what is rationally feasible, thinkable, examinable, and articulable. In the theory of subjective reason, the world is paraphrased as the content of *our doings*. Subjectivity has been turned fully into praxis.

The glaring poverty of modern practical philosophy, which would really like to produce something sound, above all, a universally binding, rigorously grounded ethics, and cannot for the life of it manage to do so, is, however, nothing other than the poverty of subjective reason as such. The latter finds a foothold in itself only to the extent that it uninterruptedly pursues its activistic fury of "praxis." Modern reason knows itself to be tied to the back of the praxis tiger. As long as the latter runs its course in a predictable way, subjective reason remains in relative balance. But woe betide when it gets caught in one of its notorious crises and becomes frenzied due to resistances or profitable prey. Then it lets its praxis rider know that with ethical tranquilizers alone, a predatory animal of its dimensions cannot be brought under control. Practical philosophy that tries to be respectable thus develops against its will into a seminar for modern tiger management. There it is discussed whether it is possible to talk reasonably with the beast or whether it would be better if a few of the tendentially dispensable riders were sacrificed to the stubborn systemic brute. In these taming conversations of subjective reason with the praxis tiger, cynicism is inevitably in play, which, with the appeal to reason, lets it be known with a wink that it did not mean it so seriously. The superficial view of things, in addition, confirms this stance. Where thinking has to agonize, especially over the projects of praxis that were unleashed with its own aid and have become autonomous, there subjective reason, even as reason, is treated with irony and suspected of being merely subjectivity that keeps on tearing along. With incessant irony, modern philosophizing, which had once been so sure of itself, shrinks to a circuslike rationalism that, in its efforts to train the praxis tiger, proves itself to be embarrassingly helpless. If the philosophers themselves, in time, also become somewhat addled in this occupation, then, given how things are, it is no wonder. In order to visualize the curiosity, philosophy, in the modern world, one has to recall an ancient episode, when a Greek Diadochian prince, to reciprocate for the gift of two elephants from an Indian maharaja, sent back two very sensible philosophers.

In the twilight of late enlightenment, the insight gains shape that our "praxis," which we always held to be the most legitimate child of reason, in fact, represents the central myth of modernity. The demythologization of praxis that thereby falls

due forces radical corrections in the self-understanding of practical philosophy. The latter must now become clear about the grave extent to which it had been taken in by the myth of activity and how blindly it had given itself over to its alliance with rational activism and constructivism. In this blinding, practical reason could not see that the highest concept of behavior is not "doing" but "letting things be," and that it achieves its utmost not by reconstructing the structures of our doing but by penetrating the relations between doing and desisting. Every active deed is etched in the matrix of passivity; every act of disposing over something remains dependent on the stable massiveness of what is not at our disposal; every change is borne also by the reliable perseverance of what is unchanged; and everything that is calculated rests on the indispensable base of what is unpredictably spontaneous.

At this point, the most modern reflection of the classical "know thyself is recovered. It leads us in a quasi-neoclassical movement of thought to the point where we can see how the producing, reflecting, active self is inlaid in a passive self that cannot be manipulated by any deed. All subjectivities, competences, activisms, and illusions of doers are still borne by this deeper layer. And no matter how much activity belongs to our essence, it nevertheless has basically the structure of "letting-oneself-do." The insight that "feasibility" has structural limits, has, since its processing by enlightenment, lost its antienlightenment tone and by no means necessarily ends up in the maliciously joyful impotence philosophies with which the conservatism of the church has long since pursued its business. Now it can be revealed that reason and praxis do not belong exclusively together, but that in a nonpraxis, a refraining from acting, a letting happen and a nonintervention, higher qualities of insight can come to expression than in any deed, no matter how well thought through.

Our ancient main witness, Diogenes of Sinope, the illuminated beggar, the self-sufficient, ironic representative of the pathos of nature, is to be cited one last time, he who, with his "restraint," had founded a model for those ancient European virtues of forbearance, from which modernity, with its activist ethos of self-assertion has turned away as radically as possible. Among the innumerable anecdotes documenting the impulse of his teaching, one in particular shines forth with profundity:

> He praised those who want to marry and do not, those who want to sail off and do not, those who want to be active in affairs of state and refrain from doing so, who want to educate children and do not, who prepare themselves to enter into the services of a prince and hold off. *(Diogenes Laertius,* vol. VI, p. 29)

Here, a puzzling oriental, indeed Asiatic component comes into the world feeling of this man, which had made its way from the far-off corner of the Black Sea to the Western metropolis of Athens. It suggests that where we have not done any-

thing, no tiger is on the prowl from which we would have difficulty dismounting. Those who can let things be are not pursued from behind by projects that have taken on a life of their own; those who exercise the praxis of abstention do not get caught in the self-continuation automatism of unleashed activisms. In that Diogenes, as they say, placed "nature against the law," he anticipated the principle of self-regulation and restricted active interventions to an extent "in accord with nature." Imbued with the spontaneous flourishing of structures, he put his trust in entelechy and renounced "projects." Although ancient kynicism, with its Socratic conviction that virtue is learnable, seems to stress the efforts of the "subject," it nevertheless knew very well that only through forbearance and tranquillity would subjective reason be capable of hearing an "objective" reason within itself. The great thinking of antiquity is rooted in the experience of enthusiastic tranquillity when, on the summit of having-thought, the thinker steps aside and lets himself be permeated by the "self-revelation" of truth. Human openness for what we today —with both sympathy and nostalgia—call "objective reason," for the ancients was based in "cosmic passivity" and in the observation of how radical thinking can make up its unavoidable belatedness in relation to the pregiven world and, by virtue of its experience of being, reaches the same height as the "whole." This culminates in the classical temerities of world reason or the logos that, to use Heidegger's words, lets itself "be given to think" what is thinkable by being itself.

That modernity has had to take leave of theories of objective reason follows from the fundamentally altered relation to the world of modern thinking. Subjective reason feels it as unbearable audacity when the logos doctrines demand that we relinquish our "own interests" and assimilate ourselves into a great "whole" — roughly, in the same way the parts of a totality that benevolently took care of all would have to subordinate themselves to that totality. It is impossible to still think of subjectivity in its relation to the world according to the model of the part and the whole. Subjectivity understands itself unquestioningly as a "world for itself," and if today we even had to lose the harmonistic idea of the individual as a microcosmic mirror of the macrocosmos, modern subjectivity would nevertheless be distinguished as a stubborn microchaos in a universal connection that is inaccessible to the concepts of reason. We have focused essentially on subjectivity because we could not believe in the sense and well-meaning of a whole, even if we wanted to. Said drastically, we have subjectivized ourselves as subjects because we have experienced the whole as disunion, nature as the source of horrid shortages, and the social world as world war. This is what has awakened a suspicious alertness in modern consciousness against importunate holistic doctrines, with which the world's misery is supposed to be presented as harmony and individual claims on life are supposed to be talked into self-sacrifice. The conventional theories of objective reason are compromised by the fact that they have been seen through as tricks in the service of orders of domination. Little by little,

they are supposed to feed the internalization of sacrifices to the members of soci-
ety for the sake of social wholes that in the end usually remain so relentlessly
against the individuals that one would think they had never made their sacrifices.
It is no accident that the enlightenment began with skepticism about the effective-
ness of religious sacrifice and with the exposure of priestly sacrificial swindles.
Once such a suspicion has become firm, it will scarcely still occur to individuals
to sacrifice "themselves" or "something" of themselves. It was modern enlighten-
ment that taught us to turn back the process of the internalization of sacrifice step
by step, until our life appeared in lurid individualization, not sacrificed, but also
unconnected with the impossible "great whole"-as aggregate of the pure will to
live in the armaments of subjective reason, which no longer lets itself be taken
in by anything and demands everything from existence.

In its legitimate disassembly of the great world images of objective reason, en-
lightenment runs the danger of destroying not only the ideological pretenses of
the fraud of sacrifice but also the inheritance of a passivistic consciousness with-
out which practical reason cannot really be called reason. In its best moments,
classical "logocentric" thinking also knew that its visions of "objective" world rea-
son cannot be forced into a consistent campaign of thinking but light up like mo-
ments of happiness when "the possible has been done" and the greater connection
becomes visible between deed and forbearance. Where therefore the thought of
totalities pervaded by reason seriously emerges, thinkers show that beyond their
active efforts, they know the passive reason of an integrating letting-be. Accord-
ingly, the idea that the whole world is a symphonic process can also be read as
the cipher for the subjective capacity for the utmost relaxation in a relation to the
world that is no longer colored by animosity. Those who can "let themselves go"
in a cosmic structure as if at home aim not at their self-mutilation in favor of a
Moloch totality but at a creative flowing into what is possible and an unaffected
self-preservation and self-elevation of existence. Such an aim obviously cor-
responds to the interests of even the most subjective reason.

Here, what I want to call not the dialectic but the irony of enlightenment sets
in. With its activistic storming of doing, planning, and thinking for oneself, it was
so successful for two centuries that in the meantime it can scarcely still bear its
own success. Ironically, where modern subjective reason becomes enmeshed in
the gears of subjective interests, reason succumbs, whereas where subjective rea-
son effects something in accord with reason, subjectivities have faded into the
background. *Empirical* subjectivity is at least just as far removed from subjective
reason as the latter is from an "objective" reason. Each, viewed from the stand-
point of "mere life," is just as much "idealistically" exaggerated. In social reality,
subjective reason is taken in by private reason and thereby pulled down from its
beautiful universality to the ground of a thousand chaotically juxtaposed in-
dividual strategies. Today it can be seen that the modern constructions of a sub-
jective reason were no less Utopian than the visions of an objective reason were

in antiquity and the Middle Ages. For subjective reason is nothing without a co-
herent universal subject. Accordingly, in modern thinking, the same spook of a
"total subject" wanders, which is supposed to bear the entire rational potential of
reason within itself. In this, the universalism of enlightenment soars as high as
any thinking that aims at the whole ever could. It lives from the idea of a com-
municative total mediation in which all privacies would be melted into a planetary
conversation. Without its communicative-pathetic core, subjective reason would
have nothing to counterpose to its reduction to the format of private reason in the
service of individual, group, and systemic egoisms. Only with the anticipation
of universal understanding can enlightenment refrain from the war of individual
strategies and save itself in the universal. Since having dissolved social communi-
cation under the sign of myth, enlightenment must rely on the myth of communi-
cation. In communication, the struggling individual strategies would be so
softened and relaxed that they could flow into rational agreements. In this way,
a structure arises similar to what was observed in the relation between the in-
dividual and "objective reason." Only through the individuals becoming con-
sciously passive and tranquil does the universal prevail against the particular, the
objective against the subjective, experience against mere imagination. Only they
can expect something rational from communication who have already conceded,
in classical passivity and deep yieldingness, to the universal, a precedence to the
process of reaching agreement over the motives of its participants. Otherwise,
no matter how much mutual understanding was undertaken, it would only become
manifest that we cannot reach agreement with each other. If the inability to sub-
jugate oneself is a characteristic structure of modern subjective autonomy, sub-
jective reason must at least be allowed to demand that the subjects subjugate them-
selves to the priority of communication over those communicating, and of
experiences over "needs." Otherwise, it would lose its credentials as reason.

The critique of cynical reason has shown how "subjects" who have become
both hard and agile in existential and social strictures of struggle have given the
universal the cold shoulder and have not hesitated to repudiate all high cultural
ideals when it was a matter of self-preservation. "Pugnacious reason" is from the
start an activist and untranquil reason that at no price lets itself be made fluid and
never subjects itself to the precedence of what is common, universal, and encom-
passing. Under these conditions, the efforts of practical philosophy are confined
within depressingly narrow limits. Practical reason, which attempts to guide the
undertakings of subjectivities, runs as if in vain up against the unpliable self-
insistence of millions of fragmented centers of private reason. The latter want to
subject every rationality to private conditions and act as if enlightenment has no
right to intrude into certain reserved places where secret strategies are spun. Sub-
jective reason that has regressed to private reason always bears within itself a *will
to night* (Ernst Weiss), a cunning not-wanting-to-know about connections, a
making-itself-inaccessible to the demands of universality and a strategic harden-

ing, made clever by life, against all sirens' melodies of communication and recon-ciliation. Indeed, "respectable" individual strategies may occasionally "negoti-ate," but where the inner strategists look over the shoulders of the dialogue part-ners, there the "communication" is also strategically perverted. Productive communication already eludes calculable feasibility and, where it succeeds, has the structure of letting-oneself-communicate. The cynicism analysis, by contrast, describes the interactions of subjectivism that cannot unwind, of highly armed centers of private reason, conglomerations of power bristling with weapons and science-supported systems of hyperproduction. None of them would even dream of bending to a communicative reason; rather, under the pretense of communica-tion, they want to subjugate the latter to its private conditions.

Under the pressure of suffering in the most recent crises, members of our civilization see themselves forced, quasi-neoclassically, to repeat the "know thy-self," and in this they discover their systematic inability to communicate in the way that would guarantee true de-escalation. The subjective that cannot "mirror" itself in any "whole" nevertheless encounters itself in countless analogous subjec-tivities that, similarly worldless and encapsulated, pursue only their "own" goals and that, where they interact with others, are only bound to each other, precari-ously and subject to revocation, in "antagonistic cooperation." The renewed "know thyself produces an image of incurable self-preservation that is merci-lessly thrown back onto every "self by all others. Hence, if in modernity, worldly and self-experience converge in spite of all sundering, they do so under the condi-tion that the struggles of self-preservation of privatized subjective reason in-wardly as well as outwardly, psychologically as well as technologically, in the intimate domain as well as in political spheres, have generated the same isolation of subjects, the same iciness, the same polemical, strategic subjectivisms, and the same quick-footed denial of high-cultural ethical ideals. I have tried to develop a language in which one can speak about both spheres with the same expressions. In the analysis of cynicism, the language of self-experience is again directly syn-chronized with the language of worldly experience—assuming we wanted to make the self side speak in an extremely honest way, the world side in a ruthlessly clear way.

So much is obvious: that the cynicism analysis aims at a critique of subjective reason without immediately wanting to return to the lost illusions of an objective reason. This would mean fighting against one false respectability with another. The critique of "cynical reason" therefore argues immanently and "dialectically." In overview of the course of enlightenment it recapitulates the inner contradic-tions in enlightenment and repeats the ironic "labor on the superego," or better, the combative "labor on the ideal" that inevitably falls due under the predomi-nance of strategic subjectivities in class and military societies. In this we have dealt with the "cultural struggle" for the great ideals, whose validity or worthless-ness decides the existence or decay of personal and collective integrity: heroic

courage, the legitimacy of power, love, the medical arts, praise of the living, truth, authenticity, obedience to experience, just exchange. In this order, we have sketched phenomenologically the various worlds of values, with their inner ruptures and struggles. One must have once taken these ideals seriously, without reservation, in order to be able to empathize with the drama of their satirical accusation by kynical resistance and with the tragicomedy of their self-denial by the serious cynicism of the will to power and profit. Those who have never respected such ideals and orient themselves, in their own twilight, toward their ambiguity, will never understand the necessity of the questions posed here: where these ambiguities come from and which experiences had to dull the once uncomplicated "shining" light of enlightenment to the overproblematic twilight of late modernity. Thus, the critique of subjective reason as well as that of strategic reason, of strategic as well as cynical "reasson," leads through a manifold convoluted odyssey of ambivalences whose threads, the closer we come to the present, entangle themselves all the more in threatening complexity.

"Sapere aude! Have the courage to use your *own* understanding! is thus the motto of enlightenment." In this way, Immanuel Kant had formulated the slogan of the still self-certain, modern, subjective doctrine of reason in his famous essay of 1784, *What Is Enlightenment?* With skeptical optimism, this reason thought itself capable, through subjective efforts, of coping with the tendencies of the world that did not "yet" obey the standards of reason. One's own ability to know, summoned by Kant, is based on the vital quality of a courage that is alien to the modern despair about the "state of affairs." Although Kant forbade us to think of "objective goals" in nature, his philosophizing orients itself, to be sure, not toward an overarching world reason but toward the confidence in our ability to bring reason into the state of the world. Secretly, classical enlightenment too assumes that the "nature of things," as if it were already prepared to bend to our aims, has already come the greatest part of the way toward the efforts of subjective reason. By connecting the use of the understanding directly to courageous self-confidence, Kant betrays that although reason is supposed to be restricted critically and discreetly to achievements of subjectivity, he relies in his extracritical relation to the world on a great, mute "accommodation" of nature to reason. It is courage that allows enlightenment thinking to imagine a rational guidance of the state of the world. This courage hints at that forbearance in which the activity of enlightenment, too, must know itself to be structurally embedded. Wherever enlightenment shows promise of *success,* it has the structure of a courageous, spontaneous letting-oneself-think-and-do that relies on the possibility that our knowing and activity do not blindly and subjectively race past all tendencies of reality, but creatively and adeptly join up with strivings and forces of the world in order in the end "to make something more out of it," in the sense of rational goals.

In view of past and threatening world catastrophes, today's historically frus-

trated life feeling may no longer really believe in this. Often it shows itself to be extremely uncourageous in "making use of its own understanding." Since they have to a large extent lost their courage to reason, the heirs of enlightenment today, nervous, doubting, and forcibly without illusions, are on the way to a global cynicism. Only in the form of derision and renunciation do references to the ideals of a humane culture still seem bearable. Cynicism, as *enlightened false consciousness,* has become a hard-boiled, shadowy cleverness that has split courage off from itself, holds anything positive to be fraud, and is intent only on somehow getting through life. He who laughs last, laughs as if in pleural shock. Cynical consciousness adds up the "bad experiences" of all times and lets only the prospectless uniformity of hard facts prevail. Modern cynicism is the knot in which all "snakelike writhings of an immoral doctrine of cleverness" (Kant, *On Eternal Peace)* entangle themselves. In the neocynical attitude, world-historical learning processes of bitterness come to fruition. They have stamped the traces of the coldness of exchange, of world wars, and the self-denial of ideals in our consciousnesses, which have become sick with experience. Hey, we're alive; hey, we're selling ourselves; hey, we're arming; those who die young save social security contributions. In this way cynicism guarantees the expanded reproduction of the past on the newest level of what is currently the worst. It is for this reason that prophecies of an imminent and manmade end of the world are so much in vogue: "Have the courage to use your own bomb." As if in a fever, cynically unfettered realism even speaks the truth to us with warnings. With macabre fits of fear, the panicking subjectivisms rustle through the media and speak of the apocalypse: "Look out, look out, the times are peculiar / And peculiar children they have: us." Have we not become as Descartes conceived us? The *Res cogitans* in self-guiding missiles? The isolated thing-for-yourself in the middle of similar beings? We are the metal ego, the block ego, the plutonium ego, the neutron ego, we are the fallout-shelter citizens, the artillery subjects, the missle pensioners, the cannon shareholders, the security lemures, the armored pensioners, the apocalyptic riders of the compulsion of things, and the phantom pacifists who promote the better cause with nuclear free-style ethics. Only the greatest impudence still has words for reality. Only anarchic waywardness still finds an expression for contemporary normality. As in the days of Diogenes, the bearers of the system have lost their self-confidence to the apparently crazy ones. They now can only choose between the false self-experience in collective suicide and the suicide of false subjectivity in real self-experience.

Sapere aude! remains the motto of an enlightenment that, even in the twilight of the most recent dangers, resists intimidation by catastrophe. Only out of its courage can a future still unfold that would be more than the expanded reproduction of the worst of the past. Such courage nourishes itself from the now faint currents of recollection of a spontaneous ability of life to be-in-order, an order not constructed by anybody. Where the old doctrines tried to speak of "objective rea-

son," they also wanted, with therapeutic intent, to remind us that in a world that has become thoroughly "alienated" since the beginning of the era of high culture, things can perhaps again flow and order themselves if we disarm as subjects and step back from respectably camouflaged, destructive activism into letting things be.

Can one really still say such a thing? Is the alliance of our rationality with "realism" and cynicism secretly already so consolidated that it no longer wants to know anything about any reason other than activistic reason? With this question, our critical investigation comes to an end. What is left to say? Experiences would now come into play that one can only refer to mysteriously without being able to call on the aid of proofs. That about which one cannot argue should be told at a more opportune time. It is a matter of experiences for which I can find no other word than the exuberant experience of a well-spent life. In our best moments, when, overcome with success, even the most energetic activity gives way to passivity and the rhythmics of the living carry us spontaneously, courage can suddenly make itself felt as a euphoric clarity or a seriousness that is wonderfully tranquil within itself. It awakens the present within us. In the present, awareness climbs all at once to the heights of being. Cool and bright, every moment enters its space; you are no different from its brightness, its coolness, its jubilation. Bad experiences give way to new opportunities. No history makes you old. The unkindnesses of yesterday compel you to nothing. In the light of such a presence of spirit, the spell of reenactments is broken. Every conscious second eradicates what is hopelessly past and becomes the first second of an Other History.

Notes

1. It is an intelligence that is "literary" in the broadest and best sense of the word. Insofar as cynicism-analysis is *also* a philosophy of literature, it measures the distance between literary-poetic achievements and philosophical-discursive achievements of intelligence.

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